

Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Burundi
2 November 2021
Chair's Summary

1. On 2 November, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an ambassadorial-level meeting on Burundi chaired by H.E. Ms. Pascale Baeriswyl, Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration. Building on the presentation of Burundi's *National Programme on Peace Capitalization, Social Stability and Promotion of Economic Growth* ("the Programme") to the PBC in July, the meeting allowed member states to learn about the challenges to youth economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in Burundi as well as how the UN is working to support youth economic empowerment.
2. In her opening remarks, the Chair noted that at the last meeting of the Configuration, member states expressed the wish to discuss the issue of support for youth economic development. She informed that the importance of empowering young people in Burundi was also discussed during her meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, H.E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, in September. The Chair stressed that the creation and maintenance of legal, financial and educational conditions conducive to the development of youth employment opportunities was an essential component of peacebuilding. In this regard, she emphasized that Burundi could continue to count on the PBC as an ally, noting that the PBC's key role in mobilizing support and its strategic action plan on youth and peacebuilding.
3. H.E. Mr. Zéphyrin Maniratanga, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the UN, welcomed the meeting, and the participation of the youth briefers in particular, and assured the PBC of Burundi's support to the Configuration. He noted that the country's National Development Program places particular importance on addressing the needs of vulnerable groups and that the Programme, which operationalizes the Government's six priorities, includes youth employment. The Ambassador briefed on recent developments in Burundi since July. Regarding the environment, he recalled the floods and rising level of Lake Tanganyika and informed that the government's *Ewe Burundi Urambaye* programme sought funds to help combat these and other negative effects of climate change. Concerning political developments, he updated that refugees as well as political opponents continue to return to Burundi, highlighting that the latter had returned principally from Europe. He emphasized the good work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and reiterated the importance of reconciliation in ensuring long-term stability, calling for support by the international community. At the diplomatic level, the Ambassador informed that security and peace in country had helped to normalize diplomatic relations and restore cooperation with bilateral and multilateral partners. Regarding human rights, he reiterated that the government was committed to protecting and promoting human rights, the fight against impunity and corruption, the independence of the

judiciary and the good functioning of transitional justice processes and the work of the Independent Human Rights Commission. He informed of an ongoing dialogue with the media, civil society organizations and political parties. The Ambassador closed by reiterating the Government's commitment to collaboration with all technical, financial and multilateral partners to achieve the Programme and promote economic growth.

4. Mr. Damien Mama, UN Resident Coordinator in Burundi, noted the timeliness of a meeting on youth economic empowerment and informed that the absorption capacity in Burundi's labor market is limited in view of the large number of youth that enter it each year. He pointed out the necessity to bolster private sector development and improve the performance of the education system in order to close the gap between skills and the needs of the labor market. He informed of several UN projects supporting youth economic empowerment including a capacity-building project with nearly 10,000 beneficiaries under the UPSHIFT Programme, a joint UNICEF-UNFPA-UNDP project in Ruyigi province to empower girls and boys, and the Generation Unlimited initiative, a global multi-sectoral partnership that helps young people become productive and engaged members of society. He also noted that the Peacebuilding Fund has invested nearly \$5 million in five projects specifically focused on youth empowerment and participation in Burundi since 2015. Mr. Mama further informed that the UNCT developed a strategic positioning document calling for investments in agricultural value chains to address the interrelated issues of youth employment and education, nutrition, infrastructure, energy, water and institutional and economic governance. In closing, he appealed to all partners to support Burundi's socio-economic development efforts as well as to the Government of Burundi to continue and amplify its current efforts to create a more encouraging and attractive environment for investment and explore new productive poles, while ensuring that young men and women are at the heart of the strategy.
5. Mr. Sixte Niyuhire, Administrator Director-General of the Youth Investment Bank (BIJE), explained that the Youth Investment Bank was one of the projects of the National Development Plan. He noted that addressing youth employment was at the heart of Burundi's macroeconomic policy and welcomed the government's efforts to empower youth by creating BIJE as well as Youth Stimulus, Guarantee and Support Fund and the Economic Empowerment and Employment Program for Young Graduates. He informed that BIJE opened in January 2021 and started to finance youth projects in July 2021. Since then, BIJE has disbursed FBU 386 million to 59 youth enterprises and cooperatives owned by 1809 youth members, for projects in different sectors such as the production of artisanal goods, agriculture and IT. In closing Mr. Niyuhire expressed his appreciation for the meeting, emphasizing that youth economic empowerment and the promotion of development would help to ensure peace and security in Burundi.
6. Mr. Wilbert Dusabe, Owner of *La Maison du Fermier* agricultural company, explained that La Maison du Fermier is a business that uses innovations in agro-technologies in fish breeding,

animal husbandry, animal feed, crop control and green energy production for farm needs. He informed that it was also an agricultural farm which provided training courses for youth. The farm had trained 894 youth, who later created nearly 500 jobs for themselves in agriculture particularly in animal husbandry. Mr. Dusabe further informed that the farm had helped to create 3091 non-permanent jobs for youth as well as two permanent jobs for two young engineers. He welcomed the Burundian government's initiatives and thanked BIJE's partnership in the trainings.

7. Ms. Yvonne Kwitonde, representing the Cooperative of Young People for Self-Development, informed that the Cooperative aimed to create jobs for youth, and young women in particular through animal husbandry. The Cooperative submitted an animal husbandry project to BIJE, and after receiving support, has seen an increase in animal production as well as milk production and the sales of local milk products. She further informed that there was an increase in the number of women working. Ms. Kwitonde thanked the government for its initiatives in support of youth empowerment.
8. Ms. Desideratte Minani explained that her association, Ejo Ni Heza, was an entrepreneurial initiative inspired by life skills training and the entrepreneurial self-care model. She informed that the association had started saving until they found enough capital to rent land to grow corn and beans. She recalled that after completing the upshift methodology training of identifying community challenges and co-creative innovative solutions in response, members of the association identified that lack of hygiene was a community challenge they wanted to address. After an association member received training in soap production, the association started producing soap in September 2020 with a capital of 400,000 FBU and had since made a profit of 600,000 FBU. She informed of the associations intention to launch a third entrepreneurial project on the sewing with the support of two association members currently in sewing training. In closing Ms. Minani expressed thanks for the capacity building support provided by a project financed by the Peacebuilding Fund and emphasized that cohesion among young people is an essential component of economic empowerment.
9. Ms. Daines Nkurunziza, a seamstress, described the difficulties of affording school and was thankful for the opportunity to learn entrepreneurship skills because of project financed by the Peacebuilding Fund. She informed that she had joined a solidarity group of 30 youth which allowed her to access credit for a small business and, with her savings, she set up a sewing workshop and bought her own sewing machine. She welcomed her new financial independence and the ability to contribute to her family and hoped to expand her business to help her friends who are still in poverty. Ms. Nkurunziza expressed hope to see more commitment from development partners to improve access to credit for entrepreneurs, including banking services by phone.

10. Mr. Hugue Nimpagaritse, entrepreneur and founder of the company Ibanga, informed that his company works in the fight against plastic by producing environmentally friendly packaging. He explained that he and other entrepreneurs had recently toured Burundi to raise awareness among young people about entrepreneurship and encouraged them to see challenges as opportunities for self-creation of employment. He noted that youth often lack a means to pay for preliminary studies and the writing of realistic business plans and, as a result, most youth startups go bankrupt. Mr. Nimpagaritse further explained that entrepreneurship training based on theory does not allow youth to have sufficient information and clear guidance in this field, and emphasized the importance mentoring by practitioners. He commended the Government for its support to mentorship initiatives.
11. Mr. Roland Rugero, Executive Director of Jimbere magazine, recalled that 71% of Burundi's population is below the age of 35, and that more than 93% of school graduates spend five years looking for their first job. He emphasized that completing school does not guarantee employment in Burundi because the majority of jobs are in agriculture and the private sector is limited. He underscored the importance of rural entrepreneurship and noted that Jimbere had documented that youth throughout the country were committed to developing their own wealth. He welcomed the Government's increasing involvement and initiatives to finance entrepreneurship and also noted the important role of the diaspora in engaging youth. Mr. Rugero emphasized that youth needed space to express their aspirations and needs and commended the PBC meeting for allowing youth to be heard. In closing, he encouraged partners to consider strategic support to youth in cross-cutting sectors such as culture and tourism and called for the PBC's continuous engagement on youth empowerment.
12. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:
 - They commended the Government of Burundi's efforts to address youth unemployment and promote youth economic empowerment and welcomed the establishment of the Youth Investment Bank as well as the Youth Stimulus, Guarantee and Support Fund, the Economic Empowerment and Employment Program for Young Graduates and the Economic Groups of Youth Solidarity.
 - They welcomed the progress made in peace and security, environmental protection, and in the return of refugees, and underlined the importance of justice and reconciliation and encouraged the government to continue efforts and cooperation in strengthening the rule of law and human rights.
 - They lauded the participation of youth briefers at the meeting and underscored the key role of youth in socio-economic development. They emphasized the timeliness of the meeting given the Secretary-General's recently released report on the Common Agenda, which encourages entrepreneurship among young people as it leads to increased levels of

ownership and sustainability of results. They encouraged all stakeholders to support meaningful, diverse and effective youth engagement.

- They underscored the importance of regional cooperation and integration and noted the importance of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in facilitating youth development.
- They reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development and called for ongoing support to the National Development Plan and the *Programme*.
- They reiterated the importance of inclusion to sustaining peace and encouraged the effective integration of returnees and IDPs. Additionally, they called for dedicated financing for women entrepreneurs.

13. In closing, the Chair thanked the Resident Coordinator and the youth briefers for sharing their experiences, needs and priorities. She welcomed the suggestion by Mr. Rugero for follow-up to the meeting and informed that she would like to visit Burundi in the coming months to meet with the Government of Burundi and other stakeholders, including young Burundians. She stressed the importance of the Peacebuilding Fund projects in Burundi and emphasized the importance of deepening its work with youth and women. The Chair underscored the need to identify ways in which the PBC could solidify its mobilization role and unite donors around common priorities.