

Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi

H.E. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, is from the northern district of Ngozi. His father, Eustache Ngabisha, was elected to the Parliament of Burundi in 1965 and later became Governor of two provinces before being killed in 1972 during a period of ethnic violence that claimed the lives of nearly 100,000 Burundians.

As a University student in Bujumbura, Nkurunziza graduated with distinction in Education and Sports in 1990 and was recruited as Assistant Lecturer at the same University. In 1995, when Burundi was facing a bloody civil war, stemming from tribal antagonism between Hutus and Tutsis, he narrowly escaped assassination when unknown gunmen attacked the University Campus.

After the incident, Nkurunziza went to the bush to join the Cndd-Fdd rebel combatants. Rising through the ranks, Nkurunziza was appointed deputy secretary-general of the CNDD-FDD in 1998. In 2001, he was elected chairman. He was re-elected to the post of chairman in August 2004. In his capacity as the Cndd-Fdd rebel chief, he led his delegation in the peace negotiations with the Government. The negotiations led to the signing of a ceasefire and a power sharing agreement. In 2004, Nkurunziza was elected Chairman of the Cndd-Fdd, soon after the rebel movement was registered as a political party.

Since late 2003, he was appointed Minister of Good Governance and State Inspector General within the transitional Government of President Domitien Ndayizeye. The former rebel chief was nominated as presidential candidate to the democratic elections in June 2005 on his party ticket. He was elected Member of Parliament and then elected President, unopposed by Members of Parliament, and sworn in as the new President of Burundi in August 2006.

He inherited a country devastated by over a decade of civil war and dictatorship. His policy aims at reconstruction and reconciliation, economic recovery and political stability. Nkurunziza is considered a man of dialogue who led the efforts to conclude a peace accord with the last rebel group, the Palipehutu-Fnl. He is known for mingling with village people in the remote rural areas where he spends much of his time.

One of his key priorities is to pull Burundi out of poverty. As President, Nkurunziza initiated 'Community Works' every Saturday, and he has taken courageous measures in favour of children and women: free education for primary school children and free health care for children under-5.