



Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council

18th Supplement

2012-2013

Department of Political Affairs - Security Council Affairs Division
Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch

4. The situation in Burundi

Overview

During the period under review, the Security Council held four meetings and adopted one resolution in connection with the situation in Burundi. With a view to the elections scheduled for 2015, the Council centred its attention on progress and challenges in the peacebuilding process discussing, inter alia, human rights violations, good governance, the fight against corruption, political violence, transitional justice and the socio-economic situation.

While extending the mandate of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB)¹ for a period of one year,² the Council also discussed the eventual transition of the office from a special political mission to a United Nations country team presence.

The table at the end of the section lists the meetings at which this item was considered, and gives information on, inter alia, invitees, speakers and decisions adopted.

Briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB and by the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)

On 5 July 2012, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB briefed Council members on both the political and the socio-economic situation in Burundi. She noted that the country had remained free of large-scale violence, and that the

¹ For details on the mandate of BNUB, see Part X.

² [Resolution 2090 \(2013\)](#).

Government had strengthened security throughout the country. Looking ahead to the 2015 elections, she highlighted the need for political parties to function with full freedom and the importance of political dialogue with the extra-parliamentary opposition. While noting institutional progress on human rights, in particular the investigation of sensitive cases by the newly established National Human Rights Commission and the reform of the justice sector - prioritizing the independence of the judiciary and the accountability of magistrates -, she also reported patterns of pressure and intimidation of civil society organisations, extrajudicial killings and continued impunity. On the strengthening of public administration in general, she underlined the improvements in the efficiency of tax collection by the Burundi Revenue Authority and the measures taken towards the implementation of the Strategy on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption. Regarding the socio-economic situation, she expressed concern over the persistence of food insecurity in many parts of the country and called for developing alternative livelihoods beyond subsistence agriculture and for strengthening education.³ In a similar vein, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) called on the government of Burundi to engage in active and inclusive dialogue with all political actors with a view to the 2015 elections, and encouraged Burundi to take stronger measures against human rights violations, political violence and impunity, strengthen the National Independent Human Rights Commission, establish transitional justice mechanisms, intensify the fight against corruption, and implement the socio-economic reintegration programme. He also expressed concern over the socio-economic situation.⁴ The representative of Burundi highlighted that his government had made significant progress in virtually all sectors of the socio-economic and political life of the country, but that among the remaining challenges, extreme poverty in particular threatened to undermine peace and brought with it the possibility of resurgence of armed conflict.⁵

On 24 January 2013, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB briefed the Council on further progress in consolidating peace and

³ [S/PV.6799](#), pp. 2-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

stability in Burundi, suggesting that never before had the country witnessed such a long and uninterrupted period of democratic experience and stability. While commending the government for continued improvements in mechanisms to fight corruption and build accountability and reporting on progress in promoting and protecting human rights, he also pointed to acts of intimidation and factional violence in the context of the political landscape in Burundi. He also underlined the need for completing a process of transitional justice, in particular through setting up a truth and reconciliation commission that was perceived as independent, legitimate and credible in the eyes of all Burundians as well as international partners. On economic and social development, he reminded Council members that despite progress, Burundi remained one of the poorest countries in the world and thus in need of significant budgetary support.⁶ Briefing the Council on his recent visit to Burundi, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC identified the priorities in view of the 2015 elections, namely: transitional justice; widening the political space and the democratic culture; the rule of law, human rights and reform of the justice sector; and good governance, fighting corruption and promoting transparency.⁷ The representative of Burundi highlighted the progress made by his country in the spheres of democratic processes; security and stability, with successes in the framework of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the drafting of the National Security Strategy, good governance, rule of law and human rights, and regional integration. As major challenges still to be tackled, he named the socio-economic situation and the troubling security situation in the sub-region as a whole. In particular, he made reference to the situation in the eastern Congo, expressing concern over the risk for it to inflame the entire region.⁸

On 22 July 2013, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB reported on advances in terms of political dialogue. With a view towards the 2015 elections, he referred to a workshop on electoral lessons learned with representatives of all political parties, including several opposition politicians who had been in exile since

⁶ [S/PV.6909](#), pp. 2-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

their boycott of the 2010 election and who had returned to participate in the workshop. A follow-up workshop discussed possible revisions to the electoral code. On the other hand, he expressed concern about the behaviour of some members of the Imbonerakure, the youth league of the ruling party, who had reportedly harassed citizens and committed crimes, allegedly, for political reasons. Furthermore, he noted the sensitivity of the question of land disputes arising from the unlawful seizing of land and other assets during the 1972 crisis; and the importance of promoting justice and reconciliation in handling these disputes. On the promulgation of the new press law on 4 June 2013, he expressed concern about the risk of a decline in the freedom of the press, and reported that the Secretary-General had called on the Government to uphold freedom of expression.⁹ Echoing the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC elaborated on the challenges posed by the Imbonerakure, the new press law and the land question.¹⁰ The representative of Burundi, while reporting significant progress in the consolidation of democracy and the resolution of political disputes through dialogue, said that poverty had become so dire that it had turned into a security issue.¹¹

Burundi Development Partners Conference

On 5 July 2012, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC briefed the Council on the preparations of the Burundi Development Partners Conference of 29-30 October 2012 in Geneva, and expressed his will to promote the conference and to increase the number of partners. At the same time, he cautioned the government of Burundi to have realistic expectations for the conference in the face of a critical financial situation of many donor states. He also pointed to the fact that political and institutional progress and socio-economic progress were mutually reinforcing.¹²

⁹ [S/PV.7006](#), pp. 2-6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹² [S/PV.6799](#), pp. 6-7.

On 24 January 2013, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC called the conference a success, marking a critical phase in the strengthening and institutionalization of the partnership between the Government of Burundi and its international partners. Based on the trust thus shown by the partners at the conference, he encouraged Burundi to continue its efforts to implement reforms in the political, institutional and socioeconomic spheres. At the same time, he asked all donors to honour their pledges and to continue to follow Burundi in its reform efforts.¹³ The representative of Burundi also called the conference an undisputed success and expressed his satisfaction about pledges that had been higher than expected.¹⁴

On 22 July 2013, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB called the implementation of the promises made at the conference more essential than ever.¹⁵ Similarly, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC called for the implementation of the results of the conference by both, the Government and the international community, in light of the deteriorating financial situation.¹⁶ The representative of Burundi regretted that the funds pledged at the conference were arriving only slowly, and that extreme poverty had begun to create tensions in Burundi. He therefore asked the Council to facilitate the realization of the pledges made at the conference.¹⁷

Extension of BNUB and discussion on the transformation of BNUB into a UN country team presence

On 5 July 2012, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB recalled that in May 2012, the Secretary-General had communicated to the Council benchmarks for the eventual transition from a special political mission to a

¹³ [S/PV.6909](#), pp. 6-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ [S/PV.7006](#), p. 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

regular United Nations country team, and added that BNUB anticipated providing baseline data within six months.¹⁸ The Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC deplored that the country-specific configuration was not involved in or informed about the setting of criteria for the transition of BNUB into a country team.¹⁹

On 24 January 2013, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB assessed that sustained United Nations and international political engagement, combined with adequate backing of the country's development strategy, was still required, and that the Secretary-General therefore recommended that the mandate of BNUB be extended for one year. He announced the intention of the Secretary-General to field a strategic assessment mission regarding the future presence of the United Nations in Burundi.²⁰ The Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC argued for a sustained BNUB presence, ideally until 2015.²¹ Conversely, the representative of Burundi argued that in recognition of the progress made by Burundi, a new framework of cooperation with the United Nations could be achieved through the progressive transformation of BNUB into a new United Nations country team in the following 12 months.²²

On 13 February 2013, the Council, by resolution [2090 \(2013\)](#), took note of the progress made by Burundi towards peace, stability and development, while expressing concern about the continued human rights violations and restrictions on civil liberties. In extending the mandate of BNUB until 15 February 2014, the Council requested the mission to focus on and to support the Government of Burundi in promoting and facilitating political dialogue in view of the 2015 elections; strengthening judicial and parliamentary institutions; supporting efforts to fight impunity; promoting and protecting

¹⁸ [S/PV.6799](#), p. 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁰ [S/PV.6909](#), pp. 5-6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

human rights; supporting efforts for socioeconomic development and advocating for resource mobilization; and providing support to Burundi's regional integration.

Speaking after the vote, the representative of Burundi called the inclusion of language on extrajudicial executions, politically motivated assassinations, lack of public freedoms and the International Criminal Court unfair, given the efforts his country had made in areas such as human rights and combating impunity. He furthermore expressed his disappointment that the official request of his government to transform BNUB gradually into a country team over 12 months was not mentioned in the resolution.²³

On 22 July 2013, the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of PBC repeated his earlier recommendation for BNUB's continued presence at least until the 2015 elections.²⁴

²³ [S/PV.6918](#), pp. 2-3.

²⁴ [S/PV.7006](#), p. 9.

Meetings: the situation in Burundi

<i>Meeting and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.6799 5 July 2012			Burundi	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB; Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)	All invitees	
S/PV.6909 24 January 2013	Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Burundi (S/2013/36)		Burundi (Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation)	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB; Chair of the Burundi configuration of the PBC	All invitees	
S/PV.6918 13 February 2013	Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Burundi (S/2013/36)	Draft resolution on the extension of BNUB, submitted by Argentina, France, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom and United States (S/2013/87)	Burundi		Burundi	Resolution 2090 (2013) (15-0-0)
S/PV.7006 22 July 2013			Burundi	Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BNUB; Chair of the Burundi configuration of the PBC	All invitees	