

Amid ongoing political tensions, situation in Burundi 'not suitable' for credible elections – UN official

Urgent efforts are needed to keep the “hard-won” gains in Burundi from eroding, a senior United Nations official told the Security Council on Monday, noting that while the security situation is calm, there is still the potential for volatility as political tensions persist.

The overall political situation, along with the Government’s decision to revise the Constitution, has hampered economic development, said Michel Kafando, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi.

At the same time, though Burundi has made some progress, human rights violations are still being reported and the humanitarian situation remains a worry.

The environment is “not suitable” for the conduct of credible elections, planned for 2020, he added.

Presenting the Secretary-General’s latest report on the situation in the country, Mr. Kafando highlighted the efforts made at the inter-Burundian dialogue and said the region had decided to continue those talks, with strong commitments from the African Union and other regional partners.

“Dialogue remains indispensable, as the process sought to bring Burundians closer together with a view to building a strong nation,” he added.

Also at the Security Council meeting, Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), the Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, said that the Configuration would align its work with subregional, regional and international efforts, focusing on the East African Community’s mediation initiative, a path to peaceful elections, socioeconomic dialogue with the Government and partners, as well as humanitarian and national reconciliation initiatives.

Noting that he would visit Burundi in the coming weeks, Mr. Lauber pledged to focus on five key issues: mediation efforts of the East African Community; the path leading to the conduct of free, fair and democratic elections in 2020; socioeconomic dialogue with the Government and its international partners; the humanitarian situation; and efforts towards national reconciliation.

He also informed the 15-member Security Council that the Peacebuilding Fund had approved three new projects for Burundi worth \$6.5 million and outlined several conclusions based on the Configuration’s recent work, which underscored the importance of the regionally-led dialogue, the 2020 elections, humanitarian efforts, improving socioeconomic development, the

swift signing of Memoranda of Understanding – both between the Government and the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), and between the Government and the African Union – and the deployment of observers to provide a more accurate picture of human rights and civil society developments in Burundi.