

**The situation in Burundi**  
**Statement by Ambassador Jürg Lauber,**  
**Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission**

*UN Security Council, 30 October 2019*

Mr. President

Members of the Council

On behalf of the PBC Burundi Configuration, I thank you for inviting me to brief the Security Council and for the excellent cooperation between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

As per established practice, this statement has been approved by the Members of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC, including the country concerned, Burundi.

I had the opportunity to provide an overview of the Configuration's engagement with Burundi to the Council during the informal interactive dialogue held on 28 August 2019. On this occasion, I highlighted that the discussions in the Configuration reflect a shared commitment to continue accompanying Burundi leading up to the 2020 elections and beyond with a view to the consolidation of peace and promoting inclusive socio-economic development.

On 27 September, in the margins of the opening of the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, I was received by **H.E. Mr. Ezechiel Nibigira, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burundi**, for a bilateral meeting. Our discussion centered on the next steps in terms of peacebuilding activities in Burundi, including my next visit to the country as Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration. I indicated that the Configuration will continue serving as a platform for dialogue on the cooperation between Burundi and its international partners, in support of the implementation of Burundi's National Development Plan. I also highlighted



the importance of preventing a slowdown in socio-economic programs as the 2020 elections draw closer. Furthermore, I underscored the need for peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections and suggested that the PBC can serve as a platform to identify activities in support of a conducive environment for such a process. The Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that the Ministry of Interior of Burundi recently convened meetings between the ruling party CNDD-FDD and the opposition parties, including the *Congrès National pour la Liberté* (CNL) and that the government addressed a call for tolerance to all political actors.

I have underlined on previous occasions the importance attached to the complementarity and coherence between the engagement of the PBC and that of other actors, including this Council, Member States of the region and the United Nations system in its entirety. In line with this approach, I continue engaging with key interlocutors on developments in Burundi. I recently had the privilege to exchange thoughts with **H.E. Ambassador Libérat Mfumukeko**, Secretary-General of the East African Community, with **Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita**, as well as with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, **H.E. Mr. Michel Kafando**. I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for our excellent working relationship, his support and advice, and for his commitment.

Let me now turn to developments in Burundi, which are relevant from a peacebuilding perspective, and to what they mean for the engagement of the Configuration.

First, the **preparations for the general elections in 2020** in Burundi continue to mark the political context in the country. Burundian government representatives have underlined on several occasions that President Nkurunziza will not stand as a candidate in the upcoming elections. The ruling party CNDD-FDD is expected to choose their presidential candidate in early 2020. According to media reports, several politicians belonging to opposition parties have recently returned to Burundi for discussions on their repatriation and the current electoral process. At the same time, reports about alleged human rights violations and some incidents of damage to infrastructure belonging to political parties have raised concerns over the democratic space ahead of the elections.



During the last meeting of the Configuration on 12 June 2019, the Permanent Representative of Burundi, H.E. Ambassador Albert Shingiro, informed PBC member states about the advanced state of preparations for the elections. These include the adoption of the Kayanza Roadmap by the government, the constitution of the national independent electoral commission (CENI), as well as the adoption of the electoral code in April and the issuance of the electoral calendar in June of this year. The Burundi Configuration has further been informed of the passing of the budget law 2019-2020, which foresees the financing of the 2020 elections through domestic resources. Meanwhile, the Configuration can serve as a platform for the identification of assistance for activities outside the operational budget for the elections, which contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections.

Second, the **voluntary return of Burundian refugees** from neighbouring countries is critical for peacebuilding, in particular at the community level. At the last meeting of the Configuration, the Permanent Representative of Burundi informed the members of the return of Burundians from neighbouring Tanzania to the country in large numbers. Member states have consistently called for these returns to be organized in full respect of international law and underscored the principles of voluntary, dignified and safe return. The PBC has also served as a platform to highlight the persistent funding needs for supporting the voluntary and dignified return of Burundians from neighbouring countries with the assistance of UNHCR as well as multi-agency efforts to enable the sustainable integration of returnees.

Third, cooperation in the **socio-economic dimension** remains key for reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and improving disaster preparedness and response in Burundi. The cooperation around the implementation of the Ebola response plan has brought together the Government of Burundi and technical and financial partners, including international NGOs, in a multi-sector, multi-partner approach centered on a key concern for the Burundian population. PBC member states have indicated their wish for an intensification of dialogue at the strategic and sector-specific levels with the Government of Burundi in support of the implementation of Burundi's development priorities. The Configuration also continues to serve as a platform to bring partners,



including the World Bank, together around the common objectives spelled out in the relevant strategic frameworks and in line with the National Development Plan.

Finally, the effective and meaningful inclusion of **women and youth** in public life and their full participation in decision-making on the future of their country is a crucial factor for sustaining peace. The second edition of the International Women Leaders' Conference, convened by the First Lady of Burundi, H.E. Ms. Denise Nkurunziza from 24 to 26 October, called on women to follow their destiny, take courage and act, as the consolidation of peace is their business (*«Femme de Destinée, lève-toi, prends courage et agis car la consolidation de la paix te concerne»*). In line with the PBC's gender strategy, member states have also expressed their support for the empowerment of women in Burundi. The PBC can further play a role – and should intensify its efforts – in supporting initiatives aimed at preventing conflict and mitigating tensions at the community level. The importance of such initiatives to **promote dialogue and reconciliation** extends beyond the electoral period, to strengthen resilience and preserve the gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. The Peacebuilding Fund supports projects that strengthen local dialogue, social cohesion, reconciliation, conflict resolution and prevention, the empowerment of women and youth, and the voluntary reintegration of refugees. The total envelope for approved operational projects under the PBF is slightly over 14 Million USD. As the testimonies of Burundian women mediators have made clear, support for the participation of women in peace processes must take a broad approach, including the strengthening of women's economic autonomy through revenue-generating activities.

Mr. President

Distinguished Members of the Council

I intend to pursue my mandate for the PBC Burundi Configuration in line with the priorities and recommendations that have received the support of the member states of the Configuration. These include possibilities for the PBC to accompany Burundi on the path towards free, fair, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2020 as well as the continuation of the socio-economic dialogue with the Government and its international partners. In close



cooperation with my Burundian counterpart, I will continue promoting the PBC as a platform for dialogue and exchange between Burundi and a broad range of member states and partners within the UN system and beyond. In close cooperation with the Burundian authorities, I am also preparing a visit to Burundi. As usual, I will seek to engage with a broad range of interlocutors, from government representatives and political parties to civil society, women and youth, economic actors, international and regional partners.

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of the Council,

Allow me to conclude with the following observations and recommendations:

(1) I encourage the United Nations to **remain engaged in Burundi** with an integrated approach, drawing on the strengths of each entity and striving towards policy coherence in order to consolidate peacebuilding gains and stay alert to the risks that jeopardize these gains.

(2) The government of Burundi, political parties and other stakeholders – with the support of the member states of the sub-region, the African Union and the United Nations – should work together in order to **create a conducive environment for peaceful, free, fair and inclusive elections**. This includes efforts to ensure the full realization of all human rights.

(3) I call on all member states to increase their support to projects and initiatives aimed at **reducing violence and mitigating tension**, including at the community level, throughout the election cycle. I will continue to engage the Configuration to serve as a platform to identify further possibilities to scale-up this support.

(4) Funding is urgently needed for the *Joint Refugee Return and Reintegration Plan 2019*. This inter-agency response plan is designed to offer a **safe and dignified repatriation** to Burundian refugees returning from the sub-region and to promote their resilience and



sustainable reintegration. I call on member states to give maximum support to this comprehensive plan, which is exemplary in leveraging synergies among existing humanitarian and development plans, including Burundi's National Development Plan, with a view to sustainable reintegration. Continued assistance is equally needed to maintain humanitarian standards in refugee camps in order to ensure that return remains an entirely voluntary decision.

(5) Through the Configuration, I will pursue efforts to sustain international support for the **implementation of the National Development Plan** and to support dialogue between the Government of Burundi and its bilateral and multilateral partners around the priorities identified in the plan.

I thank you for your interest and for the continuous support of the Members of the Security Council to the PBC.