



Unofficial summary

Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PEACE PROCESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PBC

12 December 2008, 10AM, Conference Room 1

1. The main purpose of the meeting was to have an update on recent developments in Burundi's peace process and to explore support that the Peacebuilding Commission could provide to ensure timely implementation of and full implementation of the 4 December Declaration of the Great Lakes Regional summit meeting held in Bujumbura and commitments made by parties to the peace process. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Anders Lidén (Sweden), Chairman of the Burundi CSM. In his introductory remarks, he welcomed Mr. Nqakula, outlined the agenda for the meeting and proposed for adoption the Conclusions of the meeting as circulated to members before the meeting.
2. Minister Charles Nqakula, South African Facilitator to the Burundi peace process, briefed the CSM members concerning the 4 December summit outcome and explained challenges relating to its implementation, including political integration of Palipehutu-FNL and its participation in the DDR process. Calling on PBC's support in these regards, the Minister reassured the PBC of the logistical and security assistance of the African Union taskforce for DDR tasks. He said that he would present a report in early 2009 to the Regional Initiative concerning the progress on the implementation, outstanding tasks if any, and an assessment of the security situation in the country, in consultation with UN.
3. Burundi stressed that the challenges for DDR implementation were critical and required international support. The general situation in Burundi following the recent breakthrough with Palipehutu-FNL was satisfactory, and there was cause for optimism that the Declaration would be implemented by 31 January. Burundi hoped that progress on peace process would enable the country move to a development phase. Members thanked Minister Nqakula and CSM Chair for bringing the PBC's attention to the peace process. A member voiced strong support on a need for PBC's assistance to parties in speedy implementation of provisions of the Declaration, in particular for transformation of FNL into a political party as well as for DDR. It also highlighted that the PBC could help develop further trust between President Nkurunziza and FNL leader Agathon Rwasa to ensure full and timely action, and for Burundi's ownership of the peace process.
4. Members of the region underscored the historical importance of the 4 December declaration, in particular the political integration of FNL, and the need for FNL to ensure the timely adoption of a constitutionally-compliant name for the party to register in accordance with the national law. The representatives stressed that the 2010 national elections and the process leading to those elections would require support from PBC. Furthermore, implementation of Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement and SSR would be crucial and could go a long way for consolidating peace in Burundi. A member stressed

that both the “space and scope for proactive role” for PBC were available in support of the peace process, including on DDR.

5. Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Youssef Mahmoud, shared the assessment of the Facilitator and the Regional Initiative members that Burundi needed to demonstrate the full ownership of the peace process. He said he was comforted by the Facilitator’s plan for action and calendar, including meeting of the Joint Verification Monitoring Mechanism; gathering of combatants at assembly areas on 12 December; and assessment report to be presented to the Regional Initiative in March 2009. He called on the Palipehutu-FNL to speedily and without delay or precondition, move for DDR, and for international support for DDR and for their political transformation. Simultaneously, he called on the Government to fulfill its commitment for a political integration of FNL into the Government. He also stressed the need for continued and proactive engagements of the regional actors, African Union, the Political Directorate for the peace process. Moreover, sustaining DDR and reintegration and reinsertion of former combatants and refugees were key priorities for Burundi and required support and monitoring from PBC, both in Bujumbura and in New York.

6. Opening the DDR segment of the meeting, the Chair invited the representative of World Bank to address the PBC via videolink. Mr. Bernard Harborne, senior advisor and the Sector Manager for Africa stated that the World Bank and partners would ensure that the single-country DDR Phase III programme for Burundi would commence in February/March 2009 as the Bank’s Emergency project. The current remaining caseload for DDR, to be funded partly and retroactively by the Bank, included some 4,500 from Palipehutu-FNL and 2,500 from the dissident group, although estimated numbers could be higher. He specified that the needs for sustainable socio-economic and community reintegration and reinsertion of those demobilized would require substantial international and UN assistance. With regard to PBC’s support, he stated that the PBC could help ensure: a) the security conditions remain stable for DDR to complete; b) the medium and long-term challenges, such as reintegration, to be adequately assessed and funded; and c) professionalisation of the army and police and SSR needs to be addressed.

7. Mr. Herman Tuyaga, the senior adviser to the Burundi President in charge of National Commission for DDR, expressed concern that despite ongoing consultations between the Government and the World Bank, the DDR process of Palipehutu-FNL may not commence before 31 December 2008 due to unresolved technical and logistical issues. Mr. Tuyaga urged the PBC members to ensure that the parties and all involved implement their respective parts, and to mobilize resources needed to ensure completion by 31 January 2009, as envisaged by the Facilitator, with support from the African Union taskforce. He also noted that the funds the Government endorsed were already earmarked to provide for those affected by war, including those disabled, women and children. Moreover, PBC should revisit the needs on longer-term reintegration of those demobilized and on SSR, particularly professionalisation of the police. He urged PBC members to provide support to contribute to the Government’s budget deficit for 2009 for payment of salary arrears of the national defence forces and the police.

8. A number of PBC members took the floor during the discussions. Speaking on behalf of the EU, a member emphasized that the Political Directorate for the peace process needed to make every possible effort at this critical moment to ensure requisite resources and political support to succeed in the process. Stressing the urgency of DDR and international support in this regard, the representative of France highlighted that recovery and development, as well as preparations for the 2010 elections were fundamental priorities for Burundi which required PBC's support. The full establishment of the independent National Electoral Commission would help anchor the support needed for the process. Norway and Sweden announced their Government's respective contributions for DDR, and for relevant provisions of the 4 December declaration.

9. Some members called on the Government to ensure environment conducive to the holding of the 2010 elections, including freedom of assembly and speech and level-playing field for all parties. Many members expressed hope that the African Union, including its taskforce in Burundi would stay the course in order to ensure implementation of the 4 December Declaration and completion of the peace process. Others expressed concern with regard to recent arrests of journalists and members associated with opposition parties, as well as on human rights situation, particularly sexual violence against women and children, and called for urgent release of children associated with Palipehutu-FNL. Serious concern was relayed on the human rights situation in the country, and on possible adoption of a law criminalising homosexuality.

10. Speaking on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement, Angola and Jamaica, welcomed progress made by the parties on the peace process and called on PBC's partnership and support to Burundi for the peace process and for socio-economic and longer-term reintegration and development needs. A member requested PBC to hold a meeting to discuss the aspects for reintegration support, including on SSR and sub-regional dimensions. Echoing its support, another member called for the PBC to examine socio-economic longer-term reintegration of those affected by war, including women and children in particular. A concern was expressed on the language of the proposed Conclusions of the meeting, to avoid duplication of the Security Council's role.

11. A member expressed hope that the Government would clarify quickly the total number of Palipehutu-FNL soldiers for demobilization as well as on its DDR and SSR strategy. These would help potential donors estimate their support for DDR and SSR development. The Government's proposal for longer-term DDR was welcomed. A member appealed on donors to adopt a voluntary funding mechanism to support the relevant activities. Transparent political actions and progress on the DDR and SSR were also underlined. The need to pay attention to the regional dimension of the conflict in DRC on Burundi was also raised. PBC members on the ground should advocate for the needs on the peace process as well as on the longer-reintegration and SSR needs.

12. The Conclusions on Burundi was distributed to PBC for silence procedure and was considered adopted by the Chair on 16 December, to be published as PBC/3/BDI/1 in all official languages.

Peacebuilding Support Office
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