

DETERIORO**BURUNDI: The date of the peace talks has been postponed and the main leaders of the CNARED have not been invited**

The peace talks that were scheduled to be held on May 2 between representatives of governmental political parties and their allies and representatives of the political and social opposition under the Conseil National pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Burundi et la Restauration d'un Etat de Droit (CNARED), have been postponed again by the mediating team led by Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa until May 21-24. Under pressure from the Burundian Government, the mediating team has not invited the main leaders of the CNARED, and has only invited some lesser members from the coalition. CNARED leaders and civil society organizations have asked the chief EAC mediator, the Tanzanian president, to not interfere in the talks. On May 24 Mkapa announced that the next meeting would be held in June. The talks were launched to end the crisis that has affected the country since the April 2015 elections, with expressions of violence that have already caused the death of 500 people. (AFP, 18/05/16; PANA, 03/05/16)

SYRIA: The Syrian opposition's chief negotiator resigns due to deadlock in the UN-sponsored talks

The dim prospects for negotiations over Syria have been further called into question following the resignation of the chief negotiator of the opposition delegation, Mohammad Alloush. The representatives of the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) decided to abandon the process after complaining that it was a waste of time and that the international community was unable to implement measures related to access to humanitarian aid, the lifting of sieges, respect for the cessation of hostilities agreement and the release of prisoners. A member of the group Jaysh al-Islam (Army of Islam), which is supported by Saudi Arabia, Alloush was considered an important figure for his closeness and ability to influence armed groups operating in Syria, unlike other Syrian opposition leaders. According to reports, the leader had come under pressure to resign from his own group. The HNC reported that Alloush's departure would lead to a broader shakeup of its leadership. In the days before Alloush's resignation, the special envoy of the UN and the Arab League for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, had stated that he intended to resume the talks as soon as possible, but added that a new round was not expected in the short term. (The Guardian, 31/05/16; UN News, 26/05/16)

ALERTA**CYPRUS: The peace talks are temporarily cancelled as the Greek Cypriot president protests attempts to give international recognition to the Turkish Cypriot administration**

Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades called off the round of talks scheduled for 27 May with Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı to protest against a series of events in May that he claimed resulted in the degradation of the Republic of Cyprus and an attempt to officially recognise the Turkish Cypriot administration. The controversy arose following Akıncı's participation in the dinner for heads of state organised by Turkey for the World Humanitarian Summit. Rejecting his presence, Anastasiades decided not to attend. In addition, Akıncı met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon alongside the summit. In protest of these incidents, Anastasiades cancelled the round of talks on 27 May, alleging that there was no suitable basis for dialogue. Akıncı defended the steps taken and described his meeting with Ban Ki-moon as helpful to the peace process. The meeting planned between UN Special Envoy for Cyprus Espen Barth Eide and Akıncı did take place.

Eide stressed that the situation was not optimal and urged all parties to work together to overcome it. Calls intensified for the process to resume, including appeals to both leaders from US Vice President Joe Biden. The UN Secretary-General later held a telephone conversation with Anastasiades in which he ensured that UN policy on the Cyprus issue remained the same. Finally, the Greek Cypriot leader announced that he would resume the peace talks. (Hürriyet Daily News, Reuters, 1-31/05/16)

MALI: First anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement marked by instability

On the first anniversary of the first signing of the National Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, violence remained present in the northern part of the country, mainly because of attacks caused by jihadist groups excluded from the peace agreement. The UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA) is still the most dangerous that it has deployed, having lost 68 soldiers in active service, while four others have died in different incidents. During the month of May alone, 10 soldiers from the mission (five Chadians and five Togolese) were killed in two ambushes carried out by jihadist forces on 19 and 28 May. The instability of the peace agreement is also linked to some clashes between the signatory parties, as well as the disputes generated by the different armed groups that signed the agreement regarding implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme for combatants. On 13 May, hundreds of demonstrators in the city of Gao asked the Malian government and the UN mission (MINUSMA) to include more local youths in the DDR programme so they may benefit from it. (Jeune Afrique; 20/05/2016; BBC News, 29/05/2016; UNSC Report, 31/05/2016; ICG, 31/05/2016)

MYANMAR: Armed group ALA may withdraw from the ceasefire agreement

The armed opposition group in Arakan State, the ALA, is threatening to withdraw from the ceasefire agreement after growing tensions with the Armed Forces. Although there have been no direct clashes between the two sides, the armed group accused the Army of being responsible for war crimes, such as forcibly using civilians as human shields and porters. Also, in this state there have been clashes between the Armed Forces and the armed group AA. The fact that ALA wasn't invited to be part of the Joint Monitoring Committee, which is in charge of supervising the fulfilment of the ceasefire agreement, has led to increased tension. The Government stated that, since there had been no confrontation in Arakan State, the ALA wasn't required to participate. (The Irrawaddy, 11/05/16)

SOUTH SUDAN: Implementation of the peace agreements continued at a slow pace

With the recent creation of the new Transitional Government of National Unity, progress in implementing the peace agreements signed in August 2015 continued at a slow pace. On 4 May, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) for the peace agreement, chaired by the former president of Botswana, Festus Mogae, as well as the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), announced that they would not recognise the new administrative distribution of the 28 states created by President Salva Kiir, since it is not in line with the peace agreement and is illegitimate. This declaration joined the request made by the IGAD to Kiir's government to stop the process to create new states until after the Transitional Government of National Unity is confirmed. In this regard, the new cabinet of the transitional government has agreed to form a technical committee to review the borders and determine the number of states, thereby trying to reduce the political tensions produced by the presidential decree. At the same time, the government cabinet has decided to release over 200 prisoners of war, including 59 members of opposition forces in government custody and 165 members of government forces detained by the opposition. Meanwhile, the Ceasefire Transitional and Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) has accused the forces of the SPLA, loyal to President Kiir, of failing to cooperate in implementing the security agreements outlined in the peace agreement. On 12 May, General Molla Hailemariam, the president of the CTSAMM, denounced that the

teams in charge of monitoring compliance with the ceasefire and implementing security measures continue to face resistance from government forces. Regarding the implementation of the security agreements, the SPLA-IO accused Ugandan troops of again crossing into the country, representing a violation of the peace agreement that demanded their withdrawal from national territories. With regard to the Arusha Reunification Agreement, which deals with the unity of the SPLM party, South African Vice President Cyril Ramaphosa visited Juba in mid-May to push for implementation of the SPLM's reunification, even though the trip did not produce much in the way of results. Riek Machar's faction has declared that it will register as an independent party if the reunification agreement is not respected. The SPLM is currently divided into three factions: the one led by President Salva Kiir, the one headed by Riek Machar (SPLA-IO) and the SPLM-FDS, led by Pagan Amum. Finally, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed Lieutenant General Johnson Mogoia Kimani of Kenya to be the new commander of the UNMISS forces. (Radio Tamazuj, 04/05/2016; VOA, 12/05/2016; Sudan Tribune, 14, 21-22, 29/05/2016; The East African, 19/05/2016)

UKRAINE: Stagnation continues in negotiations over the elections in the Donbas

The negotiating process over the Ukrainian conflict hosted a new meeting in Normandy format (Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France) in Berlin (after the previous one held in early March in Paris), though no progress was made on electoral matters. The new meeting, which brought together the foreign ministers of all four countries on 11 May, addressed security issues, elections in the Donbas area and the humanitarian situation. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier stated that substantive progress had been made on security issues, including measures for the separation of military forces along the front line and the creation of demilitarised zones. The security talks took place in a context of increasing ceasefire violations. There was no agreement about holding elections under Ukrainian legislation in the eastern areas controlled by the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, as reflected in the Minsk agreements. The issue has been a subject of contention between Ukraine and Russia. Meanwhile, US Deputy Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland said that sanctions against Russia could be lifted when the Minsk agreements are fully implemented. Furthermore, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko invited Pope Francis to meet with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church at a peace summit in Minsk, saying that the conflict in Ukraine required a spiritual initiative as well. The Vatican did not comment on the invitation. Finally, Russia released Ukrainian military pilot Nadiya Savchenko at the end of the month, after one year and eight months in confinement. (Reuters, RFE/RL, AP, Itar Tass, 1-31/05/16)

YEMEN: The peace talks between the parties continue in Kuwait despite recurrent ceasefire violations

Throughout May, the negotiations between the parties to the conflict in Yemen continued in Kuwait under the sponsorship of the UN, alongside recurrent violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement. UN Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed reported the activity of three working groups focused on political and security issues and the exchange of prisoners. The first focused its discussions on reactivating the institutions of the state, the second exchanged views about the withdrawal and delivery of weapons and the third proposed releasing 50% of all the people detained by the parties to the conflict before Ramadan. Red Cross representatives met with the delegations to inform them about guidelines for exchanging prisoners in war zones and about the organisation's experiences in this regard. In addition, a delegation of seven Yemeni women travelled to Kuwait where they were expected to meet with political leaders to urge them to make progress on a comprehensive solution. The UN Secretary-General also participated in meetings in the region with the emir of Qatar, deposed Yemeni President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the special envoy for Yemen and asked the parties to persevere in the search for a political solution. At the end of the month, delegations from both parties met with Ahmed and

renewed their commitment to dialogue. According to the UN, despite many violations of the truce, the cessation of hostilities agreement in force since 10 April has led to a reduction in violence and has facilitated efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to a population seriously affected by the conflict. (UN News, 05, 11, 23, 26/05/16)

AVANCE

ARMENIA – AZERBAIJAN (NAGORNO-KARABAKH): The Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents back the ceasefire and approve confidence-building measures following the escalation in April

The presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev, met in Vienna in mid-May in the first presidential meeting since the escalation of violence in Nagorno-Karabakh in April. During the meeting, both presidents repeated their support for the ceasefire agreements of 1994 and 1995 and a non-military solution to the conflict. They also pledged to agree on a possible OSCE investigation mechanism, agreed to expand the office of the personal representative of the rotating chairperson-in-office of the OSCE, and to continue the exchange of information of disappeared persons under the aegis of the ICRC. They also agreed to meet again in June. The meeting was facilitated by the OSCE Minsk Group and was attended by US Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and French Secretary of State for European Affairs Harlem Desir. (OSCE, RFE/RL, RT, 1-31/05/06)

MOZAMBIQUE: RENAMO agrees to start peace talks with the government

Through its leader Afonso Dhlakama, the armed opposition group RENAMO has announced that it accepts the invitation made by the FRELIMO government to start peace talks. On 18 May, Dhlakama expressed the desire to start serious negotiations to end the armed conflict and said he was tired of the violence in the country, stating that his main demand will focus on the governance of the six provinces where RENAMO won the last presidential election. Two days later, the RENAMO leader presented the negotiating team to resume the talks, which is composed of three MPs from the party: José Manteigas, Eduardo Namburete and André Magibire. The government's team had already been appointed by President Filipe Nyusi in March and will consist of Jacinto Veloso, a member of the National Defence and Security Council, presidential advisor Maria Benvinda Levi and Alves Muteque, the chief of staff. The announcement was hailed in the country to try to put an end to the resurgence in violence, which according to UNHCR data has so far created 11,500 refugees who are being received by the agency in Malawi. The first meeting of the negotiating teams took place behind closed doors and without statements on 25 May in the headquarters of the National Defence and Security Council (CNDS). However, the start of the talks has not prevented some incidents from taking place or accusations from being made among the parties. (El Mundo, 06/05/2016; Europa Press, 18/05/2016; STV, 18/05/2016; AIM, 25/05/2016; DW, 30/05/2016)

PHILIPPINES (NPA): New President Rodrigo Duterte meets with one of the senior NDF leaders to explore the potential for resuming peace negotiations

A week after Rodrigo Duterte won the presidential election he met in Davao with one of the senior leaders of the NDF, Fidel Agcaoli, who has been living in the Netherlands for some years, to address the future of peace talks. Days before this meeting, Duterte had offered the NDF four ministries in his government (environment and natural resources, agricultural reform, social welfare and labour and employment) and he had shown his openness to begin dialogue with CPP and NPA leader and founder Jose Maria Sison, as well as to guarantee the security and immunity of Sison and the NDF panel leader Luis Jalandoni if they ultimately return to the Philippines. Sison welcomed Duterte's declarations, but declined a position in his government. Following the meeting with Duterte, Agcaoli

appeared optimistic about the peace process and stated that Duterte had even declared his willingness to travel to the Netherlands for talks with Sison, a resident of Utrecht since 1987. Agcaoli pointed out that the NDF had not placed any conditions on the resumption of dialogue and had shown its willingness to signing a cessation of hostilities and considering the new President's federal proposal. In addition, he stated that Duterte had been prepared to reaffirm the agreements signed over the last three decades and consider the possibility of a general amnesty for political prisoners. Duterte had been a student of Sison at university and had on some occasion declared himself a socialist. Also, during his tenure as Mayor of Davao (for around 20 years) he had on various occasions facilitated the release of hostages and prisoners by the NPA. (Manila Bulletin, 24/05/16; CNN, 26/05/16; Philippine Star, 17 y 19/05/16; Inquirer, 16/05/16)

SERBIA – KOSOVO: Talks between the Kosovo government and the political opposition are facilitated by the European Union

The leaders of the five main political parties met at an event organised by the EU in order to favour a solution to the serious political crisis of recent months, including the stagnation of the agreement between Serbia and Kosovo on decentralising the Serbian municipalities in northern Kosovo and of the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro, as well as violent incidents in Parliament. In the months prior, the opposition had refused to participate in meetings with the government and had demanded scrapping the agreement with Serbia and early elections. The opposition leaders made no statements following the meeting, facilitated by European Commissioner Johannes Hahn, but it was interpreted as positive in various media outlets merely for the fact that it was held. Hahn urged the political leaders to ratify the agreement with Montenegro and to focus on the European perspective. At the same time, he warned that the EU would not approve of visa liberalisation otherwise. (Balkan Insight, AP, CDM, 18-19/05/16)

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