

Informal Meeting of Burundi Configuration on 12 April 2012

Chair's Summary

Introduction

On Thursday, 12 April 2012, from 3 pm to 5:15 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 government of Burundi was represented by H.E. Dr. Gervais Rufyikiri, Second Vice-President and a delegation at ministerial level¹. The United Nations were represented by Assistant Secretary-General Judy Cheng-Hopkins, director of the Peacebuilding Support Office. The purpose of the meeting was the presentation of the new Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-2) by the government of Burundi. Prior to visiting New York, the delegation of Second Vice-President Rufyikiri presented the PRSP-2 to the International Financial Institutions in Washington.

Presentations

In his statement, *Second Vice-President Rufyikiri* gave a positive assessment of the situation in Burundi and reported progress on all fronts since the 2010 elections. New economic and fiscal legislation bears fruit. A reform of the tax system resulted in an increase of tax collection of 33 percent in 2011 over 2010. Simplified business regulation resulted in an increased attractiveness of Burundi – a member of the East-African Community – for private business.

With a per capita annual income of 200 USD, Burundi remains one of the least developed countries on the globe. Annual growth of 4 percent is not enough to cope with demographic pressure and to embark on a path of sustainable economic improvement.

The **PRSP-2** is a four-year integrated plan defining four axes of development: 1) strengthening the rule of law, consolidating good governance and gender equality 2) transforming the Burundi economy for sustainable job-creating growth 3) Improving the access and quality of basic social services and strengthening social protection 4) managing space and the environment for sustainable development. It is expected that implementation of the PRSP-2 will result in a growth rate of 8,2 percent per annum. Second Vice-President Rufyikiri indicated that full implementation of the plan would cost well beyond 2 billion USD over four years, 48 percent of which to be mobilized by the government of Burundi and the remainder by international donors. The government of Burundi intends to organize a donor conference in October. A technical committee chaired by the minister of finance and the minister of foreign affairs is preparing decisions on the modalities of such a conference.

¹ The Delegation included the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, Mr. Laurent Kavakure, the Minister of Finances and Economic Development Planning, Mr. Tabu Abdallah Manirakiza, the Minister of National Solidarity, Gender and Human Rights, Ms. Clotilde Niragira, as well as the Permanent Secretary of the National Committee for Aid Coordination, Mr. Pamphile Muderega and the Permanent Secretary for Economic and Social Reforms, Mr. Leon Nimbona.

Assistant Secretary-General Cheng-Hopkins paid tribute to Burundi's successes in emerging from conflict. She particularly highlighted the reintegration efforts in past DDR and ongoing socio-economic reintegration programs. Among remaining challenges Ms. Cheng-Hopkins mentioned the creation of political space for all stakeholders in parliament and outside and the continuing pursuit of anti-corruption measures.

Discussion

Members speaking from the floor included , , Australia, Belgium,, Canada, Egypt, France , Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, , United States , the United Republic of Tanzania, and and the European Union,. All declared their support for the PRPS-2, highlighting the inclusion of peacebuilding-relevant aspects particularly in the first axe. Several speakers appealed to non-traditional donors to support the PRSP-2. Burundi's participation in the G-7-Plus and the New Deal was also pointed out. While many delegations expressed their appreciation about progress in political and institutional issues, a number of interventions called for a stronger commitment in the fight against corruption and against impunity of those responsible for the murder of Ernest Manirumva, the Vice-President of the anti-corruption organization OLUCOME. Several delegations also encouraged the government to work for a more inclusive political climate allowing the opposition to exercise its political activities peacefully and without hindrance. Some called for a continuation of the PBC's engagement in Burundi until the election of 2015. The European Union invited members to participate in an upcoming seminar on lessons learned in the 2010 Burundi elections.

In responding to questions from the floor, Second Vice-President Rufyikiri gave a detailed overview of anti-corruption measures taken, and he stated that there were no big new corruption cases since 2010. He noted improvements in the area of rule of law, which he attributed to the newly created offices of the Ombudsman and the Independent National Human Rights Commission. Regarding the political situation, Second Vice-President Rufyikiri pointed to a "framework of dialogue" offered to opposition parties not represented in parliament, and he appealed to exiled opposition leaders to return to the country and participate in the political process. With a view to the elections of 2015, a new law on political parties is being considered. Second Vice-President Rufyikiri declared that there were no signs of a revival of the ethnic tensions that led to the conflicts of the past, but there were concern about social tensions stemming from rising costs of living.

H.E. Clotilde Niragira, Minister for national solidarity, gender and human rights, informed the Burundi Configuration that due to capacity improvements of police and justice system, there were fewer incidents of human rights violations. The government pursues a number of initiatives for the empowerment of women, among them improvements of access to land and credit. A national action plan for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 has been adopted. Minister Niragira said that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission would soon be created and that it would be of a balanced composition.

Next Steps

The Chair informed the Burundi Configuration of his upcoming visit to Bujumbura from 19 to 25 April. The primary purpose of the visit is to continue discussing the mobilization of support for the PRSP-2 and the role of the PBC in this process, in view of the donors or partners event which Burundi envisages for October of this year. Besides, the Chair expects to follow-up on the ongoing review of the “Outcome Document” of 26 April 2011. In the Chair’s understanding, the review process in Burundi is in an advanced stage and could be finalized in a “Forum Politique” meeting during his stay in Burundi. Once the process completed in Burundi, the chair intends to call a Burundi Configuration meeting in New York, hopefully in May, in order in order to endorse the mutual commitments between the government of Burundi and the PBC for the next 12 months in a mutually agreed new document..