

24 December, 2013

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Burundi Specific Configuration of the  
PBC, New York, 16 December 2013**

**Chair's Summary**

On Monday, 16 December 2013, from 11:15 am to 12:25 pm, an informal meeting of the Country - Specific Configuration on Burundi of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC Burundi Configuration) took place at UN Headquarters under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Paul Seger, Chair of the Burundi Configuration. The purpose of the meeting was to update members of the Configuration on peacebuilding-relevant developments with a specific focus on the constitutional revision planned by Burundi. To guide and inform discussions, the Chair had prepared and circulated a non-paper on the constitutional revision before the meeting.

The government of Burundi was represented by H.E. Ambassador Herménégilde Niyonzima, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations in New York. Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Burundi, also attended the meeting.

The Chair began his remarks by honoring the great Nelson Mandela who had recently passed away and who, among the many achievements, was the driving force behind the Arusha Accord that brought peace to Burundi. The Chair recalled a quote from Mandela, speaking in Bujumbura three years after the signing of the Arusha accord: "It's a great privilege and honor to return once more to Bujumbura, one of the most beautiful African capitals and a place that I shall regard as central to any legacy that posterity may judge me to have left to peace on our continent and in the world". The Constitution being one major aspect of President Mandela's legacy for Burundi, this homage was a relevant introduction to the discussion of the day.

The Chair recalled members that the Government of Burundi had recently embarked on the process of a constitutional revision. He had brought up the subject with the President of the Republic and with the President of the National Assembly during his visit in Burundi end October, guided by central aspects for peacebuilding enshrined in the 2005 Constitution. Following the visit to Burundi, and having closely looked at the proposed changes in the draft that had been made publicly available, the Chair concluded that some of those changes required further reflection from a peacebuilding perspective.

The Chair referred members to the non-paper he had prepared on the subject and shared with members of the Configuration, suggesting that the PBC could draw from the non-paper to offer support and advice to Burundi in the process of revising its' Constitution. He suggested sending a letter to the President of the National Assembly welcoming the initiative of consultations and encouraging him to use the opportunity to further reflect on the exercise.

Ambassador Niyonzima, PR of Burundi to the UN, noted that the Chair's note described facts, he confirmed that Burundi was indeed in the process of revising its' Constitution, in conformity with the national sovereignty, and he reiterated that the Speaker of the National Assembly had called Burundian people for contribution into the revision process.

SRSO Parfait Onanga Anyanga referred to the workshop of 28-29 November co-organised by the Government of Burundi and BNUB to follow up on the implementation of the roadmap towards the 2015 elections adopted in March 2013. This workshop provided a major opportunity for participants to request more space and time to provide comments to the Constitutional review, and for the Government to offer a consultative mechanism. Following the workshop, the Speaker of the National Assembly announced that he was planning to undertake inclusive consultations on 19-20 December, in the spirit of Arusha Accord, and that only points resulting from a consensus reached by the consultations would be taken forward by the National Assembly. The Speaker called for a genuine dialogue among Burundians on the main changes to the Constitution. The SRSO informed the Configuration that the UN was deploying observers to this exercise as requested by the Speaker. He had encouraged the Opposition to join the consultations called by the Speaker. He expressed concerns that two days were not enough, and his hope that the challenge could be lived up if there was enough political will. He welcomed the PBC initiative to encourage Burundians and advise them on this important journey.

PBSO Director and Deputy Head, Mr. Kenneth Gluck, welcomed the discussion and the Chair's note and expressed PBSO readiness to support to outcome of the discussion. He informed members about the upcoming PBF allocation for a third peacebuilding priority plan.

Belgium, the EU, Netherlands, the Russian Federation, the UK, France, Egypt, Norway, Spain, Rwanda and Tanzania took the floor. They welcomed the Chair's note and expressed their commitment to help Burundi succeed, noting that the country has already made important progress in peacebuilding. They welcomed the Speaker's initiative to organise consultations on the Constitution revision. Configuration members supported the Chair's proposal to address a letter to the Speaker of the National Assembly, congratulating him for facilitating an inclusive process through the consultations he had conveyed for 19-20 December, and encouraging an inclusive and consensus-based approach. Several speakers suggested that the two days of consultations could be used as a

starting point of a process that will lead to a broader agreement on the substantive issues of the Constitutional revision. Furthermore, they encouraged opposition political parties and civil society organisations to participate in the consultations, and they offered UN assistance on the basis of needs to complete the Constitution revision process.

Other important/related issues mentioned by members of the Configuration include: provide advice/support in respect of national sovereignty and ownership, need to frame the constitution revision with the Arusha Accord, the 2015 elections as key step towards consolidation of democracy, dialogue and trust to resolve differences, need to address root causes of conflict and endemic poverty in Burundi, sustained cooperation with Burundi, regional stability, and continuation of the political presence.

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