

Peacebuilding Commission – Burundi Configuration

Summary of the informal meeting held at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations

On 15 July, the Burundi Configuration of the PBC had an informal meeting to hear a briefing on the recent visit of the chair to Bujumbura and to discuss next steps in the engagement of the PBC in Burundi. ERSG Charles Petrie was present. For lack of available space at the UN, the meeting had to take place at the Swiss Mission.

Ambassador Paul Seger, the Chair of the Configuration, informed on his visit that took place from 30 June to 3 July, i.e. in the days after the Presidential election. A detailed chair's summary was circulated to members of the configuration.

Burundi informed that in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 23 July, 7 political parties and 2 independent candidates are running. In the senatorial elections, scheduled for 28 July, two parties, CNDD-FDD and Uprona, are running.

ERSG Petrie observed that the elections process - while not meeting all expectations, given the boycott proclaimed by a number of political parties - revealed elements of a new positive reality as Burundi emerges from conflict. Among the key aspects he mentioned that, violence was no longer used to further political agenda and that civil society was emerging as an independent force.

Regarding next steps, Ambassador Seger proposed that the PBC should continue to be engaged in Burundi, concentrating on a small number of key priorities, including supporting political dialogue among the parties, including parties not represented in the parliament; strengthening the judicial system and the respect for human rights; and making use of the PBC's convening power to mobilize resources for and attract investment in an effort to reduce socio-economic pressures.

ERSG Petrie proposed to immediately engage the newly elected President and the government in devising a strategy for the future engagement of the UN in Burundi. He advocated a two-pronged 3-year-strategy. On the one hand, it would focus on residual peacebuilding tasks such as combating abuses in the administration of justice, dealing with the past, the socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants, returnees and IDPs, certain changes in the constitution and supporting the government in strengthening democratic structures. On the other hand, it would provide for a parallel initiative for economic development. ERSG Petrie said that such a strategy could be drafted and then discussed with the PBC by September and presented as part of the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council due in November.