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14 July 2016

To: Members of the Peacebuilding Commission, Burundi Configuration

Subject: **Chair's visit to Burund and Tanzania, 04 - 09 July 2016**

Excellency,
Dear colleagues,

From 04 to 09 July 2016, I undertook my third visit to Burundi and to the region as Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). I held consultations in Dar-es-Salaam on 04 July and in Bujumbura from 05 to 09 July. The main objective of my visit was to pursue the engagement with the Government and key stakeholders, with a view to support on-going efforts to end the political crisis and violence, to discuss the economic impact of the crisis and to assist peacebuilding activities supported by the PBF.

I am grateful for the welcome which I received in Burundi and Tanzania. I like to thank Ambassador Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the UN, who traveled with me, for his usual cooperation and support. I also thank the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, in particular Vincent Kayijuka, and the UN Country Team in Bujumbura for preparing a very rich program and for their on-going support.

In Bujumbura I met H.E. Pierre NKURUNZIZA, President of the Republic of Burundi; H.E. Alain NYAMITWE, Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation; and H.E. Domitien NDIHOKUBWAYO, Minister of Finances, Budget and Privatisation.

I also met the 1st Vice-President of the Parliament; the General Commissioner of the Burundi Revenue Authority (OBR); the Chief Executive Officer of the Burundi Investment Promotion Agency (API); representatives of political parties; the President of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (CVR), the President, the Executive Director, and two members of the National Commission for the Inter-Burundian Dialogue (CNDI); representatives of the international and local business community; representatives of the civil society organizations; the Resident Representative of the World Bank (WBG); a team of human rights observers of the African Union, the team of the Office of High Commissioner for Human rights, the UN Resident Coordinator, senior members of the Team of the Special Advisor on Conflict Prevention, as well as representatives of the diplomatic community.

Furthermore, I travelled to Musigati and Mitakatoka in Bubanza Province, roughly one and a half



hours outside Bujumbura, where I had the opportunity to meet women mediators, an initiative launched with the support of UN Women and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), as well as representatives of the local authorities. I was impressed by the role played by those women mediators, local leaders and civil society organizations in the resolution of local conflicts that are in one way or another linked to the political violence in 2015.

Before going to Burundi, I stopped in Dar-es-Salaam on Monday 4th July, where I met the former President of Tanzania, H.E. Benjamin MKAPA, the Facilitator of the Burundi dialogue, senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as representatives of the UN and of the diplomatic community in Dar-es-Salaam.

My discussions during this last visit to the region focused on the following main pillars of peacebuilding in Burundi: (a) the economic situation; (b) political process and facilitation of dialogue; (c) security and human rights.

I. Main points of my discussions

(a) The economic situation

Following briefings which the PBC received from the IMF and the World Bank in recent meetings, I went to Bujumbura with the objective to continue and broaden discussions on the economic situation and its links with the political crisis. In this context, I met the new Minister of Finance, Budget and Privatisation, H.E. Domitien NDIHOKUBWAYO, the High Commissioner of the Burundi Revenue Authority, Mr. Leonard SENTORE, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Burundi Investment Promotion Authority, Mr. Didace NGENDAKUMANA. I also met representatives of the local private business associations and of foreign companies.

Business representatives expressed grave concern with regard to the significant slowdown of economic activity since the beginning of the crisis, the lack of access to foreign exchange¹, the loss of qualified members of their workforce, as well as the security situation.

Important development and infrastructure projects have slowed down, either because donors have partially suspended their aid, or because of the security situation. Lack of access to foreign reserves means that companies are unable to pay their foreign suppliers or service providers. Furthermore it increasingly impacts on the import of essential goods such as fuel and pharmaceutical products.

¹ Distortions in the market of foreign exchange are important: while the official exchange rate is 1,670 FBU for 1 US\$, the exchange rate on the parallel market is 2,400 FBU for 1 US\$.



It was also pointed out to us that the political crisis occurs at a time when the value of coffee has decreased, the lowest in the last 10 years. Coffee is the main source of foreign exchange; it represents 60-70 % of national exports.

(b) Political process and facilitation of inter-Burundian dialogue

The forthcoming second round of the Arusha talks was among the most discussed subjects during my visit to Dar-es-Salaam and Burundi.

On Monday 4th July, I met the former President of Tanzania, H.E. Benjamin Mkapa, the Facilitator of the Burundi dialogue, in Dar-es-Salaam. He outlined his task as bringing the parties together to a common position, aimed at stopping violence, opening political space and discussing the preparation for the 2020 election cycle. He reiterated his commitment to the process, despite the enormous challenge posed by the wide divide between the Government and the Opposition. He expressed hope that both the Government and opposition will participate in the talks without pre-conditions. President Mkapa agreed to come to New York and engage members of the PBC on his facilitation efforts, at an opportune time.

During the week, President Mkapa's team announced that the next round of talks was re-scheduled for 12 – 14 July. Following this round, it was President Mkapa's intention to report to the EAC Heads of State in Kigali, in the margin of the AU Summit.

After my visit I learned on 13 July through media reports that five political parties (FNL, FROLINA, Piebu Abanyeshaka, RADEBU and FRODEBU) boycotted the peace talks over the inclusion of representatives of political parties (Jean Minani) and civil society organisations (Pacifique Nininahazwe and Armel Ningoyere) accused of human rights violations, and that the Government reportedly also refused to participate due to the inclusion of certain "opposition" figures in the dialogue. At the PBC meeting where I reported on my visit, I indicated that I was very worried by the attitude of all parties involved vis-à-vis the efforts by President Mkapa.

All the partners of Burundi that I talked to underscored the need for a viable, inclusive political dialogue. In my meetings with the Government and other stakeholders, I conveyed the following main messages of President Mkapa: (i) fully support the work of the Facilitator, (ii) participate in the talks without pre-conditions; (iii) seek complementarities between the regional facilitation and the work of the National Commission for inter-Burundian dialogue; (iv) focus on the perspective 2020.

I also continued to encourage better coordination between the EAC, the AU and the UN.



In our meeting on 8 July President Nkurunziza confirmed that the work of the CNDI was ongoing, and he expressed regret that some people in Burundi seemed to advocate that the Arusha Agreement should not be changed, but fail to engage in its full implementation, in particular the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) and of the Commission for Land and other Assets (CNTB).

(c) Security and Human rights

Statistics suggest a security situation in Burundi that is much calmer than a few months ago, characterized by a decrease in killings and grenade attacks.

However, I also received information about increase in arbitrary arrests and detention. Forced disappearances are still reported; torture and ill-treatment cases continued to be documented. Several interlocutors stated a general atmosphere of impunity.

On 13 July we received the very disturbing news that Hafsa Mossi, an East African Legislative Assembly MP, was assassinated the same morning Bujumbura by two gunmen. I express my condolences to the family of the victim.

UNHCR officials I met in Tanzania informed me that the refugee flow continued, at a rate of 2,000 arrivals per month. I was also informed that people interviewed by UNCHUMAN RIGHTS in Tanzania maintained that they fled targeted persecution and human rights abuse. In addition UNHCR officials fear that an economic crisis would push more people out of the country.

Trafficking of women and girls was mentioned to me as an emerging issue during my visit. I was told that this trafficking was an existing problem that had allegedly increased since the crisis in April 2015. I was given limited information on this problem; but both the UNCT and the AU human rights observers made it clear that this should be treated as a matter of priority. I count on the Government to fully engage with relevant UN Agencies, including UNICEF and UN WOMEN, to bring more light to this problem and a definite response.

I was encouraged by the cooperation both OHCHUMAN RIGHTS and the AU receive from national authorities in their work on human rights. As I did in February, I met a group of AU human rights observers; they mentioned that they now have access to the detention facilities of the National Intelligence Office, SNR, once a week.

Testimonies collected by the AU human rights observers suggest that the presence of human rights observers in Bujumbura has been reassuring for the population, and that is has been able to dissuade some violent behavior. The observers would like to be deployed in other provinces with



the hope to play a similar role. I was told that additional 14 human rights observers of the AU would arrive in July.

In our meeting President Nkurunziza reiterated his commitment to human rights, including through full collaboration with human rights institutions and appropriate response to human rights violations. The President pointed out that, in response to security forces wrongdoing; 300 police officers had been arrested, and that others had been dismissed. I underlined the importance of international observers and encouraged the rapid implementation of the agreement between Burundi and the African Union concerning the increase the number of AU military experts and human rights observers to 200.

II. Conclusion

Since my last visit in February, there have been signs of progress that we all need to sustain. Security in the streets of Bujumbura seems to have improved, especially in terms of reduction of violent attacks. On the other hand reports about grave human rights violations continue, and the economic aspects linked to the crisis continued to worsen. Donors and international partners are still in an engagement mood, and are waiting for significant signals on the political front, in particular the dialogue process to reassess positively their cooperation and engagement.

In light of the current situation, the Configuration may support the Government and people of Burundi in the following ways:

- (a) Invite the donor organizations and countries to carefully consider the economic and fiscal situation of Burundi in order to avoid further weakening of essential elements of the economy and thus contributing to the crisis.
- (b) Support the implementation of the agreement between Burundi and the African Union to increase the number of AU military experts and human rights observers to 200 as planned.
- (c) Encourage all stakeholders to engage fully and participate without pre-conditions in the Burundi Dialogue led by President Mkapa.
- (d) In addition, and as I mentioned in the last meeting of this Configuration on June 20th, George Mason University has evaluated the Inter-Burundian Dialogue currently led by the CNDI. They have come up with a number of recommendations in order to strengthen the technical quality, inclusiveness, transparency, legitimacy and broad acceptance of the work of CNDI. I intend to reach out to the Government of Burundi to discuss how international partners can assist in the implementation of these suggestions.

I would like to conclude my report with a word of gratitude to the Government of Burundi for its hospitality and confidence and to all my interlocutors for having shared their views with me. My



special thanks go to Ambassador Albert Shingiro, Burundi's Permanent Representative to the UN, for our excellent cooperation, to Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco of PBSO, and to Mr. Paolo Lembo, the UN Resident Coordinator for having made this visit possible. Last but not least, I wish to express my sincere thanks to President Mkapa for receiving me and for accepting continued engagement with the PBC.

Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair
UN Peacebuilding Commission
Burundi Configuration