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La situation au Burundi

Déclaration prononcée par

S.E. M. Paul Seger

**Président de la Réunion spécifique de la Commission de consolidation de la
paix sur le Burundi Débat thématique**

New York, le 9 décembre 2010

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Security Council

The situation in Burundi

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Paul Seger

**Chair of the country-specific meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission
On Burundi**

New York, 9 December 2010

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I thank you for the invitation to address the Security Council in today's debate. I speak in my capacity as chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I also thank the Secretary-General for his report. It addresses all pertinent aspects of peacebuilding in Burundi in a comprehensive and balanced way. And let me extend my thanks to the ERSGs Youssef Mahmoud and Charles Petrie and to DRSG Bintou Keita, with whom I enjoyed and enjoy an excellent collaboration which I am looking forward to continue with the next UN leadership.

In its Resolution 1902 (2009), adopted by the Security Council at its 6245th meeting, on 17 December 2009, the Security Council welcomed the continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission in Burundi and encouraged the Government of Burundi, the Peacebuilding Commission, and its national and international partners to honor the commitments they have made under the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding. The Council also requested the Peacebuilding Commission, with support from BINUB, to continue to assist the Government of Burundi in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and security, reintegration and long-term development in Burundi and in mobilizing the resources needed to achieve these goals, including for the 2010 elections.

Mr. President,

My statement is structured in three parts. One, a short overview of the activities of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. Two, an assessment of the current situation after the completion of the election. And three, an outlook on possible future activities of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC. (In my oral remarks I will be short, and I refer to the extended written version that is distributed).

Activities

The Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission deals on a continuing basis with the country on the agenda. I am delighted to report briefly on the work completed following the request by the Security Council.

Let me say at the outset that we enjoy an excellent working relationship with the government of Burundi. On behalf of the whole Configuration I would like to express my gratitude to Minister Nsanze who is with us today.

In its fourth year of engagement with Burundi, the Configuration continued to support the country's efforts on a range of peacebuilding activities. The engagement was marked by visits to Burundi by my predecessor Peter Maurer, a PBC delegation and later by myself ; meetings of the country

configuration; my recent visit to the World Bank as well as a lunch event I co-hosted with my colleague Ambassador Zacharie Gahutu on 24 September 2010.

Taken together, these activities illustrate the Peacebuilding Commission's efforts in fulfilling its core functions of political accompaniment to countries on its agenda, which are resource mobilization, advocacy and bringing partners together to support post conflict peacebuilding efforts.

a) Political accompaniment

The most important issue during the past year was the preparations for and holding of the elections in 2010. Much of the work of this Configuration focused on supporting the country's efforts to conduct free and fair elections and in mobilizing international support thereof.

On 25 January and 05 February 2010, the Configuration met under the leadership of my predecessor Ambassador Peter Maurer, to provide an update on progress achieved in the preparation of 2010 elections. Following the presentation of the electoral calendar, discussions at the meeting focused on important challenges, including a gap of USD 13 Million in the electoral budget, security of elections and the need to keep a focus on economic recovery in parallel to support for the elections.

From 24 to 28 February 2010, Ambassador Peter Maurer led a PBC delegation on a visit to Burundi to follow up on the preparation of elections and to pursue engagement with key stakeholders and explore opportunities for long term engagement of the PBC with Burundi. The PBC Delegation had very fruitful discussions with the President and other national authorities, the National Independent Electoral Commission, the Political Parties represented in the Parliament, the FNL Leadership, representatives of the Civil Society Organizations, regional stakeholders as well representatives of the International Community. The delegation also visited Bubanza province where it interacted with the Communal Independent Electoral Commissions and the Communal Committee for Community Development in Bubanza.

Following the visit, my predecessor convened a formal meeting of the Configuration on 24 March 2010 to report on the PBC visit to Burundi and to conclude the fourth biannual review of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi. This review provided the opportunity to update and further refine the role of the PBC in support of elections, in focusing on the following key remaining areas of support: (a) Increase efforts to mobilize remaining technical and financial resources needed for the 2010 elections and ensure that resources were made available as soon as possible and in the agreed terms; (b) Ensure communication between and, where possible, coordination of national and international electoral observers.

On 09 June 2010, I introduced myself to members of the Configuration in my capacity as the new Chair of the Burundi Configuration. By that time the first of five elections had been completed, resulting not only in a clear victory of the ruling party but also in the withdrawal of the main opposition parties who alleged irregularities. I then convened a meeting of the Configuration on 21 June 2010 for

members to be updated on the electoral process and to discuss opportunities to further support the democratic process and encourage an inclusive approach with a view to the upcoming legislative elections.

Mid-way during the elections, in my capacity as new Chair of the Burundi Configuration, I undertook a visit to Bujumbura from 30 June to 3 July 2010 with the objective to better understand progress made in the on-going electoral process; to pursue the PBC's engagement with the Government, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), political actors, and national and international stakeholders in support to efforts aimed at ensuring that the electoral process was democratic, safe and inclusive, and to discuss with national authorities and BINUB the next steps after the elections and the opportunities for PBC support to long-term development efforts.

In my report, I concluded that the PBC should continue to assist Burundi independently of the outcome of the parliamentary elections, suggesting that the focus of co-operation should be determined according to the political situation prevailing thereafter.

b) Resource mobilization and advocacy

On 11 May 2010, a meeting of the Configuration assessed progress in the preparation of the elections and further mobilized the assistance of the international community. Following this meeting, the funding gap for the election budget was closed. On a total budget of USD 46.5 million, the Government of Burundi contributed USD 7.9 millions from their own budget and the rest was mainly covered by members of the Burundi Configuration. The following countries and organizations provided resources: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the USA, the African Union, the European Union, and UNDP. To fill critical gaps, the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) provided 3 millions to the electoral budget.

On 6 October, I visited the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington. The purpose of the visit was to establish initial contacts with officials of the two institutions handling Burundi-related matters and to take advantage of the presence of field representatives in Washington, to discuss peacebuilding issues in the context of the process of preparing a new poverty-reduction strategy paper (PRSP). The conclusion of the visit suggested that while the World Bank focuses on socio-economic issues, there was an expectation that the PBC would take the lead in engaging on political issues such as SSR, dialogue with the opposition, Human Rights and others. The World Bank also suggested that on the basis of the new PRSP it could co-host with the PBC a donor conference in Bujumbura in September/October 2011.

c) Bringing partners together in support of peacebuilding

Throughout this period, my predecessor, myself and the membership of the Burundi Configuration interacted with several institutions and other key stakeholders with the aim of developing or deepening relations with them to better support peacebuilding efforts in Burundi. Some of these interactions led to

financial contributions, others generated mutual appreciation of the need to work together and still others laid the foundation of enhanced cooperation in the future.

On 24 September 2010, in the margin of the high-level segment of the General Assembly, I co-hosted with my colleague Ambassador Zacharie Gahutu, the Permanent Representative of Burundi in New York, a lunch as a way to pursue engagement with the Government of Burundi, with a particular focus on the post electoral opportunities and challenges and the long-term engagement of the PBC with Burundi. During that lunch, Augustin Nsanze, the Burundian Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, provided an update on the key outcomes of the elections and acknowledged the role played by the international community and the region. I reiterated the importance of a sustained political dialogue between the government and the opposition which had been mentioned by several speakers during the lunch.

Assessment

Clearly, with the completion of this year's electoral cycle - to the satisfaction of all observers - Burundi opens a new chapter – one that takes the building of a sustainable economy and economical improvement for all center stage. The outlook is good in many regards. There is a stable, newly legitimized government at work, and there is the prospect of economic integration into the East-African Community which makes Burundi part of a larger market. But this might not be enough. For economic development to take off and for an economy to function successfully, there needs to be a set of non-economical, i.e. social, institutional and political conditions in place – the often-mentioned “conducive environment”. There remain challenges in this regard. First the institutional challenge of still widespread corruption and of a lack of progress in justice sector reform as referred to in the Secretary-General's report. Secondly, the political challenges posed by the opposition outside of parliament, by some irresponsible threats or even acts of politically motivated violence, and an increase in extra-judicial killings as described in the Secretary-General's report. Some of the members of our Configuration are particularly concerned about the “significant increase in human rights violations” as mentioned in the report, including cases of torture, infringements of civil rights and measures perceived as intimidations of the press. Third the social challenge of a growth of fear and an erosion of trust. And fourth, the risk of donor fatigue in the context of the budgetary pressures we all experience in our capitals.

Outlook

Mr. President,

The engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission in Burundi as we know it will soon come to an end. According to our mandate, the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi will have to be reviewed as a whole after the election. This process has started and will be completed in early 2011. The government of Burundi has indicated that a continued engagement of the PBC is welcome. Thus, during the 5th biannual review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi we will define

which peacebuilding issues warrant further engagement of the Commission. These decisions will evidently be taken with the government of Burundi which is a member of our Configuration. They should, in my view, be in alignment with the mandate of the future UN presence your Council is about to consult on. I understand our role as country configuration in supporting the mandate of the UN presence in Burundi. In all of this we should not lose sight of the fact that our core constituents are 8,5 million Burundian citizens. We all have the responsibility to support the Government as it delivers to this population the key services a Government is accountable for.

Mr. President, the 2010 elections in Burundi have shown that national actors, regional actors and the international community can work together and provide efficient support to a complex process such as elections. The same experience leaves us with a big lesson that maybe we need to further put elections in a wider context and long-term perspective. I see four entry points for a future PBC engagement with Burundi:

- Ø First and most immediately, the Burundi presidency of the East African Regional Integration. If Burundi needs support in fulfilling this important regional role, the PBC stands ready to work with the UN leadership in mobilising the resources required, once the needs have been clearly identified and their costs assessed.
- Ø Second, the new Poverty Reduction Strategy Burundi has embarked on. In the view of many of our members, the new PRSP should take particular peacebuilding sensitivities into account, and the PBC could have a role in making the PRSP “conflict-sensitive”, not least drawing on previous experience in other peacebuilding contexts.. Moreover, the PBC could be of additional value in specific, sensitive areas such as the long-term reintegration of demobilized individuals and populations particularly affected by the conflict. Furthermore, the PBC could play its part in mobilizing the investment required for certain priorities in a conflict-sensitive long-term development agenda. I would like to commit the PBC in mobilizing traditional donors and assisting the Government to attract new investments. Let’s use the next donor conference to stimulate new business opportunities in Burundi. We believe that a strong and equitable economic development will absorb or reduce a lot of the current socio-political pressures and tensions.
- Ø Third, there is a whole array of rule-of-law issues Burundi needs support for and assistance with. For the PBC, transitional justice is one of those issues of particular importance. We highly appreciate the publication of the report on the national consultation on transitional justice. It will now be up to the Burundian authorities to follow-up on the recommendations in this report, and the Peacebuilding Commission is ready to lend support to this process. This leads to the wider issue of national reconciliation and overcoming the culture of impunity. I would like to point out that, in view of the commemoration in the coming years of several of the tragic events of the past, additional stress on reconciliation is to be reckoned with.
- Ø Fourth, and most delicate, dialogue. The culture of dialogue inherited from Arusha and embedded in the Burundian tradition and Constitution as way to address socio-economic and political challenges is under constraint. Some elements of the Burundian polity have not only

boycotted the electoral process but taken a political leave of absence at a decisive moment. We condemn the use or threat of use of political violence and we deplore the loss of lives that occurred over the past months. We note that all partners agree on this, and we particularly appreciate the stance of Burundi's neighbors in this regard. However, not everybody who disagrees with the government is ready for violence. In fact, all signs indicate that the overwhelming majority of the Burundian people is tired of war and committed to peace. Moreover, not all of the opposition is represented in parliament. Over the long run, political systems are only stable if all relevant actors find some way to communicate. In the view of many of our members, it is desirable that all Burundians, including political actors not represented in parliament, can contribute constructively to the political debate. This is one of the questions the PBC Burundi Configuration will look at in the context of the 5th biannual review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi. If there is consensus, the PBC will do its part in finding solutions within the scope of its role as a sounding board for all stakeholders.

Conclusion

Mr. President, I intend to visit Burundi in early 2011 to participate in the 5th review of the Strategic Framework and to finalize discussions with the Government of Burundi on the role of the PBC in addressing outstanding peacebuilding challenges and in supporting the new UN Mission in Burundi.

Let me express my appreciation of the Security Council's support of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in its past resolutions.

I highly appreciate the Council's invitation to speak today. I note that note S/210/507, paragraph 61, of the President of the Security Council room for informal dialogue between the Council and the Chairs of country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission. I am ready to further consult with the Council if you so wish and I suggest establishing a regular exchange of views between the Council and the PBC in the coming months.

I thank you Mr. President.