



## Embassy of the United States of America Bujumbura, Burundi

### **Speech by Ambassador Dawn M. Liberi On the Occasion of the Inauguration of the New American Embassy May 21, 2013**

Welcome to you all.

Kaze Mwese.

We are very pleased to have you join us on this historic day.

We come together today to dedicate this building as a symbol of the commitment of the government of the United States of America to the people of Burundi.

You have heard and read some of the statistics that define this building – its size, its cost, its components. But what those numbers don't tell you is what it truly represents.

It is a sign of the enduring relationship between two governments and two peoples.

It is a confirmation of our shared past and a promise of commitment for the future.

And it is the place of work for the cadre of dedicated people – Americans and Burundian alike -- who every day support that diplomatic effort.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of this special group of people – our Embassy employees. Please join me in thanking them for all they do.

For more than 50 years, our two countries have worked together in partnership. It has not always been easy and we have not always agreed. But that is the nature of international relationships.

In Burundi, these were years of civil war, uncertainty and extraordinary challenge as the country evolved from colonial rule into a democracy. In the United States, these were years of immense change as the Cold War ended, geopolitics shifted and new political realities emerged.

Even during the most difficult war years, the American Embassy remained open in Bujumbura and Americans were here to continue the work of diplomacy.

Today we are Burundi's largest bilateral donor with a budget of over \$80 million a year supporting programs that fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, maternal mortality and malnutrition, that stimulate economic growth through trade and investment, and that promote defense cooperation and regional security through support of Amisom.

Last year, Burundi proudly marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a democracy. It was a milestone worth celebrating. And just like this building you see before you, it was a milestone built one brick -- one block -- at a time.

That does not mean that all the problems are resolved or that the challenges are gone. Over and over again, history has shown that the process of building a democracy is a very complicated one.

There is a reason we talk about the development of democracies in the language of building construction. A strong democracy needs a solid foundation of democratic principles, supported by walls of sound management of public funds, transparency and accountability, and protected by a roof of good governance, an independent judiciary, and a free press.

As Burundi prepares for its next important milestone – the 2015 elections – it must continue the work. A solid foundation was laid with the Arusha Accords, and the country has a constitution that can support democratic rule. Burundi’s integration into the East African Community can provide the beams for economic advancement.

And just as this embassy -- this building -- will be here for many years to come, the United States will be a partner with Burundi for achieving a peaceful future and progress for its people. As President John Kennedy said, “Democracies are a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures.”

We will continue to work on a number of levels to support Burundi’s efforts to develop a better future for its people. President Obama has recognized the need to develop Africa’s economic potential by increasing trade and investment, particularly in the EAC, boosting food security and farm productivity.

We value our partnership with Burundi and look forward to working with you. But in the end, Burundians must and should decide their own future.

Tugire amahoro