

Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Burundi
17 March 2021
Chair's Summary

1. On 17 March, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an ambassadorial-level meeting on Burundi under the chairmanship of H.E. Ms. Pascale Baeriswyl, Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration to provide member states with the opportunity to learn about the priorities of Burundi's new government and to consider related bilateral and multilateral partners' engagement in support of these priorities.
2. The Chair welcomed participants to the first meeting of the year on Burundi and noted that it was also her first meeting as Chair. She recalled recent developments, including the 4 December 2020 Security Council Presidential Statement, as well as exchanges with Burundi's Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, who had underlined the government's openness to international cooperation and its willingness to increase regional engagements. The Chair recognized that Burundi had chosen to continue its engagement with the PBC and that the partnership was embarking on a new chapter to mobilize the international community in support of the Government of Burundi's priorities and the needs and aspirations of the people of Burundi. She recalled past engagements by the Configuration in the socio-economic dimension within an integrated approach to peacebuilding, which encompasses all pillars of the United Nations. She further emphasized the added value of the Burundi Configuration in complementing other players and initiatives at bilateral and regional levels and noted its role in promoting coherence among partners.
3. Mr. Evariste Ngendankengera, Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Burundi, reiterated Burundi's continued cooperation with the Configuration. He briefed on the government's domestic and foreign policy advances following the successful completion of the elections in 2020 and noted the importance of the Security Council's decision of 4 December 2020. He stressed the country's commitment to sustainable development and the fight against poverty as well as the strengthening of partnerships with bilateral and multilateral partners such as the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) and the European Union. Mr. Ngendankengera updated on Burundi's efforts to strengthen the process of national reconciliation and social cohesion, noting the re-opening of dialogue with sanctioned press agencies and the release of journalists from prison. He also informed of efforts to strengthen and facilitate the work national mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights, in particular the National Independent Human Rights Commission (CNIDH). He informed that the significant number of voluntary returnees was evidence of the restoration of peace and stability in the country and added that their socio-economic reintegration in host communities requires the technical and financial support of partners. Mr. Ngendankengera emphasized the importance of implementing the National

Development Plan 2018-2027 and the government's commitment to good governance, public health, agriculture, addressing youth unemployment, social protection for pensioners, and peace and reconciliation. He noted the government's efforts to address unemployment including the creation of investment banks for both youth and women and highlighted community-based cooperatives and associations to promote local agriculture production. He called on all bilateral and multilateral partners to assist Burundi and focus support on the National Development Plan. He closed by emphasizing the importance of coherent and consistent approaches to socio-economic development and informed that the government is ready to work with partners in the spirit of mutual respect and through mutually beneficial partnerships.

4. Ms. Nicole Kouassi, UN Resident Coordinator a.i. in Burundi, presented perspectives from the field on UN initiatives in Burundi. She noted that the government had developed a plan for sustainable socio-economic development and stressed the urgency required to address underlying structural challenges in Burundi. She informed that significant efforts had been made by the UN and IFIs in support of the government's priorities and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Recalling the successful political transition in 2020, she stressed the need to maintain the momentum towards peace and consider the context of the Arusha Accords. Ms. Kouassi noted the government's efforts to engage in constructive dialogue with the UN and its welcoming of the UN's Strategic Assessment Mission last year. She underscored the importance of the Peacebuilding Fund and updated that future investments would build on the gains made so far, based on an evaluation of the portfolios currently underway. She informed that the UNCT and partners are committed to supporting the two-year socio-economic response plan currently under discussion with the Government. Ms. Kouassi closed by calling upon the PBC to continue discussions with Burundian authorities and its partners to address socio-economic challenges as well as its peacebuilding priorities.
5. Ms. Veronique Kabongo, World Bank Country Manager in Burundi, briefed on the World Bank's interventions in Burundi. She informed that Burundi, an IDA country with an investment envelope of USD 860 million, had a total of 15 projects in the sectors of education, social protection, health, energy, agriculture, job creation, local development, environment, and roads and infrastructure. She highlighted the portfolio's successful performance and the exceptional disbursement rate last year with no ineligible expenses. She informed of additional efforts to further improve the performance of the portfolio by strengthening the fiduciary and safeguard capacity of Ministry of Finance. Ms. Kabongo also informed that the World Bank has one project under the "host and refugee" window, with plans to integrate the window into the sectors of education, health, social protection under the next strategy. Regarding strategic engagement, she highlighted that the Country Partnership Framework approved in 2019 has two strategic pillars – human capital and economic and social resilience – as well as a foundation in macro-economic stability, structural reforms and governance. In line with the World Bank's focus on fragile and

conflict-affected countries, Ms. Kabongo informed that Burundi is eligible for the IDA 19 Prevention and Resilience Allocation (PRA) that would increase its current envelope from USD 343 million to USD 600 million for the next two to three years. She referenced the National Program for Peacebuilding, Social Stability, and the Promotion of Economic Growth, informing that the program, once approved by the Government, will serve as a basis for the PRA. She underlined the World Bank's readiness to work in coordination with partners based on comparative advantages. She closed by welcoming President Ndayishimiye's focus on macro-economic stability and good governance and informed that the Bank and UNDP will support the set-up of an economic governance unit in the Presidency.

6. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, UN Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Peacebuilding Support, briefed on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Burundi. He recalled that the PBF has invested \$83 million dollars in projects ranging from the rule of law and the security sector to justice, human rights and the resolution of land-related disputes. He noted that, more recently, the PBF has supported projects concerning voluntary returnees and their host communities as well as projects on dialogue and social cohesion at local level. Looking ahead, he informed that the PBF has commissioned an independent evaluation of its portfolio for the period 2014 to 2020, to identify impact and guide future investments. The ASG also informed that the PBF is funding an in-depth situational analysis by Interpeace, which will identify peacebuilding gaps and opportunities and inform the PBF's financing strategy. He added that the analysis will be shared with the World Bank in support of the PRA in Burundi and will also be used by key Burundian stakeholders to identify peacebuilding priorities in support of a new National Program for Peacebuilding, Social Stability and the Promotion of Economic Growth. He closed by emphasizing that women's and youth empowerment was a priority for the PBF and that the Fund will remain open to supporting innovative peacebuilding proposals under the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives.
7. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:
 - They welcomed Burundi's continued engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission and noted the important contribution of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). They referenced the Security Council President's statement of 4 December 2020 and encouraged the continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission as a viable platform for dialogue and cooperation between Burundi and its partners and for mobilizing international support for the aspirations and needs of the Burundian people.
 - They acknowledged the positive momentum brought about by the political transition and welcomed the presentation of President Ndayishimiye's six priorities and the Government's efforts for peace and stability, economic growth, social cohesion and reconciliation in alignment with the country's National Development Plan (NDP) and the SDGs.

- They commended recent steps undertaken by Burundi to improve good governance, human rights, media freedoms and rule of law as well as to combat impunity and expressed their readiness to support further efforts to tackle remaining challenges. They emphasized the importance of democratic and peacebuilding processes that included civil society, women, youth and returnees.
- They further welcomed Burundi's renewed spirit of cooperation with the international community and stressed the importance of partnerships with regional and subregional organizations such as the African Union and the East African Community for socio-economic development and sustainable peace.
- They emphasized the importance of investment by the private sector and acknowledged the government's focus on good governance and the rule of law as an important basis for sustainable development as well as positive signal toward partners and foreign investors.
- They reiterated the need for the international community to take a more active role in support of Burundi's socio-economic development and peacebuilding priorities and stressed the importance of coordination, complementarity and coherence by partners. Several member states informed of initiatives in their bilateral cooperation with Burundi.
- Some member states highlighted the need for support to the voluntary return of refugees and their sustainable reintegration, expressed concern about the significant humanitarian needs in Burundi, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the impact of climate change, and called upon the international community to mobilize resources.

The Chair closed by thanking briefers and member states and underscored that the meeting provided the opportunity to pinpoint areas for constructive engagement and cooperation as well as the associated challenges. She summarized member states interventions, noting the strong call for coherence and the importance of an open and regular dialogue between partners in support of national programmes. She further noted the importance placed on an inclusive approach to peacebuilding and expectations for the PBC to hear more about the specific needs of women and youth. She reiterated that a focus on socio-economic needs will guide the PBC's engagement without excluding other equally important aspects for resilience, social cohesion and lasting peace and, in this regard, noted the importance of continued support by the PBF in Burundi. Lastly, she stated that the PBC would reflect on how best to deliver on commitments and expressed a desire to visit Burundi as soon as travel conditions permit.