

Summary of the PBC Burundi Configuration meeting 5 October 2018

1. On 5 October 2018, H. E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, convened the Configuration to discuss current and planned PBC engagement in Burundi and recent developments in the country with a focus on the socio-economic situation.
2. In his opening remarks Ambassador Lauber highlighted two significant developments; President Nkurunziza's announcement that he would not seek reelection in 2020 and the launch of the National Development Plan on 22 August which he called an important reference document for international partners. He informed about recent UN engagement on Burundi, including the debates in the Security Council and the Human Rights Council as well as a recent visit by ASG Ursula Mueller (OCHA) to Burundi. Ambassador Lauber also provided an update on his visit to Burundi planned for the first half of November, with aims at pursuing the socioeconomic dialogue with the Government and following up on questions such as the political dialogue, the elections of 2020 and reconciliation. While in Burundi, the Chair plans to co-host an event on socio-economic development with a focus on the National Development Plan.
3. Resident Coordinator Garry Conille provided an update on the situation on the ground via VTC. He informed that the UNCT is in the process of completing a new UNDAF which will be aligned with the new National Development Plan. RC Conille highlighted some positive recent trends which include improvements in health, education and agriculture. He underlined, for instance, that access to education has considerably improved. He also stressed that cyclical shocks have reversed some development gains and highlighted continued humanitarian needs. 56 percent of the children were said to suffer from malnutrition.
4. Ms Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy head of the Peacebuilding Support Office briefed on the engagement of her office and of the Peacebuilding Fund in Burundi. This includes two new projects, totaling 6m USD : “Renforcement des mécanismes locaux de prévention et de résolution des conflits au Burundi” \$ 3.4 million for 24 months and the “Appui à la Résilience des jeunes face aux conflits sociopolitiques au Burundi” \$ 2.5 million/ 18 months.
5. H. E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations, provided an update on the political situation and the preparation of the 2020 election, including a roadmap which is currently under discussion. He referred to his president's announcement that his term will end in 2020. Ambassador Shingiro highlighted that refugees are continuing to return as a result of the peaceful situation

in the country, and invited the international community to lend financial support to these efforts. He briefed on the government's 10-year National Development Plan, which he described as multifaceted and called on partners to support its implementation. Ambassador Shingiro also called for "lifting unilateral economic sanctions".

6. Following the briefings Member States took the floor: Morocco, Sweden, Tanzania, Belgium, Bangladesh, France, Indonesia, Netherlands, Mexico, Canada, Germany, India, China, EU, UK, Korea, Norway, Italy, Russia, Japan, Bolivia, Ecuador, Liberia and the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*. The interventions recognized several positive developments in Burundi, namely the announcement of the president that he would not present his candidacy in the 2020 elections, the planned 5th session of the EAC-led dialogue in late October, and improvements in the security situation. Meanwhile several Member States also highlighted continuous challenges Burundi is facing, such as reports on human right violations, the unsolved political situation, large humanitarian needs and the socio-economic development.
7. On the EAC-led dialogue, Member States expressed their continued support to the process, its mediator, H.E. Mr. Yoweri Museveni, and facilitator H.E. Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa. They welcomed the 5th dialogue session scheduled for late October and highlighted the expectation of a positive outcome reached in an inclusive format and focusing on the way towards the elections of 2020. Some delegations mentioned that this would be the last session and that the dialogue would subsequently proceed inside Burundi. The importance to include women in the process was highlighted in the discussion.
8. A number of Member States highlighted the improved national security situation in Burundi, and as a consequence the return of refugees. They called for greater support from the international community to Burundi, stressing PBCs important role as a convener and mobiliser of support, and highlighted the underfunding of the Humanitarian Response Plan and UNHCR's efforts regarding the return of refugees. Several delegations referred to the AU's appeal for "European sanctions to be lifted", fearing they would otherwise compromise progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The European Union and its Member States clarified that there are no sanctions in place against Burundi, but a suspension of direct budgetary support to the Government based on the Cotonou agreement. Meanwhile extensive European support programs still exist providing aid to the Burundian population on the ground through partners.
9. The role of the PBC Burundi Configuration was generally welcomed, stressing that it is a unique platform to discuss the situation in Burundi and contribute to greater coherence within the international community. Many delegations stressed the useful

link provided between the PBC and the Security Council and welcomed the Chair's planned trip to Burundi and his focus on the socio-economic development.

10. Lessons were shared from the Sierra Leone PBC Configuration, namely on elements which had been pivotal in ensuring free and fair elections in Sierra Leone. This include the neutrality and impartiality of the electoral commission, its access to resources and a careful preparation of the army, police and judiciary for the elections.
11. In terms of challenges, several delegations expressed concerns about reports on grave human right violations, and encouraged the government to fully cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms, namely with the Human Right Council and its commission of inquiry. They also encouraged Burundi to resume collaboration with the OHCHR. The humanitarian challenges were generally perceived as worrying, with 3.6 million Burundians in need. In this regard, many delegations expressed their concern over the Government's decision to suspend the activities of all foreign NGOs which do not comply with new regulation with immediate effect for a period of 3 months. Several Members argued this could have grave consequences for the people most in need, and the government was encouraged to seek a solution as soon as possible.
12. H. E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi thanked member states for their interventions, highlighting that their commitment and activity demonstrate their friendship with Burundi and the importance of the configuration. Ambassador Shingiro explained that NGOs which adapt to the new legal conditions will be able to operate again in Burundi. He stressed Burundi is aware of the challenges it faces, but prefers dialogue and communication over political pressure. He underlined that previous positive steps by the Government, such as the release of prisoners, had not yet yielded the expected positive reactions by the international community.
13. H. E. Mr. Jürg Lauber concluded the meeting with a number of takeaways, which included the broadly shared commitment from Member States to support Burundi through ongoing political social challenges and strengthen the resilience of its people. He stressed that recent developments are opportunities for renewed and intensified engagement and the need to solve the NGO issue. As for the planned 5th round of the EAC-led dialogue he highlighted its potential to ease the tensions between the Government and key donors if it is able to bear a positive outcome. He thanked the Member States for supporting for his travel plans and the intended continuation of the socioeconomic dialogue.