

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI**PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC
Secretariat-General of the Government****MEDIA RELEASE CONSECUTIVE TO THE CABINET MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2020**

A Cabinet Meeting was held on Wednesday 22 April 2020 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi. The following items have been analyzed:

1. Bill establishing the Labor Code, presented by the Minister of Public Service, Labor and Employment.

The Government, in partnership with professional organizations of employers and workers, has undertaken the reform of labor legislation to ensure a balance between the interests of companies and the fundamental rights of workers. Although many of the basic principles found in the existing Code remain current, there is a need for clarification.

Indeed since 1993, the year of the promulgation of the current Code, many things in the world of work have evolved hence motivating the revision of this text:

- Burundi has ratified many important international labor conventions which must be incorporated into the Labor Code
- The accession of Burundi into the East African Community creates the obligations and adaptations necessary for the free movement of people which must be taken into account in this Code
- Since 1993, many changes have taken place in the world of work and have created working situations not covered by the Labor Code in force
- Some principles applicable to the world of work are found in other texts but need to be incorporated into the Labor Code for more readability and to make their exploitation easier
- Certain principles are set out in implementing texts of the Labor Code without being found in it.

These are the few elements on which the revision of the current Labor Code is based. The Council had analyzed this project and had found that it required a much more in-depth analysis and had set up a team to re-examine it in all its details and bring it back for adoption.

After analyzing the report from the Commission which had been set up to re-study this project, the Council adopted it.

2. Bill on the ratification by the Republic of Burundi of the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Zone (ZLECAF), presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The idea of creating a free trade area in Africa dates from the 1960s. But it was at the Summit of African Heads of State and Government in January 2012 in Addis Ababa that the decision on the framework and roadmap to accelerate the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area was made.

Subsequently, negotiations continued to reach an agreement establishing the African Free Trade Area (ZLECAF). The objective of the African Free Trade Zone is among other things to create a single market for goods and services, facilitated by the movement of people. It will also contribute to the circulation of capital and natural persons and will facilitate investments.

The Council had analyzed this project and had appointed a commission to assess what Burundi will gain or lose by ratifying or not ratifying this project and bring it back for adoption. The commission was also charged with proposing a permanent multisectoral committee of experts to study and negotiate all the agreements to which Burundi is called upon to join.

The commission put in place has analyzed the file and suggests that the Government wait for the report from the Standing Committee on Negotiations and the effective implementation of the strategies being developed (Regional Integration Strategy and National Industrialization Strategy) before considering the ratification of this bill.

The Council of Ministers adopted the commission's proposal.

3. Bill on the ratification by the Republic of Burundi of the Minamata Convention on mercury, presented by the Minister of the Environment, Agriculture and Livestock.

Mercury is a highly toxic heavy metal that poses a threat to human health and the environment. Aware of the harmful impacts of this substance, the International Community decided, in February 2009, to establish a binding legal instrument.

The related negotiations started in 2010 and led to the adoption, by 140 States, of the Minamata Convention (named after the city where the convention was concluded) in January 2013, whose overall objective is to protect human health and the environment against emissions and releases of mercury and its components.

By ratifying this Convention, Burundi will have undertaken to take appropriate measures to phase out mercury-containing products, to develop and implement a national action plan to eliminate the use of mercury in artisanal mining and educate the public about the negative effects of using mercury.

The Council had analyzed this project and returned it to study first the implications of this ratification and to be sufficiently informed about the countries which have already ratified this Convention.

After analyzing the report produced by the team which had been appointed to analyze this Convention in depth, the Council endorsed the bill ratifying it.

4. Bill on the manufacture, possession, import, export, marketing and regulation of veterinary products, presented by the Minister of the Environment, Agriculture and Livestock.

Since the 2000s, the Government of Burundi has embarked on a vast program to repopulate the cattle, goat, pig and poultry herd and to improve them genetically. Animals of the improved breed are very prone to disease and require substantial veterinary care. To cope with this, the availability and accessibility of quality veterinary products is essential.

A mission of experts from the World Organization for Animal Health carried out in Burundi in March 2019 on the performance of veterinary services formulated, among other recommendations, the updating of existing veterinary legislation and the initiation of new laws. This bill complements and strengthens existing veterinary legislation, one of the concerns being to regulate and supervise all stakeholders in the chain of veterinary products and thus prevent Burundi from being a market for counterfeit veterinary products.

After analysis and debate, the Council adopted the project subject to finalization by a team designated for this purpose.

5. Company regulations of the Authority for the Development of Coffee (ODECA), presented by the Minister of the Environment, Agriculture and Livestock.

The Authority for the Development of Burundi Coffee "ODECA" is a technical body set up by the Government of Burundi to redress, revitalize and perpetuate the coffee sector in Burundi. It was established by decree n ° 100/001 of January 07, 2020.

These proposed Company Regulations are intended to govern the working relationship between ODECA and its staff in accordance with the provisions of the Labor Code. It is a tool that will allow a good organization of work in compliance with the texts governing work in Burundi.

At the end of the analysis, the Council designated a commission which will assist in the refining of these Rules.

6. Draft decree fixing the pricing rules relating to the marketing of the public electricity service, presented by the Minister of Hydraulics, Energy and Mining.

The Government of Burundi has embarked on major reforms in the energy sector in order to increase the rate of access to energy by the population and stimulate economic growth. To this end, many legal and regulatory texts have been put in place as well as a body responsible for regulating the energy sector.

Electricity being a market service requiring huge investments, it is essential to have clear pricing principles, making it possible to guarantee the return of the investment, while favoring the principle of equity and the social aspect for low-income people. These pricing principles are defined in Law No. 1/13 of April 23, 2015 on the reorganization of the electricity sector.

This draft decree incorporates and develops these pricing principles in accordance with the requirements of this law. It sets the application procedures and specifies the rules and procedures applicable to the proposal, determination, adjustment and revision of the tariffs for the public electricity service.

Following the analysis of this project, the Council adopted it with a few corrections.

7. Draft decree establishing, missions, organization and operation of a steering committee responsible for the Uvinza-Musongati-Gitega-Bujumbura-Uvira-Kindu railway,

8. Draft joint ministerial order establishing, missions, organizing and operating a technical committee to monitor the railway project in Burundi.

The two projects were presented by the Minister of Transport, Public Works, Equipment and Land Planning.

The 2018-2027 National Development Plan recommends the structural transformation of the long-term economy characterized by sustainable and equitable growth. The implementation of this Plan will help build basic infrastructure for the economy and develop the industrial fabric. In this Plan, it is recommended the development of transport infrastructure with a view to opening up and connecting Burundi to neighboring countries by rail. This mode of transport offers many advantages over the road, because it is the cheapest and the lifespan of railway infrastructure is longer.

The governments of Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are in talks to build a railway line that will link the three countries: Uvinza-Musongati- Gitega-Bujumbura-Uvira-Kindu. It is therefore essential to set up an institutional and operational framework governing rail transport which will pilot this railway project in Burundi. This is the purpose of this draft decree.

As for the draft ordinance, it sets up an operational technical unit of the Technical Committee with, among other tasks, to define and develop the technical procedures for the implementation of the project to be submitted to the Steering Committee.

After analyzing the two projects, the Council of Ministers adopted them subject to some corrections.

9. Bill on the ratification by the Republic of Burundi of the IDA financing agreement D616-BI between the Republic of Burundi and the International Development Association in favor of the project to prepare and respond to COVID-19 in Burundi signed in Bujumbura on April 14, 2020, presented by the Minister of Public Health and the Fight against AIDS.

The coronavirus pandemic has spread rapidly around the world after the diagnosis of the first cases in China. Burundi has taken steps to mitigate the risks of the spread of the coronavirus and has developed a national response plan to the coronavirus, but which requires funding.

It was with the aim of contributing to this that the International Development Association granted a donation of 5 million US dollars in order to strengthen the national capacity to respond to the coronavirus and other epidemics for a period of fifteen months.

Following the analysis, the project was adopted.

10. Draft decree relating to the participation of the State of Burundi and the Communes in the share capital of the Investment and Development Bank for Women in Burundi, presented by the Minister of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender.

The Government of the Republic of Burundi has decided, with regard to gender and the empowerment of women, to strengthen its commitment to eliminating inequalities and exclusion linked to gender, by updating the national gender policy in 2003.

This is why significant progress has been made in improving the living conditions of women.

It is with this in mind that on February 12, 2020, the Council of Ministers supported the project to create an Investment and Development Bank for Women in Burundi and recommended to accelerate the establishment of this bank. This draft decree is part of this framework and fulfills one of the conditions required by banking regulations.

After analysis, the project was adopted.

11. Note on the Participation of the Government of Burundi to a public-private partnership between the Province of Gitega and a consortium of Dutch private sector companies for the implementation of the project "Implementing Measurable Productive Agri Cooperation Trade (IMPACT), presented by the Minister of the Interior, Patriotic Training and Local Development.

In 2018, the Government of Burundi established Gitega as the Political Capital of Burundi. This province has just expressed its interest in working with Dutch industrialists in the private sector to contribute to the socio-economic development of rural areas, the development of infrastructure in rural areas, the creation of jobs and the generation of income.

Since April 2019, some Dutch companies have started a feasibility study for this project. In May 2019, a delegation of these companies came to Burundi to discuss this partnership. In November and December 2019, these companies conducted field

surveys on how to establish collection points for the storage and distribution of food, especially fruit and vegetables with appropriate technology.

This public-private partnership project plans to result in the installation of a food processing plant in Gitega called "Organic Burundi Food" where the Government would hold 49% of the shares.

Processing is the only alternative to increase the value of these products in Burundi, mitigate the deterioration of the surplus of production and increase the lifespan of these products.

The Council of Ministers had analyzed this Note and had expressed concerns in particular the fact that not all stakeholders were associated and the monitoring of the procedures required in Public-Private Partnership contracts.

After analyzing the report of the team which had been designated to analyze the dossier in depth, the Council of Ministers noted that certain texts must be used to ensure that the project complies with it, in particular the one which governs intercommunal cooperation.

A commission has been designated to carry out this work and a period of three days has been set.

12. Any Other Business.

- The Ministers of the Interior, Patriotic Education and Local Development informed the Council that the floods of the Rusizi River have destroyed many homes in Gatumba and that many households are in distress. He said that the first emergency aid has been granted and that the government is organizing to provide the necessary support to the population.
- The Minister of Public Security informed the Council that the floods of the Rusizi River would be due to the closure of the spillway of the waters of Lake Tanganyika which is the Lukuga which is in the Democratic Republic of Congo because of a dam being built there. He suggested contacting the authorities of the Democratic Republic of Congo to see how to open this weir.
- The Minister of Education, Technical and Vocational Training informed the Council that most young people are not aware of the opening of a bank which will support them in their projects. She asked that the radio news broadcasts begin with the

extract from the speech of the President of the Republic made on the occasion of the official opening of this bank so that young people listen above all to the advice he has given them.

- The Minister of Transport, Public Works, Equipment and Land Planning spoke of the damaged roads due to recent torrential rains most threatened for the moment being the RN1, RN2 and the RN9 as well as what is being done so that they do not continue to degrade.
- The Minister at the Presidency in charge of East African Community Affairs spoke of the need to sensitize the population to continue to comply with the recommended hygienic measures against the coronavirus because there is a risk of relaxation after the announcement that people who were hospitalized all recovered.

She also informed the Council that a mobile laboratory for coronavirus examinations had been granted in Burundi and that it had been received in Kobero.

His Excellency the President of the Republic recommended more caution in certain donations granted in materials because they are not always safe, certain people or organizations not often being in good faith.

Done at Bujumbura, April 23, 2020

Prosper NTAHORWAMIYE
Secretary-General and Spokesman
of the Government.-