

# **The situation in Burundi**

## **Report by the Peacebuilding Commission**

*9 March 2017*

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of the Council

In view of the consultations of the Security Council on Burundi of 9 March, I would like to report on my ongoing engagement as Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

### **1. Activities of the PBC Configuration since the last oral briefing to the Security Council (18 March 2016)**

From 4 to 9 July 2016, I travelled to Burundi and Dar-es-Salaam in order to pursue the dialogue with the Government and key stakeholders as well as with H.E. Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, the EAC Facilitator of the inter-Burundi dialogue and former President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

On 7 and 8 November 2016 the UN Resident Coordinator in Burundi, Mr. Paolo Lembo, and I convened Burundi's main multilateral partners to Geneva for socio-economic consultations on Burundi. The World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, several representatives of the UN Country Team, and the European Union participated in these consultations.

My overall approach to peacebuilding has remained holistic, i.e. pertaining to all three pillars of the mandate of the United Nations. In 2016, I held six meetings of the PBC Burundi Configuration and briefed the Security Council on three occasions (once orally and twice in writing).

## 2. Assessment of the current situation in Burundi

In their most recent meetings, the Members of the Configuration heard reports by various UN entities all of which underscored that the situation in Burundi requires sustained attention and support from international partners, e.g.:

- Reports by human rights monitoring mechanisms on the situation of *public security and human rights*, including on acts of violence and violations of human rights, as well as on pressure on civil society organizations and human rights defenders.
- Reports by UN Special Advisor Jamal Benomar on the ongoing *political impasse* including the lack of confidence between the Government and the opposition, the situation of the media, as well as on national, regional and international efforts to find a political settlement of the crisis.
- Reports by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the UN Country Team on the deteriorating *socio-economic situation*.

Regarding the socioeconomic situation, the consultations which took place in Geneva on 7-8 November 2016 were particularly insightful:

- The five participating partners of Burundi shared the view that Burundi is currently experiencing severe **macroeconomic difficulties** which are reflected in a negative growth of the GDP in 2015 and 2016. Food insecurity affects a much larger part of Burundi than in 2015, and consumer prices are on the rise.
- They identified food security/agriculture, health and education as **the sectors** which are most seriously affected by the current situation.
- Besides these sectors, the need for broader macroeconomic engagement in Burundi was emphasized in Geneva since decreasing **fiscal revenues** (partly related to decreased investments and direct budgetary support) put the national budget under pressure.

- In view of these economic indicators, Burundi's partners showed continued **readiness** to address the needs of the population and to prevent a further deterioration of the situation.
- While recognizing the importance of the contribution of Burundi in AU and UN peacekeeping operations, Members of the Configuration expressed concerns about signals of disengagement sent from the Government of Burundi to their regional and international partners, for instance by suspending the cooperation with the OHCHR.
- We welcome the fact that the government of Burundi has transmitted on February 24th, 2017 to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva a draft agreement between the Republic of Burundi and the UN concerning the establishment of an office of the High Commission for Human Rights in Burundi.
- I'm personally afraid that, faced with the current situation, the international partners may decide to disengage vis-à-vis the Government and the people of Burundi.

### **3. Ideas on the way forward for sustained efforts in peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding in Burundi requires a long-term vision and sustained efforts. Abandoning Burundi now would mean wasting past efforts and putting the country and its people at risk of recurring conflict.

While the primary responsibility for the wellbeing of the Burundian people lies with the Government of Burundi, the international partners must maintain their support to the current efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Burundi.

I would therefore like to invite Burundi's regional and international partners, in particular the relevant parts of the UN system, to maintain and, where possible, step-up their support in the areas of peace & security, human rights, political reconciliation and institution building as well as with regard to humanitarian aid, the socio-economic development and the preparation for credible, peaceful and democratic elections in 2020.

At the same time, I invite the Government of Burundi to recognize their partners' goodwill and to facilitate efforts of the EAC, the AU and the UN in engaging with Burundi to advance the Inter-Burundi Dialogue and strengthen the cooperation with both the AU and the UN.

I welcome any efforts for reconciliation within Burundi as well as ongoing dialogue inside and outside the country and the efforts of the EAC Facilitator, and I wish to reassure former President Mkapa of the continued support of the Configuration for his work. I am convinced that it would be of great benefit for Member States if Mr. Mkapa could brief the Security Council and the PBC Configuration at a certain point on the developments in the Inter-Burundian dialogue.

#### **4. Ongoing and planned activities of the Configuration**

I'm planning to travel to Burundi from 27-31 March 2017 in order to:

- Get first-hand impression of the situation on the ground;
- Meet with the Government, opposition and civil society;
- Pursue the socioeconomic dialogue;
- Brief the Government on my continuous conversation with Burundi's partners.

I see the continuation of the socioeconomic dialogue not only as an opportunity to address the socioeconomic challenges, but also as a means to increase the confidence between the Government and its international partners.

Beyond my next visit to Burundi, I will continue working with the Members of the Configuration – including the Government of Burundi – the PBC Chair and the PBSO on a variety of peacebuilding activities with a view to supporting Burundi's path towards sustainable peace. The activities of the Configuration will continue to be in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and consulted with relevant international, regional and sub-regional partners, in particular the facilitator of the EAC-led process.

I will keep the Security Council informed about my visit to Burundi and my planned engagement as per established practice.