

Rwandan government and rebels sign peace and power-sharing agreement

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ARUSHA, Tanzania, Aug 19 (AFP) - The Rwandan government and the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) have signed a peace and power-sharing agreement aimed at ending their 22-month civil war.

The Tanzanian-brokered, signed late Tuesday, followed week-long tough negotiations during which the RPF sought sweeping democratic reforms and assurances on respect of human rights from the government.

Rwandan Foreign Minister Boniface Ngulinzira signed on behalf of his government and Pasteur Bizimungu represented the rebel side.

Under the agreement, both sides accepted that rule of law as the best guarantee for national unity, respect of fundamental freedoms of the individual and a democratic form of government.

"We solemnly undertake to do everything possible so as to preserve these values in the interest of the

present and future Rwandese generations," the text of the agreement stated.

A ceasefire reached here last month between the two parties is holding.

Both sides meeting under Tanzanian auspices agreed to meet again in this northern Tanzanian town from September 7 to discuss power-sharing and the structure of the future broad-based government.

They have until October 10 to reach consensus on all political issues before signing the final peace accord whose implementation is scheduled to start in January.

Key issues still to be resolved include the proposed integration of RPF forces into the national army and the return many thousands of refugees to the the tiny central African country.

Both sides have been under great pressure from Tanzania, Uganda,

Zaire, Burundi, the United States, France, Belgium and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to reach a political settlement.

Representatives from the seven countries and the OAU attended the talks as observers.

The mainly ethnic Tutsi RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda in October 1990 in a bid to topple the 19-year-old Hutu-dominated government of President Juvenal Habyarimana.

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