

Burundi

UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB)

• Authorization Date	25 October 2006 (UNSC Res. 1719)
• Start Date	1 January 2007
• ERSG	Youssef Mahmoud (Tunisia)
• Budget	\$35.23 million (1 January 2007–31 December 2007)
• Strength as of 31 October 2007	Military Observers: 8 Police: 12 International Civilian Staff: 117 Local Civilian Staff: 229 UN Volunteers: 46

For detailed mission information see p. 200.

Despite concerns over the hasty draw-down of the UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB) in 2006, the security situation remained relatively stable during the year in review, with the government of President Pierre Nkurunziza making some progress in improving good governance and human rights. Burundi participated in various regional initiatives, including joining the East African Community and signing the Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region. The country was also chosen to host the headquarters of the International Conference on the Great Lakes—a sign of confidence in the peace process—and participated in efforts to revive the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries. Moreover, the government pledged to provide 1,700 troops to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the first batch of the contingent deployed in December 2007. However, progress in implementing the peace agreement between the government and the People

Hutu–Forces Nationales de Libération (Palipehutu-FNL), which was signed in September 2006, was faltering. This raised the possibility of a return to open conflict and reversal of the modest gains made since the election of President Nkurunziza.

Background

Burundi descended into violence in 1993 following the assassination of the country's first democratically elected president. The conflict pitted the Tutsi-dominated military against a host of Hutu rebel movements, including the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD) and the Palipehutu-FNL. Hundreds of thousands were killed in the ensuing years of internal war. A new power-sharing transitional government was established after the signing of the Arusha Accords in August 2000. However, it was not until November 2003 that the CNDD-FDD declared a cease-fire and joined the transitional administration. Meanwhile, the FNL, which had remained a source of insecurity in Burundi's western provinces, signed a peace agreement with the government in September 2006.

The UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB) was initially deployed in June 2004, taking over from the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB). The mandate of ONUB ended in December 2006, and the mission was replaced by the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB). Some ONUB contingents—with South Africa as the core contributor—were rehatted and became known as the African Union Special Task Force, which is mandated to provide

support during the implementation of the cease-fire agreement between the government and the FNL. BINUB was mandated to support the government of Burundi in its peace consolidation efforts and to ensure a holistic approach by the UN in its support to the government. In this vein, BINUB has championed the development of an integrated UN peace consolidation strategy for the 2007–2008 period.

Developments in 2007

Related to this peace consolidation strategy, Burundi was chosen as one of the first two clients of the newly established UN Peacebuilding Commission. In October 2006, the Peacebuilding Commission endorsed four critical priorities for peace consolidation and reducing the country's risk of relapse into conflict: promoting good governance, strengthening the rule of law, reform of the security sector, and ensuring community recovery. The Peacebuilding Commission and the government of Burundi, with the support of international actors and civil society organizations, agreed on a strategic peacebuilding framework. Adopted in June 2007, the framework builds on existing political and development frameworks, and identifies critical peacebuilding priorities and specific commitments to be undertaken by the government of Burundi, the Peacebuilding Commission, and other stakeholders. In addition to creating an integrated peacebuilding strategy in Burundi, the Peacebuilding Commission drafted a priority plan, outlining necessary critical interventions in relation to the Peacebuilding Fund. The priority plan was finalized by the government of Burundi and BINUB, and was fully endorsed by the head of the Peacebuilding Support Office. As a result, the Peacebuilding Fund allocated \$35 million to Burundi in January 2007. Twelve projects amounting to \$27 million have been approved, primarily in the areas of human rights and security sector reform.

Other areas of progress were recorded. The Burundian government and the FNL reached

agreement on the question of immunity—granting FNL leaders provisional immunity from prosecution—and the release of detained FNL members. A joint verification and monitoring mechanism was established, and its chairman, Brigadier-General M. E. Pheko from South Africa, arrived in Bujumbura. The first meeting of the mechanism was convened on 19 February 2007, but subsequent meetings were suspended following disagreements between the parties over preconditions put forward by the FNL for its continued participation in the mechanism. Meanwhile, preparations continued for the demobilization of the FNL, but efforts to reform the security sector registered minimal results.

The acquittal of the country's former transitional president, Domitien Ndayizeye, and his deputy Alphonse-Marie Kadege, who were arrested in August 2006 on allegations of an attempted coup, were seen as important steps in fostering reconciliation and upholding the rule of law. Additionally, the adoption of presidential decrees commuting all death sentences and releasing 2,588 prisoners was viewed as a demonstration of the government's commitment to improving the human rights situation. The establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission and a special tribunal—two bodies designed to deal with the widespread crimes committed during the twelve-year civil war—was agreed to by the government of Burundi, and negotiations on its modalities were ongoing throughout the year in review.

While fears of a relapse into violence after the withdrawal of ONUB proved unfounded, significant challenges remained in peace consolidation efforts. Lack of progress in the implementation of the cease-fire agreement and reports of the FNL's active recruitment drive raised concerns over the sustainability of the country's fragile peace. The dire humanitarian effects of devastating rains at the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007 increased the need for the government and its international partners to deliver the much-awaited peace dividends. The allocation of \$35 million by the UN Peacebuilding Commission

to support peacebuilding initiatives in the country was a step in the right direction. However, while progress in socioeconomic recovery is crucial, concluding a viable peace

deal with the FNL and, most importantly, undertaking efforts toward reconciliation, will likely be central in determining whether Burundi's hard-won peace can be sustained.