

Burundi peace session may be the last

By Simon Kivamwo,

SIGNATORIES of the Burundi Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed last year meet tomorrow in Arusha in a session that Judge Mark Bomani, an aide to the international mediator, says will be final.

Judge Bomani, an aide to former South African President Nelson Mandela, told this reporter in an exclusive interview that the three-day meeting would give Burundians the last chance to agree on who would lead the transitional government.

"We wish this session to be the last one for Burundi," said Judge Bomani in Dar es Salaam yesterday. "Tutsi delegates must agree among themselves on who will be the president of the first phase of the transitional government."

Bomani insisted: "If they do not agree, (Mandela) will immediately convene a special meeting to sketch out a durable solution."

He said the meeting would be attended by leaders of the Great Lakes region and donors who would decide on the next step to end the conflict which has taken more than seven years.

Under the peace agreement, a Tutsi president will lead during the first 18 months of the transitional government while a Hutu president will lead the second term before the general elections are conducted.

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So far, Hutu groups, under their umbrella called G-7, have agreed that Domicien Ndaizeye, from FRODEBU party will lead the second phase of the transitional government.

However, members of Tutsi groups, called G-10 and G-3, are still bitterly divided.

While many want the retired army officer, Col. Epitace Bayaganakandi, to lead the first phase of the transitional government, others want the current President Pierre Buyoya.

A few others prefer former military ruler Col. Jean Baptiste Bagaza.

The Burundi conflict erupted in 1993 after soldiers from the minority Tutsi tribe murdered the country's first democratically elected Hutu President, the late Melkior Ndadaye.

Since then, more than two million innocent civilians have died in the war that pits Tutsi-led army on one side against Hutu rebels mainly from FDD-CNDD and Front for National Liberation-Palipehutu.

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EXHIBIT NO. DB 239
DATE ADMITTED 1-11-2005
TENDERED BY DEFENCE
NAME OF WITNESS BAGAZA