



28 September 2010

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

Working Lunch - Peacebuilding Commission, Burundi Configuration

Co-hosted by Ambassador Paul Seger, Chair of the PBC-Burundi Configuration and Ambassador Zacharie Gahutu, PR of Burundi in New York

24 September 2010, Restaurant DeGrezia, New York

Purpose of the lunch: For the Government of Burundi to pursue its engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission, with a particular focus on the post electoral opportunities and challenges and the long-term engagement of the PBC with Burundi.

The attendance was excellent and at high level (about 40 participants).

In his opening remarks, the Chair of the Country Configuration underscored the peacebuilding progress achieved by Burundi, including the 2010 elections that went well. He suggested two avenues for the PBC future engagement with Burundi: 1) Supporting economic and social progress and 2) Strengthening institutions. He went on to say that the two avenues were inter-related. There could be, from his perspective, no lasting stability without economic and social development. On the other hand, sustainable economic progress required a stable democratic and rule-based framework.

The PBC should thus help attracting investment and at the same time assist Burundi in building an institutional and legal environment conducive to investment.

Burundi Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, Augustin Nsanze took the floor to share the latest developments in Burundi. He described the long electoral process and the key outcomes,

despite contestations of certain political parties. Among key outcomes, the president was sworn in and the new government was formed end August - beginning September 2010. He acknowledged the role played by the international community, in particular the East African Community that sent a delegation of foreign ministers in an effort to bring back into the electoral process political parties that have decided to boycott the elections after the communal in June.

The Minister noted that one of the challenges for the government was to define a role for opposition political parties that have decided to organize themselves into a coalition which was never legally established.. Individually most of these political parties did not reach the necessary number of votes to be integrated in the government although they have been able to advance their views taking advantage of the freedom of speech and using the numerous Media operating in Bujumbura. He further stated that the current violence is more the results of banditry and not a sign of an organized armed rebellion.

On the UN presence in Burundi, Minister Nsanze recalled that the current mandate of BINUB ends on 31 December 2010. Discussions have started on the content and the format of the UN – Burundi collaboration, especially how the UN will support socio-economic development efforts in Burundi. These discussions are urgent particularly in view of the Secretary General Report due in November and the Security Council Resolution due in December.

The Minister concluded by inviting all friends of Burundi to provide support to the country for the next steps, particularly those who had been waiting for the elections to be completed.

The Executive Representative of the Secretary General, Charles Petrie, took the floor to confirm some of the frustrations shared by the international community regarding the withdrawal of a number of political parties from the electoral process. He nevertheless recognized that the context in Burundi had evolved in a positive direction: the tensions were political and not violent, which showed that the vulnerability of the population to potential manipulation including involvement with violent acts had decreased.

The ERSG suggested a 3-5 year strategy of accompaniment by the UN and the International Community. Challenges to be focused on include peace consolidation; peace dividends and livelihoods; reconciliation through transitional justice and economic recovery, particularly in the context of upcoming commemorations of the violent eruptions of 1972 and 1993..The ERSG recalled that violent dynamics still exist in the Great Lakes region and that a sustained attention was required.

The following members took the floor: Kenya, Germany, Sweden and Australia.

The Foreign Minister of Kenya underscored the good bilateral relations between Kenya and Burundi and the prospects of the region in the context of the East African Community. He recalled the role played by the EAC in the context of the 2010 elections, including the trip of Foreign Ministers in July in an effort to safeguard the electoral process in Burundi. He encouraged the UN and the International Community to support Burundi and to no longer look at Africa as a problem but rather as an opportunity or a partner for human development.

The representative of Germany announced an increase of 5 million EUR to the Peacebuilding Fund. He inquired what the future role of the PBC could be, what was needed to raise its profile in Burundi and how the Government of Burundi intended to reach out with opposition parties.

Australia mentioned its financial contribution to the electoral process, congratulated Burundi on its successful elections and suggested to look into opportunities of further investing in the mining sector in Burundi.

In reaction to statements made and questions raised, Minister Nsanze first thanked Australia for its contribution. He then reaffirmed that the door would remain open for anyone willing to contribute to the advancement of democracy in Burundi. He declared that the opposition parties were welcome to join national institutions. The Minister stated that peace consolidation is a priority in Burundi and that there are high expectations

for the continuation of support of the PBC. Details on the PBC's role will be discussed in the context of the future configuration of the UN in Burundi.

The Minister welcomed Australia to explore investment possibilities in Burundi. The Economic Adviser to the President, Mr Tuyaga, highlighted the commitment of the government of Burundi to combat corruption and tackle the issues of good governance and transparency. He welcomed foreign investment and noted the recent adoption of a new law on foreign investment and other institutional reforms.

In his concluding remarks, the Chair reiterated the importance of a sustained political dialogue between the government and the opposition which had been mentioned by several speakers. Such dialogue would not necessarily have to be institutionalized but nevertheless required some kind of a framework. In closing, he offered Burundi the support of the PBC in marshalling resources and assisting the country in creating the conditions for presenting itself as an attracting place for foreign investment.
