



MEETING BRIEF

BURUNDI'S STRATEGY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION & PEACEBUILDING

A conference for Burundi's development partners has been scheduled for October 29–30, 2012, in Geneva, Switzerland (<http://burundiconference.org>). Intended as a platform to present the government's recently adopted second-generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP-2) and mobilize support for it, the Partners' Conference is being organized by the government of Burundi with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Switzerland, and other European countries.

In advance of the Geneva Partners' Conference, the Permanent Missions of Burundi and of Switzerland to the United Nations co-organized a high-level roundtable discussion on Burundi at the International Peace Institute in New York on October 2, 2012.

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Burundi H.E. Mr. Laurent Kavakure, his high-level delegation, and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Burundi Configuration and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations H.E. Mr. Paul Seger addressed a diverse group of representatives from traditional and nontraditional development partners, the region, UNDP, the World Bank, and NGOs. Participants had an open discussion on the expectations and outcomes of the Partners' Conference.

The roundtable produced the following conclusions:

1. The Geneva Partners' Conference will be the opportunity for development partners to reiterate their support to Burundi in order to consolidate its peacebuilding achievements through economic growth and job creation over the next four years. Important reforms in the area of good governance were noted, including the adoption of a National Strategy for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption, the setting up of a single Burundi Revenue Office, and the establishment of an Independent National Human Rights Commission, as well as of an ombudsman. But in spite of these initiatives and progress in education and health sectors, the economic recovery has been slow and poverty reduction remains a major challenge in a context of high population growth and low private-sector investment.
2. The Geneva Conference aims to mobilize political, material, financial, and other support for the implementation of the PRSP-2, a product of extensive and widely inclusive negotiations within Burundi. It will have the dual objective of reinforcing the strategic partnership with traditional partners (some of whom indicated they had already or will soon increase their bilateral support to Burundi) and of widening this partnership to nontraditional donor countries (some of whom

already confirmed their interest and upcoming participation in the Geneva meeting). It will also include representatives from Burundi's civil society and private sector, as well as international investors, NGOs, foundations, and development agencies.

3. Partners encouraged Burundi to present a smaller number of priority areas in Geneva, defining the most urgently needed support in the short term among the many priorities listed in the four strategic pillars of the PRSP-2. They also suggested that Burundi present clear ideas of what support in these areas would achieve. Regarding the final communiqué to be adopted at the end of the Geneva conference, some partners suggested it should be a joint document of the government of Burundi and its partners based on the principle of mutual accountability.
4. While positive and supportive overall, some partners suggested that the upcoming conference will also be the opportunity for Burundi to present a new face and demonstrate its commitment to democracy and human rights while addressing some of the outstanding peacebuilding challenges. Acknowledging important advancements, several partners also indicated the need for continued progress in the areas of justice, national reconciliation (including transitional justice), human rights (including the need to end extrajudicial killings and address impunity), and freedom of the press. They also spoke of the importance of implementing the new National Strategy for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption. In addition, meeting participants recalled the importance of fostering a climate of political dialogue and openness, and promoting the necessary legal, institutional, and political conditions conducive to inclusive and transparent elections in 2015. This would ensure that all parties, including the extraparlimentary opposition, have a fair chance to compete. Partners reiterated the importance of strengthening the overall judicial and legal framework in Burundi, a factor that will also prove crucial for boosting private-sector investment. Ultimately, peace and development are strongly interrelated and have to be tackled together. Only then can a decisive and lasting progress be reached, enabling Burundi to leave the cycle of violence behind.
5. Participants highlighted the importance of regional and subregional partnerships for the economic future of Burundi as a landlocked country but also as a potential regional hub. Representatives from the region expressed solidarity and support for Burundi, which they described as an exemplary partner. They highlighted the importance of continued regional cooperation—including South-South cooperation—and of the international community's sustained, and even reinforced, engagement built on this regional cooperation. They praised the Burundi's active role in the subregion: Burundi is a member of the East African Community, which it chaired in 2011; it is also a member and the host of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which plays an important role in subregional peace efforts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Finally, participants recognized Burundi's significant contribution to regional peace and the fight against extremism under the flag of the African Union in Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007. This was widely interpreted as proof of Burundi's commitment to international solidarity and, in turn, used as a strong argument in favor of sustained and reinforced support for the new PRSP-2.