

Unofficial summary of the Second Review Meeting of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi

Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission

4 February 2009, 11AM, Conference Room 2

I. Introduction

1. The second bi-annual review meeting on the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding for Burundi took place on 4 February 2009 in New York. The purpose of the meeting was to assess progress in priority areas in peacebuilding on the basis of mutual engagements by the Government of Burundi and Peacebuilding Commission, and to identify remaining challenges. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the Burundi-based national and international stakeholders who had prepared the report under the consideration of the meeting. He also expressed his gratitude to the Burundi delegation, led by honorable Mr. Melchior Wagara, Chef de Cabinet of the President. The Chair noted that there had been progress since the last review meeting, particularly on the peace process. However, he noted that many important challenges remain requiring attention and support from the Commission.

II. Presentation by the Burundi Government

2. Mr. Wagara presented the Bi-annual report of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi, stressing the inclusive and participatory nature of the process. He underscored the report reflected an assessment on progress, areas of concern as well as recommendations for follow-up actions that were conducted in a consultative manner by the national and international stakeholders. Concerning progress achieved in good governance, Mr. Wagara welcomed that a “culture of dialogue” between national partners was emerging, notably with their commitment to establish a permanent forum for dialogue, including political parties and civil society. Moreover, the tension between the Ministerial portfolios and areas of responsibility had been resolved. A Presidential decree concerning establishment of an independent National Electoral Commission had been issued. Notwithstanding the increase in prosecution of cases against corruption, the capacities of police and judiciary remained weak requiring additional assistance.

3. Mr. Wagara reported a significant progress in implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement owing to regular dialogue by the Head of State with the leader of the Palipehutu-FNL, and 4 December 2008 Declaration of Regional Heads of State in Bujumbura. In the area of security and rule of law, efforts to professionalise the defence and security corps continued, whilst a National Security Council and provincial security committees had been established. Preparations for national transitional justice consultations and discussion on modalities for its implementation were ongoing with relevant partners. Women and youth were more and more involved in peace consolidation efforts in the country.

4. In conclusion, he underscored that the gains of the Strategic Framework should be further consolidated and diversified. The peacebuilding process in Burundi also required additional resources, particularly for the integration of Palipehutu/FNL combatants into national institutions and for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts. He urged that international community deliver on commitments made during May 2007 donor round-table, including for the Government's Priority Action Plan.

III. Remarks by the United Nations

4. Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Youssef Mahmoud, underscored the active role of the international partners in the Political Forum of the Partnership Coordination Group in undertaking the bi-annual review. Among the main challenges outstanding, Mr. Mahmoud highlighted implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, including DDR and durable socio-economic reintegration of former combatants and displaced persons. He expressed readiness of the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) to continue its mandate given by the Security Council in the peace process and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development.

5. Mr. Ejiviome Otobo, Officer-in-Charge for Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), expressed his gratitude to the Government of Burundi and national and international stakeholders involved in the review process. Following collective efforts and milestones achieved by the Peacebuilding Commission, it was time to renew mutual commitments and consolidate efforts for durable peace, recovery and development. He welcomed the request from the PBC for PBSO to conduct an assessment of impact of the Peacebuilding Commission's work in Burundi and to present a report and recommendations, prepared in consultation with the relevant partners, to PBC at the forthcoming bi-annual review meeting.

IV. Discussion and key messages

6. PBC members welcomed the Bi-Annual Review report and expressed their appreciation to the Government of Burundi, stakeholders in Burundi, the Chair of the Burundi Configuration, BINUB and PBSO. The considerable progress in the peace process was hailed and appreciation expressed to the Regional Peace Initiative, the South African Facilitation, the Political Directorate and BINUB. Members also stressed the national ownership and responsibility of Burundi stakeholders to ensure success of the peace process, and renewed their commitment to remain in support of the process.

7. Members stressed that major challenges remained, including the further outstanding elements of the peace process, institutionalization of political dialogue amongst stakeholders and preparations for the forthcoming national elections, consolidation of good governance and efforts to strengthen rule of law and human rights. Speaking from Bujumbura, the Burundian civil society member stated that the PBC should

focus on preparations for 2010 elections to address risks; support DDR efforts; and to help ensure dignity and respect for human rights in their daily lives.

a) Good governance

8. Many members called on the Government to establish a legal framework for the 2010 elections in Burundi and expressed their readiness to provide support required. Some delegations noted that there were still some concerns with the regard to the lack of political space and the hardening of attitudes towards political parties in Burundi. Many considered progress in this area essential for ensuring conditions and environment conducive to free and fair elections to be held in 2010 in Burundi. It was stated that monitoring and supporting the 2010 elections should be a priority for the PBC. BINUB's role to promote political dialogue in light of its mandate from the Security Council was emphasized. Canada announced the pledge of its Government to provide \$200 million in promotion of democracy and good governance. Role of civil society in promoting democracy and governance was underscored.

b) Human rights, justice and rule of law

9. Many members urged the Government of Burundi to take decisive steps to improve the human rights situation, to establish the national independent Human Rights Commission in line with the Paris Principles, and to undertake the transitional justice process effectively and in a manner that would address past grievances and promote national reconciliation. The Government was called to enhance its fight against impunity and to adopt, without further delay, a revised penal code. The establishment of the Human Rights Commission and 2010 national elections were considered as key milestones for PBC. The role of BINUB was also stressed in protection of human rights, including women and children in particular.

c) Security Sector Reform (SSR) and DDR

10. Uruguay noted its readiness to establish diplomatic relations with Burundi and commence technical cooperation in the fields of DDR, SSR and combating the proliferation of small arms. Some delegations urged the Government to take further steps to develop national SSR plan and to professionalize security forces. The linkage was underlined between the DDR and SSR efforts. In this regard, the agreed on technical modalities for the rightsizing process of army and the police should be promoted as part of national efforts to reform the security sector. Speaking from Bujumbura, the Tanzanian Ambassador to Burundi noted that further steps must be taken to complete the process and urged the international community to ensure timely financial support to DDR.

d) Land issue and socio-economic recovery

11. Members noted with appreciation the positive steps taken by the Government of Burundi, including the adoption of legislation on land tenure. They also called on the Government of Burundi to ensure that women's rights to own land were enforced. The role of youth was stressed and the need for sustainable efforts to integrate former combatants into communities more effectively. The EU noted its contribution of \$20 million in promotion of rural and health sector development. One delegation stressed the role of East African Regional Community in promoting regional economic and political integration which can help consolidate gains of peace in the region.

V. CSM-specific issues

12. The PBC was called to prioritize its objectives for the coming months. The need for a closer coordination between PBC members in New York and members in Bujumbura was stressed to improve the overall impact of peace consolidation efforts in Burundi. The Government was commended for conducting the review, but it was also stressed that the PBC should regard it as a process rather than an event. Members also stressed the Government's role in guiding the PBC and the need for PBC members to further rationalize monitoring structures. It was noted that the PBC had an essential role to play in assisting the Government of Burundi in meeting the remaining challenges and providing advice to the Security Council. It was stressed that investment by the PBC in post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Burundi was a "win-win" situation which carried a multiplier effect for the region and for the international community.

VI. Conclusions

13. The Chair thanked all participants and closed the meeting. He announced the procedures for adoption of the PBC Conclusions and recommendations, which were subsequently agreed through a silence procedure.

*Prepared by PBSO
10 February 2009*