

20 February 2016

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC, New York,
10 February 2016**

Chair's Summary

1. On 10 February 2016, the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), held an informal meeting under the chairmanship of H. E. Mr. Jürg Lauber to discuss the economic situation in Burundi as well as the political developments and the UN engagement. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Mission Chief for Burundi and Deputy Division Chief in the African Department, Mr. Jaroslaw Wieczorek and the World Bank (WB) Country Director for Tanzania, Burundi, Malawi and Somalia, Ms. Bella Bird briefed the Configuration on the economic developments since the beginning of the crisis. The Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations, H. E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, outlined the Government's efforts to address the current challenges. The UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) a.i. in Burundi, Mr. Paolo Lembo briefed the Configuration via VTC from Bujumbura. The Assistant Secretary-General of OHCHR, Mr. Ivan Simonovic, gave an update on the human rights situation and the Assistant Secretary-General of PBSO, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco provided an update on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) support. Mr. Peter Smith, Senior Political Affairs Officer briefed the Configuration on behalf of Mr. Jamal Benomar, the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General (SASG) for Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi, on the SASG's engagement in and with Burundi. Mr. Alexis Lamek, the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, provided an update on the UN Security Council's engagement with Burundi, including its recent trip to Burundi in which he had participated.
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair expressed concern about the impact of the political crisis on the economy and the resulting uncertainty for development programs. He stated that this meeting presented the opportunity to discuss the kind of political signals from Bujumbura could encourage international donors and investors to resume or continue their engagement with Burundi. The Chair also informed the Members on his planned trip to Bujumbura, Kigali and Addis Ababa, to pursue policy dialogue with the Government of Burundi and key stakeholders, encourage an inclusive and credible national dialogue, an intensification of mediation efforts and the continuation of engagement with international partners, as well as to pursue engagement with the African Union (AU) in supporting a peaceful solution to the crisis. He further stated that he would focus on

raising awareness on the economic impact of the crisis and the human rights situation in the country, initiatives supporting the disarmament of youth groups and reduction of community violence, the political dialogue as well as the humanitarian and regional implications of the crisis.

3. Mr. Wiczorek (IMF) shared the newest macroeconomic data with the Members, and he provided an overview of the economic developments in the country. He stated that since the end of the civil war, the IMF had been supporting Burundi in several reforms. The political crisis had disrupted the implementation of the current programs; those due in 2015 could not be concluded; the current program had been extended to 2016. Explaining some of the economic trends in the country, Mr. Wiczorek stated that the political crisis had deeply affected the economic activities and that, while inflation had largely been contained, with an estimated negative growth of 4.1 percent, the GDP of 2015 was significantly below expectations. He noted that the drop in foreign grants had grave consequences for the country as budgetary resources had shrunk causing less public investment in infrastructure, development, as well as basic social services such as the health sector. He noted that public debt is on the rise and that the Central Bank has used a significant part of its foreign assets in order to stabilize the local currency. Possible outcomes and trends for the rest of the year depended significantly on developments in the political crisis and on the management of the financial situation. He stated that there was a high risk for the Government to run out of currency reserves; the resolution of the political impasse was important for donors' support since 80% of the public investment budget used to be provided by donors. He stated that the resumption of the IMF's projects in Burundi and the advancing of the development agenda would depend on the Government's relation with the international community since the programs were financed through the international partners.
4. Ms. Bird (WB) referred to her recent visit to Bujumbura and stated that the prevailing insecurity, human rights violations and grievances risked being exacerbated by a deterioration of the economy. She stated that Burundi had many of the structural risk factors of fragile countries, such as land disputes, ethnic tensions and unemployment. The WB budget support had not yet been (re) authorized due to the environment assessed as not conducive. She noted that economic challenges included a decrease in demand for agricultural products by the city, affecting the rural areas, the threat of a situation of food insecurity, a slowdown of activities in the service sector, in trade and tourism, as well as the accumulation of unpaid loans. Ms. Bird stated that the aid dependency of the country was extremely high and that human suffering as well as general poverty was increasing due to the current situation and to cuts in donors' support. The economic situation affects the provision of social services impacting especially women and children.
5. The representative of Burundi thanked the PBC Members for their efforts in supporting the country in overcoming the current crisis. In this regard, he welcomed the Security Council's recent mission to Burundi and its resolution 2248 which condemned the violent acts committed in the country. He emphasized that such acts were being committed by a

handful of radicalized people who were trying to create a political vacuum in the country. The Government condemned these attacks and extreme violence that was bearing the characteristics of terrorist acts. He furthermore welcomed the AU's decision to refrain from sending the MAPROBU mission to the country since military solutions could only be the last resort and no objective criteria could justify such a deployment; in this regards he stated that the Burundian security forces were providing security for all Burundians. He questioned the objectivity of some reports and images broadcasted by external media agencies and stressed the importance of verifying information when assessing the situation on the ground. He stressed the importance of the proper treatment of refugees in the camps in neighbouring countries. He underscored the need for support from development partners, since a further deterioration of the economic situation would have a severe impact on the most vulnerable population and most likely lead to increased acts of violence.

6. Member States took the floor to comment on the first section on economic trends. Delegations expressed their concern over the worsening economic situation and its potential impact on the crisis. They stressed the need to address together the economic and political challenges of the current crisis. Member States highlighted the need for an inclusive political dialogue and welcomed the EAC, the AU and UN's engagement in this regard. They stressed the need to address the root causes of the conflict and to restore trust between the Government and its opponents. Some delegations underscored the regional consequences and impact of the crisis; they highlighted the need to protect civilians and to prevent regional tensions from further escalating. Some delegations emphasized the importance of the resumption of development support to the country as a way to create incentives for a political solution; they suggested that quick win projects had the potential to prevent further escalation of violence. One delegation stressed the important role of the PBC in advocating for a timely readiness by international partners to provide financial support should there be significant actions [move] towards the resolution of the political crisis.
7. In his briefing, the UN Resident Coordinator a.i, R C, Mr. Paolo Lembo suggested that recent developments had the potential to contribute to the resolution of the ongoing political, humanitarian and socio-economic crisis. He mentioned the letter that H.E. President Nkurunziza had sent to the President of the Security Council, in which he outlined areas for which Burundi was calling for UN support. In the same letter, the President committed his Government to cooperate with Special Advisor Benomar and with the UN system in the critical areas of dialogue, disarmament, security, human rights and development. He expressed concern over the increasing number of attacks and clashes in provinces outside of Bujumbura, as well as the increasing criminality that included robbery and hold ups on highways. Some of these criminal incidents could be linked to the worsening economic situation as well as the easy access to weapons. He expressed concern over the worsening humanitarian situation and emphasized the need for economic and humanitarian support to the country. The UN was considering humanitarian activities under the CERF funding mechanism in key areas such as

protection, food security and health, as well as nutrition and shelter. He stated that UN agencies had updated the Burundi post-crisis contingency plan for October 2015-February 2016. He stressed the need to address the root causes of the crisis and highlighted the engagement with women and youth as well as the fight against impunity. He further underscored the need for a more coherent approach by all relevant actors.

8. In his briefing, OHCHR ASG Simonovic indicated that compared to previous months, the number of reported killings had decreased. He mentioned that the Government of Burundi had expressed their willingness to carry out investigations on the allegation of mass graves in relation to the violent incidents of December 2015. He underlined that OHCHR is witnessing changing patterns of violence, with a great number of cases of forced disappearances, more frequent reports on torture, ill-treatment and sexual violence. ASG Simonovic also reported that the number of refugees continued to grow, most likely due to widespread fear, the degradation of the security situation, as well as the aggravation of the economic situation. He reiterated the concerns of the Human Rights Council over the persisting restrictions of the media, as well as bans and arrests of civil society members; he underscored the importance of conducting the mission of investigation by 5 independent experts in order for them to prepare the report requested by the Human Rights Council. He welcomed the strengthening of the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations, through both OHCHR and AU Human Rights Observers. ASG Simonovic recommended that it was important to address the issue of impunity that continues to perpetuate to the cycle of violence, as well as the release of those journalists, members of civil society and of the opposition from detention centres who were not involved in violent acts.
9. ASG Fernandez-Taranco welcomed the good practice of approaching issues of peace, security, economy, development and human rights in an integrated and strategic way. He highlighted the important role of the PBF in providing fast and catalytic support to extend the OHCHR presence in the field. He stressed the importance of further commitment by donors to sustain the OHCHR presence on the ground and support long term activities such as capacity building for the National Human Rights Commission and human rights defenders. He noted that PBSO remained committed to support the AU Human Rights observers; in this regards, discussions between the AU, OHCHR, UNDP and PBSO were under way to develop the concept and project proposal. He further reiterated the PBF's willingness to further support political dialogue in Burundi in addition to the support already provided through local organisations. He suggested continuing to seek opportunities to work with the National Commission for inter-Burundian dialogue in a way that ensures that its work is inclusive and transparent and linked to the regional mediation. He reiterated PBF willingness to support the Government in the crucial areas of disarmament and community security. He further stressed the fact that PBF projects are not stand alone activities but that they are designed to complement and support the work of the PBC.

10. Mr. Smith briefed the Configuration on behalf of the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi, Mr. Jamal Benomar. He stated the importance of recent consultations with the national authorities including President Nkurunziza. He noted that the letter sent by the President to the President of the Security Council provided with an opportunity for further cooperation. He stated that more efforts needed to be made to achieve a political dialogue, as well as to articulate the UN support that could help the country solve the political impasse.
11. Mr. Alexis Lamek, the Deputy Permanent Representative of France, provided a briefing on the UN Security Council's trip to Burundi. He expressed concern about the political, humanitarian, economic and security situation and stated that discussion with various stakeholders enabled an important exchange of views. He stressed the importance for the respect of human rights and content of the Arusha Accord, as well as further collaboration with the international community including the EAC, AU and the UN. He stressed the importance of using this window of opportunity to make progress in solving the crisis. Furthermore, he highlighted the need for an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue.
12. Member States expressed concern over the human rights violations, and the continued humanitarian impact of refugees on the region. They highlighted the importance to prevent the crisis from further escalating and from possible spill-overs at the regional level. They expressed the need for a genuine and inclusive dialogue. Member States stressed the need for the respect of human rights and democratic principles and the rule of law, addressing the issue of impunity, ensuring the protection of civilians, and the resumption of good relations with development partners. Some members reiterated the importance of the Arusha Accords. Some urged Burundi to sign the MoU with the AU in order to facilitate the deployment of human rights observers and military experts.
13. The representative of Burundi took the floor and reiterated his Government's willingness to re-engage with developments partners and seek durable peace. He stated that the windows to engage were open for an inclusive national dialogue. He highlighted the need for economical support as well as for the resumption of projects especially those supporting youth, in particular to prevent further political manipulation and involvement in violence.
14. In concluding the meeting, the Chair thanked the briefers for their contributions and Member States for their active participation; he underscored the importance of such substantive discussions. He indicated that the discussion had allowed him to further specify the messages of his upcoming trip and that he would share the report on the visit with the Configuration upon his return. The same report would be shared with the Security Council.
