

The UN Peacebuilding  
Commission: A Chance to  
Build Peace More Effectively  
The Case of Burundi\*

October 2006

\*This submission draws on International Alert's experience as an independent peacebuilding organisation which works both directly with people affected by violent conflict and with governments, the EU and the UN to shape their policy and practice. The report has been informed by over ten years of activity in Burundi through Alert's Great Lakes programme as well as by wide-ranging discussions held during 2006 which have focussed on the challenges and opportunities for the PBC.

## Executive summary

The international community has long acted as facilitator and very substantial financier of Burundi's peace process and its development efforts. The advent of the UN Peacebuilding Commission offers a chance for it to provide Burundi with more effective support for the long and painstaking process of *peacebuilding*.

### An improved dialogue process

The Peacebuilding Commission can add real value by facilitating dialogue among Burundi's governance institutions, its civil society as well as the international donors. It is clear that fora already exist for negotiation on different aspects of the country's development but what is distinct about the PBC is its potential to put peacebuilding at the heart of those plans and activities.

The PBC has a unique mandate from the Security Council and General Assembly. This creates an unprecedented opportunity to forge a unified and influential political voice to advise on how best to establish the conditions necessary to drive and sustain Burundi's peaceful development. The PBC can help ensure that the interaction among Burundi's governance institutions, people and donors is as constructive as possible in addressing the main risks to peace and prosperity. It has a particularly important role to play at this time because of the recent confrontations between the government and leading civil society groups, as well as the recent tensions with the United Nations system involving the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General.

### Putting the primary focus on peacebuilding

The primary focus needs to be placed on peacebuilding because peace still tends to be discussed in a way that is somehow detached from development objectives for the country. For example, peace is only one strand envisaged for Burundi's poverty reduction strategy. Yet international experience shows that, to be sustainable, peace must be built on physical security, accountable governance, equitable economic development, reconciliation and universal access to justice. It has to be supported by structures and mechanisms that are capable of managing change and resolving disputes without resort to violence.<sup>1</sup> The PBC has the potential to redress this gap and ensure that those involved in leading and funding development in Burundi genuinely tackle the main risks to peace. The emerging international peacebuilding architecture must not be perceived as being simply an additional source of funding.

### Analysis of the context

The cornerstone of effective assistance in Burundi is a full and balanced understanding of the conflict (and not simply poverty) context. This involves identifying the structural factors and potential trends which put peace at risk. It also involves inclusive discussions with stakeholders in the country to establish both a shared analysis of the issues, their participation in the process, as well as mutual confidence in each other's willingness to work constructively together to address them. On the basis of this analysis, a strategic framework should be used to define and prioritise the necessary set of integrated peacebuilding activities.

### Prioritising key peacebuilding initiatives

There has been very significant progress in Burundi since the Arusha peace accords and the Pretoria protocol. Presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005 were held to be free and fair, and the

government has used its popular mandate and won the support of donors to implement measures to improve the quality of basic services including healthcare for young children, primary education and security across much of the country. However, great political and economic challenges remain.

Analysing long-term needs as well as immediate priorities, this paper emphasises five key areas where the PBC would best focus its diplomacy and attention:

1. ***Truth and Reconciliation:*** emphasising the importance of participation, consultation and fairness in the proposed transitional justice bodies and in the national reconciliation process.
2. ***Land:*** helping to ensure the effectiveness of governance and dialogue mechanisms to determine land tenure and access rights, as well as impartiality in decision-making on land restitution and on the allocation of resources made available for compensation. This problem will become more and more acute as the process of reintegrating tens of thousands of refugees, ex-combatants and internally displaced people picks up speed.
3. ***The separation of powers in line with the principles of the constitution:*** concentrating, in particular, on the independence of the judiciary (beginning with the *Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature*) and on the ability of the media to protect and promote the democratic process in the country.
4. ***The institutions of the security sector:*** driving the transformation of their financial management, governance, ethics and operational skills so that communities can have confidence in the quality and accountability of these institutions.
5. ***Gender equality:*** working with all elements of Burundi's governance system to ensure that women's rights are protected and promoted, and to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

## Peacebuilding, the economy and the PRSP

The weakness of the private sector and the lack of equitable access to economic opportunity in Burundi make the programmes supported under Burundi's Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP) absolutely vital to the peacebuilding endeavour. For years to come, the country's ability to increase access to jobs and a decent income will determine not only whether poverty can be reduced but also whether those who have been living by the gun will be willing to disarm and participate in the process of building peace. In addition, it must be noted not only that external financial assistance for socio-economic activities can become a resource worth competing, or even fighting, for, but also that its provision can be a positive force in creating opportunities for people to get involved in decision-making and to play a bigger role in processes that affect their lives. It is essential, therefore, for officials in the International Financial Institutions whose work is defined by the PRSP to be closely involved in, as well as be substantively influenced by, the PBC's expert focus on building peace.

## The 'how' which is as important as the 'what'

The *way* that the Peacebuilding Commission engages in dialogue in Burundi will be of vital importance in the coming months. Success will, in part, be driven by the PBC's ability to develop the capacities of Burundian citizens to participate meaningfully in their country's progress towards sustainable peace. An important avenue to achieve this will be for the PBC Chair and Vice Chairs to engage in the country itself and not only at UN headquarters. Working with, and through, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), UN staff in Burundi will provide a vital resource for PBC.

The PBC (as an intergovernmental body) needs to interact not just with designated government officials and the few civil society representatives who occasionally travel to New York. It must, through its own actions and relations with parliamentarians and civil society (including media), underline that the main stakeholders in Burundi's peacebuilding process are the Burundian people themselves, and that they must, therefore, be more deeply involved.

## The vision

From the outset of its work, the PBC will need to be focused on *the end-goal of peacebuilding* – for Burundians to be able to manage change and resolve disputes through peaceful means. This is a highly complex and fragile endeavour which can take many years, if not decades. Ultimately, progress will depend on Burundi's own leadership, institutions and people. Their actions will determine the extent to which the attitudes, behaviours, and structural conditions that have long destabilised the country can be changed and the conditions created for long-term sustainable development. The PBC has a vital role to play in supporting this process.

In this paper, we recommend that the PBC use an overarching strategic framework such as the one depicted below (Figure 1.)<sup>2</sup> in order to make its peacebuilding engagement as effective as possible. This conceives of peacebuilding as a wide range of interdependent activities which need to be mixed together, integrated and sequenced according to the context. In the light of this framework, we suggest certain initiatives for the PBC to prioritise in its discussions, in its dialogue with Burundian governance institutions and civil society, and in the lead that it gives to external actors that are active in the country.

Figure 1: A Strategic Peacebuilding Approach



## The PBC's distinct role

Although progress is being made in terms of security on the ground and in some aspects of the country's development, Burundi continues to face great political and economic challenges. The foundations of sustainable peace are still along way off and factors that perpetuate instability have not yet been put at the heart of development strategies for Burundi. Given that peace remains fragile, assistance in Burundi is moving too quickly towards a focus on poverty and macro-economic change that is not sensitive to the conflict dynamics on the ground and may, therefore, inadvertently drive a renewal of violence.

To address this, the PBC has a very distinct and special role to play. It has an unprecedented mandate from both the Security Council and the General Assembly to recommend actions that need to be prioritised by political actors (including both the government and donors) in the country. It is vital that its unique role is understood and positively perceived by the government and people of Burundi. Such an understanding will help the PBC in its efforts to engage in constructive dialogue on how best to tackle the structural conditions which put peace in Burundi at risk. The first step in this process is to establish a shared analysis of the main causes of instability and tension in the country.

### Structural factors and potential trends which put peace at risk

- *Extreme levels of poverty* continue and there are *very few job opportunities* in a context in which the needs are acute. Years of conflict have severely damaged the human capital of the country and the average income (mainly earned from agricultural activities) is estimated to be around \$83 per annum. Economic development is undermined by poor market links and few people have access to financial services. Very little value is added to agricultural produce, and growth in non-agricultural sectors of the economy remains negligible.

The economy is not only a poverty reduction issue; it is very much a peacebuilding one. Generating hope in the future, and mobilising the energy of societies to sustain it, significantly depends on people's ability to earn money. This is a major priority for Burundi and will directly affect its ability to address specific challenges such as the reintegration of ex-combatants or return of refugees or IDPs, and more generally to assist in the difficult process of reconciliation in communities. As the recent International Alert report on *Supporting Security and Development* (2006)<sup>3</sup> outlines, income generation initiatives which focus on the needs and concerns of a community as a whole can really help to reconcile and reintegrate individuals and groups within it. They are a major determining factor in whether, for example, those who have been living by the gun will be willing to disarm and reintegrate into society. Job creation will also be critical in keeping the growing mass of unemployed men away from a path of violence and criminality.

The influence of political power in determining economic advantage means that this area, and assistance to it, also impact on governance aspects of peacebuilding. Given that access to institutions and offices of the State is seen as being the predominant source of social and economic *advancement*, the emergence of a dynamic private sector (which itself depends, in part, on better governance and the Rule of Law) will help reduce competition for these positions and the influence of political figures in the economy. Private enterprise can also make a significant contribution to peacebuilding in its own right, using its resources, skills and capacities across a range of peacebuilding tasks.<sup>4</sup>

- *Land* has enormous socio-economic and symbolic importance in Burundi and tension over land continues to fracture society. Livelihoods, wealth and power are often determined by the ability to access, use and own it. About 94 percent of the population live in rural areas, and food crops,

primarily for consumption by the rural families that grow them, cover 90 percent of cultivated lands.

Land is ever-scarcer (already less than half a hectare per family). Demographic growth, over-exploitation of the soil and the fragmentation resulting from the traditional system of inheritance have not only intensified competition for it but substantially degraded much of what there is. With the return of potentially tens of thousands of refugees, IDPs and ex-combatants, the land problem will be even more acute.<sup>5</sup> Success in diversifying the economy as well as the effectiveness of Burundi's land governance institutions and other available mechanisms for dialogue (as well as perceptions of their legitimacy) will be critical factors determining whether tensions over land in the country can be managed peacefully.

- With a *governance system* that has historically been characterised by corruption, impunity, limited public accountability and clientalism, Burundi faces the risk that a culture of democratic accountability and participation will not prevail over autocratic and exclusionary forms of governance.

Since the sweeping election victory of the CNDD-FDD in 2005, Burundi has been able to take advantage of a welcome degree of relative political stability following the turmoil of its recent past. The executive has enough support in parliament to pass legislation. The travel of President Nkurunziza to over 100 communes and the promise of free education and child health care have helped the government maintain wide support among the rural poor. Meanwhile, the power of the CNDD-FDD in politics and the economy gives it strong base of party faithful.

However the political and economic landscape is still affected by governance challenges, such as an absence of meritocracy, that undermine prospects for long-term stability. The lines between the power of the party and the constructive exercise of the powers of the executive continue to be blurred. This is causing tension even within the ruling party's own ranks, manifested in the 5th September resignation speech of the Second Vice President. Although mostly visible in Bujumbura, ongoing political problems also undermine the degree to which communities in the *collines* feel secure.

Ministries, provincial governorships and other state institutions remain characterised by the individual attributes and alliances of the people who occupy them rather than by the operation of transparent and agreed rules and procedures. Failure to change this system, tackle institutionalised corruption and embed a robust separation of powers will perpetuate the threat of renewed tensions, putting at risk the peacebuilding gains of the past decade. It is vital to improve the 'social contract', the shared understanding between those who govern and those who give their consent to be governed.

- While formal *civil society* is diffuse and remains dominated by a relatively small number of dynamic individuals, it has played a very important role in the peace process in recent years. The campaigning of civil society groups on issues relating to corruption, nepotism, respect for the constitution and human rights is a positive sign of the vitality of the non-governmental groups in Bujumbura. Yet tensions are growing between certain members of the current government and some NGOs and private radio stations. Government attitudes to these organisations are hardened by some journalists' investigatory methods and allegations that are not constructive at this point in Burundi's emergence as a fragile democracy.

Not only is there an immediate problem of too little balanced dialogue on the issues over which they clash (particularly corruption and human rights abuses) but the space for civil society to play its reporting, advocacy and watchdog roles may now be under threat. Moves to establish tighter government control of the private media and civil society would be highly detrimental to the long-term endeavour of building peace through more effective and accountable governance. A more constructive and consensus-building process of engagement is needed.

- The *security situation* continues to improve in the country as a whole. The September 2006 agreement in Dar es Salaam with the leaders of the FNL is a positive step, not least as it will reduce the activity of the government's security services in arresting people on charges of supporting the FNL. Progress has also been made since the Arusha Accords and Pretoria peace agreements in integrating former rebel fighters into state security structures and giving them new command structures and training.

The governance and capacity of the security sector, however, are not yet sufficient to protect people from abuses of power, extra-judicial detention and violations of human rights (including torture), and to win their confidence. The law protecting the security of the State and public order is widely defined and is too open to misuse. The security services, particularly the Burundian Intelligence Service, remain largely removed from the possibility of judicial procedures, internal affairs investigations and are under little or no parliamentary oversight. Improving security sector governance and the Rule of Law will be essential in order to foster and sustain trust in the peacebuilding process.

- The fundamental *rights of women* continue to be a major issue. It is a welcome step that President Nkurunziza, in his 21 September speech to the UN General Assembly, called on the Peacebuilding Commission and the rest of the UN system to make gender equality a priority. However, much more needs to be done by national and international actors to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and to ensure women can benefit from equal access to economic opportunity.

The rights of women continue to be all-too-frequently violated. They are not only vulnerable as victims of hardship, isolation and displacement, but they are directly targeted with rape, robbery and assault. Given the potent mix of poverty and impunity in Burundi, the nature of the violence and threat against women seems to have generalised since the war, spreading throughout the country as a whole. The security services urgently need to develop a professional ethos and capacity which means that they can provide security to the civilian population, both women and men, and particularly the most vulnerable.

## Where the PBC might most effectively engage

The value-added of the PBC is to build a constructive dialogue with Burundian stakeholders including, but not limited to, the government. Using a strategic peacebuilding framework, the PBC can work with all governance institutions and civil society (including the media) to put peace at the heart of development strategies in the country. It has the international political weight to engage in dialogue on how to create the conditions that are necessary for poverty reduction. It can move the debate beyond technical measurable outcomes whose sustainability is far from guaranteed.

The fractures that have afflicted Burundi in the past, and continue to cause tension, make it absolutely vital that diplomacy and attention are focussed on how to address the following:

### a) Transitional justice and reconciliation

**The PBC has the potential to play a useful role in the process of finalising what Burundi's transitional justice process will look like.**

*Long term:* Reconciliation is both a part of the peacebuilding process and also an end-goal on which lasting peace will depend. Transitional justice is often an important element in this endeavour. While the process and its mechanisms must be appropriate to the specific Burundi context, efforts to provide justice will be important in dealing with perpetrators.

*Priority Steps:* The PBC's role in dialogue with the government and UN officials should be to:

- i) Assist in efforts to work out structure and composition of the proposed transitional justice bodies so that they are properly constituted with respected and untarnished experts and will not be perceived as becoming part of the patronage system.
- ii) Ensure that the bodies and the process are based on consultations with a range of different points of view and reflect the diversity of stakeholders, and thus achieve the right balance between the need for formal justice and reconciliation.
- iii) Help determine how the bodies can best give a voice to victims and respond to people's concerns about impunity.
- iv) Ensure that the need for reconciliation at the very local level, where mistrust and tensions continue to exist (particularly over land), is properly understood and integrated into development programming.

### b) Land

**The PBC can help address tensions over land by accompanying recently-begun technical approaches with political dialogue.**

*Long term:* Land disputes can trigger or fuel not only local level tensions but also wider-scale violent conflict. The long term challenges include diversifying the economy so that fewer people rely on agriculture to survive and earn a living. It also seems clear that greater public confidence in health care and in economic opportunities is needed in order to help bring down birth rates. The nature of the emerging land policy and the effectiveness of, and public confidence in, institutions for the resolution of land disputes will be critical. The PBC's role should be to help the country's government and people move in this direction.

*Priority steps:* The focus of the dialogue will need to be the Government's land policy and the newly created land commission. Key issues will be how to ensure that:



- i) Negotiation processes on the land policy are inclusive. In order to ensure attention to gender issues regarding land tenure and access rights, the processes must include women.
- ii) Public awareness campaigns are put in place to improve knowledge about the policy and process and how they should function.
- iii) Both the policy and land commission are seen as being removed from political patronage and interests. Perceptions of impartiality will be particularly important when it comes to decision-making on land restitution and on the allocation of resources made available for compensation.

### c) Separation of powers in line with the principles of the constitution

The PBC should work with the government, parliament, the judiciary and civil society to embed effective checks and balances within the governance system.

*Long term:* Experience shows that sustainable peace depends in the long run on whether access to power and wealth comes from institutionalised relationships governed by predictable and transparent rules framed by the constitution. To make progress in peacebuilding in Burundi, the role of the PBC should also be to enter into and sustain dialogue with the government and other stakeholders on how to:

- foster the emergence of civil society as a collection of organisations (rather than individuals) which have the core institutional capacity to function constructively as (i) a ‘watchdog’ – holding authorities accountable for their actions, (ii) a ‘corrective’ – campaigning against abuses of power and for the protection and promotion of Human Rights, (iii) a source of policy advice, and (iv) a facilitator of dialogue and negotiation.
- ensure the justice system delivers not only equality before the law (procedural rules allowing for real and genuine equal access), but also equality in the law (substantive rules allowing for and ensuring non-discriminatory outcomes).
- promote independence and meritocracy in the civil service, isolating it from clientalism involving political parties. A clearer line between the role of the ruling party and the constructive exercise of the powers of the executive would help reduce political tensions in the country.
- strengthen parliament so that it has the will and capacity to effectively debate proposed legislation and scrutinise the government’s actions, and so that parliamentarians fulfil their functions as representatives of their constituencies.

*Priority steps:* Two elements of the governance system in particular would benefit from PBC engagement in the short to medium term:

- a) ***The impartiality and professional capacity of the judiciary:*** The justice sector is a key area for ensuring people and businesses are able to realise their rights, solve disputes and obtain redress.<sup>6</sup> The sector is part of the proposed PRSP and benefits both from a sectoral plan recently presented by the Minister of Justice and from various donor programmes. Priority steps for the PBC’s diplomacy, and its decision-making on resource allocation, should be to help work out with Burundian leaders how to:
  - i) put in place a meritocratic process of selecting and promoting judges, fully independent of political influence. One initial focus should be to ensure that the principles of independence and impartiality in the composition and operation of Burundi’s *Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature* are applied in practice, in line with the constitution.<sup>7</sup>
  - ii) orientate the system of payment for justice sector salaries so that it reduces the influence of the executive in the remuneration of judges.
  - iii) provide (fully overseen and audited) funds to the justice sector to improve its day-to-day ability to function effectively. Justice and penitentiary officials and magistrates need to have the resources to review case files across the whole country and ensure suspects and prisoners are treated fairly and within the law.
  - iv) develop the system of legal education and expertise in the country, strengthening the human and financial resources of existing law faculties and improving training and education for those involved in delivering justice in the communes and collines. One

important element of this will be whether and how to restore respect for, and enhance, the expertise of the traditional institution of the *Bashingantabe*.<sup>8</sup> The start-up of the *Ecole Supérieur de la Magistrature* will also be an important step that should be pushed forward.

- b) *The Media*: Many Burundians pay close attention to political events and relationships, particularly through the radio. The media and particularly the private radio stations are thought by many to help protect and promote the democratic process in the country. The PBC can play a crucial role in preserving the vitality of the media and helping it to confirm itself as a pillar for peacebuilding in the country.

The dialogue process in which the PBC engages needs to have two elements to it:

- i) Discussion with the Government to define an approach to the media sector which protects and strengthens the necessary role of the media in an emerging democracy. Flexibility and pragmatism are needed on the question of whether journalists should have to obtain an official journalistic qualification and press accreditation (from the National Council of Communication, a body which does not yet benefit from public confidence in its independence). A particular topic for the PBC's dialogue is the possibility that the operation of the private radio stations could be put at risk by large demands for broadcasting and transmitter fees which have unrealistic deadlines for payment.
- ii) Interaction with media actors to keep them informed of the peacebuilding process and affirm the importance of the media to that process. The PBC's role in this interaction should be to emphasise the objective balance in reporting that is necessary in Burundi to reduce political and social tensions on a sustainable and long term basis.

#### d) The Security Sector

The PBC can help in the ongoing discussions with the government on the composition, professionalisation and governance of the security services.

*Long term*: Critical to a stable and peaceful Burundian future, Security Sector Reform-related issues are among the most sensitive areas of negotiation. These include how to transform law enforcement agencies into effective and accountable public services, and achieve very substantial cuts in the numbers of police (which are very roughly estimated to number around 20,000 personnel). The PBC should focus its attention on how to help the government improve the real and perceived ability of the security services to protect civilians and ensure the Rule of Law. The steady transformation of financial management, governance, ethics and operational skills will be needed in order to restore the confidence of communities in the mechanisms available to tackle the culture of impunity. On the one hand, from the top down authorities need to draw a clear dividing line needs to be drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. On the other, from the bottom up it will be vital to engage communities in the process of change, ensuring they are involved in determining needs, issues and ideas.

*Priority steps*: Initiatives are underway to review the composition of the police force, improve the infrastructure and financial management of the sector and train police personnel in operational matters. These are elements of the PRSP and should be supported in the short term as the issues of who is recruited into the security services, how the recruitment is done and what training is offered are all important. Agreement on a longer term vision is vital, however, and ordinary people must be involved in its formulation. In its dialogue, the PBC needs to emphasise that:

- i) sustaining public confidence in the long term depends on whether the security services are subject to democratic control and are accountable to democratic institutions for their actions.
- ii) a longer-term governance approach should involve the creation and reinforcement of the necessary mechanisms for external oversight (relevant civilian ministries, an Ombudsman's office, parliament, civil society and ultimately judicial procedures in a court of law) and internal control (disciplinary procedures and internal affairs units).

- iii) it will seek to mobilise additional financial resources to improve the governance-related aspects of the modernisation of the security sector.

#### e) Gender as a cross-cutting and special focus area<sup>9</sup>

**International agreement exists on the importance of gender issues in peacebuilding processes. The PBC can help promote greater progress in its implementation on the ground.**

It is clear that women remain especially vulnerable to violent crime, the violation of their rights and marginalisation from political and economic life. The PBC should use its unique mandate and role to work with all elements of Burundi's governance system to ensure that women's rights are protected and promoted. It should prioritise measures to implement Security Council Resolution 1325. These should include systematic engagement with women's peacebuilding groups. The PBC will need to mobilise political will on issues such as how new land laws improve women's access to land and agricultural opportunities and how police and magistrates will make sexual violence and domestic violence a higher priority for investigation and punishment.

#### Peacebuilding, the economy, and the PRSP

Ensuring 'freedom from want' is not only a part of Burundi's Poverty Reduction process (PRSP), it is also a key peacebuilding issue. The solidity of peace will depend on progress in creating jobs outside the sphere of the state, expanding and diversifying the productive sectors, building local markets in goods and labour and generating livelihoods in the private sector. This will increase hope in the future and mobilise the energy of societies to sustain it. Success will be hugely influenced by progress in the area of participation and governance, access to justice (properly enforced), and confidence-building in the probity and effectiveness of the security services. The degree to which activities defined by the PRSP actually serve to underpin the peacebuilding process will, therefore, greatly determine the speed and extent of progress towards sustainable peace.

## Optimising the PBC's comparative advantage

The PBC has the potential to make a profound difference to prospects for peace if it can help ensure peacebuilding is placed at the heart of development strategies for the country. The PBC can optimise its engagement by focusing on the following:

- **Using its unique political mandate to engage in dialogue:** The PBC has an unprecedented mandate from both the Security Council and the General Assembly to recommend actions that need to be prioritised by political actors (including both the government and donors) in the country.

By emphasising its *intergovernmental* nature, it can forge a unified and influential political voice distinct from the various UN agencies and operations that are already active in the field. It is vital that its unique role is understood and positively perceived by the government and people of Burundi. It should be also clear that decisions on the use of the Peacebuilding Fund are ones which the PBC will make solely on the basis of their strategic importance for peacebuilding.

- **Engaging in-country:** The advice and messages of the PBC will be best discussed and communicated *on the ground* in Burundi. This will be more effective than if the political dialogue were limited to UN meeting rooms and delegations in New York.

The PBC's engagement *in-country* would best be effected by the Chair and Vice Chairs travelling to Burundi as often as possible (ideally about every six months). This will be a vital complement to the activities of the Peacebuilding Support Office and to the regular meetings of the PBC in New York.

- **Involving the range of stakeholders:** The PBC's engagement must be balanced, inclusive and broad-based. It needs to build dialogue with the government but also with the wider political system including the parliament and its committees, as well as civil society. This is vital as ultimately Burundians themselves will need to drive and sustain the peacebuilding process, and achieve genuine reconciliation among previously conflicting groups within society.

In order to help civil society groups engage as constructively as possible, peacebuilding consultations with them should be held in-country at least every six months to exchange information and perceptions of progress. These need to be attended by representatives of the PBC (notably the Chair and Vice Chairs) to protect and reinforce the space in which citizens can engage in political processes.

Good communication with and through the media will be very important given the need to increase the interest and participation of ordinary people (particularly those outside the capital) in peacebuilding. (Indeed it could be very constructive for the PBC to ask the PBSO to arrange for a Burundian radio show to be recorded in New York with the aim of covering and explaining the events and discussions unfolding there).

- **Using the Support Office to the greatest effect:** The PBSO will add significant value to the work of the PBC by ensuring it has access to expert analysis conducted in-country and elsewhere and as a channel for communication between New York and the field. It will serve to ensure that expert analysis from within and outside the country is available and is presented to the PBC on an ongoing basis.

To improve coherence, the role of the PBSO will be to establish a constructive interface with the range of UN agencies and bodies (eg UNDP and DPKO) operating in Burundi. Their staff and

institutional experience provide a vital resource as well as multiple channels for implementation and outreach. An important step towards the coherence in the agencies' contribution to the PBC's peacebuilding priorities will be the appointment of a focal person in each agency to cover these issues. By meeting on a systematic basis in-country and acting as a port-of-call for PBSO officials, the grouping would help ensure and verify coherence in the strategy as well as in the implementation of activities on the ground.

- *Ensuring coherence among development assistance activities in the country so that collectively they serve to build peace:* On the ground, additional mechanisms for donor to government co-ordination are unlikely to be desired or needed. Sectoral round tables exist and, in the future, a government-led national aid co-ordination committee should provide a forum for this. Through the PBSO and drawing on the UN team on the ground, the PBC will nonetheless need to ensure ongoing two-way communication on aims, activities, budgets and methods between the existing donor work and its own discussions in New York. Donors with representatives in both places will also need to co-ordinate their positions and inputs so that initiatives are actually mutually reinforcing, rather than merely avoiding duplication.

The most crucial issue of coherence will be the inter-relationship between the peacebuilding approach set out by the PBC and programmes implemented under the PRSP. This is particularly important because agencies involved in 'traditional' development (health, education, sanitation etc.) can inadvertently design and implement programmes which are insensitive to conflict dynamics and may therefore fuel conflict. Moreover, the degree to which PRSP-defined programmes actually serve to underpin the peacebuilding process will, to a great extent, determine the success of these efforts. It will be essential, therefore, for the International Financial Institutions to be closely involved in, as well as be substantively influenced by, the PBC's expert focus on building and consolidating peace.

## Endnotes

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- 1 See the OECD DAC Guidelines (2001) *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*: [www.oecd.org/dac/conflict](http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict)
- 2 International Alert *Annual Review 2005*.
- 3 International Alert (2006) *DDR: Supporting Security and Development - The EU's Added Value*.
- 4 International Alert (2006): *Local Business, Local Peace: the Peacebuilding Potential of the Domestic Private Sector* (London, UK: International Alert).
- 5 According to UNHCR, the total number of returnees between 2002 and late 2005 was about 264,000. In western Tanzania, as of the end of August 2005, some 225,000 Burundian refugees were receiving assistance in camps, with another 198,000 living in settlements near the border without assistance. There are also more than 19,000 Burundian refugees in DRC, many of whom may opt to return in 2006. Some 120,000 people are internally displaced in Burundi. Land conflict is prevalent because many current occupants were given the land legally by local authorities and they feel they are entitled to resist returnee claims to it.
- 6 A number of organisations have commissioned experts and developed skills in this area. The European Commission, Belgium, Germany's GTZ and the World Bank have worked in or analysed the justice sector. *Avocats Sans Frontieres* and *RCN* are among the international NGOs most active on justice issues.
- 7 The *Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature* is the body charged with overseeing the proper administration of justice and guaranteeing the independence of magistrates (article 210 of the Constitution). It also advises on promotion for magistrates and where judges are assigned to work, and on clemency. It is headed by the President of the Republic, with the Justice Minister as Vice-President of the Council. Five of the other eleven members are nominated by the government and a further two work for the Justice Ministry (article 217). This composition, and the remuneration and benefits recently awarded to judges by the government fuels the perception that the executive controls the judiciary.
- 8 The *Bashingantaha* are local leaders who are chosen by their communities to arbitrate disputes and give initial rulings to resolve them.
- 9 The NGO Working Group of Women, Peace and Security will be circulating a submission that addresses women's issues in the countries in which the PBC will work. It is a source of more specific expertise in this area.