

WORSENING
BURUNDI: MSF warns that the Burundian exodus is becoming the main African refugee crisis today

The humanitarian organisation MSF warned that the fifth increase in the number of people who have reached Tanzania fleeing from the political violence plaguing Burundi is becoming one of the most serious refugee crises on the continent today, amidst alarms of threats of genocide. Around 10,000 Burundians have entered Tanzania each month since August, increasing the saturation of three refugee camps in northwestern Tanzania to around 250,000 people. About 325,000 people, or 3% of the population of the country, have fled since the crisis began in April 2015. Most have fled to Tanzania, but others have gone to Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC. UNHCR has announced that 462 Burundians and 42 Congolese have come to Tanzania each day in November, so the Burundian refugee population will total 280,000 by the end of 2016. The Tanzanian government has had to displace and compensate its own population each time that it has needed space to create a new camp. Thousands of people demonstrated in late November in support of the government, which is opposed to UN investigations into alleged human rights abuses committed in the country. A joint report by the local organisation Iteka and by the International Federation for Human Rights warned of the risk of genocide in Burundi. (VOA, 15/11/16; Reuters, 16/11/16; AP, 27/11/16)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: A rise in clashes between rival militias prompts the flight of thousands of people

Clashes between militias belonging to the former Séléka coalition in the town of Bria, in the north-central part of the country, caused the deaths of 16 people and forcibly displaced thousands of others in the area, and around 5,000 people, including the local authorities and humanitarian organisations, sought refuge in MINUSCA facilities. These two factions are the Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique (FPRC) and the Union pour la Paix in Centrafrique (UPC). The UN mission in the country has intervened to curb violence in the area. In late October, at least 25 people were killed (including civilians, security force members and combatants) in the vicinity of Bambari as a result of fighting between anti-balaka militias and former members of Séléka. Meanwhile, forces involved in France's Operation Sangaris withdrew from the country, coinciding with the escalation of clashes. France has withdrawn 2,000 soldiers. Around 350 soldiers from the mission will remain in the country to support MINUSCA. (BBC, AllAfrica, 31/10/16; HRW, 01/11/16; Sputnik News, 30/10/16; UN, 22 and 23/11/16)

IRAQ: ISIS executes dozens of people and uses children as suicide bombers as the Iraqi Armed Forces advance on Mosul

For the first time since 2014, in early November 2016 Iraqi troops began to enter the suburbs of Mosul as part of the campaign to regain the city from the control of ISIS. Shia militias, Sunni tribal fighters and Kurdish forces supported by the US-led international coalition participated in the campaign. Faced with the advance of this group of forces, ISIS has been executing dozens of people accused of treason, of collaborating with Iraqi forces or of deserting. Intending to intimidate, ISIS has hung their bodies on power poles next to signs explaining the alleged motive of their execution. ISIS has also begun to send children up to 12 years old with explosive belts into areas where enemy forces are penetrating to stop their entry into the city. Iraqi troops advancing south of the city found a mass grave with over 100 decapitated bodies near Hammam al-Alil. In this area alone, around 1,500 families were forcibly displaced by ISIS towards Mosul. In this context, witnesses and the UN high commissioner for refugees warned that faced with military pressure, ISIS is

displacing thousands of residents to use them as human shields. Media reports highlighted that about 50,000 people have left the area around Mosul. Furthermore, Human Rights Watch claimed that it had received reports indicating that the armed group was collecting chemicals in order to use them as weapons against their adversaries. The organisation also asked the Iraqi government to maintain control over its forces after reporting abuses committed by Iraqi forces and pro-government militias as part of its campaign in Mosul, including the mutilation of ISIS combatants' corpses and the execution of one fighter following his surrender. Near the end of the month, media reports stressed the slow advance of the Iraqi forces in Mosul, adding that Iraqi and Kurdish officers privately acknowledge that the campaign could be extended for at least three months. In late November, the strategy of the Iraqi forces and of the pro-government militias focused on cutting off the supply routes to Mosul after surrounding the city. ISIS combatants fought in Tal Afar (around 60 kilometres west of Mosul) with Popular Mobilisation Units, a coalition mostly made up of Shia armed groups backed by Iran with Baghdad's approval. Cutting off the supply routes would require breaking the connection between Mosul and Raqqa, the most important ISIS-controlled city in Syria. By the end of November, Mosul was surrounded by Iraqi government forces and Kurdish troops (peshmergas) from the north, south and east. (The Guardian, 01, 08, 11/11/16; AP, 07/11/16; al-Jazeera, 12, 22/11/16; HRW, 15/11/16; Reuters, 21/11/16)

NIGERIA: Amnesty International denounces serious human rights violations committed by the Nigerian Army in Biafra

On 23 November, Amnesty International issued a report entitled *Nigeria: 'Bullets were raining everywhere'* that denounced how Nigerian security forces led by the Nigerian Army have conducted a chilling campaign of violence and extrajudicial killings against the pro-Biafra IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) movement, which has cost the lives of at least 150 peaceful demonstrators in the southeastern part of the country. The report covers the period from August 2015 to August 2016 and compiles information related to demonstrations and meetings through the analysis of 87 videos, 122 photographs and 146 eyewitness accounts demonstrating the security forces' disproportionate use of force and evidence of mass extrajudicial killings. One of the most emblematic cases mentioned in the report was the Nigerian security forces' crackdown during the two-day celebrations of Biafra Remembrance Day on 30 May 2016, which commemorated the 49th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, where at least 60 people were shot dead and 70 others were wounded. Makmid Kamara, the interim director of Amnesty International Nigeria, urged the Nigerian authorities to begin an impartial investigation to determine who was responsible for the incidents. Colonel Sani Kukasheka Usman, the interim director of public relations for the Nigerian Army, denied the claims made by Amnesty International, describing the accusations of the mass killing of MASSOB and IPOB demonstrators by the Nigerian Army as unfounded. Since August 2015, a series of protests, marches and meetings have taken place with members and supporters of the IPOB (an organisation that emerged in 2012), demanding the creation of an independent state in Biafra. Tensions rose in the area after the arrest on 14 October 2015 of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu, who remains in detention. (AI, 23/11/2016; Vanguard, 24/11/2016)

PHILIPPINES (MINDANAO-ABU SAYYAF): The government declares that over 100 Abu Sayyaf combatants have been killed in four months of counterinsurgency operations

In early November, the Philippine Armed Forces declared that over 112 Abu Sayyaf fighters had been killed, another 30 had been wounded and around 100 had been arrested since current President Rodrigo Duterte took office and ordered an increase in military actions against Abu Sayyaf in early July. During this same period, 28 soldiers were killed and 36 were wounded, most of them in Sulu province. Most of the clashes took place and most of the victims fell in Sulu province, although high levels of violence were also reported in

Basilan. In mid-November, 14 people (10 Abu Sayyaf combatants and four soldiers) were killed and scores were wounded in the region of Patikul (Sulu province) during fighting between the Philippine Armed Forces and a group of Abu Sayyaf combatants commanded by one of the group's main leaders, Radullan Sahiron. Meanwhile, in late November the government of the Philippines declared that Abu Sayyaf had abducted 12 people during the month, four of them Indonesian citizens, six Vietnamese and two Germans. One of the Germans was murdered. Abu Sayyaf is currently estimated to hold 16 people in captivity. The Philippine government recently published a report claiming that Abu Sayyaf may have received over \$7 million in ransom to release hostages during the first six months of 2016. Given the rise in the number of kidnappings observed in regions such as Sulu and in the Malaysian state of Sabah in recent months, in early November Duterte declared his intention to boost cooperation with Malaysia and Indonesia, to include joint patrols and to start combined military exercises in 2017. (Inquirer, 18/11/16; ABS-CBN News, 18/11/16; Wall Street Journal, 01/11/16; Channel News Asia, 21/11/16, Anadolu Agency, 01/11/16; Associated Press, 02/11/16; Philippine Star, 04/11/16)

SOMALIA: The armed group al-Shabaab intensifies its attacks while indirect elections are held

The think tank Sahan Research stated that the radical armed Islamist group al-Shabaab has intensified its attacks in the country and increased the use and power of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This increase aims to erode the country's ability to hold its presidential election in November. Some of these revelations will appear in the next UN report. Experts on security issues have said that the attack on a commercial airliner in February reveals al-Shabaab's more sophisticated use of bombs and its ties to insurgencies in the Middle East and other areas. IEDs have killed 470 people in the first seven months of 2016, while they killed 200 in all of 2015 and only 50 in 2010. The use of truck bombs, which were only used very rarely before, were employed on five occasions against military bases and other facilities that car bombs had been unable to damage, with a bomb volume of over 400 kg, whereas car bombs use between 100 and 150 kg and their weight and volume are easier to detect in a car. The rise of shaped charges that can penetrate armour and direct the explosion towards a small area has been noted. These shaped charges are normally used in Iraq and Afghanistan and have been used between 20 and 40 times in the last two years. Moreover, standardisation in the manufacture of IEDs bolsters the theory that there is some manufacturing and distribution location due to the similarities between IEDs, and that there may be an expert with experience in countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. The increase of pressure-detonated bombs at the expense of bombs operated by remote control, which are less accurate, has also been noted, which suggests some kind of factory producing them, according to Bancroft Global Development, a US organisation training the Somali police. Hundreds of civilians, al-Shabaab fighters, soldiers and AMISOM members were killed in different attacks, bombings and military actions taken by al-Shabaab during the month. The most prominent included the deaths of 140 combatants around Afmadow (Lower Juba) on 1 November, according to the Kenyan AMISOM contingent the week before. Finally, it was announced that the African Union mission in the country may possibly withdraw in 2018. This announcement prompted AMISOM to request 4,000 additional soldiers on top of the current 21,129 in order to defeat al-Shabaab in areas under the group's control in Juba Valley, Bakool, Hiraan and other costal areas. Even though the UN support mission in Somalia (UNSOS) announced that there are funds available to increase the contingent in Somalia, no countries have volunteered in the last two months. Ethiopia recently withdrew 2,000 soldiers who were not part of AMISOM from the country in the context of a bilateral agreement between Ethiopia and Somalia on the grounds that there was a lack of international support. Countries like Kenya and Burundi have threatened to withdraw troops due to delays in payments and a lack of compensation. (AllAfrica 01/11/16; Reuters, 04/11/16; The East African, Shabell Meida, 17/11/16; 22/11/16; Shabelle Media, 23/11/16)

SYRIA: The population living in besieged areas doubles in six months and reaches one million amidst growing violence, which is especially serious in Aleppo

The United Nations warned that the number of Syrians living in besieged areas in the context of the armed conflict has intensified significantly in the last six months, rising from 468,700 people to 974,080. Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien warned of the dramatic living conditions of these people, who suffer from isolation, a lack of food and malnutrition, a dearth of medical care and precarious aid and are faced with the dilemma to either surrender or flee, when conditions permit. O'Brien stressed that this strategy is mainly being used by Bashar Assad's forces, which have recently added Jobar, Hajar al-Aswad and Khan al-Shih (in the Damascus suburbs) and several parts of the Ghouta farming area to their list of places under siege. The worst humanitarian conditions, however, were reported in the area east of Aleppo, which has been the subject of an intense air campaign waged by the Syrian regime. After weeks of relative calm, government troops in Damascus with decisive Russian support (including the deployment of an aircraft carrier to the Syrian coast) once again clashed with the opposition-controlled part of the city and surrounding rural areas. The attacks continued to affect hospitals, including the only paediatric centre that remained operational. During November, the US Army also publicly recognised that 64 civilians had been killed as a consequence of US attacks on alleged ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria between November 2015 and September 2016. This toll does not include the victims of the offensive in Manbij in July, which is still under investigation and in which dozens of people may have lost their lives. In October, an Amnesty International report concluded that around 300 civilians had died in 11 attacks by the US-led coalition in the last two years. According to official sources, by early November the United States had launched 5,362 air strikes against ISIS in Syria and another 6,992 in Iraq. Regarding the dynamics in the battlefronts, by late November Syrian regime forces had managed to capture key areas in eastern Aleppo, which some observers described as the worst rebel defeat since 2012. (BBC, 21, 28/11/16; Reuters, 09/11/16; The Guardian, 15, 18, 28/11/16)

ALERT**CHINA – JAPAN: The Japanese government protests diplomatically against a new incursion of Chinese ships into the territorial waters of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands**

The Japanese government protested diplomatically to the Chinese foreign minister through its embassy in Beijing after four Chinese ships entered what Japan considers the territorial waters of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (as the archipelago is known in Japanese and Chinese, respectively), whose sovereignty is disputed by both countries. A few days after lodging the complaint, Tokyo denounced that several Chinese vessels had once again sailed in the same territorial waters. According to Japan, over 30 formal complaints were made regarding incursions by Chinese ships in 2016 alone, most of them coast guard vessels or fishing boats. On the other hand, the tension around this dispute increased again after China expressed its discomfort and concern about the Japanese government's intention to have UNESCO declare the Amami-Ryukyu islands world heritage. Although Tokyo has indicated that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands are not included in the proposal that it must formally submit in February 2017 so that the possible designation may become effective in 2018, Beijing says that it may have a negative effect on the management and resolution of its dispute with Japan. (AFP, 06/11/16; The Japan Times, 14/11/16)

EGYPT: The Court of Cassation overturns sentences of capital punishment and life imprisonment against the Islamist former president, while the government continues its campaign to crack down on dissidents

In mid-November, the Court of Cassation (Court of Appeals) of Egypt overturned the death sentence handed to the Islamist former President Mohamed Morsi, who was ousted by a military coup d'état in mid-2013. The court annulled the sentence for Morsi and five other leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), including its top leader, Mohamed Badie, as part of a case opened for allegedly participating in and preparing assaults on several Egyptian prisons during the revolt against Hosni Mubarak in 2011 with the help of Hamas and Hezbollah. Although some media outlets pointed out that the Court of Cassation is one of the most rights-based institutions in the country, others suggested that the move may reflect the reluctance of the current Egyptian government to execute the MB leaders, who still enjoy popular support despite the persecution campaign launched by the authorities. In late November, a new ruling from the highest level of the Court of Cassation also struck down the sentence of life imprisonment given to Morsi for a case of conspiring to commit acts of terrorism in collusion with foreign organisations for the purpose of undermining national security. The accusations levelled against Morsi claimed that he had sent “elements” to training camps run by Hamas and Hezbollah, although the MB has denied this. The former president is still facing long sentences in two other court cases, including 40 years in prison for allegedly revealing secrets and delivering sensitive documents to Qatar and another 20 years for his role in cracking down on demonstrations outside the presidential palace in December 2012, while he was in office. Meanwhile, the campaign to harass dissidents continued. A court in Cairo sentenced the head of the Egyptian Journalists' Union, Yehia Kalash, and two other leaders of the organisation to two years in prison. Egypt is considered one of the six most dangerous countries for practicing journalism following the arrest of dozens of professionals in recent years. Finally, insurgent groups active in the Sinai Peninsula claimed responsibility for the murder of two generals in recent weeks. Reports indicate that at least two new armed organisations have emerged in the area: Louwaa al-Thawra (Brigades of the Revolution) and the Hasam Movement. (El País, 15/11/16; New York Times, 15/11/16; BBC, 22/11/16)

KOREA, US-NORTH KOREA, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA: The North Korean government warns the new US administration about its policy in the Korean peninsula

The North Korean government issued a statement urging the new US government to end what it regards as an anachronistic policy of hostility and nuclear threats towards Pyongyang. The statement also urged the incoming administration to face reality, in reference to the formal recognition that North Korea is already a state with a remarkable nuclear capability. The statement openly criticised the policy upheld by the Obama administration and although it did not directly mention US President-elect Donald Trump, some consider it a clear warning to Washington. In fact, in the middle of the month, some media outlets published that in January, coinciding with Trump's inauguration, the North Korean government intends to conduct a test of a medium-range ballistic missile in order to make a clear statement to the United States that it does not plan to abandon its arms policy. According to some experts, North Korea currently has between 12 and 20 nuclear warheads and could attain between 50 and 100 in the next five years. In addition, according to these same experts, Pyongyang currently has between 200 and 320 Nodong medium-range ballistic missiles (capable of striking any city in Japan and the US military bases in the region) and various Musudan long-range missiles (capable of striking Alaska and Guam, an island where the United States has an important military base) and is developing some long-range missiles that could reach certain parts of the west coast of the United States. Finally, the same analysts think that the last nuclear test conducted by North Korea in September may have demonstrated that it is already capable of building nuclear bombs as powerful as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. (Washington Times,

22/11/16; CNBC, 08, 15 and 18/11/16; USA Today, 14/11/16; Yonhap News, 09, 13 and 21/11/16)

SOMALIA: Elections are held in Somalia

Somalia began the process to elect 275 MPs in late October. This process will continue until late November in different parts of the country and is not expected to end by 30 November, meaning that the presidential election must be postponed. Among more than 12 million citizens of the country, 14,025 will choose 275 MPs, who will join the 54 senators appointed by the different regions in the country. Women must occupy 30% of the seats, which is difficult due to the features of the process. These MPs will choose a new president, though it is still unclear when due to the successive postponements of the process. The deputy director of the Somali electoral body, the Federal Indirect Election Implementation Team, described the process as unique. In 2012, only 135 clan leaders appointed the MPs, so participation in the process has multiplied one hundred-fold. The UN representative in the country, Michael Keating, has said that the aim is to achieve a peaceful transfer of political power and like other observers has indicated the many problems in the process: intimidation, pressure to prevent new alternative candidates, restrictions on movement, bribes and movements of money, disputes, corruption and accusations of fraud. US Ambassador for Somalia Stephen Schwartz sent an official letter to the president of the region of Galmudug, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, indicating fraud, bribery and intimidation in the process. In fact, on the list for a local area, the minister of the presidency in the region, Mahad Mohamed Salad, allegedly replaced the names of the clan's legitimate MPs with the names of his employees and security detail, obtaining the seat, and may have prevented a female candidate, Ayan Dahir Canshur, from running against him. Members of civil society have expressed concern about the fraud detected. The United States has also stated that the lack of representatives of the pro-government armed group Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa may be a factor of future tension. (Shabelle Media, 21, 23/11/16; Dalsan Radio, The East African, 22/11/16; Daily Monitor, 24/11/16)

THAILAND (SOUTH): The government boosts security measures in schools in the southern part of the country

The government stepped up security measures in the three southern Muslim-majority provinces (Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat) due to the start of the school year. In late October, a teacher was reportedly murdered at a school in Pattani. Shortly before, 16 people (including five children) were allegedly wounded when an explosive device was detonated in a market in Pattani. In September, two people were killed after a bomb exploded in a school. Since violence resumed in the southern part of the country in 2004, more than 200 schools have been attacked and over 180 teachers have been killed. Meanwhile, in the middle of the month, two local authorities were wounded in the province of Pattani after an explosive device blew up. Early in the month, three people had died as a result of three coordinated attacks in the southern part of the country. (Wall Street Journal, Bangkok Post and Xinhua, 02/11/16; Bernama, 01/11/16, AFP, 03/11/16)

TURKEY (SOUTHEAST): Tensions rise following the arrest of the co-leaders and around a dozen MPs of the pro-Kurdish party HDP and the closure of about 200 associations

Tensions rose in relation to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. In early December, the co-leaders of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yüksekdağ, were arrested along with around a dozen of the party's MPs due to their refusal to testify in the court case investigating them because of the declarations of autonomy of various municipalities in the southeast during a congress of the platform DTK in late 2015. The arrests sparked protests, including criticism of the Turkish opposition party CHP, and the HDP began a boycott of Parliament, even though it decided to resume its parliamentary duties at the end of the month. Arrests of

other political figures and activists of the Kurdish movement continued, who were charged with crimes related to terrorism, including the historical Kurdish political leader Ahmet Türk. The government ordered the closure of 190 associations accused of having links to the PKK (as well as over 100 accused of having ties to other groups), which led to new criticism from different sectors of civil society and calls of alarm about alleged attempts by the government to dismantle the entire civil space that does not support the AKP. The government appointed administrators in Kurdish municipalities to replace mayors who had been arrested, including at Diyarbakir City Council, and announced that it would take apart the alleged system to fund the PKK from sympathetic city councils. The government predicted a harsh winter for the PKK. Meanwhile, the PKK warned that the time of words had ended and called for “resistance” and “uprisings” and threatened the state with alleged plans of a military operation against PKK bases in Qandil. Moreover, 11 people, including two police officers and civilians, were killed and over 100 people were wounded in a car bomb attack next to a police station in Diyarbakir. The armed group TAK, which is considered linked to the PKK, claimed responsibility for the attack. New attacks attributed to the PKK targeted government offices, with bomb attacks on the offices of the governor in Adana that killed two people and wounded around 20, and in Derik (Mardin), which claimed the governor’s life. (Hürriyet, Firat, Bianet, The Guardian, 1-28/11/16)

UKRAINE (EAST): The OSCE warns of a serious increase in ceasefire violations

The conflict in eastern Ukraine witnessed a serious increase in ceasefire violations, rising from 1,000 infractions per day to around 2,000, according to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. The mission claimed that most of the incidents involved the use of weapons not permitted by the Minsk agreements and that it had detected an increase in the use of mortars, artillery and multiple rocket launcher systems. The bombings were concentrated in the areas between the Donetsk Airport, Yasynuvata and Adviiivka; areas north and west of Horlivka; around the Debaltsevo-Svitlodarsk axis; areas east and northeast of Mariupol; and in western Luhansk. The situation of violence continued to have an impact on the civilian population, including due to bombardments in populated areas and in places close to crossing points. Furthermore, coinciding with the third anniversary of the Maidan protests, anti-government demonstrations whose organisers included some opposition leaders were staged in Kiev to protest the precarious socio-economic situation and rising prices. Government representatives denounced an alleged Russian plan to destabilise the country, including through protests like those held in the middle of the month. Tension also continued between Russia and Ukraine with regard to Crimea, with new incidents around the peninsula. Among them, Russia arrested three people that it accused of forming part of a terrorist group linked to the ministry of defence that planned acts of sabotage. Russia detained three Russian soldiers near the border with Crimea. Moscow also announced its withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, reversing its signing of the Rome Statute, which it never ratified. The announcement came after a resolution was issued by the human rights committee of the UN General Assembly that condemned the “temporary occupation of Crimea” and human rights abuses and after a report was issued by the ICC prosecutor’s office. According to the ICC prosecutor’s office, the information available suggests that the situation amounts to a military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and that the situation inside Crimea amounts to a “state of occupation”. (OSCE, Reuters, The Guardian, RFE/RL, Itar Tass, 1-30/11/16)

PROGRESS

CENTRAL AFRICA (LRA): Violence caused by the LRA falls during 2016

The data collection platform LRA Crisis Tracker has stated that the armed group of Ugandan origin LRA kidnapped 44 people in eight attacks in October, which is one of the lowest counts of 2016. Five of these attacks (with 40 people abducted) were committed by

an LRA splinter faction led by Doctor Achaye, which has been operating independently of Joseph Kony's leadership since 2014. The LRA-Achaye has been operating on the CAR'S southeastern border with the DRC since January 2016. The attacks launched by the LRA-Achaye were concentrated in the towns of Zemio, Dembia and Derbissaka. Five Congolese and a Central African who had remained with the group receiving military training for between three and 24 months escaped in the town of Derbissaka in October. Only two attacks were reported in the DRC in October, the lowest figure in 2016. Meanwhile, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is reviewing its search and capture operation targeting Joseph Kony after five years in support of the mission of the armed forces of the countries of the region, especially Uganda. The commander of AFRICOM, Marine General Thomas Waldhauser, is considering reducing the mission after taking into account that the group has shrunk with the passing of time and should hardly have 200 combatants, as many of the main fighters have deserted. The operation against the LRA costs the US Treasury around \$100 million per year. (LRA Crisis Tracker, 10/11/16; Stars and Stripes, 18/11/16)

GEORGIA (ABKHAZIA, SOUTH OSSETIA): An equality strategy and an action plan for internally displaced persons in Georgia are approved

The Georgian minister of internally displaced persons approved an equality strategy and an action plan for 2016-2017, which have an allocated budget and are aimed at supporting gender equality within the ministry itself and within the displaced population. According to the International Displacement Monitoring Centre, the population internally displaced by the conflict in Georgia amounts to 239,000 people, of which around half are women. The strategy and the action plan include efforts to combat violence against women, support female victims of violence and implement the resolutions of the international women, peace and security agenda, in addition to other commitments established in Georgia's national action plan. As part of the strategy, an internal mechanism for gender equality was developed that includes the creation of a gender advisor for the minister, the establishment of a gender equality commission and the designation of focal points in the branches of the ministry. The development of the strategy is part of a project carried out by UN Women and the FAO and funded by the EU. (UN Women, EEAS, 8/11/16)

HAITI: The country holds the presidential and legislative elections postponed since December 2015

Since Hurricane Matthew passed through on 4 October, killing over 500 people and triggering a humanitarian crisis similar to the one created by the earthquake in 2010, which forced further delay of the presidential and legislative elections planned for 9 October, the country has been returning to normal, enabling it to hold the elections. The first round of the presidential election and the legislative elections were finally held on 20 November. When they were held, the country took a step towards institutional normalisation following the political crisis unleashed at the end of 2014. Instability and internal political tensions have forced postponement of the elections up to four times since the first date scheduled for 27 December 2015. Léopold Berlangier, the president of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), was pleased with the functioning of election day, whose definitive results would be known at the end of the month. The Electoral Observation Mission of the Organisation of American States, which has deployed a team of 130 experts and observers of 24 nationalities in the country, led by former Uruguayan Senator Juan Raúl Ferreira, reported that in the coming weeks, it will present a report with recommendations for the CEP to be considered with a view to the second round of the elections, scheduled for 29 January 2017. (Haiti Libre, 19, 21-22/11/2016)

VENEZUELA: The government and the opposition began talks fraught with tension

On 30 October, the Venezuelan government and opposition, represented by the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) alliance, began a national dialogue process facilitated by the mediation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the participation of the Vatican in order to find a solution to the crisis gripping the country. The dialogue process established four working groups: respect for sovereignty, reparations for victims, an election timetable and the economy. The MUD has said that progress in the talks depends on the release of over 100 members of the opposition and on the convening of an early presidential election. As a result of the start to the talks, the Venezuelan Congress has postponed the political trial against President Nicolás Maduro in order to avoid influencing them. The Venezuelan government's first gesture was the release of three opposition activists detained a little over a month ago. The foreign ministers of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay signed a joint statement expressing their hopes for the talks. On 12 November, the government and the opposition agreed to a joint statement called "Convivir en paz" ("Peaceful co-existence") in which they pledged to comply with the country's Constitution and expressed their commitment to peaceful co-existence without violence. In turn, MPs from both parties agreed to implement measures to boost supplies of food and medicine, which are scarce in the country. The process was rife with tension and mutual accusations were made throughout the month, so in an extraordinary session held on 16 November, the Permanent Council of the Organisation of American States (OAS) approved a statement of support for the talks in Venezuela, encouraging both sides to achieve concrete results within a reasonable amount of time in order to put an end to the difficult national situation. The next day, the MUD accused the government of breaching the agreements signed at the dialogue table. On 23 November, Henrique Capriles, a key opposition figure, claimed that Maduro's government had abandoned the political talks, though the president denied this and said that the dialogue would continue to make progress and become consolidated. Capriles has set the deadline for 6 December, the day of the third plenary meeting for MPs, to see the results of the opposition's talks with the government, and has warned that if there are no results, the talks could end. Former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, who is acting as a mediator, has reaffirmed the validity and strength of the political dialogue between the Venezuelan government and the opposition and has stressed that the talks are the great future and guarantee of peace in the country. (Reuters, 01/11/2016; Efe, 02, 08, 12, 16-17, 20, 24/11/2016)

To subscribe to the monthly observatory or to receive information from the School for a Culture of Peace,
<https://llestes.uab.es>

To unsubscribe, click [here](#)

For any comments or suggestions, please write to:

Tel. +34 93 586 88 42 | <http://escolapau.uab.cat> | pr.conflictos.escolapau@uab.cat

Plaça del Coneixement -Edifici MRA (Mòdul Recerca A), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 08193 Bellaterra
 (Barcelona)

In compliance with Law 15/1999, of 13 December, on Protection of Personal Data, the School for a Culture of Peace informs that personal information is treated in strict confidence and incorporated into our general database in order to keep you updated on our activities.



**Agència Catalana
de Cooperació
al Desenvolupament**