

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Round Table Meeting between Burundi and its Partners

Bujumbura, 11-12 December 2014

On 11-12 December 2014, a two-day roundtable meeting was held in Bujumbura, bringing together the Government of Burundi and its main regional and international partners (“the participants”).

The purpose of the meeting was threefold:

- 1) To hold a dialogue on the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper-II (PRSP-II) since the Geneva Partner’s Conference of 2012, namely to exchange views on the progresses achieved, outstanding challenges, in view of the realization of mutual commitments.
- 2) To discuss the implications of the end of the UN Mission in Burundi and considerations for the future cooperation between Burundi and its bilateral and institutional partners on the regional and international level.
- 3) To assess future perspectives for a mutually beneficial partnership towards long-term development and prosperity of Burundi on the assumption that free, transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2015 will establish an important basis for sustainable development in a peaceful context.

The round table meeting was chaired by H.E Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, and it was attended by the Senior Government Officials, together with representatives of the countries and organizations mentioned in the annex.

The participants thank the Government of Burundi for its hospitality and applaud the spirit of openness and dialogue that has prevailed throughout the roundtable.

At the end of the roundtable participants adopted the present joint communiqué and agreed on a set of mutual commitments that will sustain Burundi’s path on peace consolidation and socio-economic development.

Progress

1. The participants of the roundtable take note of important progress made since the Geneva Conference in 2012, notably in the continued restoration of security and stability in Burundi.
2. They welcome ongoing Government’s efforts of dialogue, conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB), with the political parties and political actors. In particular with regard to the elections of 2015, they welcome the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the unanimous adoption of the new Electoral

Code, and the adoption by consensus of the Roadmap for the elections and code of conduct for political parties and political actors, as well as the finalization of the electoral calendar and other preparatory work under way for the elections of 2015.

3. They welcome the continued performance of the National Independent Human Rights Commission, as well as on-going efforts to improve its coverage of the country.
4. They take note of the law on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and of the appointment of credible commissioners as an important first step to that should lead to a comprehensive transitional justice process incorporating both truth-seeking and reconciliation as well as accountability for committed crimes.
5. They take note of the on-going economic reforms to enhance macroeconomic stability, including the policy of zero tolerance on corruption, and continued efforts towards improving fiscal policies, namely by the Burundian Tax Authority (OBR), the business environment and the development of the private sector.
6. In addition of progress noticed under the first pillar of the PRSP-II, participants welcome significant progress achieved under the other three pillars. With regard to progress achieved under the second pillar on the transformation of the Burundian economy, partners welcome efforts aimed at improving the business environment and progress in the agriculture sector. They take note of large infrastructure projects under way, in particular in the sectors of transportation and energy, which should significantly contribute to improving the potential of growth in the upcoming years. They underscore the commitment of the country to better integrate itself in the regional (through EAC) and global economy.
7. With regard to progress achieved under the third pillar on quality social services, they welcome sustained efforts to implement policies of inclusion in matters related to universal education, access to health care and to different mechanisms of social protection. They encourage the Government of Burundi to focus efforts on improving the quality of services including access to safe drinking water, food security and quality of nutrition.
8. With regard to progress achieved under the fourth pillar related to environment and landscape management, participants welcome progress in addressing the land issue and they encourage the Government to promote a better adaptation to climate change.
9. They welcome continued engagement by regional and international partners in support of the Government's reform agenda and of the elections of 2015. They particularly acknowledge the work accomplished by the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the UN Mission to Burundi, BNUB, under the leadership of the SRSG, and welcome the UN Electoral Observer Mission to be deployed on 1 January 2015, the continuation of the stand-alone Office of the High-Commissioner on Human Rights' (OHCHR) presence in Burundi, the strengthening of the UN Country Team, as well as the additional resources provided by the UN Peacebuilding Fund.
10. They welcome progress achieved in translating the pledges made at the Geneva Conference and during subsequent sectorial conferences into concrete commitments, as reflected in different cooperation programs.

Areas requiring further attention and engagement

11. Notwithstanding this progress, participants agreed that there are challenges; in particular those related to the upcoming elections that require sustained attention in order to achieving a free, transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful process building on the positive steps already taken. In this regard, and in line with the roadmap for the elections of 2015, they underscore the need to accompany the Government in its efforts aimed at facilitating the dialogue among all political actors.
12. They also note that additional efforts are needed to implement national priority policies such as the National Strategy on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption.
13. They are concerned by the fact that despite the reforms initiated, the economy remains fragile due to internal structural weaknesses and the slowdown of the international economy, and that budget constraints have a negative impact on social sectors and pro-poor spending (health, education, transport, agriculture). They note that macro-economic reforms are yet to translate in increased job opportunities and better living conditions, in particular for the youth and for the people of Burundi.
14. They note that Burundi remains heavily dependent on external funding, and they underscore the need to increase revenues generated through the promotion of private investment and through the expansion of the base of domestic revenues.
15. They underscore the need to address the implications of BNUB's departure as identified in the Joint Transition Plan adopted by the Transition Steering Group, in particular in the areas of political dialogue, high-level facilitation and advocacy and human rights. In this regard, they welcome the UN Electoral Observer Mission (MENUB) and the country Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in agreement with the Government of Burundi.

Mutual Commitments

16. Recalling that on 29th October 2012, at the Geneva Conference, the Government of Burundi reiterated its commitment to reforms, including improving the human rights situation and the rule of law, concrete measures to implement the policy of zero tolerance on corruption, action to fight impunity, the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms, ensuring respect of fundamental freedoms, as well as an open and inclusive political climate in view of the elections of 2015;
17. ***The Government of Burundi*** commits to pursue the promotion of all public freedoms, to ensure the protection of all human rights defenders, and to redouble its efforts to ensure that all human rights violations are seriously investigated, and that the perpetrators are held accountable and punished in accordance to the law.

18. The Government commits to guarantee a free, transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful electoral process and to implement the road map and the code of conduct for political parties and political actors, in accordance with the Constitution and the electoral code.
19. The Government commits to ensure the independence of the CENI and its provincial and communal affiliations, as well as its engagements with all partners on the basis of the principle of equality between citizens and candidates.
20. The Government will work with the political parties to ensure that the youth are neither politically manipulated nor committing violent acts nor acts of intimidation, but instead are allowed to substantially and constructively participate in public life.
21. The Government commits to promote and reinforce policies aimed at improving the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, in particular in light of the conclusions of the national meeting on Judiciary, “les Etats Generaux de la Justice”.
22. The Government further commits to ensuring that the TRC will accomplish its mandate in an independent and inclusive manner in line with the results of the national consultations in 2009 and international standards and practice, and the TRC will address all issues at the heart of the conflicts since Burundi’s independence in 1962.
23. The Government commits to protect the National Committee on Land and other Assets (CNTB) and the Special Court on Land Issues from political interferences, with the objective to reinforce national reconciliation.
24. The Government will implement policy recommendations agreed upon with bilateral partners, multilateral organizations and international financial institutions to improve the performance of the economy and the public finances management, including through domestic resources mobilization, and it will take concrete measures and actions to implement the National Strategy on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption and its action plan.
25. ***The international and regional partners*** of Burundi commit to continue their support to the country's efforts and commitments in view of improving the well being of the Burundian people through basic social services.
26. In accordance with the mutual engagements made at the Geneva Conference and at the present Round Table, partners commit to ensure the complete disbursement of the resources pledged, in line with the principle of alignment and aid predictability, and to provide the policy advice and technical assistance required to take forward the Government’s commitments in its development strategy.
27. In their cooperation with Burundi, international and regional partners will take into account the BNUB Joint Transition Plan, in particular through an efficient accompaniment of the elections of 2015, in coordination with all international elections observer missions, as well as by ensuring that the Office of the High-Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) has the resources required to continue to carry out its work in Burundi effectively.

28. Following the conclusion of free, transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2015, international and regional partners will engage with the Government of Burundi in a policy dialogue aimed at strengthening and implementing the Vision Burundi 2025 and to establish the foundation of the next generation of the development strategy.
