

Open letter

To the Deputy Executive Secretary (EASTECO) Dr. Saidi Kibeya, former Minister of Education and Scientific Research of the Republic of Burundi;

To Mrs Dr. Janvière NDIRAHISHA, Minister of Education and Scientific Research of the Republic of Burundi;

To Mrs Dr. Sabine Ntakarutimana, Senior Advisor to the president in charge of political and diplomatic issues, and former Minister of health of the Republic of Burundi;

I Am Worried.

Dear Dr. Kibeya,

I remember with great pleasure your visit to Karlsruhe. I am sure, that you also remember your stay and our meetings (please see our picture). And I remember our deep discussions about not only our cooperation, but also about development especially in Africa and in Burundi, where I could also explain my experiences as former Danish minister for Greenland. It was a good visit that gave me a good souvenir. And I remember your smile when we showed the photo of you on the big screen in the center of Karlsruhe. But now...

I am worried,

worried about the development in your country, our partner country, in Burundi. I take it that you, Dr. Kibeya, especially with your new responsibility for regional development and in partnership with the European Union, and you, Dr. Ndirahisha and Dr. Ntakarutimana, are also worried.

I am worried,

when I hear that there is no more guarantee for free speech for everybody in Burundi, almost no more functioning independent media, no more political opposition which all is so crucial for a sound democracy. When I hear that there are arbitrary arrests and prosecution, torture, and all sort of violence. When I hear that people and especially children – the future generation! – are suffering from the bad security and economic situation. When I hear, that children are no more attending schools because of hunger or of fear to be arrested on their way to school. When I heard that situation of people's health is in danger because of the lack of medicine and doctors.

Dr. Kibeya, we talked about your education in France. You know France and Europe very well. I am worried, that neither France nor my own two countries, Germany and Denmark, will react to the development in Burundi. I think, Dr. Kibeya, that you must also be worried,

because you and I discussed the importance of an open dialogue on all levels. As you wrote in your own words in the Golden Book of the City of Karlsruhe on January 15th 2009:

"It is about exactly this spirit of consolidation of solidarity between youth that walls and barricades won't appear again in human's history."

This dialogue seems to have died with regard to Burundi and the crisis since 2015. This is not good for Burundi and the people, not good for the East African Community you are working for, not good for Europe, not good for Africa. Especially not for the African Union.

I am worried,

because I do not understand the reaction... or should I say the lack of reaction from the African Union. I think that this organization is more and more losing its credibility, which also is perceived in the same way from more and more African civil societies. And this worries me.

Dear Dr. Kibeya, Dr. Ndirahisha, Dr. Ntakarutimana, I wish all the best for your country and its people, with whom we are in partnership for so long time, but I am worried. I hope that you, Dr. Kibeya, precisely as Deputy Executive Secretary of the East African Science & Technology Commission, Dr. Ndirahisha, as Minister of Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Ntakarutimana, as Senior Advisor in charge of political and diplomatic issues, are also worried. The only way forward is the dialogue. I think, we agree on this. My best wishes for you and for the people in Burundi for 2017 are: openness for a real dialogue in your country and with the world around you.

Dear Dr. Kibeya,

when you visited us in Karlsruhe, you also invited me to visit you in Bujumbura. I would be happy to accept this invitation now and to continue our talk about development, democracy and education.

Sincerely yours,

Tom Høyem

*Member of the Karlsruhe city council since 2004
Former Director of the European School of Karlsruhe
Former Minister for Greenland
OSCE election observer for more than 20 years*