

## ***MDRP Briefing Note***



### ***Burundi***

#### ***Lessons Learned from the Muyange Cantonment Experience***

***28 November 2003***

***This Briefing Note was prepared by the MDRP Secretariat and does not necessarily reflect opinions or positions held by the World Bank or by MDRP Partners.***

## **1. Introduction**

1. This paper has been prepared by the MDRP Secretariat in response to a request from the recent MDRP Joint Supervision Mission (JSM) of October 2003 to draw lessons from the Muyange cantonment experience of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) with a view to informing the planning of future cantonment and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) activities in the region.<sup>1</sup> In the short term, the note is intended to aid MDRP partners in the DRC with the possible preparation of cantonment and DDR activities in the northern and eastern DRC. The note demonstrates the possible risks and pitfalls of initiating a cantonment process in an environment where the political and security environment are not ripe, and/or where exit strategies and associated policy, financial and technical preparations are not yet in place.

## **2. Background**

### *General*

2. The Arusha Accords of August 2000 and the Cease Fire agreements signed in October and December 2002 included significant steps to prepare for the integration of combatants of Armed Political Parties and Movements (APPMs) into the new integrated defense forces. Under the stipulations of these agreements, the soldiers of the *Forces Armées Burundaises* (FAB) and the combatants of the APPMs would initially be placed under the authority of the Transitional Government of Burundi (TGOB) before the initiation of demobilization processes.
3. Of the four APPMs opposing the TGOB militarily, three signed Cease Fire agreements with the TGOB by the end of 2002.<sup>2</sup> The fourth armed group, FNL-PALIPEHUTU (Rwasa), has still not signed any agreement and continues to militarily oppose the TGOB.

### *Specific*

4. Following the handover of authority from President Buyoya to President Ndayizeye on April 30, 2003, the new Government began to advance the implementation of existing cease-fire agreements as a demonstration of its political will and possibly draw attention to the benefits giving up the armed struggle. The Government wished to encourage the CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) to initiate implementation of its cease-fire agreement with the TGOB, which was at the time not being respected.

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<sup>1</sup> Burundi Country Annex, MDRP Joint Supervision Mission, October 2003

<sup>2</sup> On October 7, 2002, the TGOB signed a ceasefire agreement with the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD) – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) faction led by Mr. Jean Bosco Ndaykengurukiye, and the Forces Nationales pour la Libération (FNL) – PALIPEHUTU faction led by Mr. Alain Mugabarabona. On December 3, 2002, the TGOB signed a cease-fire agreement with the CNDD-FDD faction led by Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza. This was followed by Protocols signed in Pretoria with the same group on October 8 and November 3, 2003.

5. A number of forces of the CNDD-FDD (Jean Bosco Ndaykengurukiye) were concentrated in the southern part of the country, and were exacting taxes from local communities to sustain themselves. The associated insecurity provided a justification for Forces Armées Burundaises (FAB) attacks on these forces, who were also under attack from the CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza). The leaders of the CNDD-FDD (Jean Bosco Ndaykengurukiye) and the FNL – PALIPEHUTU (Mugabarabona) exerted pressure on the President to initiate “cantonment” activities for their supporters.
6. Similarly, several donors urged Government and AMIB to initiate “cantonment” activities in order to demonstrate progress in – and commitment to – the peace process, reduce insecurity associated with APPMs harassment of civilian populations, limit harassment of combatants who had disarmed, and to show a return on their financial support to AMIB.
7. At the time, large scale hostilities between Government forces and the CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) and the FNL-PALIPEHUTU (Rwasa) were ongoing, and significant parts of the country remained insecure.
8. AMIB had deployed approximately 1,200 soldiers mostly from the South African contingent by the end of May 2003.
9. A discussion ensued among Government, AMIB, UNOB and MDRP partners about how best to advance the implementation of the cease-fire accords, address the minimum needs of the APPM cease-fire signatories, and reduce the level of violence perpetrated against the civilian population by these groups. In this context, the MDRP Secretariat drafted an options note in May 2003 which raised the risks and possible costs of open-ended cantonment. The European Commission responded formally (See *attachment 1* for the MDRP Secretariat note of May 21, and *attachment 2* for the European Commission’s response of May 28).
10. In late May 2003, AMIB announced that it would establish a cantonment center in Muyange (Bubanza province) for the combatants of CNDD-FDD (Jean Bosco Ndaykengurukiye) and the FNL–PALIPEHUTU (Mugabarabona) at the request of the President. A cantonment center was established in early June 2003. On 26 June 2003, the first 22 “combatants” of the FNL–PALIPEHUTU (Mugabarabona) reported to the cantonment site. On 4 July, 127 “combatants” of the “CNDD-FDD Ndayikengurukiye arrived at Muyange . At present there are about 196 persons encamped in Muyange, among them 28 who are believed to be child soldiers. Almost all of those who entered the center in its early days still remain there.
11. At the time of the initiation of the cantonment process, there was no plan in place to either integrate the combatants into the armed forces or demobilize them. Indeed, in the absence of an agreed policy definition of combatant status at the level of the JCC and any associated combatant verification process, the legal status of those in the center remains unclear, and Government is reluctant to accord the inhabitants “combatant” status.

### **3. Current Situation**

12. **Verification Process and Exit Strategy:** In the absence of agreed definitions for combatant status and a combatant verification process, AMIB has not been able to determine the combatant status of those entering the center. The lack of agreed policies and procedures for

combatant status identification and verification, as well as the lack of an exit strategy (either military integration or demobilization and reintegration), has contributed to the Muyange center becoming an open-ended experience. Alleged “combatants” insist on remaining in the center, as their leaders have allegedly promised them benefits for staying put.

13. **Logistics**: The provision of adequate food, health care and shelter for the residents of the center has been a significant challenge for AMIB, which lacked requisite financing and logistical capacity for ad hoc cantonment center management. The shelter, food and health support provided in the centers remains minimal. However, AMIB has responded with great flexibility, and has sought to provide as much assistance as possible (e.g., water, emergency health services) within its means. The EC is financing the provision of basic food assistance via GTZ/International Services. UNICEF and the Government have provided resources for the provision of basic shelter and cooking facilities. Government has also provided some resources for the provision of basic medical services in nearby clinics.
14. **Security**: A full battalion of AMIB (about 650 soldiers) is required to provide security and logistical support to the site, which was attacked by hostile groups on two occasions early in the process. AMIB has robustly protected the inhabitants of the center. The cost of this deployment are thus substantial.. One should note that for each cantoned individual about 3.5 AMIB soldiers provide their protection and other services.
15. **Morale**: AMIB reports that the morale of those in the center has diminished over time. Reported incidents of alcohol and drug abuse as well as medical problems among the camp population have increased. In view of the duration of their stay, camp inhabitants increasingly seek contacts with the civilian population outside the center and also try to bring their dependents into the center. This poses significant additional security risks and financial challenges for AMIB.
16. **Child Soldiers** : To date, the political leadership of the two parties who hold some of the children in the cantonment center has refused to release them, claiming that the security of the children cannot be assured once they leave the center. They appear to be using the children as a “bargaining chip” in negotiations with AMIB and the humanitarian agencies, who are eager to have the children removed from the cantonment site and reintegrated into their families and communities as soon as possible. UNICEF and Government efforts to remove the children from the site have not succeeded to date. AMIB is unwilling to forcibly remove them from the site, an operation which would incur significant risks for AMIB personnel.
17. **Next Steps**: In view of the above experience, AMIB and other partners have been resisting political pressure to bring more alleged combatants to the center. However, there is no intention to close the center in the near future, partly due to concerns about perceptions of the Government’s commitment to implementing the cease-fire agreements, possible protests from the leaders of the affected groups, AMIB’s concerns about perceptions of its capability to support a disarmament and demobilization process, and the continued absence of a military integration policy and a demobilization program. It is anticipated that verification, military integration and demobilization of residents at Muyange will serve as a pilot for the implementation of the Joint Operations Plan (JOP) and the draft national program. They will likely remain in the Muyange center until February 2004, before either being integrated into the new defense force or being demobilized and receiving reintegration assistance.

#### **4. Key Lessons Learned**

18. **Political:** Pressures to show progress in the peace process and provide assistance to those that lay down their weapons should be taken very seriously. On the other hand, a decision to start cantonment should also take into account the possible negative political and security fallout as a result of an open-ended or a failed cantonment process. A failed cantonment risks undermining the confidence of combatants, political leaders and civilians in the DDR process. In addition, a slow and open-ended cantonment process burdens the government and the international community with substantial security and financial costs.
19. **Precedents:** The initiation of a cantonment process immediately sets precedents and generates expectations among combatants and political leaders. Thus, it is very important to ensure that adequate security and logistical arrangements are agreed and in place, and that verification, screening, military integration and demobilization procedures and systems are operational before initiating the cantonment process. The screening process and benefits provided for any “pilot group” will be perceived as the standard for those who follow. It is thus essential to ensure that systems are robust and the delivery of benefits is manageable and affordable over the course of the program.
20. **Security:** Starting cantonment of combatants in the context of an ongoing conflict is a risky business. Such centers are likely targets for military attacks, and those who leave the centers may be targets after their departure. It is the responsibility of those who initiate the process to ensure that adequate security is put in place and maintained throughout.
21. **Financing:** A decision to start cantonment should only be made if sufficient funding is available to provide basic services to the ex-combatants during their cantonment, to undertake demobilization activities, and to ensure that a reintegration exit strategy is financed. To this end, security, development, financing and implementing partners should be implicated in the planning process and consulted in decision-making on whether and when to proceed with a cantonment process.
22. **Duration:** The longer combatants stay in a cantonment site, the more likely it is that problems will arise, both in terms of the provision of assistance, and security and the morale of those cantoned. Combatants may lose faith in the overall DDR process if no exit strategy is in place. Others may hesitate to join the future national DDR process. Optimally, the cantonment process should not exceed 3-4 weeks per person at most.
23. **Location:** The location of such centers should fully take into account political, security and logistical considerations. Access to potable water and roads should be a prerequisite for the establishment of any such centers. The identification of sites should be a joint undertaking of technical, political and security partners.
24. **Child Soldiers:** There is no room for conditionality regarding the release of child soldiers. Screening procedures, separation procedures, and reintegration strategies for child soldiers must be in place before the initiation of cantonment activities. Leaders should be informed and confirm their willingness to release all child soldiers unconditionally before the initiation of the cantonment process.

## **Attachment 1**

### **Transition to Peace in Burundi Interim Arrangements Pending a General Ceasefire Agreement**

**Discussion Note prepared by the MDRP Secretariat  
May 20, 2003**

#### **Provisions under the Arusha Agreement**

Protocol III of the Arusha Peace and Reconstruction Agreement for Burundi foresees the creation of a national defense force including members of the Burundian armed forces and combatants of the Burundian armed groups. For reasons of economy and foreseen improvements in the security situation, the size of the new national defense force will need to be smaller than the current size of Burundian armed forces (FAB), and certainly smaller than the current armed forces and armed groups combined. The necessary downsizing of the new armed forces requires – in principle – the following sequence:

1. establishing the size of the Burundian armed forces and armed groups at the time of the ceasefire agreements;
2. establishing the structure and size of the national defense force;
3. determining the criteria for absorption of soldiers and combatants in the new national defense force;
4. determining the criteria for demobilization (and reintegration support); and
5. demobilizing (in phases) the soldiers and combatants not retained in the national defense force.

According to Protocol III, the soldiers of the FAB and the combatants of the armed groups would first be placed under the authority of the Transitional Government, before the integration and demobilization processes start. In order for integration and demobilization to commence, a general ceasefire agreement would need to be signed and adhered to by the Burundian armed forces and all rebel movements.

#### ***Situation analysis***

Of the four Burundian armed groups currently operational, three have signed ceasefire agreements with the transitional Government. Two have begun to implement the provisions of the respective agreement. The third, and largest, group (CNDD-FDD faction of Pierre Nkurunziza) has not yet implemented the provisions of its cease-fire agreement signed with Government on December 2, 2002, and violent conflict between this group and Government forces persists. The fourth armed group (FNL-PALIPEHUTU faction of Agathon Rwaswa) has yet to sign any agreement. The two armed groups that have adhered to their agreements are

apparently located in designated areas, but without being monitored by the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) or within clearly delineated boundaries.

Without an all encompassing, general ceasefire agreement, the provisions of the Arusha Agreement concerning the integration and demobilization of forces cannot be implemented. At the same time, AMIB forces are being deployed, and the current situation of the two armed groups that have adhered to their cease-fire agreements have led to calls for their cantonment. This note outlines the benefits and costs of four possible options for addressing this situation.

## ***Options***

The following four options have been identified:

1. Status quo: combatants remain in their designated areas without being encamped.
2. Open-ended cantonment: combatants move to designated cantonment sites that are supervised and secured by AMIB.
3. Cantonment and pilot demobilization: combatants move to designated cantonment sites and will be demobilized as soon as requisite procedures have been worked out.
4. Integration: combatants move to designated camps under the authority of the transitional Government with a view to integration into the security forces.

The attached table provides a comparison of the activities, benefits, and foreseen costs and risks involved with each option. In view of the current political and security context, option 1 is considered the least unattractive. However, it should be noted that:

- None of the options is optimal;
- None of the options provides a permanent solution; and
- None of the options can substitute for the political will to reach a general ceasefire agreement.

Whichever option is pursued, will only provide a partial and interim solution until a general ceasefire agreement between the Burundian armed forces and all armed groups has been reached and is respected, and the question of integration of (some of) their combatants into new national security forces has been addressed. Only under those circumstances can a comprehensive demobilization and reintegration program be implemented.

## Option Comparison Tables

	<i>Option 1</i> <b>Status quo</b>	<i>Option 2</i> <b>Open-ended Cantonment</b>	<i>Option 3</i> <b>Cantonment and pilot demobilization</b>	<i>Option 4</i> <b>Cantonment and integration into security forces</b>
Overview of Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combatants would remain in their designated areas without being encamped (free to move around).</li> <li>• They would retain their weapons.</li> <li>• Combatants would continue to live off the land but may receive support from AMIB and others, as has at times happened since the signing of the ceasefire agreement.</li> <li>• AMIB forces may provide a security perimeter around the designated areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combatants would be cantoned in (a) designated site(s) that are (is) under the overall management of AMIB.</li> <li>• AMIB would also provide security.</li> <li>• Combatants could retain access to their weapons or be fully disarmed by AMIB.</li> <li>• Cantonment would be open-ended, i.e., be in place until a general ceasefire has been reached.</li> <li>• This option has been determined in the ceasefire agreements with the two rebel movements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combatants would move to designated cantonment sites and would be demobilized as soon as requisite procedures have been worked out. (This may take 2-3 months.)</li> <li>• Combatants would be fully disarmed.</li> <li>• AMIB would be responsible for managing the site(s) and for providing security.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combatants would move to designated camp(s) (“interim barracks”) under the authority of the transitional Government.</li> <li>• They would be integrated into the armed forces. Some would potentially be demobilized at a later stage</li> </ul>

	<b><i>Option 1</i></b> <b>Status quo</b>	<b><i>Option 2</i></b> <b>Open-ended Cantonment</b>	<b><i>Option 3</i></b> <b>Cantonment and pilot demobilization</b>	<b><i>Option 4</i></b> <b>Cantonment and integration into security forces</b>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be a reduced risk of conflict in the areas where the combatants are concentrated.</li> <li>• Security for the civilian population may be improved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security for the civilian population may be improved.</li> <li>• An interim solution would be provided pending a general ceasefire agreement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disarmament and demobilization activities for the first caseload of combatants would be undertaken and a short-term solution would be provided for their situation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This option would follow the spirit of the Arusha Agreement as it provides combatants the chance of integration in the new national defense force.</li> <li>• Participating rebel movements would achieve an important provision of the Arusha Agreement.</li> <li>• Initial steps of the reform process could be initiated.</li> </ul>
<i>Benefit rating</i> <sup>3</sup>	3	3	3	2

<sup>3</sup> 1...greatest benefit; 5...least benefit.

	<b><i>Option 1</i></b> <b>Status quo</b>	<b><i>Option 2</i></b> <b>Open-ended Cantonment</b>	<b><i>Option 3</i></b> <b>Cantonment and pilot demobilization</b>	<b><i>Option 4</i></b> <b>Cantonment and integration into security forces</b>
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few direct financial costs would be incurred; they would be limited to optional basic needs supplies.</li> <li>• No cantonment sites would be built at this time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites would need to be established and managed.</li> <li>• Substantial site management costs would be incurred as cantonment would be open-ended.</li> <li>• If combatants were fully disarmed, and if a realistic DDR policy framework existed, the MDRP could cover the running costs. If these two were not in place, costs would need to be covered through AMIB and others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites would need to be established and run. Costs would be acceptable as the cantonment period would be pre-determined.</li> <li>• If disarmament took place upon entry, costs could be covered by the MDRP as this could be considered as a pilot demobilization exercise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camps would need to be established and run.</li> <li>• Substantial costs could be involved for encampment.</li> <li>• Being formally under the authority of the transitional Government, and retaining combatant status, the transitional Government may need to pay salaries and cover non-wage expenses (food allowances, etc.) similar to the arrangements for the Burundian armed forces.</li> <li>• Budget support may be required to help the transitional Government cover these costs.</li> </ul>
<i>Cost rating</i> <sup>4</sup>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>

<sup>4</sup> 1...least expensive; 5...most expensive.

	<i>Option 1</i> Status quo	<i>Option 2</i> Open-ended Cantonment	<i>Option 3</i> Cantonment and pilot demobilization	<i>Option 4</i> Cantonment and integration into security forces
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There would be two main risks: (i) combatants may continue to pose a threat to the population, e.g., by pillaging for food; (ii) combatants may leave the designated areas and resume fighting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cantonment sites may be targets of attacks by armed groups hostile to the process.</li> <li>Prolonged cantonment often demoralizes, with a high risk of violence in sites or desertion from the sites.</li> <li>The legal status of (ex-) combatants may not be clearly definable in the absence of a demobilization process, hindering the ability of some organizations to provide assistance.</li> <li>Open-ended cantonment is considered the least attractive option for combatants (possibly considered as “prisoners of war”) and is unlikely to provide incentives for other rebel movements to do the same.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cantonment sites may be targets of attacks by armed groups hostile to the process.</li> <li>Demobilized combatants may be at high personal risk should they wish to return to communities that are still insecure</li> <li>“Interim reintegration” in urban centers may increase overall DRP costs and carry security risks in urban centers.</li> <li>Demobilized combatants would not be eligible for consideration in the new security force, which contradicts provisions of the Arusha Agreement.</li> <li>Pilot demobilization before the establishment of the structure of the new security force may not provide incentives for other armed groups to follow suit.</li> <li>Overall risks, especially in the medium-term, are considered substantial.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cantonment sites may be targets of attacks by armed groups hostile to the process.</li> <li>Resumed fighting on the part of the encamped combatants is considered unlikely.</li> <li>The risk of attacks on camp sites by those who do not support the process may be significant.</li> <li>Willingness of Government to integrate these combatants while conflict persists is not assured.</li> <li>Availability of adequate budget support is not assured.</li> <li>Delays in the finalization of integration approach and mechanisms may lead to prolonged, expensive encampment.</li> </ul>
<i>Risk rating</i> <sup>5</sup>	3	5	5	3
<b>Summary rating</b> <sup>6</sup>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>5</sup> 1...least risky; 5...most risky.

<sup>6</sup> Average of benefit, cost and risk ratings. 1...least unattractive; 5...most unattractive.

## **Attachment 2 :**

### **Response of the European Union Delegation in Burundi (28 May 2003)**

#### **Comments on the MDRP secretariat's note on Burundi Cantonment Options (20/05/2003)**

1. The options are assessed from a clearly technical, if not technocratic, perspective. Therefore it does not take into account political considerations. These, however, should play a vital role and are in fact the driving force in the preparations, which are currently ongoing in view of a possible cantonment of combatants of some of the armed movements. It is also important that, even though it might not be clear where this cantonment might lead to, these movements seem to be willing to being cantoned. Their will is shown by declarations of their leadership as well as by the fact that combatants have already pre-cantoned themselves in some areas. These movements are certainly less important than the CNDD-FDD of Nkurunziza and the PALIPEHUTU-FNL of Rwasa in terms of troops and political weight, but they do exist and should be taken care of in line with the agreements they signed. By the way, the current preparation of the cantonment has provided some new momentum to the peace process and quite some hope is put on the potentially positive effects of the cantonment of some of the combatants in the sense that it might weaken the position of those who, on all sides, prefer military to political solutions. This all does not mean that success is guaranteed and that there are no serious risks, but this is equally true for all realistic options.

2. From the point of view of political analysis, the options should rather be assessed in terms of how realistic and how beneficial to the peace process they seem. Of course, all aspects presented in the MDRP note have to be considered as well. But the final assessment or 'summary rating' differs. Thus, option 1 (Status quo) is certainly the least attractive from a political point of view, because it would not present any progress in the process. Yet, from the MDRP secretariat's point of view, it is the option with the best summary rating. Option 4 (Cantonment and integration) is the one ultimately pursued in the peace process (first integration, then demobilisation) and therefore the politically most attractive and, at the same time, the second best option for the MDRP secretariat. At this moment, however, it can be considered as the least realistic because the Burundian Armed Forces have not indicated any willingness to integrate combatants of any armed opposition movement in the absence of a global and effective ceasefire.

3. Most of the technical arguments brought forward by the MDRP secretariat are correct and well considered. Some of them, however, can be contested or at least be reconsidered. For example, the risk assessment is at times subjective and lacks transparency. Thus, the risk of the Status quo option is considered as 3 (of 5) although it poses a direct threat to the civilian population and includes the potential of resuming fighting. Open-ended cantonment, on the other hand, is rated with the highest risk (5) although cantonment would be supervised and therefore controlled by the African Mission (AMIB). Strangely, the possibility of attacks by armed groups is only considered in the options involving cantonment but not in the Status quo option. In fact, reports indicate that the CNDD-FDD of Nkurunziza recently attacked pre-cantoned combatants of Ndayikengurukiye in the province of Makamba (this has officially been denied by the group).

4. Another aspect to be clarified is the covering of the costs of cantonment. The note takes up this issue in the two options concerning open-ended cantonment and cantonment and pilot demobilisation by providing two

conditions for the covering of costs by MDRP: the full disarmament of the cantoned combatants and the existence of a 'realistic DDR policy framework'. The MDRP secretariat should be encouraged to be flexible in its definition of these terms. Thus, the ceasefire agreement with Nkurunziza's movement foresees the cantonment of its combatants while their arms are being stocked and supervised by AMIB but remain accessible to them. This should be considered as disarmament or else MDRP could not get involved at all in this cantonment. As far as the combatants of Ndayikengurukiye and of Mugabarabona are concerned, this issue should not pose a problem, since their agreement provides for disarmament at the arrival in the camps. The point on DDR policy does already hint at a greater flexibility as compared to the MDRP secretariat's previous position, because it does not evoke an actual national DDR program. The case of Burundi shows that it would be counter-productive for the MDRP to get involved only when and if there is such a fully-fledged national program.

Delegation of the European Commission  
Bujumbura  
28 May 2003

## **Attachment 3 :**

### **MDRP Secretariat Follow-Up Note 2**

#### **Transition to Peace in Burundi Interim Arrangements Pending a General Ceasefire Agreement**

**Notes on the Way Forward prepared by the MDRP Secretariat  
13 June 2003**

## **1. Background**

In preparing to downsize the armed forces in Burundi along the lines of the Arusha Peace Agreement, key actors-- such as the Transitional Government of Burundi (GoB), civil society, the (ex-)rebel groups and Burundi's external development partners-- are faced with several challenges and dilemmas, but in different ways. The central concern is that despite the agreement reached in 2000 between key parties to the conflict and several ceasefire agreements signed in late 2002, violent confrontations are still taking place in many parts of the country and no significant steps have yet been taken to prepare for the inclusion of (former) rebels into to be newly constituted national armed forces. Dilemmas exist around the questions of 1) how to protect and support the troops of those groups that have signed ceasefire agreements with the GoB and are abiding by them? and 2) how can external actors support the implementation of the Arusha Agreement and the deeper peace process in general?

## **2. Options**

On 21 May 2003, the Secretariat of the Multi-Country Demobilization Program for the Greater Great Lakes Region (MDRP) circulated an Options Note to all MDRP focal points and partners in Bujumbura, to further the debate around the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed cantonment. The following four options were identified of how to address the pressures for early cantonment of the rebel forces that are willing to be cantoned:

5. *Status quo*: combatants remain in their designated areas without being encamped.
6. *Open-ended cantonment*: combatants move to designated cantonment sites that are supervised and secured by the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB).
7. *Cantonment and pilot demobilization*: combatants move to designated cantonment sites and will be demobilized as soon as requisite procedures have been worked out.
8. *Integration*: combatants move to designated camps under the authority of the transitional Government with a view to integration into the security forces.

The note provided an overview of the activities, benefits, and foreseen costs and risks involved with each option. It concluded that none of the options is optimal, none of the options provides a

permanent solution; and that none of the options can substitute for the political will to reach a general ceasefire agreement. However, it also concluded that in the light of the political and security context, 'option 1' was considered the least unattractive. Whichever option is pursued, will only provide a partial and interim solution until a general ceasefire agreement between the Burundian armed forces and all armed groups has been reached and is respected, and the question of integration of (some of) their combatants into new national security forces has been addressed. It clearly stated that only under those circumstances could a comprehensive demobilization and reintegration program be implemented.

Given recent events and the fact that cantonment will be pursued, the purpose of this follow-up note is to highlight areas of continued concern that require attention of the international community in the preparation and implementation of the cantonment.

### **3. Discussion of the options**

The MDRP options note was tabled at the DDR-CC meeting in Bujumbura on 30 May 2003. Several risks and advantages of early versus late cantonment were discussed. Subsequently, the Delegation of the European Commission submitted its comments also in writing to the MDRP Secretariat on June 6, 2003. Its main concerns are that the note assesses the options "from a clearly technical, if not technocratic, perspective", rather than in terms of how realistic and how beneficial to the peace process the options are, that some of the technical arguments in the note can be contested, and that the MDRP Secretariat should be more flexible with regards to the definition of 'full disarmament of the cantoned combatants' and 'the existence of a realistic DDR policy framework' (see EC note also attached).

In the view of the MDRP Secretariat, the central consideration is that the cantonment, disarmament and demobilization support provided to the Transitional Government is all seen in a long-term perspective. This implies that:

- Cantonment not be an objective in itself, but an element of the process towards security sector reform, downsizing of the national armed forces, and support to the resettlement and reintegration of ex-combatants. In the absence of an agreed Armed Forces Restructuring Plan and/or National Demobilization and Reintegration Program, cantonment must be planned and implemented in close cooperation with those government agencies/teams that are responsible for these respective exercises. *This now appears to be the consensus of the key partners.*
- Cantonment should not only respond to the short-term expectations of certain groups, but be part of a realistic larger strategic plan of the GoB to negotiate and agree with the CNDD-FDD faction of Pierre Nkurunziza and the FNL-PALIPEHUTU faction of Agathon Rwasa.
- It be understood that services provided and possible promises made during the cantonment would establish precedents and create expectations that subsequent cantonment, demobilization, resettlement, reintegration support and military reform would have to deal with.

- All cantonment and demobilization efforts are designed and implemented in such a manner to provide positive incentives to the political peace process in the country and strengthens democratic processes and government capacity.

#### **4. Possible way forward**

Given the recent events, actions and expectations raised by the GoB, AMIB and others, the proposed **option 1 (status quo) seems no longer to be realistic**. Based on the analysis in the options note, the comments provided by the Delegation of the European Commission and the discussion in the DDR-CC, the starting point should now be some combination of options 3 and 4 as it appears to be generally agreed that option 2 (open-ended cantonment) is the least preferred option of all.

Given that cantonment now seems inevitable, the MDRP Secretariat believes strongly that the Transitional Government (and the BAF) need to agree with the two groups to be cantoned on (i) the estimated numbers of rebel fighting forces that will be demobilized, and (ii) the criteria and process to be applied for absorption into a new national army. The platform for such discussions and agreements should be the Joint Ceasefire Commission (JCC). Although it is argued that option 4 (cantonment and integration) is currently the least realistic, the MDRP Secretariat continues to strongly believe that an eventual **agreement on integration in the army** would be required in order to prevent (violent) political problems in the future. Even with such agreement, the risk exists of arguments about the ‘representation’ of certain groups (whose sizes are unknown) in the future armed forces. If some groups would (agree on how to) be integrated in the armed forces, that by itself would set a standard for the other groups that would later also claim positions in the new forces. The preferred approach would obviously be that the essential ‘balancing’ of the future armed forces would occur without reference to the actual fighting (rebel) groups.

Normally, **integration and demobilization** would only commence once a general ceasefire agreement were signed and adhered to by the BAF and all rebel movements. However, if the numbers of the forces to be cantoned are indeed indeed relatively small as currently indicated, than the risks involved in implementing integration and demobilization in a piecemeal fashion might be acceptable. But all stakeholders should be fully aware that resettlement and reintegration may be much more problematic for many in a country still at war, which could lead to extended cantonment with associated costs and risks.

Concrete steps should also be taken in further developing and detailing the **Joint Operational Plan (JOP)**. This plan will outline the overall process (cantonment, logistics, disarmament, demobilization), the various responsibilities, as well as the linkages between the activities and phases in the processes. It will also detail the agreements on the guiding principles, preconditions and criteria for cantonment and demobilization and reintegration support. *Again, this is now the shared view of partners.*

## 9. Remaining concerns

In light of the current situation on the ground, and the discussions that have preceded this note, the MDRP Secretariat feels that a number of issues require further attention in order to properly undertake cantonment in a way that will best facilitate demobilization and reintegration of combatants in Burundi. These issues are:

- a. **Clear and irreversible disarmament** is and remains a minimum condition for financial support by the MDRP. If the fighters who are cantoned would still have access to weapons, this would make it impossible for the MDRP (as well as for several other donor agencies) to support them in the camps. Questions still to be addressed in this respect are: i) How and by whom will the combatants be disarmed? ii) How will the weapons be managed (disabled, secured, etc.) iii) What steps will be taken to minimize the risk that some weapons would be kept outside of the disarmament process? and iv) What verification process would be put in place?
- b. The **Government must be the lead partner** in the demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration support process. As such, cantonment should become part and parcel of the national demobilization and reintegration support strategy, as currently being finalized by the GoB.
- c. Cantonment needs to be accompanied by very **clear and agreed access criteria** and good communication of these criteria and associated entitlements. It should be made clear to those that are accepted into the cantonment that they do not necessarily qualify for resettlement and reintegration support. Risks exist that the two groups may try to artificially inflate their numbers in order to increase benefits from the DD&R support program and possible ‘slots’ in the reformed national armed forces. The disarmament process should be carefully managed and clearly documented.
- d. An essential concern remains that the **overhaul of the security sector** that has been agreed upon in the Arusha process has not yet started. A large number of (ex-)members of armed groups are expected to be integrated in the national security forces, while the overall size would have to be smaller than the current size of the BAF. Agreement on at least the principles is required before a national demobilization and reintegration program can become operational.
- e. Lastly, but possibly most importantly, the **political process – peace and reform – should be kept in the center** of the dialogue and external support. Although cantonment and demobilization could play an important role in the peace process and post-war reconstruction, its organizational concerns and logistics should not take away any attention from the actual political process with the armed groups.