

17 November 2009

To : Members of the PBC - Burundi Configuration

From: Ambassador Peter Maurer, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission - Burundi Configuration

Peacebuilding Commission - Burundi Configuration
Report of the Chair's visit to Bujumbura,
10-11 November 2009

I. Introduction - background and objectives of the visit

1. In my capacity as new Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission - Burundi Configuration, I undertook a visit to Bujumbura, Burundi from 10 to 11 November 2009.
2. The main objective of the visit was to review progress in peacebuilding since the biannual review of July 2009 and the 14 October meeting on the preparation of 2010 elections.
3. Specific objectives of the visit were the following:
 - i. Preparation of 2010 elections: follow up to the conclusions of the meeting of 14 October on the preparation of 2010 elections, pursue dialogue with the Government, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), the political parties and other key actors on the progress and outstanding the challenges that needs PBC attention and support;
 - ii. Socio-economic reintegration: follow up to the preparation of the socio-economic reintegration of demobilized, former combatants, returning refugees, internal displaced and other groups affected by the war.
4. During my visit, I met with Burundian authorities, including the First Vice President, the President of the Senate, the Minister of National Solidarity and Social Reintegration, the Chief of Cabinet on the Office of the President, the Chief of Cabinet in the Ministry of External Relations and International Cooperation, the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), the Political Parties

represented in the Parliament, the FNL Leadership, Representatives of Religious Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Media, Women Organisations, Abashingantahe, Private Sector, the International Partners, and BINUB.

II. Progress and challenges

5. After the National Independent Electoral Commission, CENI, was set up, the electoral code was adopted through a dialogue and consensual process among the political partners.
6. The first Vice President reiterated Government support to CENI, and, together with other political parties and other actors, they expressed their confidence in the CENI.
7. The CENI is very engaging and committed. They are finalizing the process of setting up of the CEPIS, provincial independent electoral commissions (129 members). The process of selecting members of CEPIS has been very consultative and guided by principles such as integrity, gender and ethnic balance. They are scheduled to be sworn in the week of 16 November. Once they are in place, CEPIS will work on putting in place CECIs, communal independent electoral commissions (645 members).
8. The preparation of elections is marked by a culture and dynamic of dialogue. The parties represented in the Parliament are very much committed to the success of elections and to dialogue.
9. The International Community is interested and committed to provide financial support and to ensure political support to the electoral process.
10. On the issue of socio-economic reintegration, the Minister of National Solidarity is chairing a sectoral group that is overseeing the preparation of a national reintegration strategy. The work is well advanced and the Minister is ready to share the outline of the strategy as an entry point for a discussion with the PBC.
11. There are a number of challenges that need to be taken into account in order to secure the success of the 2010 elections. Some of these challenges are common to any electoral environment. They are exacerbated by the post conflict context and the history of elections in Burundi.
12. Among the challenges, the first Vice President and other political actors mentioned the identity card as a priority issue for the

electoral process. A significant number of Burundians don't have the national identity card, and yet it is the only valid document to be accepted as voter or candidate. Given the other rights and public services facilitated by a valid national identity card, this issue should be addressed as a long term governance issue.

13. The electoral atmosphere appears to exacerbate violence. Many actors have denounced intimidation and limitations of political parties' freedom of assembly. The ruling party, CNDD-FDD, and the other parties represented in the Parliament seem to have a different assessment and position on this. While these parties perceive activities of the youth wing of CNDD-FDD as one of the causes of violence, CNDD-FDD deems other political parties as too alarmist and it doesn't give the same importance to the issue of violence.
14. The FNL seems to be particularly disappointed by the cases of violence and corruption. It condemns attempts of manipulation aimed at dividing his party.
15. The Civil Society Organisations, Women Associations, Religious Denominations, the group of "Wise", the Media, and the Private Sector also mentioned insecurity and violence as a key concern.
16. They advocate for stronger participation of women, beyond the current status quo of 30%.
17. The atmosphere of insecurity is negatively impacting on the culture and practice of dialogue. One can feel a decrease in the trust between the ruling party and the other parties represented in the parliament. The permanent forum of political parties and other existing institutions don't seem to be fully utilized by the political actors to dialogue on these challenges and to resolve conflicts that are specific to the electoral environment. This is increasingly becoming a concern for the International Community that is committed to accompany the electoral process.
18. Most of the stakeholders have expressed the need for an early monitoring of the electoral process as a conflict prevention and confidence building mechanism.

III. Conclusion and way forward

19. The Peacebuilding Commission:
 - will continue to monitor closely the preparation of elections and discuss challenges as they arise;

- will continue to build on progress, opportunities and existing mechanisms and institutions to accompany the electoral process in Burundi;
 - will support initiatives aimed at ensuring equitable provision of national identity cards to the population;
 - will further develop with BINUB the concept of long term observation and discuss possible support to ensure that long term observers are deployed to Burundi early enough in the electoral process in order to ensure a monitoring of the preparatory work and serve as a conflict prevention and confidence building mechanism;
 - will continue to mobilize the support of the international community in ensuring that financial gaps are addressed;
 - will meet on 23 November to start discussions with the Government on the socio-economic reintegration of former combatants, demobilized, returning refugees, internal displaced people and other groups affected by the war;
 - will undertake a visit to Burundi at the beginning of February in order to assess progress in the electoral process and further engage with national and international stakeholders through the fourth review of the strategic framework for peacebuilding in Burundi.
20. The Chair would like to thank:
- The Government of Burundi for a warm welcome and a constructive discussion during his visit to Bujumbura;
 - The national and international stakeholders for sharing their assessment and renewing their commitments to the success of the 2010 elections in Burundi;
 - BINUB and PBSO for their support to the visit.
