



United Nations - Nations Unies

## **Peacebuilding Commission**

Visit Summary

**Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission**

Visit to Burundi and to East Africa; 14 – 22 February 2011

## *I. Purpose and objectives of the visit*

The purpose of my visit to Burundi and to the region was to pursue engagement with the government of Burundi, with national, regional and international stakeholders and to further discuss the PBC priorities in the next phase of peacebuilding in Burundi.

I was guided by three objectives:

- 1) To show respect to the Government for its efforts and for progress made since July 2010 and to stakeholders for their contributions to the progress achieved;
- 2) To get an update on the most recent developments, and to discuss different perspectives on the outstanding peacebuilding challenges;
- 3) To discuss with the Government the future role of the PBC in light of the outstanding peacebuilding challenges and to explore with stakeholders their possible roles in further supporting the peacebuilding efforts and opportunities to strengthen partnership with the PBC.

## *II. Meetings and events*

In Bujumbura have met with the following groups of stakeholders:

- High Officials of the Government including the President, the two Vice Presidents, the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, and the Minister in charge of East African Community, EAC;
- The new SRSG of BNUB, her team as well as members of the UN country team;
- The Ombudsman;
- Leaders of Political Parties represented in the Parliament as well as leaders of the extra-parliamentary opposition;
- Representatives of the Civil Society and the Media;
- Representatives of the International Community, both in small groups or bilaterally ;

On Wednesday 16 February 2011, I participated in the Political Forum of the Partners Coordination Group that discussed the fifth and final review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi;

From 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> February, I went to Tanzania where I met with the leadership of the Secretariat of the East African Community (EAC), the Country Director of the World Bank, representatives of the Government of Tanzania [Ministry of EAC and Ministry of Foreign Affairs] as well as with the Ambassadors of some partner countries and with the UN Resident Coordinator in Tanzania.

### *III Assessment of the situation*

#### a) Progress

Since my last visit in July 2010, Burundi has made significant progress which has been acknowledged by my interlocutors. In particular:

- The 2010 elections have been successfully completed and elected institutions have started working; the President has just signed performance contracts with members of his Government, against which they will be assessed on a regular basis.
- Parliament has passed the bill creating the National Independent Human Rights Commission, NIHRC [CINDH in French] , and the nomination of its members is under way.
- The national consultations on Transitional Justice mechanisms have been completed and the report issued.
- The President is committed to combat corruption and has taken some actions on existing corruption cases; the President and his two Vice Presidents have a shared determination on this issue.
- The institution of the Ombudsperson has been created and the Ombudsperson appointed, together with a small initial team.
- There are a few signs of a reviving economy; the Burundi Revenue Authority was recently established and has started its work, and since then there are indications of increase in public revenues collected.
- The process of preparing the PRSP II has been initiated and the Government is working with its partners to integrate peacebuilding issues in the PRSP II.
- The Political Forum of the Partners Coordination Group is functioning and continues to provide a platform for dialogue between the Government, the international community and non-governmental stakeholders on key peacebuilding issues.
- Burundi continues to gradually embrace the dynamics of regional integration, and the fact that Burundi is chairing the Summit of Heads of State and the Council of Ministers of EAC in 2011 has generated additional momentum for Burundi and for the whole community.

#### b) Challenges

Though the analysis differs among the stakeholders, I felt from my discussions an overall agreement on the following outstanding peacebuilding challenges:

- New political tension: One of the unexpected outcomes of the 2010 elections is the tension between the Government and the extra-parliamentary opposition – i.e. mainly

the parties that withdrew from the elections and their leaders who fled the country. The sides are trading accusations of fueling violence. The tension keeps growing, and most partners suggest that eventually there will be a need for some kind of communication including all relevant political actors, as a way to stop the specter of renewed violence. Both sides agree with the general idea of such a communication, but they don't agree on the purpose, the subjects and the format thereof. Despite these disagreements, none of the two sides has indicated a desire to question the Arusha Accords or the Constitution.

- Corruption is still a concern for the Government, the donor community and the civil society. The Government and its partners realize that fighting corruption successfully will require long-term changes within the institutions, practices and people's mentalities. They also agree that the issue requires immediate and sustained attention. The donor community believes that addressing the long lasting corruption cases will restore donor confidence. The leadership of the country asks for more patience and sustained support by the international community, which could include the use of modern technology.
- Transitional justice and reconciliation: the report on national consultations has been issued, but given the other competing priorities and the complex/political nature of the issue, there are doubts within the international community that this will remain a top priority for the President and the Government.
- Respect of human rights remains a concern. The Government has set up internal commissions to address some of the most recent cases, including allegations of torture and extrajudicial executions. Delays in producing results will contribute to perpetuating the culture of impunity. There are high expectations that the National Human Rights Commission will be instrumental in moving the Human Rights agenda forward, and particularly in addressing some of the allegations repeatedly made by international NGOs. Such allegations continue to damage the reputation of the country.
- Socio-economic development issues and combating poverty have been mentioned by most of our interlocutors; these include youth unemployment; sustainable reintegration of former combatants, returnees and internally displaced persons, sustainable solutions to the refugees who are still in Tanzania; resources to fund the programs of the next PRSP II.
- Regarding international assistance, the Government is of the view that despite the significant progress made – some of which in fulfilling preconditions to increase the international assistance - traditional donors continue to set additional conditions without delivering promised assistance. As a consequence, the Government feels restricted in the national budget process and in managing the national economy. At the same time, it is to be noted that tangible results in the fight against corruption and improvements in the rule of law will facilitate advocacy on behalf of Burundi and eventually help attracting additional assistance and investment.

- Institution-building: most stakeholders are of the view that strong national institutions are key to addressing the political and socio-economic challenges of Burundi, as well regional integration. The EAC Secretary General told me that if the PBC wants to support Burundians' regional integration efforts, it should help them to build strong national institutions.

#### *IV Future role of the PBC*

I felt an overall demand for Burundi to remain engaged with the PBC, with a focus on a limited number of tasks and a simplification of reporting exercises and other working mechanisms. In particular:

- During the meeting of the Political Forum it was agreed that there will no longer be a separate strategic framework for peacebuilding and that remaining peacebuilding issues would be addressed in the PRSP II under preparation. The PBC would then use reporting and review mechanisms of the PRSP II to monitor and sustain the attention on peacebuilding issues.
- It is agreed that the Political Forum continues to meet regularly to hold discussions at the high level. Thus, it will de facto become the local mechanism to maintain the dialogue between Burundi and the International Community on any policy and political issues that require attention.
- I also clearly felt that the PBC should work on a gradual transfer of some of its accompanying/support role to entities such as the East African Community.
- Interlocutors believe that the specific political and institutional issues such as communication or dialogue between the political actors, fight against corruption, and transitional justice, should be kept on the PBC agenda. The issue of communication between political actors requires immediate and yet careful attention to avoid any escalation of tension and at the same time manage fears and misconception. Such a process should be designed on the basis of a commitment by all actors to non-violence, non-negotiability of the results of the 2010 elections and to forward-looking discussions that should focus on issues of concern for all Burundians.
- On the socio-economic aspects, the immediate engagement of the PBC could be to provide support aimed at ensuring a sustainable reintegration of demobilized former combatants, returnees and internal displaced people; work with the Government and the UN to mobilize resources required by the national socio-economic reintegration strategy.
- Regarding the PRSP II process, the PBC will remain engaged with the Government of Burundi and the World Bank. I have suggested to transfer the recommendations on the 5<sup>th</sup> review of the strategic framework for peacebuilding in Burundi into the new PRSP document as a peacebuilding pillar. In addition, I have recommended to ensure that peacebuilding is mainstreamed in the various socio-economic pillars of the

PRSP, in my exchanges in Burundi it was suggested to use the PRSP II as an opportunity to develop a strategy for sustainable job creation with a particular view to address the challenges faced by the youth.

- Advocacy for resource mobilization: co-host a donor conference , most likely under the format of a Consultative Group meeting, with the World Bank in October-November 2011, either in Bujumbura or - [to give further impetus to the regional integration dynamics - in Arusha; pursue engagement with the World Bank and other main donors to Burundi such as the AfDB and the EU.
- Attracting investment in Burundi: continue to advise Burundi on the preparation of the Istanbul LDC Conference where the UN Global Compact plans to organize the presence of a substantial number of potential private investors
- Regional integration: explore concrete venues for cooperation between the Secretariat of EAC and the PBC.

## V. *The way forward*

It is clear for me that the strategy of the PBC should follow a two-track approach: on one hand addressing political and institutional issues, and on the other hand looking at socio-economic issues. I propose the following steps:

- Finalisation of the 5<sup>th</sup> review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi by finalizing and adopting the recommendations in light of the discussions of the meeting of the Political Forum of 16 February. It has been agreed by the partners in Bujumbura to make a limited, strategic number of recommendations and to make the recommendations on regional integration more concrete.
- PRSP process: transfer the content of the recommendations of the 5<sup>th</sup> review to the new PRSP II under a peacebuilding pillar. In addition, mainstream a conflict prevention approach into the other socio-economic sectors/pillars of the PRSP II.
- With regards to the pressing peacebuilding challenges and opportunities identified, I suggest a few concrete activities for the Government and the PBC to pursue together:
  - (1) A donor conference following the completion of the PRSP II: the Government and the World Bank say that the PRSP II could be completed by June-July; the donor conference could then take place in October-November 2011;
  - (2) The LDC conference in May in Istanbul is a great opportunity for Burundi to show case for its potential for investment and engage with possible investors. I encourage a large participation by Burundi and together with the UN Family we stand ready to support Burundi in this;
  - (3) Targeted advocacy with regional and international stakeholders with a view to further mobilise their support to peacebuilding and sustainable long-term development;

(4) Continue to explore with key stakeholders options for a communication/dialogue between the Government and the extra-parliamentary opposition; if the notion of a “dialogue” poses political problems, we should find another concept that is historically less charged and that can be accepted by both sides. The discussions could start with less complex and forward-looking issues such as the revision of the electoral code, or the participation of political parties in the PRSP II process. There are Burundian eminent personalities who can be accepted by all parties and can help to bring the parties together. Regional actors and the EAC can also help finding such personalities.

(5) Use the PBC as a platform for the Government to share the outcome of the national consultations on Transitional Justice mechanisms with the wider International Community in New York, with a view to further mobilize the international support for the implementation phase.

I would like to end by thanking the Government of Burundi for having accepted and facilitated this visit, and for the frank and forward-looking discussions I had with the national authorities. I also thank the national, regional and international stakeholders for their insights, advice and continued support. Last but not least I thank SRSK Karen Landgren and her team for their excellent support throughout the visit. I look forward very much for a fruitful collaboration with her and her team.