

3 June 2015

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Burundi Specific Configuration of the
PBC, New York, 03 June 2015**

Chair's Summary

On Wednesday, 3 June 2015, from 10am to 12pm an informal meeting of the PBC Burundi Configuration took place at UN headquarters under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Paul Seger. Mr. Saïd Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, briefed the Configuration on his efforts to facilitate a political dialogue in Burundi, particularly in light of the decisions taken at the EAC Summit on 31 May 2015. Burundi's Minister of Interior, Mr. Edouard Nduwimana, presented his Government's position on the current situation. UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Agostinho Zacarias, informed Configuration members on the scope of the humanitarian challenges in Burundi.

SESG Djinnit gave an overview over main developments that had taken place since the last meeting of the PBC Burundi Configuration on 15 May 2015. He noted that the security situation remained tense with protests continuing on a daily basis. According to OHCHR figures, since the outbreak of demonstrations, 44 people had been killed, including 4 from the security forces; the number of injured included 335 civilians, 106 police officers and 4 soldiers. 307 persons were detained in prison in relation to protests. He noted that these numbers did not include the casualties of the attempted coup of 13 May. The SESG recalled that the political dialogue in Burundi had been going since 5 May. He noted that representatives of the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the African Union (AU) and the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) had gradually joined him in the facilitation team. He said that the resumption of the dialogue after the attempted coup had been very difficult, but participants and the facilitation team had managed to find more opportunities for concrete proposals, and civil society organizations that had previously avoided the meetings subsequently re-joined the discussions. He noted that the parties had been making encouraging progress on the outstanding issues related to elections and fundamental freedoms and liberties, when another event came to affect the momentum. On 23 May, following the assassination of opposition presidential candidate Zedi Feruzi and his bodyguard, the opposition and civil society organisations suspended their participation to

the dialogue. The facilitation team used the suspension to hold individual consultations with the various stakeholders, which led to the resumption of the dialogue on 28 May with the participation of all concerned parties. The SESG explained that the discussions were still structured around five agenda items, including 1) confidence-building measures; 2) management of electoral calendar; 3) conditions for free, fair and peaceful elections; 4) respect of Arusha and the Constitution; 5) constitutional freedoms and liberties. In many areas, participants had found agreements in principle, but the issues of the third term and the management of demonstrations still proved very divisive. SESG Djinnit also briefed on the EAC Summit that took place in Dar es Salaam on 31 May and in which he participated. He particularly referred to the statement that was adopted after the Summit by the members of the EAC calling on the Burundian government to postpone elections by at least one and a half month to allow the establishment of conditions conducive for the holding of credible elections. The SESG underlined that the outcome should give impetus to the political dialogue and commended the region for its role in facilitating a lasting political solution to the Burundian crisis. Looking forward, Mr. Djinnit stated that following the EAC Summit his first priority was to resume the dialogue process as soon as possible with all participants and with the help and guidance of the regional actors. A ministerial delegation of the EAC was set to arrive in Bujumbura soon. He stressed the importance of rapidly taking a decision on the management of the electoral calendar in light of the EAC's recommendations. Concluding his briefing, the SESG noted that prevention efforts were key at this point, also to stay clear of potential divisions along ethnic lines.

The Minister of Interior of Burundi noted improvements with regard to the security situation with the intensity of protests diminishing, daily activities picking up in main urban centres and more than 30'000 refugees returning to the country. He referred to ongoing unrest and violence as cases of criminality and called on the international community to condemn those acts. He deplored that some political leaders had welcomed the attempted coup d'état which he saw as a negative sign for ongoing needs towards reconciliation in Burundi. The Minister commended Mr. Djinnit and regional actors for facilitating the political dialogue to which his Government would fully subscribe. He also welcomed the recommendations contained in the EAC communiqué of 31 May and underlined that the Government was committed to implement them, including the 45 days postponement of elections. He stressed that the EAC Summit had not pronounced itself on the third term and that the issue should not be open for further discussions. He called on the international community to respect that conclusion and to help bring all political parties and leaders back to the electoral process by putting an end to demonstrations. The Minister further confirmed that two of the five members of the CENI had resigned. His Government was committed to consult with all stakeholders, including civil society and opposition parties, to find candidates able to replace them swiftly. With regard to the EAC's call for a rapid disarmament of all youth groups affiliated to political parties, Mr. Nduwimana

underscored that the recommendation was in line with his Government's continued programme of disarmament with the ultimate goal of eliminating the circulation of weapons within the civilian population.

UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Agostinho Zacarias echoed the SESG by saying that the security situation remained tense. He noted that demonstrators faced increasing difficulties with regard to their security due to the presence of heavily armed police forces. Instead of anti-riot gear police officers were seen carrying live ammunition guns and there were reports of direct shooting at crowds. The RC stated that according to the ICRC 5 people had been killed and 81 injured over the past week. 307 people remained in detention as of 1 June. Mr. Zacarias further noted that people in the neighbourhoods affected by demonstrations could not circulate freely and often could not go to work. Due to the security situation economic activity had slowed down and although some businesses started to reopen, services and commercial activities remained low. On the humanitarian situation, the RC stressed that while there was no major crisis inside Burundi, there were refugee flows into neighbouring countries. He noted that initial refugee figures had been revised downwards, amounting to about 90'000 in all neighbouring countries as well as in Uganda. Around the capital, delivery of health and medical services remained difficult and some schools were still closed. The RC also mentioned some cases of Cholera in a Tanzanian refugee camp that were under control by now. He concluded by referring to the dire situation of the population in the south-western village of Nyanza-Lac where around 2'000 households were in very vulnerable conditions.

The PBC Burundi Configuration Chair Ambassador Paul Seger commended SESG Djinnit as well as regional actors, particularly the EAC, for their efforts in promoting a political solution to the crisis through dialogue. He referred to the window of opportunity that the EAC Summit had created and that needed to be seized to establish the necessary conditions to allow for elections to take place – conditions that were not in place right now. The Chair further alluded to the increasingly worrisome impact of the political crisis on the socio-economic situation of Burundi. He stated that the slowing of economic activity, budgetary reshuffles by the Government and revisions of donor support were having a serious impact on the country and its budget. He therefore called for a discussion on measures to mitigate the negative impact of the crisis on socio-economic development within the PBC. The Chair also pointed to the need to look beyond the elections and think about their aftermath already at this stage. He noted the deep divisions within Burundi that the current crisis had showcased and stressed the importance of establishing truly inclusive political institutions and resort to reconciliation.

Following the three briefers and the Chair, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Belgium, the Netherlands, Brazil, the African Union, the European Union, Burundi and Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, took the

floor. All delegations fully backed efforts carried out by SESG Djinnit and the region. They called for the swift implementation of all recommendations made at the EAC Summit to ensure the establishment of conditions for the holding of elections (i.a. immediate stop to violence, disarmament of youth groups, respect of human rights and all public freedoms, return of refugees, repeal of arrest warrants against political and civil society leaders, liberation of detainees, establishment of security for all, respect of all political rights). Belgium specifically called for a strong and independent follow-up mechanism to monitor the implementation of these conditions and suggested that MENUB and the SESG should play a central part in it. Delegations also echoed the Chair by stressing the need to address post-electoral reconciliation needs as early as possible. They also commended the PBC for its role and stressed that it should continue to closely follow the situation. ASG Fernandez-Taranco referred to the Peacebuilding Fund as important instrument to support the implementation of the EAC's recommendations, particularly in the areas of political dialogue through SESG Djinnit and the disarmament of youth groups. Burundi's Chargée d'affaires, Ms. Anésie Ndayishimiye, thanked the regional actors, the PBC and PBSO for supporting her country and underlined once more her Government's commitment to dialogue.

In concluding, the Chair used the metaphor of a ship in troubled waters to illustrate Burundi's current situation. He stressed that the EAC Summit in conjunction with the SESG's dialogue process would now offer a unique framework to steer the ship back on track. He appealed to the responsibility and civic far-sightedness of all political stakeholders to find a lasting political solution. The Chair also alluded to the role of the PBC Burundi Configuration, which he said was twofold. First, it would continue to remain actively seized of the matter through regular meetings and to provide an inclusive platform for dialogue. Second, the Chair also suggested that the PBC could play a role in monitoring and facilitating at HQ level the implementation of the conditions that would ensure credible elections.
