

16 December 2009

To : Members of the PBC - Burundi Configuration

**Informal working luncheon of the Country Specific
Configuration of the PBC on Burundi
New York, 11 December 2009, 13 h30 - Swiss Mission**

Chair's summary

On Friday, 11 December 2009, from 13:30 to 15:30 pm, in the premises of the Swiss Mission to the United Nations, a working luncheon bringing together members of the Country Specific Configuration of the PBC on Burundi was hosted by H.E. Mr. Peter Maurer, Chairperson of the PBC Country-Specific Configuration of Burundi. The purpose of the working luncheon was to seize the opportunity of the presence of BINUB/ERSG Youssef Mahmoud in New York for the 6th SG report on BINUB to informally discuss the way forward in supporting the 2010 elections and the reintegration process in Burundi.

In his update ERSG Mahmoud referred to the 6th SG report and the preliminary remarks he made to the Security Council on 10 December 2009 that provide information on the most recent developments in Burundi

He also shared a number of useful lessons learned from the ongoing support to peacebuilding process in Burundi:

In supporting peacebuilding efforts in countries like Burundi, the multilateral system is under pressure to deliver quick results. The nature of peacebuilding makes it challenging to keep a right balance between the quick results we want and the long term nature of the peacebuilding process. The way we report on our activities should take that balance into account. We need to manage the tension between externally driven norms and internal processes that are specific to a particular country. Peacebuilding must be internally driven. What is important in the end is not "our" results (what we achieve) but rather "their results" (what the country on the agenda does and achieve with what we do for them).

He mentioned that Burundi has made tangible and commendable progress. Using the metaphor of a half full/half empty glass, he said that if one looks where the country came from, the glass is half full - whereas someone who is not aware of the progress made could say that the glass is half empty. He highlighted some of the most significant outstanding challenges:

Elections related stress: elections put any country under stress, and the stress is particularly higher in post conflict countries like Burundi. Reminding that the mechanisms to effectively support elections are in place, ERSG Mahmoud advised that the PBC should remain vigilant and ensure that gains are not jeopardized by tensions related to elections;

Socio-economic reintegration is urgent. ERSG made an appeal to members of the PBC to mobilize around the Chair. He suggested that one or two members could join the Chair as champions of this process [Sweden has already expressed their interest].

Development of the country in general: We should not wait for a total stability before encouraging long term investments, instead we should think about development in post conflict differently. The country has taken a decisive step by joining the East African Community while still dealing with the fragile economy and other post conflict challenges. PBC members could support this dynamic by encouraging entrepreneurs and business people to come and invest in Burundi.

With regards to the new mandate of BINUB, the Delegate of France who is leading the drafting of the SC resolution mentioned that there would be no major change in the mandate of BINUB. They are working with the Government of Burundi. The on-going discussions are consensual; the target date for the adoption of the resolution is Thursday 17 December.

Interventions from PBC members and discussion with ERSG Mahmoud focused on the following:

Elections:

Security of elections: the continuing presence of arms in private hands and the activities of youth groups are of concern. There is a need for an operational capacity of the Police which is a young institution; BINUB has helped with some training and equipments, but bilateral support should come forward for hardware, including shelter. Netherlands and Belgium are active in this regard. Disarmament is an ongoing effort; progress is reflected in the SG report. Collecting arms is not enough; disarmament should be integrated with efforts of restoring trust and economic recovery.

Calendar and possible stumbling blocs for elections: These include the stress, a further polarization of political parties and problems related to the issuing of the identity card. The UN is working with the Government of Burundi to ensure provision of identity cards to all citizens. The practice of dialogue has been strengthened by the project "Cadre de dialogue"; the Political Parties have agreed on a Permanent Forum bringing them together. The crucial moment will be the acceptance of results of elections. The PBC needs to help the country better

prepare for the period after elections, which will be decisive for the normalization of the country.

Observation of elections: The President of Burundi has expressed his wish to have long terms observers who would cover a period of 3-4 months before and some weeks after the elections. The UN is working with the AU, the sub region and other partners including the EU to test the implementation of this idea. If this is successful, Burundi will be the first instance of long-term election observation of this type.

Socio-economic reintegration: issues raised included the residual refugees in Tanzania to come back, the environment conducive to welcoming and reintegrating returning refugees as well as land issues. Refugees: The Tripartite Commission Burundi-Tanzania-HCR is working on all issues related to the return of refugees, and the Minister of National Solidarity has been playing a key role, including visiting refugees' camps and having open discussions with refugees on their concerns. Efforts to ensure their insertion include language training, the Integrated Peace Villages, and addressing the land issues with the support of the Land Commission. If the economy of Burundi becomes more attractive, it might contribute to resolve the issue of refugees.

Private investment in Burundi: The Burundian Delegate mentioned coffee and tourism among the potential sectors for foreign private investment.

In concluding the working luncheon, the Chair thanked ERSG Mahmoud for his time and insightful comments, as well as members for their continued commitment. He confirmed the PBC planned visit to Burundi end January 2010. He will contact PBC members to agree on which members will accompany him for this visit.
