

24 March, 2014

To : Members of the PBC – Burundi Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Burundi Specific Configuration of the
PBC, New York, 12 March 2014**

Chair's Summary

On Wednesday, 12 March 2014, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, an informal meeting of the Country - Specific Configuration on Burundi of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC Burundi Configuration) took place at UN Headquarters under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Paul Seger, Chair of the Burundi Configuration. The purpose of the meeting was to update members of the Configuration on peacebuilding-relevant developments with a specific focus on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2137 (2014) and its implications for the Peacebuilding Commission. A copy of the Security Council Resolution 2137 (2014) had been shared with members of the Configuration.

The government of Burundi was represented by H.E. Ambassador Herménégilde Niyonzima, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations in New York. BNUB joined the meeting from Bujumbura via VTC.

In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled the main findings of his visit in mid-January and summarized the main events that had occurred since. He reported that the first quarter of 2014 had been characterized by a deterioration of the political climate caused by a dispute between the ruling party CNDD-FDD and its minority ally in the government, UPRONA. This had led to the dismissal of the 1st Vice President Busokoza, a UPRONA member, by President Nkurunziza, on 1 February, followed by the resignation of the three UPRONA ministers and their replacement by members of the party wing officially recognized by the government. Political and social tensions had also risen during the same period. The level of violence had gone up, especially involving youth wings associated with political parties. A number of meetings and demonstrations by opposition party members had degenerated into violent clashes with police forces, resulting in arrests and excessive use of force in some instances.

He noted that these unfortunate developments were unfolding against the overall background of the elections of 2015 and the on-going insecurity over the constitutional review process. It was not clear whether the consensus of Kigobe [during the consultations of December 2013, political stakeholders agreed that the discussion of the articles of the Constitution that touch the core of Arusha principles and the existing power sharing

arrangements would be postponed until the elections of 2015] would be respected and this had created a situation of uncertainty and fear among the opposition and civil society.

The Chair appealed to all stakeholders in Burundi to show restraint and to work constructively towards reducing tensions. He expressed his support and agreement with the press communiqué issued by BNUB on 10 March 2014, asking “all Burundian political leaders and their supporters to show moderation and avoid expressing demands that could exacerbate tensions and violence” and calling “on the authorities to show the greatest restraint and to foster the free exercise of fundamental liberties”. With regards to the constitutional review process, the Chair reiterated the message the Configuration had conveyed to the President of the National Assembly, appealing for an inclusive process and a revision that didn’t undermine the basic principles of the Arusha Agreements. He strongly encouraged political stakeholders to give due regard to the results of the Kigobe consultations. The Chair reiterated that he would continue to closely monitor the situation on the ground, also via its advisory role to the Security Council, and inform and, if need be, convene the Configuration.

The Chair also underscored the role of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC during BNUB’s transition period and beyond the closure of the Mission in December 2014. He recalled Security Council resolution 2137 (2014), and invited a discussion amongst members of the Configuration on the role of the Configuration during this crucial phase. He informed members of the Configuration that a Transition Steering Group had been created in Bujumbura to provide strategic guidance to the transition process and assist the actual implementation of BNUB’s mandate until 31 December 2014. The Group is co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the SRSG, and composed of Belgium, China, France, Kenya, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Russia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, the UK, the US, Switzerland, the African Union, the European Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Resident Coordinator and the Burundi Configuration of the PBC. The Chair informed members that the first meeting of the Steering Group was scheduled on 18 March and that he would be attending the meeting via VTC.

The Chair underlined that the PBC should be guided by the principle of “no duplication of efforts” during the transition period. He underscored that BNUB was in the lead for the implementation of Council resolution 2137 and that the PBC would play a supportive and complementary role to its efforts. The Configuration could help raise awareness and mobilize support for the transition period and beyond by engaging the wider membership, the UN Secretariat, regional organizations and international financial institutions.

The Chair suggested that the role of the PBC during the transition also included sustained attention and follow up on the Geneva Conference of October 2012, a role reiterated by the Security Council in its resolution 2137 – paragraph 19. Under this role, the Chair suggested

to reconvene the main partners of the Geneva Conference to a meeting with the Government of Burundi. The meeting would be an opportunity to assess the implementation of the mutual commitments, progress in the implementation of the PRSP, and discuss the way forward.

In his update, BNUB's Chief of Staff shared the Chair's assessment and noted that Burundi was in the news for the wrong reasons, referring to the demonstrations and the increasing restriction of the political space. He mentioned that the recent statements made by the Secretary General, by the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the US Department, were an indication of how concerned the international community was. He indicated that BNUB continued to support the country's efforts, in particular the political dialogue, and that this support would be sustained with the new allocation of the Peacebuilding Fund.

In his message, Ambassador Herménégilde Niyonzima of Burundi linked the situation in his country to the deterioration of people's living conditions, and he committed his Government to operate with respect for human rights and international conventions. He also promised that the Government would try its best to avoid unnecessary confrontation with an opposition that was increasingly becoming violent.

Tanzania, Belgium, the EU, Netherlands, Japan and PBSO took the floor. They shared concerns over the political tension, and encouraged the Government and Burundians to ensure that the pre-electoral period is peaceful. They noted that the democracy in Burundi was still fragile and recommended that PBC members must ensure that the situation in Burundi wouldn't deteriorate. They agreed on the need to address poverty challenges and to build governance institutions – the Burundi Revenue Authority was mentioned as an example of a priority institution. Participants expressed hope that the international community would be able to sustain engagement throughout the electoral process, including through the electoral observation mission. They overall expressed support to the idea of a follow up meeting to the Geneva Conference.

In his communication, PBSO Director and Deputy Head, Mr. Kenneth Gluck, informed members that on 19 February, PBSO approved a third allocation to Burundi for its Peacebuilding Priority Plan in the amount of \$11.65 million - making the total PBF contribution to Burundi close to \$61 million up to date. This new funding would support four peacebuilding priority areas: i) national dialogue and social cohesion, ii) youth participation in political and socio-economic life, iii) democratic exercise of human rights, and iv) resolution of land disputes (for the last area, only the budget for a preliminary study was approved). Much of the support would build on the results and lessons of the previous two tranches of PBF support, as well as on the global experience in particular with regards to the youth role, and in light of the political manipulation of youths and the

political violence involving youths, as mentioned by many interlocutors. He noted that the role of the Chair would be crucial in this priority plan, as articulated by ASG Cheng-Hopkins' letter to the Government and BNUB, including by dealing with the political risks that could have an impact/link with the agreed activities.

In concluding the meeting, the Chair indicated that he would follow up on the idea of a follow up meeting to the Geneva Conference. He then reiterated his appeal for assistance to Burundi following the heavy rains of February that left more than 77 people dead and about 180 injured, and about 4,000 houses destroyed – overall 20,000 people were affected. He recalled his letter of 19 February, noting that there was still a large funding gap, especially with regard to the reconstruction of the destroyed houses (4,000 housing units at an estimated cost of USD 3,000 - 4,000), that needed to be addressed. He strongly encouraged Configuration members that were willing to help to get in contact with UNDP.
