



## **Press Release**

Caux, 27 April 2007

### **40 Burundi leaders in Caux for an 'honest conversation'**

**Forty leading Burundians have been meeting in the Caux conference centre for 'an honest conversation' from 22 to 28 April 2007, at the invitation of *Initiatives of Change International*. This meeting was made possible thanks to the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in the framework of the 'good offices' policy of Swiss diplomacy. Burundians asked *Initiatives of Change* to organize this 'Caux phase' of the process to consolidate the fragile peace in their country. They felt the need for an informal setting where they could build relationships of trust.**

Following this request from Burundians, *Initiatives of Change International* initiated this 'honest conversation', with three former heads of state, senators, members of parliament, political leaders, representatives of the rebel Palipehutu-FNL movement, religious leaders, and representatives of civil society.

The aim of the meeting was to offer an informal framework to build trust and thus help to consolidate the peace process under way in Burundi. The themes of the meetings were defined with the participants themselves in the months preceding the Caux meeting.

Swiss Ambassador Jean-Daniel Biéler, representing the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, in his official welcoming speech, noted that there had been two previous dialogues in Caux in 2003. These had brought together for the first time the then government, and different movements and parties: CNDD-FDD, the Palipehutu-FNL, Frodebu, Uprona, the churches, and civil society. These meetings, the Swiss ambassador said, were not negotiations, but had helped towards a better understanding and knowledge of each other. Such encounters, which allowed participants to dialogue, to test out ideas, had helped towards a series of referenda and elections in 2005. Today, this 'Caux phase of the process answered the need to talk out some unresolved questions which affect the consolidation of the peace.

The 'honest conversations' approach, with its three essential components of honest talk, listening with empathy, and a secure framework, had allowed the participants to discuss fears, fear of losing power, the cycles of ethnic violence that had led to political manipulation and led to more conflict. Sufferings not transformed are transferred, it was said, from generation to generation.

The participants expressed their determination to continue this kind of 'honest conversation' back in Burundi.

*Initiatives of Change International* has been 'accompanying' the peace process in Burundi over the last seven years. This work will continue through 2007, with support from the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs.

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