**PBC Ambassadorial-level Meeting on Burundi, 12 June 2019**

***Summary of the meeting***

1. On 12 June 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Chair of the PBC Burundi Configuration. The main purpose of the meeting was to brief the Commission on the Chair’s recent visit to Burundi from 5 to 10 May 2019. The meeting also provided the opportunity for an update on the engagement in the socio-economic dimension, in support of the National Development Plan 2018-2027.
2. H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi Configuration, updated the PBC on the basis of the report of his visit to Burundi which had been shared with Configuration members. In view of the elections of 2020, he encouraged the government of Burundi, political parties and other stakeholders, with the support of the Member States of the sub-region and building on previous efforts, to create the conditions that support peaceful, inclusive, free and fair elections. He underlined the imperative to maintain attention on the socioeconomic development agenda of the country to ensure that the electoral period does not lead to a slowdown of development efforts; it was therefore important to sustain international support to the National Development Plan. He also underscored the role played by a network of women mediators in addressing conflicts at community level; their work has been supported by a PBF-funded project. With regard to the return of refugees, he highlighted persistent funding needs in order to support 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.
3. H.E. Mr. Albert Shingiro, the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the UN, welcomed the Chair’s report of the visit to Burundi and briefed on the situation in the country, underscoring the increasingly peaceful and stable environment since 2017. He provided an update on the preparations for the 2020 elections, including the adoption of the electoral code, the budget that will be funded by the domestic resources and the forthcoming announcement of the electoral calendar. He indicated that external assistance might be provided for specific activities or issues, at the request of the Government and/or of the national electoral body. He indicated that the political parties accredited in Burundi hat met with H.E. President Pierre Nkurunziza in the beginning of June and that there were no restrictions on civil and political freedoms. He further recalled the launch of the National Development Plan, NDP, covering 10 years, 2018-2027, indicating that the Government was mobilising domestic resources to finance the NDP and that this internal mobilisation did not exclude the support of Burundi’s partners. Recalling the decisions of the African Union Summit of February 2019, he asked the PBC to advocate for the lifting of measures adopted by the European Union under the Cotonou Agreement’s Art. 96 with a view to mobilize resources for development.
4. Briefing from Bujumbura, the Resident Coordinator, the World Bank Country Manager for Burundi and the UNICEF Representative provided an update on the on-going engagement with the Government, with a focus on the follow-up to the high-level side event on improving nutrition in Burundi that was co-organised by the World Bank and the Government together with bilateral and multilateral partners in Washington D.C. in the margin of the Spring meetings. Currently, the second five-year plan within the framework of Burundi’s membership in the Scale-Up Nutrition (SUN) movement is being developed to address chronic malnutrition. One of the key objectives of the side event was to raise the profile and create awareness in order for the multi-sector plan to become meaningful to development partners; and understand how it fits into the National Development Plan, the UN Development Assistance Framework and how partners can contribute to the different elements to tackle chronic malnutrition. Regarding the National Development Plan, the Minister of Finance had convened a meeting with the key bilateral and multilateral partners in May, as a first step in a continuous dialogue on its implementation. The World Bank has planned to provide $30 million in grants to translate policies in terms of household support and nutrition practices at the local level. The World Bank is also working with UNICEF to support School Feeding Programs and with WFP as part of the World Education Program.
5. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General of Peacebuilding Support Office welcomed the impact of the PBF on sustaining peace in Burundi, particularly the role played by the women mediators in resolving disputes at local level. He noted that there are lessons and practices that have been accumulated by countries around electoral processes, including the prevention of violence. The PBC could serve as a platform to share these experiences, particularly among countries engaged with the PBC and other countries that have recently completed elections. He also reiterated that the PBC could use its gender strategy to support the full participation of women in political processes, including elections. He welcomed the Government’s ongoing engagement with the World Bank and other international partners, and the focus on tackling chronic malnutrition which affects the next generation of Burundian citizens. As part of the current plan, he informed that the PBF would continue to support ongoing initiatives currently budgeted at $10 million and that enable local dialogue, social cohesion, reconciliation, conflict resolution and prevention, empowerment of women and youth, and voluntary reintegration of refugees.
6. The members of the Commission welcomed the report of the Chair’s visit and his recommendations, the briefings and made the following observations:
* They welcomed the stable security situation in Burundi and encouraged the Government to create a conducive environment for the peaceful conduct of elections in 2020, including an open political space and freedom of expression.
* They welcomed the steps undertaken in preparation for the elections of 2020. They underscored the importance of peaceful, inclusive, free and fair elections; they affirmed the importance of the Arusha Accords; and they expressed their commitment to support in Burundi in accordance with the principles of national ownership. In this regard, they welcomed the idea of using the PBC as a platform for sharing lessons and best practices among countries engaged with the PBC and others in similar contexts.
* They underscored that the electoral year should not shift attention from the socio-economic development agenda and encouraged continuous engagement between the Government and its multilateral and bilateral partners in support of the priorities identified by the National Development Plan.
* They welcomed the commitment shown by the Government in tackling chronic malnutrition and encouraged partners to further support Burundi in this effort.
* They noted that the challenges in Burundi must be addressed in a holistic manner, recognizing the interrelation between the political, socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights pillars. In this regard, members welcomed the coherence and complementarities between the PBC and the Security Council.
* They thanked neighboring states for hosting refugees and stressed that the return of refugees should be carried out in accordance with principals of international law in a safe, voluntary, and dignified manner.
* They welcomed the role played by the network of women mediators in addressing disputes and resolving conflict at the local level.
1. In concluding the meeting, the Chair noted of a shared view for a continued engagement of the Configuration, both in the lead-up to the elections and with a view to keeping the medium to long-term challenges in the socio-economic dimension on the forefront. He recalled that the work of the PBC remains complementary to that of other actors, including the Member States of the region and the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General. He indicated that he would reflect on concrete follow-up in terms of identifying useful forms of assistance with a view to supporting a peaceful conduct of the 2020 elections, including the possibility of an exchange of lessons and practices among countries engaged with the PBC. He also noted the expectations for the socio-economic dialogue to be further intensified and for support of the priorities identified in the NDP. He further welcomed the support expressed for further engagement to empower women in Burundi, including through projects such as the PBF-funded mediators network, and support women’s full participation in the political sphere.

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