


**Stephen O'Brien MP**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

Kieran Holmes,  
Commissioner General  
Office Burundais de Recettes  
Bujumbura  
Burundi

 May 2012

*Dear Kieran,*

I am writing to thank you for taking the time to host my visit to the Office Burundais de Recettes (OBR) headquarters, and to its customs services at the port on Monday 23 April. I was very impressed by the progress that the OBR has made in such a short space of time, in particular the very strong revenue collection results recorded so far. Securing £85 million more each year in revenues will be vital in enabling the Government to provide more services to ordinary Burundians – something that perhaps the OBR could communicate more strongly. I was also interested to hear about the project for a new building at the port, which would follow some of the open plan principles that you have already put in place elsewhere – crucial for establishing a more open and transparent way of working.

The professionalism and enthusiasm of your staff were obvious, which is testament to the culture and good governance practices that you have established within the organisation. I informed my Government interlocutors that the OBR serves as a model for institutional reform in Burundi, and has raised its profile and reputation internationally. I would like to congratulate all involved, and am very satisfied that the partnership with the Department for International Development (DFID) and TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) to create the OBR has been so fruitful. As you know, DFID will continue to provide support for the OBR through TMEA in the coming years.



I was also very interested in the wider role that the OBR plays in trade facilitation and improving the business environment. While the OBR will need to maintain a tight focus on consolidating revenue gains and making further progress against stamping out corruption, it also has a central role in making it easier to do business in Burundi. I am encouraged by the new One Stop Border Post at Kobero/Kabanga, and by the improvements in other procedures that you outlined to me. I would be grateful to hear in the future about your progress in further reducing customs clearance and border transit times, and your efforts to balance effective collection with a customer-focused approach.

*With best wishes*  
*Yours sincerely*  
*Stephen*

**STEPHEN O'BRIEN**