

**Chairman's Summary**  
**Thematic Meeting on Land Issues in Burundi**  
27 May 2008

The purpose of the informal meeting was to focus on the multifaceted problems regarding land tenure issues in Burundi. The intended dialogue with key stakeholders in Bujumbura was not possible due to technical problems with the audio/video link.

The meeting was chaired by **H.E. Ambassador Johan L. Løvald, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations**. He started by briefing the PBC on the recent visit to Burundi (10-15 May 2008) by a PBC delegation. Security issues figured highly in the discussions<sup>1</sup>. The delegation called for the prompt resumption of the National Assembly's legislative activities. In addition, the PBC visit discussed preparations for the biannual review, scheduled to take place on 23 June 2008 in New York. The Government of Burundi has established an inclusive and participatory process, including through the formation of five multi-stakeholder task groups. **H.E. Ambassador Augustin Nsanze, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations, welcomed** the confidence and support of various national stakeholders in the work of the PBC.

Mr. Bo Schack, UNHCR's Representative in Burundi, introduced the session's Discussion Paper, noting that it was the result of extensive consultations with Burundian authorities, the civil society, UN agencies, donors and international NGOs. The key needs identified included:

- An inventory of state owned land and distribution of land to the landless;
- A more efficient land registration system; tenure security is needed but, at present, the system is slow and complex;
- A national land policy to guide legislative and administrative processes. Participation by key stakeholders is essential when preparing the national land policy.

Traditionally, non-state actors play a strong role in land dispute arbitration – especially through “the wise men arbitration system” or *Bashingantahe*. State capacities need to be strengthened, and the interna

- PBC members reiterated the fundamental principle of the right to return or be compensated. For Burundi, the modalities for compensation remain to be elaborated by the various stakeholders, including the time-frame for receiving claims. Compensation can include monetary and non-monetary settlements, such as training. Support from the international community in this area, particularly through dialogue with the IMF, was stressed in the discussion. Unlike the past, the Government, with assistance from UNHCR, is prepared for the current level of refugee returns.
- All speakers viewed decentralization as good and necessary policy. Concentration of land-tenure related decision-making in Bujumbura precludes the poor and those living in the countryside from finding solutions.
- The National Commission for Land and Other Assets (CNTB) has progressed cautiously on some delicate issues related to land tenure. Even if its number of decisions seems small, it is just a reminder