

24 June 2016

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC, New York,  
20 June 2016**

**Chair's Summary**

1. On 20 June 2016, the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), held an informal meeting under the chairmanship of H. E. Mr. Jürg Lauber to discuss the situation in Burundi. PBC members were briefed by the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations, H. E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, by Jean-Francois Joh Epoko, representing the Special Advisor Jamal Benomar, by Mr. Ivan Simonovic, Assistant Secretary-General of OHCHR, by Mr. Yutaka Yoshino, World Bank Group, Program Leader & Lead Economist for Burundi, Malawi, Somalia and Tanzania, and by Ms. Mari Yamashita, Director and PBSO Deputy Head.
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair recalled that since April 2015, the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) had met 8 times to discuss Burundi and issued three statements to encourage dialogue, warn against the escalation of violence and support regional and UN mediation efforts. He recalled the main points of the last meeting of 9 March, during which the Chair had reported on his visit to Burundi, Rwanda and Ethiopia which took place from 15 to 20 February 2016. Participants at the meeting of 9 March had welcomed the measures taken by President Nkurunziza in February as positive steps, they had also commended the appointment of former President of Tanzania, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, to facilitate the dialogue process under the EAC mediator President Museveni, and they had welcomed support by the Peacebuilding Fund to the deployment of AU human rights observers. The meeting of 9 March had encouraged continued policy discussions with the IMF and the World Bank as a way to promote the dual track by which socio-economic challenges would receive equal attention as the political, security and human rights issues.
3. In this regard the Chair informed PBC members that he had undertaken a visit to Washington D.C. on 13 April, during which he discussed the economic situation with representatives of the IMF and of the World Bank. Both institutions reiterated their concerns about further deterioration of the economy as a result of the crisis and a potential additional major driver of the crisis.
4. The Chair further informed PBC members that on 16 June he had met Mr Stefano Severe, UNHCR's Regional Representative for the Great Lakes Region, who underlined that

greater resources must be mobilized through support to the Strategic Response Plans (SRP) and the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) for Burundi which both remain underfunded. The UNHCR Representative indicated that it is crucial that states grant refugees a safe haven, preserve the humanitarian character of asylum, and do not infringe upon the freedom of movement of the displaced. Mr Severe had stressed that strengthening the socio-economic resilience of the displaced and ensuring their participation in the national reconciliation process at this juncture is a peacebuilding imperative. He underscored that address the root causes of the crisis was key in preventing a relapse into conflict.

5. The Chair suggested the objectives of his visit to Tanzania and Burundi on 04 -10 July: i) to pursue the engagement with the Government and key stakeholders, with a view to complement efforts by the Security Council, UN actors on the ground and regional organizations (EAC & AU) to support a viable and inclusive political process; ii) to discuss and raise the awareness on the economic impact of the crisis; iii) to sustain the attention on structural peacebuilding issues and to support PBF activities.
6. In his remarks, Mr. Jean-Francois Joh Epoko, speaking on behalf of the Special Advisor Jamal Benomar, informed PBC members that on 21-24 May, EAC Facilitator, former President of Tanzania, H.E Benjamin Mkapa, had convened a meeting with Burundian stakeholders in Arusha. Some members of the opposition CNARED and Civil Society had criticised the event for its “lack of inclusivity”. On 10-11 June, President Mkapa met with CNARED leaders in Brussels, Belgium. The second round of talks is scheduled to take place in July; currently, the main issues are who should participate in the talks, the structure and the agenda of the dialogue. Mr Joh Epoko indicated that discussions were under way to organize the UN support to the facilitation; he further indicated that the EAC, the AU and the UN were discussing the best way to coordinate their support to the dialogue which is still in its initial phase. He welcomed the resources provided by the PBF in support of the dialogue process.
7. Mr.Yutaka Yoshino, from the World Bank, speaking via VTC from Arusha, noted that the economic and humanitarian situation was of increasing concern. The World Bank also noted that rising cost of the security sector was leading to decreased government spending on social services. He suggested three key issues for consideration: i) engaging Burundi in a long term development approach; ii) impact on the political crisis at macro and micro economic levels; and iii) the World Bank response to the crisis. He reminded that Burundi has the highest rural density in the world with a population highly depending on agriculture. The World Bank noted a GDP contraction of 2.5 percent in 2015. Mr Yoshino highlighted the main recommendations from the fragility assessment conducted by the WB this year: i) support to an inclusive dialogue process; ii) economic and macro-fiscal intervention; iii) social interventions to build resilience; iv) mitigation of the impact of the humanitarian crisis. He informed that the World Bank would be supporting a new project in the coffee sector [US\$ 55million].

8. In his briefing, ASG Simonovic noted positive trends, occurring in parallel with worrying developments. Positive developments included the reduction in number of people killed compared to previous months (17 people killed in May, compared to 46 in April). Under negative developments, ASG Simonovic indicated that injuries remain high, with indiscriminate grenade attacks against the civilian population, including in the capital. He further stated that 447 people had been arbitrarily arrested from 1-14 June, and that torture was still occurring. He warned about signs of a growing ethnic dimension to the crisis, which would require greater international attention.
9. He noted that there were 266,702 refugees, and about 100,000 IDPs, of which 70% displacements occurred during the current political crisis. ASG Simonovic highlighted the need for increased monitoring of the human rights situation, including through a UN police presence. He informed that OHCHR was working with the 32 African Union Human Rights Observers in Burundi, by providing them with training and logistical support, as well as exchanging information. He noted that the current OHCHR presence of 40 internationals and 7 nationals based in Burundi will face challenges of funding in 2017.
10. In his statement, Ambassador Shingiro challenged the assessment provided by ASG Simonovic. He indicated that the security was good, with the exception of a few cases; he noted that criminality cases were common to many countries. He remarked that according to the recent visit of the three human rights experts of the United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB) who report to the Human Rights Council, the situation had significantly improved. Ambassador Shingiro regretted that the gap between the descriptions of situation by the UN in Bujumbura and by the UN in New York there were different. He provided figures reflecting the implementation of the measures taken by President Nkurunziza in February. He stated that 1800 prisoners had been released, an action that had reduced the number of prisoners by 25%. He recalled that perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence were not eligible to these release measures. He informed PBC members that the political dialogue was well under way, both outside and within the country. He noted that the external dialogue would not discuss power sharing, a subject that was addressed by the existing Arusha Accords and the Constitution of 2005; rather it would be a tool for forging social cohesion. He reiterated that coup plotters and their allies would not be part of the dialogue process and underlined that the external dialogue must be complemented by the internal dialogue. Ambassador Shingiro recalled that UN reports on the DRC contain evidence of Rwanda providing support to Burundi rebels in DRC, and called on the Rwandan Government to stop destabilizing Burundi. In concluding, he stated that the security and political situation was becoming normal again, and that Burundi needed support by international partners. In this regard, he welcomed the WB funded project to support the coffee sector.

11. In her remarks, Mari Yamashita, Deputy Director of PBSO, welcomed the upcoming Chair's visit to Burundi and to the region, particularly the discussion on the dialogue process with the Facilitator, President Mkapa, on the economic aspects of the crisis, with the World Bank, the IMF, the African Development Bank, and economic actors in Burundi. She indicated that the Chair's visit in February had given additional impetus to the development of peacebuilding projects that are a critical contribution to the response to the current crisis, and to which the PBF is contributing. Projects had been recently approved by PBSO within the following priority areas: i) Dialogue [support to the Special Advisor's team and the work of the EAC and AU; and specific support to women's role in the dialogue process]; ii) Youth engagement for community security and social cohesion through socio-economic opportunities, training, dialogue, interactive theatre and trauma healing.; iii) Additional support to promotion and protection of human rights and assistance to victims. In addition, PBSO provided direct funding to the African Union to support and bridge the early deployment of AU Human rights observers. This funding is helping to ensure that 32 human rights observers are able to remain for an additional 6 months, while the AU secures other sources of funding.
  
12. Delegates of the following countries and institutions took the floor: Belgium, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Rwanda, the UK, the US, the AU and the EU. They noted the importance of dialogue and the need to maintain the spirit of the Arusha Accords. At different levels they expressed concern over the security and human rights situation. Some members urged the government of Burundi to be open to the second option for a UN police contribution, which was proposed by the Secretary General to the Security Council in April and foresees the deployment of 228 persons, as a sign of good faith, which could open the door for donor re-engagement. They welcomed the deployment of human rights observers by the AU, and the funding provided by the PBF. The Representative of Rwanda called allegations of Rwandan involvement unsubstantiated and underlined that Rwanda has no interest in a destabilization of Burundi. The need to respect the sovereignty of Burundi and to address the long term development challenges which were among the root causes of the current crisis was also emphasized.
  
13. In concluding the meeting, the Chair indicated that he would continue to follow the external and the internal dialogue. In this regard, he informed members about a research initiative by George Mason University which was looking into the work of the National Commission for the inter-Burundian dialogue. George Mason had recently conducted 490 interviews on the inter-Burundian dialogue in Burundi and is currently reflecting on how their findings could be made available to the Members of the Configuration. Ambassador Lauber announced that he will brief the Configuration on the outcome of his upcoming trip to Burundi and Tanzania.

-----