

## Archbishop of Burundi tells UK: "Don't make us an aid orphan"

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By Laura Payne, Anglican Alliance

The Archbishop of Burundi today (Tuesday) gave a passionate appeal to the UK government to restore its bilateral funding to Burundi – one of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world.

The call came when he gave evidence at the International Development Select Committee's enquiry into the UK government's decision to end its bilateral aid programme for Burundi and shut the DfID office in Bujumbura.

He backed his call for funding with a warning that the security in Bujumbura was difficult and the country risked slipping into conflict only two years after the final peace agreement was signed with the last remaining rebel movement. The Most Reverend Bernard Ntahoturi travelled to the UK with the Anglican Alliance which brings together the development, relief and advocacy work of the Anglican family of churches and agencies.

When the UK closes its development office in Bujumbura next year, Burundi will be the only country in the Great Lakes and East Africa not receiving UK bilateral aid. The UK hopes Burundi will trade its way out of poverty through 'TradeMark East Africa', an initiative to increase commerce between the countries of the region, part-funded by the British. The Archbishop applauded the programme but explained that trade, although vital, is no silver bullet.

Giving evidence after the Archbishop Stephen O'Brien MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for the Department for International Development, justified the government's decision to withdraw aid. He said that the UK £12 million programme was too small to make impact and would be taken over by other donors. He said that there had been no objections made during the DfID consultations on the proposals and denied that the population of Burundi would suffer as a result of the UK government's decision.

The Church of Burundi and the Anglican Alliance are considering the next steps in their joint efforts to get the UK government to reengage with bilateral support for Burundi.