

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Organizational Committee
16 September 2015

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 16 September 2015, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission convened an informal meeting. The meeting was chaired by the Permanent Representative of Sweden, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and addressed the following agenda items: (1) Workplan of the PBC until the end of 2015; (2) Briefing by the President of the National electoral commission of Burkina Faso.

Workplan of the PBC until the end of 2015

1. The Chair presented the workplan until the end of 2015 and made reference to the main priorities discussed during the informal meeting of June: the continued efforts on the improvement of working methods of the PBC, and the consideration of new and lighter footprint of the PBC's country-specific engagement. Furthermore, he alluded to a recent working luncheon with the African caucus and the countries on the Commission's agenda where ways to strengthen partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations and actors was addressed. In connection with the ongoing intergovernmental phase of the review of the peacebuilding architecture, he noted that the annual PBC retreat, scheduled for the end of October, would represent a useful opportunity for Member States to interact with the co-facilitators, and with other relevant stakeholders on key recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Group of Experts.
2. The Chairs of the Country-Configurations, and the Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned, reported on the activities undertaken and being planned by the respective configurations for the remainder of the year, including planned field visits to Burundi, CAR, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone before the end of the year. The Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration drew attention to a possible Peacebuilding Assessment Mission to the country in November, with participation from PBSO, DPA, UNDP, WB and possibly IMF. He noted that this would be the second such mission aimed at arriving at a clearer picture of the needs and priorities of the country in the context of the ongoing recovery from the Ebola crisis of the past year. The Chair of the Burundi Configuration briefed on its recent informal meeting, during which the ASG DPA and ASG OHCHR provided an overview of the political, security and human rights situation. The Chair informed that the priority for the PBC's engagement with Liberia over the coming months would be to help the UN and the country manage UNMIL's drawdown and to plan for the post-drawdown accompaniment. The Chair of the WGLL reminded that the focus of the WGLL in 2015 is on institution-building and that the next sub-theme under consideration will be the "Rebuilding of Political Institutions". As per the established practice, the discussion would be concluded with a meeting at the Ambassadorial level in November and a presentation of the outcome report to the OC scheduled for December.

Briefing by the Charges d’Affaires and the President of the National Electoral Commission of Burkina Faso

3. The Chargé d’Affaires of Burkina Faso briefed on the political transition in place following the popular uprising of 2014. She noted that the priorities of the transitional Government included ensuring the continuity of the state, the organization of free and credible elections scheduled for 11 October 2015, social cohesion and national reconciliation, as well as addressing the socio-economic challenges. She indicated that major accomplishments had been achieved during the transition, including the establishment of the High Court of Justice, the anti-corruption law, the adoption of a new electoral law, and the holding of a national youth forum, to discuss some of the grievances that were at the origin of the popular uprising of 2014,. She noted that these initiatives and institutions are aimed at building the foundations for better and inclusive governance, under which all people of Burkina Faso will be included.
However, she stated that challenges remained, such as the reform of the army, and that the international community’s support for the holding of the upcoming elections and beyond would be crucial. The President of the National electoral commission of Burkina Faso gave a detailed overview of the accomplishments made so far in preparation of the elections. Major points included ensuring an open electoral process, the participation of youth and the review of the electoral lists. He elaborated on the assessment of the budget for the elections, noting that there would be enough resources to cover the presidential and legislative elections of 11 October 2015, and highlighting the importance of securing additional funding for the planned municipal elections scheduled for January 2016.
4. The representative of Senegal, in his capacity as President of the Economic Community of Western African States, briefed on the outcome of the ECOWAS Summit of 12 September and on the importance of political stability in West Africa, particularly in Burkina Faso. He highlighted that Burkina Faso represented an example for a well-managed transition towards democratic governance, commending in this regard the efforts of the transitional authorities. The representative of the African Union stressed the imperative of long-term engagement with Burkina Faso and the necessary cooperation of different actors involved. The Permanent Observer of ECOWAS reinforced the statements made by the representatives of Senegal and the AU and highlighted the need for continued support for dialogue between stakeholders in the country. The representative of DPA noted the efforts made by the UN and the international community and stated that support is needed for the political and organizational aspects during both the electoral process, and the post-electoral phases. The representative of UNDP stressed the importance of successful, free and transparent elections for the future stability of the region and the continent as a whole. He noted that the new UNDP country cycle was planned for 2016 to better support the new government’s priorities.
5. Overall, PBC members commended the efforts of the transitional Government to conclude democratic elections and to initiate the reforms/programs that will help the new Government to address the root causes of the crisis, including youth disenchantment and threat of radicalism in the region. There was recognition that the experience of transition in Burkina Faso could set a good example for the West African Region and for the entire African continent.
6. Member States welcomed the decision to convene a country-specific meeting of the OC on Burkina Faso and expressed their appreciation to the representatives of Burkina Faso for their presentations. Several Member States welcomed the initiative of Burkina Faso to brief and interact with the PBC as it potentially represents a good model for nationally-driven, flexible and light engagement. A number of delegations highlighted that this new approach, which includes the full participation of relevant UN entities and regional actors, reflects the potential convening

role of the PBC as a central aspect of its advisory function to the General Assembly and the Security Council. One delegation noted that the decision to convene such country-specific discussions needed broad consultations within the Organizational Committee in order to arrive at a collective understanding of its objectives and format.

7. Additional comments from Member States emphasized two points:
 - The importance for Burkina Faso to work towards inclusive elections and to ensure that electoral funding is managed in a transparent manner;
 - The need to step up the support from the international community in order to assist the potentially elected Government to face numerous post-electoral challenges;
8. The Chair expressed his gratitude to the representatives of Burkina Faso for their briefing and for seeking an engagement with the PBC as a broad-based platform bringing together key and relevant members of the international community. He expressed appreciation to all who had provided support to the transition and in the preparations for the elections, and he encouraged others to step forward in support. He furthermore stated that the Commission stands ready to provide further assistance, as appropriate, if requested by the Burkinabe authorities.

Other matters

9. The Chair reminded Member States about the scheduled high-level meeting on the PBA review organized by the International Peace Institute on 29 September. He informed that invitations have been sent to all delegations and that confirmed speakers include the distinguished Foreign Ministers of Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and Angola, as well as the President of the General Assembly, and the chair of the Advisory Group of Experts on the review of the PBA.
