

Visit of Ambassador Paul Seger, Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration to Washington, October 6-7, 2010

On 6 Oct, Ambassador Paul Seger, chair, PBC Burundi Configuration, visited the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The purpose of the visit was to establish initial contacts with Burundi-related offices of the two institutions and, taking advantage of the presence of field representatives, to discuss peacebuilding issues in the context of a new poverty-reduction strategy paper (PRSP) the government of Burundi has started to work on.

The Chair was accompanied by Gregor Binkert, Deputy Head of Department at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Johann Aeschlimann, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, Olanrewaju Shasore, Political Affairs Officer, Department of Political Affairs, and Vincent Kayijuka, Senior Peacebuilding Officer, Peacebuilding Support Office.

Institutions visited and officials met

The World Bank

1. Michel Mordasini, Executive Director for Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Poland, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
2. John McIntire Country Director, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda
3. Mercy Tembon Country Manager, Burundi
4. Faris Hada-Zervos, Advisor and Director a.i, Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Team
5. Ian Bannon, Sector Manager, Fragile States, Conflict & Social Development.
6. Henriette von Kaltenborn-Stachau, Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Team

The IMF

7. Iacovos Ioannou, Senior Economist for Burundi

Main results of the visit

Assessment of the situation, current challenges and prospects: interlocutors agree that Burundi is at a crossroad following the elections. The next stage of the peacebuilding process will be dominated by economic development issues, provided that the political situation that ensued after the electoral boycott by the opposition will not deteriorate, trust in the government by citizens and by investors is solidified, the rule of law is strengthened and macroeconomic discipline is maintained. The World Bank representatives in the region have close relations with the President and his cabinet. The economy is slowly picking up. Growth is projected at 5 percent per year in the medium term. World Bank interlocutors express concern about an observed trend for violence and insecurity. They stress that while the outlook is generally good, there remain political and social issues of governance, dialogue, reintegration and reconciliation that need to continue to be addressed. It is noted that due to limited absorption capacities, Burundi has not been able to put all World-Bank resources to use.

Peacebuilding agenda: Partners suggest that consolidating and building peace remain a priority in Burundi. A peacebuilding agenda could focus on: 1) groups made vulnerable by the conflict; 2) dialogue and other inclusive activities that bring people together 3) mechanisms to make government accountable for the delivery of basic services to the people including outreach/communication efforts. Interlocutors underline that peacebuilding processes should be driven from the field and that the PBC should strive to ensure a right balance between the process in the field and the process in New York/Washington.

The new PRSP and peacebuilding issues: Interlocutors stress that the PRSP is a government-led and government-owned process, highly inclusive with the participation of donors in the field. World Bank experts agree that PRSPs in post-conflict countries should be conflict-sensitive and should incorporate peacebuilding issues – for example as one pillar of a PRSP. An alternative approach could be to complement a PRSP with a separate peacebuilding strategy, both cross-referenced. The role of the PBC in the PRSP process is for the government of Burundi to decide. Given that according to some government representatives there is no intention to start a grass-roots consultation process from scratch, as there are already existing communal plans to be used as reference points, world bank experts are of a view that the PRSP could be finalized by summer 2011. The World Bank suggests that on the basis of the new PRSP it could co-host with the PBC a donor conference in Bujumbura in the context of a Consultative Group meeting in September/October 2011.

Conclusions and next steps

There seems to be reluctance on the part of the World Bank interlocutors to engage in political issues such as SSR, dialogue with the opposition, Human Rights and others. Interlocutors note that consultations between the government and international donors on the new PRSP are well developed.

In conclusion, the Chair suggests the following avenues for action:

- a) The PBC – including the government of Burundi – come to terms on the peacebuilding issues that have to be pursued in the course of the next few years, with a possible view of redefining the PBC engagement in Burundi.
- b) The PBC and the donor community come to agreement regarding the relevance and the prioritization of peacebuilding issues in the context of a new PRSP
- c) The PBC is of service as a convener and a platform of political discussion whenever one particular issue is blocked. Example: the two major corruption cases. This role of the PBC requires very close and open cooperation with the ERSG and the RC
- d) The PBC is of service as an advocate for Burundi in multilateral settings, the civil society and the business community, and it uses its influence to mobilize resources for immediate peacebuilding priorities such as the implementation of the national reintegration strategy
- e) Like any good advocate would do with his client, the PBC should continue to maintain an open and frank dialogue with Burundi on issues relevant to peacebuilding.

In summary, the PBC will help addressing the remaining peacebuilding challenges through its ongoing engagement and dialogue with Burundi. . The upcoming 5th biannual review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding will provide for a thorough discussion and for inputs to the PRSP-process.