

28 November 2016

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC, New York,
18 November 2016**

Chair's Summary

1. On 18 November 2016, H. E. Ambassador Jürg Lauber, the Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), informed the Members about the outcome of the preparatory socioeconomic consultations which he had co-organized with Mr. Paolo Lembo, UN Resident Coordinator in Burundi, on 7-8 November near Geneva, and which he had introduced to the PBC Configuration on 19 October. PBC members were also briefed by H. E. Ambassador Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations, by UN Resident Coordinator Paolo Lembo, by Ms. Mari Yamashita, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and by Ms. Reena Ghelani, Deputy Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
2. The Chair opened the meeting with a report about the outcome of the preparatory socio-economic consultations which took place on 7-8 November near Geneva (*his written outcome report was shared with the Configuration on 18 November*). The World Bank, the European Union, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the UN system (PBSO and the UN Country Team) had convened to compare their macroeconomic assessments; to inform each other about their responses to the current socio-economic challenges; to identify the most urgent needs of the population; to discuss opportunities and respond to the current challenges and to identify possible synergies in these responses.
3. The Chair informed that the Government of Burundi had welcomed the idea to organize a retreat to discuss socioeconomic questions together with multilateral partners and was engaged in its preparations, but had informed the co-organizers in late October that the proposed dates were inconvenient. Following further consultation with the Government and in order to benefit from the presence of numerous multilateral partners in Geneva, the co-organizers decided to use the opportunity to prepare for a socioeconomic policy conversation with the Government which may take place at a later point in time.

4. The consultations revealed that Burundi was experiencing severe macroeconomic difficulties. Among the key indicators for these challenges were a GDP decline of 3.9 percent in 2015, shrinking domestic revenues and increasing public debt (*cf. outcome report of the Chair for further numbers and details*). The participants also shared the view that the root causes of such challenges were political in nature.
5. The current macroeconomic challenges had significant negative socioeconomic impacts such as increasing food insecurity, malnutrition, a lack of resources in sectors such as health and education and a shortage of essential medicine. Draughts and floods further exacerbated this impact, in particular with regard to food security. Within 8 months the number of persons depending on humanitarian aid increased from 1 to 3 million. The participants of the Geneva consultations noted that while the general trends were clear, additional data was needed to draw a full picture, and they expressed readiness to share and compare data with the Government for that purpose.
6. The Chair reported that in response to the deteriorating situation, Burundi's international partners had shifted their focus towards immediate humanitarian responses and had started to re-channel their funds.
7. Participating partners at the consultations concluded that the current macroeconomic development risked reversing the gains made over the past 10 years. Agriculture, health and education were identified as the sectors, which were most seriously affected by the current macroeconomic challenges. The multilateral partners expressed readiness to address both the immediate needs of the population with a special focus on these three sectors and IDPs/refugees as well as the macroeconomic challenges. The Chair emphasized that in addressing Burundi's macro- and socioeconomic problems a holistic approach would be needed, taking prevention, inclusion and social cohesion into account – in other words, a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy
8. Mr Paolo Lembo, UN Resident Coordinator in Burundi, underlined that the socioeconomic consultations had shown that both socioeconomic and humanitarian responses were needed. The current challenges were related both to development and peacebuilding. He described the Geneva consultations as a frank exchange among multilateral partners on root causes, impacts and on the question which strategies had worked and which had not. He noted a considerable fallout of macroeconomic challenges on the delivery of services which affected a growing part of the population. Efforts to address the humanitarian needs were urgently needed; they would, however, not be able to address the root causes of the crisis which required a broader and coherent humanitarian, socioeconomic, peacebuilding and resilience approach. Both efforts should run in parallel, he added.
9. Mr Lembo further concretized the needs identified in the three key sectors such as access to financial resources, seeds and fertilizers in the agricultural sector; salaries for teachers, food for students, textbooks and maintenance of school infrastructure in the educational sector and salaries for employees and the provision of essential medicine in the health

sector. He also pointed to the specific needs of refugees and IDPs. Mr. Lembo informed the Configuration that a humanitarian briefing took place on 9 November in Geneva which had allowed UN agencies on the ground to share their assessment with the international community. In concluding, he mentioned that the UN Country Team had started to discuss the follow-up of the Geneva consultations with both the Government and the diplomatic community in Bujumbura.

10. Reena Ghelani, Deputy Director of the Coordination and Response Division of OCHA, reported that 26 % of the population (i.e. 3 million people) currently depended on humanitarian aid. 600'000 persons were affected by acute food insecurity and 1.2 million children under five years were affected by chronic malnutrition. The number of displaced persons amounted to 430'000 people of which 110'000 were internally displaced persons within Burundi. 50 % of the state budget relied on international aid. Ms. Ghelani thanked the international community for its generous support, but underlined that further efforts would be needed with a particular focus on food insecurity and its impact.
11. PBSO Director Mari Yamashita welcomed the preparatory consultations in Geneva in which ASG Oscar Fernandez-Taranco had participated. She said that the discussions in Geneva suggested that macro-economic reforms and socio-economic interventions could be intentionally designed to prevent the crisis from further escalating in a way which would take peacebuilding prerogatives into account. She reminded the Members of the Configuration that national leadership was key to implement the reforms agreed in Geneva in October 2012 and in Bujumbura in December 2014. Ms. Yamashita referred to the ongoing PBF programs and recommended to program remaining PBF resources with a focus on strengthening social cohesion and sustaining on-going peacebuilding initiatives. In that regard, Security Council resolutions 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security and 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security could offer guidance on how to put women and youth at the centre of a peacebuilding strategy.
12. Ambassador Albert Shingiro, Permanent Representative of Burundi, thanked the Chair, Resident Coordinator Paolo Lembo and Burundi's multilateral partners for having convened in Geneva to prepare a socioeconomic conversation with the Government. His Government shared the view that health, agriculture and education were the most affected areas. Ambassador Shingiro welcomed the approach taken by the co-organizers and said that consultations should now be followed by concrete actions. He indicated that Burundi remained committed to both the internal and the external dialogue process and encouraged Member States to support Uganda's President Museveni and Tanzania's former President Mkapa in their efforts. He described the internal dialogue as more advanced than the external dialogue and noted that, in many contexts, dialogues within countries proved to be particularly successful. He regretted the suspension of cooperation by the European Union and the general decrease in budget support – measures which affected the most vulnerable parts of the population. The Government had tabled a budget for 2017 which was realistic and included austerity measures. While inflation remained weak, the private sector (namely tourism and construction) was affected by decreasing

demand and difficulties to obtain credits. Ambassador Shingiro noted that emergency programs would be necessary and that the coffee sector would also need support. He described the Configuration as a forum which could help to strengthen the link between Burundi and its international partners with a view to rebuild trust.

13. In the ensuing discussion, Belgium, Canada, China, Egypt, the European Union, France, Mexico, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Sweden, Tanzania and the USA took the floor. They thanked the Chair and Resident Coordinator Lembo for their initiative and emphasized that the political and economic aspects of the crisis were interrelated. They emphasized the need to address both the urgent needs of the population and the root causes of the current challenges. Broad support was expressed for the facilitation efforts of former President Mkapa. The Government of Burundi was encouraged to actively engage in the EAC-led dialogue and to ensure full respect of the Arusha Agreement. Many discussants pointed to the need to rebuild trust between the Government and the international community. Some Member States said they perceive a worrisome tendency of isolationism in Burundi.
14. In his concluding remarks, H. E. Ambassador Albert Shingiro noted that Burundi did not perceive itself as being isolated. He clarified that the modification of constitutions was a usual practice in many member states and that the discussion on constitutional changes in Burundi was taking place in accordance with the roadmap of Kayanza. He explained the reasoning behind Burundi's sovereign decision to withdraw from the International Criminal Court and underlined that Burundi remained engaged in both the internal and the external dialogue. Ambassador Shingiro also stressed the importance to recognize that a large number of refugees had already returned to Burundi.
15. The Chair concluded the meeting by committing to explore strategies for a renewed engagement in Burundi which would include socioeconomic, security and human rights aspects. He emphasized that the PBC Configuration would continue to serve as a forum for the dialogue between Burundi and its international partners.
