

Peacebuilding Commission Burundi Configuration

IV. Results of the visit

1) *Overall impression:*

The delegation is aware that mutual trust and reconciliation which are the essence of peacebuilding are still at fragile state. At a time of political controversy it is difficult to assess the difference between rhetoric and reality in Burundi. Sustainable peacebuilding requires for all stakeholders to be included in the political process and for all to match their political rights with political responsibilities.

The delegation was impressed by the seriousness of the political engagement of all interlocutors to build peace.

2) *On the preparation of elections:*

Technical preparation of the elections continues to progress as planned. Voters registration is completed. Data processing for the production, publication and review of the voters list and production of voting cards (cartes electorales) is currently being carried out according to schedule.

All interlocutors agreed on the need for continuing political dialogue among all stakeholders. However, some opposition parties complained about a reluctance of the ruling party to engage in a meaningful dialogue. Some political parties questioned the relevance/utility of the recently established Permanent Forum for Dialogue among the Political Parties.

Interlocutors in the government showed awareness of these challenges and assured the delegation that they are being addressed. A second initiative to disarm the civilian population is being planned. Regarding the youth groups affiliated to political parties, the government expressed readiness to ban potentially threatening activities.

All interlocutors stressed the need for national and international election observation, especially on a long-term basis. They called for immediate deployment of observation missions. Partners such as the EU, AU and EAC and national actors such as COSOME have started preparations for such deployments. Coordination of different observation missions and communication with existing mechanisms will be important.

The delegation noted a general commitment by all actors to achieve successful elections.

The election process in Burundi is at critical stage. The delegation is of the view that the funding gap in the electoral budget should be closed urgently.

3) *On the socio-economic reintegration of war-affected populations:*

The national reintegration strategy and its action plan have been agreed to in principle by the Council of Ministers. The delegation was informed that all government entities are committed to implement the strategy that aims at resolving precarious situations of particularly vulnerable groups of demobilized, returnees and internally displaced people. A funding gap of 18.5 millions USD has been identified by the government.

The delegation visited the Ruyange IDPs site in Rugazi commune, Bubanza province, and was informed on the socio-economic reintegration pilot project “Appui aux populations affectées par les crises”. Representatives of returnees, demobilized individuals and IDPs participated in the meeting. The project is funded by the Peacebuilding Fund in support to the implementation of the national reintegration strategy.

The delegation recommends that the PBC Burundi Configuration engages in the resource mobilization effort in support of the implementation of the reintegration strategy and action plan.

It is important for the government to accelerate the resettlement of war affected populations, including efforts to make state owned land available for those populations in dire need such as the Ruyange group that has been internally displaced since 1993.

The delegation recommends that the government ensures implementation of the national free-primary education policy to all, in particular to children in IDP sites. One member of the delegation was told that only 1/3 of the children of the Ruyange camp go to school.

4) *Longer-term perspective of the PBC engagement in Burundi*

The delegation noted an overall agreement that successful elections are a key milestone to the consolidation of democracy and therefore to sustainable economic development. But peacebuilding in Burundi doesn't end with the elections. The Peacebuilding Commission should remain engaged with a longer-term perspective focused on transitional justice, rule of law, creating an environment conducive to developing economic activity and attracting national and foreign investment.

Next steps on the peacebuilding agenda should focus on post-conflict issues that are blocking economic development such as the weakness of institutions, land reform and national capacity to fully participate in the regional integration that includes organizations such as EAC and CEPGL.

The delegation is of the view that the key for national reconciliation and sustainable peace in Burundi lies in sustainable economic development leading to poverty reduction and employment creation. The political peacebuilding agenda and economic development have to be further integrated. The delegation recommends that the PBC Burundi Configuration aims for closer