

BTI 2010 | Burkina Faso Country Report

Status Index	1-10	4.74	# 87 of 128	
Democracy	1-10	5.17	# 74 of 128	➔
Market Economy	1-10	4.32	# 96 of 128	➔
Management Index	1-10	4.88	# 68 of 128	

scale: 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) score rank trend

This report is part of the Transformation Index (BTI) 2010. The BTI is a global ranking of transition processes in which the state of democracy and market economic systems as well as the quality of political management in 128 transformation and developing countries are evaluated.

The BTI is a joint project of the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Center for Applied Policy Research (C•A•P) at Munich University.

More on the BTI at <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/>

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2010 – Burkina Faso Country Report*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009.

Key Indicators

Population	mn.	14.8	HDI	0.39	GDP p.c.	\$	1120
Pop. growth	% p.a.	2.9	HDI rank of 182	177	Gini Index		39.6
Life expectancy	years	52	UN Education Index	0.30	Poverty ²	%	81.2
Urban population	%	19.1	Gender equality ¹	-	Aid per capita	\$	63.0

Sources: UNDP, Human Development Report 2009 | The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2009.

Footnotes: (1) Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). (2) Percentage of population living on less than \$2 a day.

Executive Summary

Political transformation in Burkina Faso has stagnated during the period under review, as the process of democratization has run into various hurdles. Legislative elections in 2007 consolidated President Blaise Compaoré's, as well as the ruling party's, grip on power. The party's political strategy concentrates foremost on maintaining its power and ignores democratic improvements that could address the population's grievances. The government and ruling party, while managing to win landslide election victories, is at the same time becoming less popular, and its policies are heavily criticized by an increasingly discontented population. The main reasons for the repeated failure of the electoral process to bring political change include the ruling elite's extensive patronage networks and their control of state administration on one hand, and a notoriously weak and divided opposition which offers no convincing political alternatives on the other. An already high level of social tension, sometimes accompanied by violence, has been aggravated by the consequences of the global economic crisis and the government's unwillingness to address citizens' demands to fight impunity and corruption. Rising crime and an increasing disaffection among security forces threaten the country's stability. Successful efforts however have been made as regards cooperation over regional and security issues. President Compaoré's successful mediation in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis, for example, has increased his reputation among Western donors.

Regarding economic policy, the government has made further progress in the implementation of a poverty reduction and growth program which is supported by the IMF and the World Bank. However, dependency on both developments in the world market and on the goodwill of donors remains extremely high, and the country faces a number of structural constraints. The IMF urges that pro-poor measures need to be addressed more systematically to alleviate the effects of high prices for oil and food in 2008. Most of the government's actions seem to originate from foreign and domestic pressure, rather than from independent vision or foresight.

History and Characteristics of Transformation

Since achieving independence from France in 1960, Burkina Faso had endured continuing political instability, including several military coups, and perpetual civil strife. The 1983 coup led by Captain Thomas Sankara, who attempted to remodel the country and its society on the basis of a social revolutionary program, stands out for its anti-imperialist and populist leanings. Four years later, in 1987, Sankara was assassinated in a military coup organized by Blaise Compaoré. The country began its gradual democratic transformation, and by 1991, several new parties had been formed and legalized. A new constitution was also approved in June 1991 via referendum, albeit with low voter turnout. Opposition forces demonstrated their dissatisfaction with the constitution through strong internal pressure, mainly exerted by the unions, forcing Compaoré to consider substantial reforms. The first presidential elections in that same year (1991) led to further boycotts by the opposition. The only candidate on the ballot, Compaoré, was re-elected with only 25% of the electorate participating.

In 1992, Burkina Faso held its first multiparty parliamentary elections. Facing a weak opposition, Compaoré's Organisation pour la Démocratie Populaire/Mouvement du Travail (ODP/MT) achieved a two-thirds majority. The president's party, renamed the Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (CDP) in 1996 after merging with several parties, among them the main political party of the opposition, repeated its success with an even bigger landslide victory in legislative elections five years later. The dominance of the ruling party and the weakness of the opposition turned out to be one of the largest obstacles to democratization during this period. Parliament's ability to govern was theoretical at best, and work in the National Assembly was reduced to a one-party affair. Party opposition began to form outside of parliament, and the National Assembly began suffering a loss of credibility among the population. Although human rights improved, state-sponsored terror and violence did not disappear under the new government. Impunity and a weak rule of law have therefore prevailed. Compaoré had hoped to strengthen his legitimacy shortly after being re-elected as president in 1998 on the basis of relatively high voter turnout. However, he faced a crisis that not only further revealed the regime's authoritarian character but also contested the legitimacy of the president as well as that of the political system as a whole. The crisis centered on the presumably state-ordered assassination of Norbert Zongo, founder and director of *L'Indépendant*, Burkina Faso's most influential private weekly. "Trop c'est trop!" (Too much is too much) quickly became the slogan of an increasingly radical opposition movement, which demanded justice not only in the Zongo case but also denounced the deficient rule of law and the lack of political accountability in the government, as well as the deteriorating living conditions experienced by most Burkinabè (citizens of Burkina Faso). Consistent political pressure forced Compaoré to make concessions to reduce tensions. Numerous institutional and electoral reforms represented a qualitative improvement over the previous system.

The legislative elections of May 2002 shifted the political balance of power, with the ruling party holding on to its absolute majority only by a narrow margin (57 out of 111 seats). For the first time since the inception of the electoral process in 1991, the parliamentary opposition now represented a serious political group. Since then, the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has profoundly affected the political and economic situation in Burkina Faso. A divided political opposition, as well as a wave of patriotic fervor that swept through Burkina Faso following the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Burkinabè fleeing the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, have given Burkina Faso's ruling party, the CDP, renewed strength. The refugee situation has also given the Compaoré government and his CDP party the opportunity to pose as defenders of the national interest. Following a rigorous public debate on the constitutionality of Compaoré's candidacy, citizens in November 2005 re-elected Compaoré as president by more than 80%. Despite rising social tensions based on the population's increasing dissatisfaction with difficult living and working conditions, the CDP won three-quarters of the seats in local government elections in April 2006 and gained a landslide victory in the legislative election held on 6 May 2007, a vote that raised the party's majority in the National Assembly to 73 out of 111 seats. The weak, fragmented opposition combined with the CDP's control of official resources that helped it sustain patronage networks and co-opt political opponents strengthened the governing party's and the president's authority while further democratization of the country fell by the wayside.

Since its independence, Burkina Faso has been ranked one of the poorest countries in the world. After decades of statist policies and the resulting economic crisis, the government had to give in to pressure from the donor community, and in March 1991 agreed to a structural adjustment program (SAP) with the IMF. This was followed in 1993 by the first of four enhanced structural adjustment facilities (ESAF), and in 1996 by the first three-year poverty reduction and growth facility (PRGF) arrangement. In April 2007 the IMF approved the country's fourth consecutive PRGF, covering the period 2007-2010. The PRGFs have been aiming at broad-based growth and poverty reduction, while maintaining macroeconomic stability and progressing with structural reform.

Since the beginning of the reform programs, macroeconomic data has largely improved and economic and institutional reforms have been implemented mostly successfully in a country heavily dependent on international aid. However, the process was particularly painful for the poor, and macroeconomic developments have never translated into an increased standard of living for most citizens, of which up to 85% earn their living from agriculture and raising livestock.

Transformation Status

I. Democracy

Political transformation in Burkina Faso has stagnated during the period under review. Shortcomings identified during the previous period, particularly in the rule of law and institutional stability, persist. The president does not demonstrate a real commitment to democratization but instead focuses on the maintenance of his own power. Rising political and social tensions, along with disturbances within the security forces, increase the risk for further instability.

1 | Stateness

The state's monopoly on the use of force is largely intact. During the period under review, however, there were instances in which elements of the security forces acted independently and the government's authority was weakened. Some incidents demonstrated the army's politicization and revealed a deep crisis within the uniformed services. Soldiers, policemen and prison guards repeatedly demonstrated against poor economic conditions as well as against corruption and favoritism among the forces' leadership. In several cases, security forces have unreasonably resorted to violence when trying to control protests and demonstrations by citizens. The crime rate has increased and armed gangs operate around the country.

Monopoly on the use of force

Although Burkina Faso has a relatively high degree of ethnic diversity (more than 60 ethnic groups, with the Mossi constituting almost half of the population), the definition of and qualifications for citizenship are not politically relevant. All ethnic and religious groups or minorities exercise their rights and basic freedoms without any discrimination and with full equality before the law. The preponderant majority fundamentally acknowledges the state's constitution.

State identity

The state is largely defined as secular, a practice inherited from French colonialism. Religious dogmas have no noteworthy influence on politics or the law. According to the last census in 2006, 15% of the population have African traditional (animist) beliefs, 61% are Muslims, 19% Catholics and 4% Protestants. Though Muslims are less politically influential than Christians, who are in general better organized and have played an important role in the education of the state elite, there are no tensions between religious groups. Thus far, Islamic fundamentalists do not exercise any noteworthy influence.

No interference of religious dogmas

A basic state infrastructure exists throughout the country, but shows functional deficiencies in many areas. The government officially concluded its decentralization program in 2006 with the creation of 309 new rural communes, with the goal of devolving basic administration, social services and some political decision-making to local authorities. In practice, however, the extent to which this autonomy could be exercised and local state administration strengthened was limited by thin financial resources. Overall, extensive corruption on all levels of state administration limits the functionality of existing structures.

Basic
administration

2 | Political Participation

The constitution guarantees all citizens the right to vote in direct, general, uniform and free elections, as well as the right to run for political office. The principle of equality is heavily constrained by the extensive patronage network maintained by President Blaise Compaoré and the ruling party and their control of the state administration and resources. After clear majorities for Compaoré and the CDP in the 2005 presidential and 2006 municipal elections, the parliamentary elections in May 2007 brought the CDP to an almost two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. The explanations for the president's and his party's unbowed power remain the same: exclusive access to state resources, which enables them to mobilize a powerful patronage network, including the exertion of political pressure and co-optation; electoral law that discriminates against smaller parties; and a still fragmented, weak opposition that has yet to offer any convincing political alternatives. Election observers declared the 2007 elections generally free and orderly, despite some irregularities including fraud with voter identification cards. These irregularities however didn't affect the overall outcome.

Free and fair
elections

In general, the elected government has the power to govern. The military however can act as a veto power, in the case the civilian government attempts to curtail its privileges or ignores its grievances. Military coup attempts, the exact circumstances of which at times were unclear, have occurred periodically, however no coups have been reported during the period under review. Serious clashes between the military and police occurred in December 2006 and March 2007, events that demonstrated the army's politicization; the government in both cases was unable to quickly resolve the crisis. Reasons for the clashes stemmed from dissatisfaction among some parts of the security forces with economic conditions. While the members of the security forces concerned considered government concessions insufficient, people outside the security sector criticized the authorities for making deals with armed protestors – but not civilian protestors – and questioned the government's ability to then prosecute participants for violent acts. The extent to which army officers influence political decisions or exercise veto power is unclear, though the ties between some members of the military and the ruling party are well-known and security personnel rarely face legal action over offences committed. The president's massive patronage machinery, however, has the capacity to exercise possible veto powers.

Effective power to
govern

As a rule, the government respects the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of assembly and association, a right exercised extensively by different political and civic groups. However, the government has repeatedly attempted to curtail citizens' rights to demonstrate or strike, sometimes with excessive force. Police forcibly dispersed several violent demonstrations in 2008, protests addressing the rising cost of living. Under intense political pressure, for example, the judges' union canceled a march to demand improvements to working conditions (including a call to prevent political interference). Heavily armed security forces violently dispersed student demonstrators and sanctions were imposed on workers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for having taken part in the demonstration for better payment and working conditions.

Association /
assembly rights

Freedoms of the press and of speech are relatively ensured. The country's press is dynamic, its journalistic quality high and competition healthy, when compared to many other African countries. While state-owned media outlets exhibit a significantly pro-government bias, overall they program with an eye to participation by those representing oppositional views. The private media are relatively independent and often critical of the government. However, many journalists are pressured into self-censorship and have been occasionally sued by the government, under a law that defines libel in excessively broad terms. The ruling class is sensitive to criticism, specifically when reports reveal corruption or human rights abuses committed by people in power. The investigations into the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo still remains a sensitive issue for President Blaise Compaoré. In the Global Press Freedom 2008 survey by Freedom House, Burkina Faso ranked 89th in 2008; the country's level of press freedom is rated "partly free."

Freedom of
expression

3 | Rule of Law

The institutional separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches is guaranteed in the constitution, but significantly limited in practical terms. The president's broad powers and overwhelming majority of the ruling party have guaranteed the executive a legally secure monopoly on power. Parliament's authority and involvement in decision-making is ineffective and its control function is severely limited. This state of affairs has persisted for years, and the elections of 2005-2007 consolidated the disequilibrium between the political branches.

Separation of
powers

The judiciary is formally independent and institutionally distinct, but dominated and politicized in practice by the executive branch. The executive orchestrates judicial appointments and promotions, and prosecutors are part of the hierarchy headed by the justice minister; because of this, the executive interferes in judicial decisions. The judicial system suffers from rampant corruption; corruption stems from an

Independent
judiciary

overall system that is inefficient, poorly trained and poorly equipped. The economic vulnerability of its members is rife for exploitation, and operates under extreme political pressure. Efficient court proceedings are only conducted when critics of the government are put on trial, but rarely when politically or economically powerful people are concerned. Fighting impunity has been ranking among the population's main demands since the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo, but the judiciary has not made any move toward solving this or other crimes with a political taint. A manifesto by the judges' union in 2007 demonstrated that many justices are unhappy with the current situation.

Public officials can be sued for the abuse of power or over other inappropriate actions. The leading figures of the government or the ruling party, however, are rarely subject to such measures. In general, lawsuits against public officials are only conducted in cases of disloyalty, or public pressure requires the government to offer up a political "pawn." Most politicians enjoy de facto immunity from prosecution. Fighting rampant political and bureaucratic corruption, including the criminal prosecution of corrupt officeholders, is one of the public's main demands, but much remains to be done.

Prosecution of
office abuse

The constitution forbids torture, but in practice, security forces often subject citizens to torture and inhumane and degrading treatment, acts which usually go unpunished. When political tensions are high, political opponents or protesters are often arbitrarily arrested. Prison conditions are harsh. Cases of long-term detention without trial or access to legal counsel are widespread. In some cases, detainees are held without charge or trial for longer periods than the maximum sentence they would have received, if they had been convicted of the alleged offense. Equality before the law and due process under the rule of law exist in theory, but in practice, it is often only citizens with financial means who can secure a fair or speedy trial. Protected by an easily swayed judiciary, the government has cultivated a culture of impunity which thus far has not been tackled politically or legally, despite high public pressure. Freedom of religion and a ban on discrimination, both guaranteed by the constitution, are generally respected. Despite a law condemning all kinds of discrimination, including gender discrimination, the government does not effectively enforce the law. Women's rights are not always guaranteed in practice; in rural areas, traditional practices and values hold that women are inferior. The government's continued media campaigns to change discriminating attitudes toward women are said to have contributed some modest change. A clear sign toward the equality of gender in the country was made by opening the military to women in 2007. In addition, the government and parliament are considering the adoption of a law to enforce quotas to correct gender inequalities in local and national assemblies.

Civil rights

4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

Democratic institutions are functional only to a limited degree and do not have intra- or inter-organizational stability. Stability suffers greatly from shortcomings in the rule of law and a dysfunctional, politicized and often corrupt administration that lacks both qualified personnel and materials. Although the government has officially completed its decentralization program, the potential of the program making local institutions more efficient has to be ascertained.

Performance of democratic institutions

Acceptance and support for democratic institutions is low both among the government and large segments of the population; national institutions are deemed nearly irrelevant for the rural population. The army is not a reliable guarantee of stability or security. There have been repeated displays of discontent and open protests among army ranks. These protests concerned not only the soldiers' difficult living conditions but also the lower ranks' complaints over clientelism and corruption among the leadership. This situation constitutes a serious risk in a country shaped by military coups. Burkina Faso's strong civil society could be seen as a potential veto power. The partially violent protests in 2008, fueled by the effects of the global economic crisis, again demonstrated the population's preference to take politics to the streets. The country's youth, which make up more than 45% of the population, are increasingly disillusioned and have sought to be heard outside political institutions; observers see serious destabilizing potential within this demographic group.

Commitment to democratic institutions

5 | Political and Social Integration

There are few restrictions to founding a political party. Currently, there are more than 100 registered parties. The CDP's hegemonic position has led to a semi-authoritarian, dominant party system. But except for the CDP, the party system is highly fragmented and the level of organizational stability is low. The parties' fragmentation and their representatives' inability to build stable coalitions are two of the main reasons for the country's stagnating process of democratization. One of the ruling party's leaders has admitted to having played a key role in the political splits that have affected several opposition parties. In 2008, cracks in even the governing CDP began to show. It remains unclear, even among academic observers, what the individual party platforms of each of the 100 political parties represent. The system lacks programmatic capacities and shows grave weakness with regard to the population's social integration and political education. Parties, therewith, can fulfill their political role only partially. Civil society groups are much more able to integrate large parts of the population and contribute significantly to the absorption of democratic awareness and action. Ideologies and programmatic issues do not play a significant role in party membership. The changing of political affiliation ("nomadisme politique") is frequent and mostly seems to follow strategic political calculations. Voters' decisions are rarely geared to programmatic topics.

Party system

Non-parliamentary groups and an active civil society can develop and articulate societal concerns. Burkina Faso has a diverse landscape of interest groups, primarily dominated by unions, student associations and human rights organizations. The quality of representation is relatively high when compared to sub-Saharan standards. Despite a rather small labor force, labor unions in particular are well-organized and have showed their strength in a recent wave of protests against the rising cost of living. The network of cooperating interest groups has become highly politicized, with a risk of polarization. However, this combining of interests can lead to increased power to coerce the state to be more cooperative.

Interest groups

While no new data is available, there is no indication that the assessment of the previous period under review, mainly based on representative poll by the Institute of African Affairs in Hamburg in 2006, has lost its validity. Notwithstanding an imperfect political process of transformation and democratization, citizens' agreement on the tenets of democracy in the liberal sense is high. According to the survey mentioned, around 70% of all respondents prefer a democratic government to any other kind of government; the population also strongly supports the characteristics of a democracy under the rule of law, such as multiparty competition or an independent judiciary.

Consent to
democratic norms

Civic organizations in Burkina Faso operate independently from the state and must be viewed against the background of the broad landscape of interest groups. In many areas, civic organizations take on a representative function that government institutions, specifically the country's weak parliament, aren't able to perform. Civic organizations are cooperative and strategic. They generally operate under the principles of self-regulation and are a voice of political and social concern. They benefit from a partnership system with NGOs and considerable support received from migrants. However, many civic organizations have been corrupted or domesticated by the ruling powers and lack the capacity to adequately fulfill their roles.

Associational
activities

II. Market Economy

Despite some level of macroeconomic stability in key economic indicators such as growth and rate of inflation (the latter temporarily offset by rising energy and food prices in 2008), the government's successful continuation of economic reforms and the continued high influx of aid funds, Burkina Faso remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The IMF has judged that the government has been, by and large, on target with reforms. However, to consolidate modest gains, the government needs to continue fiscal reforms as well as privatization and private-sector growth programs, and above all improve and expand its poverty reduction policies.

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Poverty and social exclusion are quantitatively and qualitatively extensive and structurally ingrained. The UNDP Human Development Report 2007-2008 ranks Burkina Faso 176 out of 177 countries (down from a 2006 rank of 174 out of 177 countries), despite steady but minor improvements in the country's Human Development Index since 1975. According to the World Bank World Development Indicators 2009, GNI per capita was \$430 in 2007, placing Burkina Faso well below both the average for sub-Saharan Africa (\$952) and the group of low-income countries (\$578). In the context of extreme poverty and widespread inequalities, social exclusion is severe and structurally reinforced, especially in the rural areas and for women. Positive climatic conditions have already contributed to a strong performance of agricultural crops in 2008, and should also help the recovery in the cotton sector. Government spending for education continues to rise in relation to GDP. However, literacy and primary school enrollment rates remain extremely low. Gender disparity is extremely high, with Burkina Faso occupying a rank of 154 out of 157 countries on the UNDP's GDI (gender-related development index).

Socioeconomic
barriers

Economic indicators		2004	2005	2006	2007
GDP	\$ mn.	5109	5427.4	5771.2	6767
Growth of GDP	%	4.6	6.4	5.5	3.6
Inflation (CPI)	%	-0.4	6.4	2.3	-0.2
Unemployment	%	-	-	-	-

		2004	2005	2006	2007
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	0.3	0.6	0.6	8.9
Export growth	%	21.6	4.5	24.4	-
Import growth	%	18.0	8.7	7.1	-
Current account balance	\$ mn.	-	-	-	-
Public debt	\$ mn.	1863.4	1878.6	1003.2	1268.4
External debt	\$ mn.	2007.2	2003.3	1123.2	1460.9
Total debt service	% of GNI	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.6
Cash surplus or deficit	% of GDP	-4.4	-3.9	-6.1	-
Tax Revenue	% of GDP	11.8	11.6	12.0	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	21.6	22.3	22.0	-
Public expnd. on edu.	% of GDP	-	4.5	4.5	-
Public expnd. on health	% of GDP	3.3	4.0	3.6	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	0.2	0.2	-	0.1
Military expenditure	% of GDP	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4

Sources: The World Bank, World Development Indicators 2009 | UNESCO Institute for Statistics | International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market Database | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

The institutional framework for market competition remains weak, with significant entry and exit barriers, pervasive corruption, lack of access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises and sizable government control over strategic sectors, despite a renewed drive toward privatization. The Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom 2009 describes Burkina Faso's economy as "mostly unfree," ranked 85 among 179 countries. It should be noted that the 2009 overall score is 3.8 points higher than the previous year, reflecting the government's successful reform measures. In sub-Saharan Africa, Burkina Faso is ranked eighth out of 46 countries, and its overall score is equal to the world average. Similarly, the World Bank Doing Business 2009 survey noted substantial improvements in some areas (construction permits, labor laws, property registration and tax administration), ranking Burkina Faso among the top 10 reformers in 2007-2008. Still, the overall business environment remains among the worst in the world, despite Burkina Faso's climb to rank 148 in 2009, among 181 countries surveyed, and up from rank 164 in 2008.

Market-based
competition

The formation of monopolies and oligopolies is not regulated consistently, though the government has pledged to revive its stalled privatization program. The government sold in late 2006 its majority stake in the national telecommunications utility, Onatel (Office national de télécommunications), and a further 26% share is planned to be sold. Also, a further 30% share in the partly privatized cotton producer Sofitex (Société des fibres et textiles) will be sold, and the privatization of electricity provider Sonabel (Société nationale burkinabé d'électricité) is on the government's agenda, following the adoption in November 2007 of a new electricity law.

Anti-monopoly
policy

The government is in the process of reforming its customs administration system, a priority for 2009-2010, with the aim of increasing the country's revenue base. While foreign trade follows non-discrimination principles in form, supplementary taxes on imports, targeted import bans, as well as significant non-tariff barriers such as inadequate infrastructure and corruption, limit foreign trade.

Liberalization of
foreign trade

Burkina Faso's banking system is supervised by a common central bank (Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, BCEAO) which serves all members of the WEAMU. Previously regulated and controlled by the government, the banking system continues to undergo restructuring. However, Burkina Faso's financial system is small and underdeveloped. The World Bank identifies a lack of access to financing for small to medium-sized enterprises as the main business obstacle. Microfinance plays a key role and its institutions are expanding rapidly.

Banking system

8 | Currency and Price Stability

Burkina Faso benefits from its membership in the CFA franc zone. The common currency has a fixed parity with the euro, which is guaranteed by the French Treasury. Strict fiscal and monetary regulations within the WEAMU have helped to keep domestic inflation low by African standards (averaging 4.1% from 1990 to 2005 and 6.4% in 2004 and 2005), rising to 7.1% in 2007 and 9.5% in 2008, mainly due to high international oil and food prices. The inflation rate is forecasted to fall sharply to 2.2% in 2009, and then to rise again due to rising domestic and government consumption. This rise led to violent demonstrations in the capital Ouagadougou and in other cities, protesting over the government's incapacity to reduce domestic inflation.

Anti-inflation /
forex policy

The government is pursuing an IMF-sponsored poverty reduction and growth strategy with a goal of macroeconomic stability and real GDP growth per head of at least 4%. Also, the government's goal is to reduce poverty to less than 35% of the population by 2015. To this end, the tax and customs administration is in the process of being reformed, to raise the relatively low revenue/GDP ratio and thereby make funds available for poverty reduction measures. However, tax revenue was still at only 13.6% of GDP in 2007, and is planned to rise by 1% until the end

Macrostability

of 2010, while spending should be reduced from 25.7% of GDP in 2007 to 24.7% in 2010. If successfully implemented and accompanied by improved expenditure management, the reforms will help to keep the fiscal deficit in the 2009 budget below 5%. However, due to Burkina Faso's economic structure, the attainment of macroeconomic stability depends, to a large extent, on external factors, most notably on developments in the world market and on the readiness of donors to continue their support.

9 | Private Property

Property rights and rules regarding the acquisition of property are adequately defined under the law, but weaknesses in the judicial system complicate or prevent their protection or implementation. In the period under review, the government has undertaken some reforms to make registering and transferring properties easier and less expensive, with improvements such as merging taxes and eliminating the need for municipal authorization of property transfers. Due to legislation in the past decade, land generally is the state's property and is leased to farmers and other interested parties or institutions. These measures are intended to prevent arbitrary acts by traditional authorities, accommodate the increasingly diverse population and facilitate decentralization. However, structural deficiencies remain in enforcing property rights, including the arbitrary removal of judges, outdated legal codes, an insufficient number of courts, a lack of financial and human resources and excessive legal costs.

Property rights

The exercise of privatizing state-owned enterprises was revived during the period under review, and is expected to continue. Private companies can act freely in principle but encounter economic, political or social barriers to development, such as a lack of financing. State companies, or rather companies recently privatized or operating under significant state ownership, dominate the country's strategic business sectors.

Private enterprise

10 | Welfare Regime

Rudimentary measures to preserve social welfare do exist, but are extremely diverse in terms of territory, social strata and sector. The country definitely cannot systematically combat poverty on its own. The Human Development Report 2007-2008 estimates that close to 80% of non-agricultural employment exists in the informal sector of the economy, thus only a very small group of salaried workers, including state employees, benefits from the country's modest social security system. Existing social welfare laws provide pensions, disability insurance, occupational injury insurance and health insurance. Workers and unions have demanded improved social welfare networks for years and continued to make this a

Social safety nets

key issue during strikes. Additionally, the government in cooperation with donors has continued its efforts to increase access to education and health care, in addition to basics such as clean water and sanitation services, and to promote income-generating activities for vulnerable social groups. These efforts have shown some success; the gross enrollment rate for primary education increased from 68.3% in 2006 to 72.5% in 2007, according to the IMF and the World Bank; overall, these are still low levels even for regional standards.

There are some institutions and programs to compensate for gross social differences, but they are limited in scope and quality. Women and members of other vulnerable groups have limited access to education, social services, public office and so on. It is nearly impossible for individuals to combat the effects of poverty alone, particularly in rural areas. Despite renewed government efforts such as a 10-year development plan for basic education, a program approved in January 2007, education services as well as health care, clean water access and sanitation services remain poor. Women are particularly affected by poor social services. Even though better access to higher education for women has been promoted, the proportion of women in higher education has remained far below that of men. Equal opportunity with regard to access to public services exists only in principle.

Equal opportunity

11 | Economic Performance

The economic performance of Burkina Faso during the period under review was relatively stable, despite adverse international developments and a poor crop season in 2007 following a period of uneven rainfall and persistent difficulties in cotton, a vital sector. Real GDP growth fell to 4% in 2007, after peaking at 5.5% in 2006. For 2008, a relatively robust growth rate of 4.5% was estimated at the end of the year, brought about by a strong expansion in the mining sector and a good harvest, offset by a poor cotton crop and high international food and oil prices. Coupled with an estimated average annual population growth rate of 3.1% from 2000 to 2007, the figure for 2007 translates into a GDP per capita growth rate of only 1%, according to the World Bank Development Indicators 2009. While consumer price inflation was relatively low in 2006 (2.3%) and actually negative in 2007 (-0.2%), it rose sharply to 9.5% in 2008, mainly due to sharp increases in food and oil prices. An anticipated good harvest in 2008-2009 and falling international oil prices are forecasted to bring inflation down to 2.2% in 2009. The exchange rate, as the CFA franc is pegged to the euro, is relatively stable, with some depreciation to dollar rates since October 2008. Burkina Faso's current account balance is chronically negative, with imports usually being roughly double the value of exports in any given year in the past decade. The current account deficit as a percentage of GDP was 8.6% in 2007 and 11.3% in 2008, but is forecasted to be reduced slightly due to higher cotton prices and stronger gold exports. Burkina Faso has benefited and will continue to benefit from debt relief under the HIPC initiative, reducing its total

Output strength

external debt from \$2 billion in 2005 to \$1.1 billion in 2006. External debt has risen again to \$1.4 billion and \$1.7 billion in 2007 and 2008. In 2007, tax revenues were at a modest 13.6% of GDP while total government spending was at 25.7% of GDP. Ongoing macroeconomic reforms aim at increasing tax revenue and reigning in government expenditures. The overall fiscal deficit is estimated at 5.3% in 2008, slightly higher than expected, due to a temporary suspension of customs duties and value-added tax on basic staples since March 2008.

12 | Sustainability

The environment is among the 12 priority sectors of the second phase of Burkina Faso's poverty reduction strategy. In May 2007, the IMF and the World Bank assessed Burkina Faso ready to address environmental issues and confirmed that necessary regulations are in place. However, the same team noted that compliance with such regulations is weak. Overall, environmentally compatible growth has so far only received sporadic consideration, and environmental issues are usually subordinate to other economic considerations.

Environmental
policy

The state system of primary, secondary and tertiary education remains inadequate despite increased investment and some improvements. According to IMF and World Bank figures, the gross enrollment rate in basic education has risen to 72.5% in 2007 (67.9% for girls) and to 25.9% at the secondary level. Permanent infrastructure and investment in science as well as research and development remain underdeveloped, despite increased government expenditures for education that totals 2.9% of GDP, up from 2.6% in 2004. In Burkina Faso there are only 17 researchers in R&D per one million people, and R&D expenditure is at 0.2% of GDP, according to the Human Development Report 2007-2008.

Education policy /
R&D

Transformation Management

I. Level of Difficulty

The structural constraints on effective governance in Burkina Faso are still massive. Chief among them is the extremely high poverty rate, as reflected in all common indicators such as low GDP per capita and Burkina Faso's bottom rank in the Human Development Index (176th out of 177 countries in 2007-2008). Other constraints include a weak infrastructure, both physical and institutional, high vulnerability to weather risks, which regularly affects the country's ability to produce staples as well as its main export commodities (cotton and livestock), its high dependency on imported fuel and food and its concomitant exposure to world market developments, as well as unstable terms of trade for its main export products. The country's landlocked situation adds a further level of difficulty. Despite the recent recovery of the cotton sector and increasing gold exports which are expected to rise further, Burkina Faso's trade balance remains solidly negative.

Structural
constraints

Burkina Faso has relatively considerable civil society traditions, at least according to sub-Saharan standards. The fragmentation and fluctuation of a number of political parties do not reflect these traditions. The numerous organizations and associations, which partially have their roots in the pre-colonial society, is one of society's key strengths. These organizations include "groupements villageois" (village groups) and youth associations, which were originally self-help groups or traditional warrior associations. Trade unions, student unions and a wide spectrum of literacy, environmental and women's advocacy groups, such as trade and professional organizations, are vital to civil society in Burkina Faso. Powerful trade unions organized several successful strikes and protests during the period under review. Their relevance and strength has been further consolidated in the context of a new wave of economic hardship, intensified by the current economic crisis. The new CCVC (Coalition Nationale Contre la Vie Chère), supported by trade unions, opposition parties, and human rights and civil society organizations, collectively protested and pressured the government. But civil society organizations have their own weaknesses that impact their capacity to demand good governance from the government.

Civil society
traditions

Ethnic and religious conflicts are infrequent. This is partially due to so-called jocular relations which cut across different ethnic groups and include the acceptance of mutual joking by the other group. In the event of tensions, these practices create a moral boundary and ensure that dialogue between groups is maintained (and thus between different ethnic groups in general). However, the already high level of dissatisfaction with the government has grown larger during the period under review. None of the continuing popular demands over corruption, clientelism, impunity and the ruling elite's abuse of power has been addressed substantially. Concessions, if any, are made only to prevent an immediate escalation in public uprisings, but never demonstrate any real commitment to change. The growing gap between a small circle of wealthy, powerful figures and the poor masses has been dangerously widened as a result of the country's increasingly difficult economic situation. Therefore, the potential for conflict has grown and violence, expressed by both protestors and security forces in demonstrations, could intensify. The search for pasture land often leads to clashes with local farming communities. Some of the clashes seem to have a source in ethnic strife, though the most important factors that lead to conflict are questions regarding land. Two clashes have been reported during the period under review, events where violence between pastoralists and farmers has reached unprecedented levels.

Conflict intensity

II. Management Performance

14 | Steering Capability

The government has adequately pursued strategic economic priorities. The country's deficit has remained within acceptable limits, and the government has pledged to continue its policies. Even the IMF has urged that measures to aid the poor need to be refined to alleviate the effects of the high oil and food prices in 2008. On democratization, the government under President Blaise Compaoré continues with its well-known, and so far successful, strategy of showing its commitment to long-term aims, but then compromising them regularly with short-term interests and political bargaining, all in the interest of maintaining power.

Prioritization

The government has made further progress in the implementation of its poverty reduction and growth program, supported by the IMF and the World Bank. Yet the country remains extremely sensitive to developments in the world market and dependent on the goodwill of donors, a situation that is aggravated by the structural constraints facing the country. Despite positive steps, reforms are sometimes implemented superficially or incompletely, as evidenced by the slow progress of

Implementation

privatization in the past two years. Improvements in conditions are not expected in the short or medium term. Although reforms are properly prepared and legally enacted, they often fail to become fully implemented. In many cases, the government simply does not have the required capacity to monitor results. Furthermore, decentralization and a culture of self-help translate into the implementation of measures being left to local institutions or organizations. Often, organizations' financial support is dependent on foreign donors, and thus a source of relief for the state budget. All in all, effective reforms are limited by a market economy. The lack of political will on behalf of the government, above all, prevents substantial democratic reforms.

Democratic reforms have been partial and shortsighted, reaching only as far as necessary to address instances of social unrest and general yet intense popular pressure. In this context, the government shows that it is to some degree able to react to a changing environment, exemplified by decisions such as the temporary suspension of customs duties and VAT on basic staples since March 2008. For the most part, reforms reflect the Compaoré administration's self-serving strategies rather than any long-term aims to further democracy. The country's democratic development reflects little willingness on the part of government actors to learn; actions are determined foremost by actors' desire to remain in power and to safeguard that power. Flexibility by the government is shown if such a position is considered beneficial within the context of keeping power. After the local and legislative elections of 2006-2007, which solidified the power of the CDP party in the period under review, President Blaise Compaoré had already started to orient his political strategy toward the 2010 elections, when he plans to run again for the presidency. In a certain way, Compaoré has learned from the past; yet he rarely focuses on past errors, but continues a savvy political carrot-and-stick tactic which enables him to emerge from each crisis stronger than before.

Policy learning

15 | Resource Efficiency

Available human, financial and organizational resources are utilized efficiently in very few areas. Huge amounts of resources are wasted due to corruption, clientelism, favoritism and the country's lack of infrastructure, coordination and official monitoring. A majority of state resources is distributed to a small, elite group via patronage networks. The country's youth, who as a whole are economically disenfranchised and lack adequate education and employment, are frustrated with the selfish behavior of the political leadership and as a block are essentially being ignored as a valuable resource. Many citizens respond with caution or even distrust to government appeals for help in contributing human or economic resources to meet development objectives. The fruits of citizens' good will have often been harvested by others. Consequently, directed reforms are often met with skepticism. Extravagant building projects in the capital show that more

Efficient use of assets

funds have accumulated in urban areas than ever before. With costly military parades and awards of decoration given to more than 500 individuals, the government celebrated its twentieth Independence Day for which it spent about \$1 million. Trade unions criticized the government for not having streamlined the duties of 34 ministers that made up the cabinet during its last reshuffle, to free up budgetary resources for more pressing needs.

The population's skepticism over reforms helps to explain the government's conflicting objectives, even in cases where it may show foresight in seeking necessary change. Peasants and urban laborers fear, with good reason, that their efforts are misused to benefit a small group of elite people. While the government tries to coordinate conflicting objectives and interests, it is not always successful. Different parts of the government tend to compete with each other against the background of a highly fractured ruling party. Tensions within the CDP have been growing during the period under review. Internal and external critics accuse the party, particularly its leadership, as being corrupt, arrogant and out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Burkinabè citizens. While the party hasn't yet found a strategy to deal with this crisis, the emergence of a "non-political" group called the Fédération Associative pour la Paix et le Progrès avec Blaise Compaoré (FEDAP-BC) has the potential to split the CDP, and allow the president to broaden his support beyond the ruling party.

Policy
coordination

As corruption has increased, international donors have moved the fight against corruption and for increased transparency to the top of its priority list. While Prime Minister Tertius Zongo (appointed in 2007) implicitly acknowledged criticisms over the government's anti-corruption scheme, a plan that is fragmented, uncoordinated, lacks both autonomy and sufficient funding and rarely publishes reports on corruption or takes action against the worst perpetrators, success in the fight against corruption has yet to materialize. The parliament has adopted a bill to create a new anti-corruption body (Autorité Supérieure de Contrôle d'État) but its efficiency has yet to be proven. Massive public pressure during the evaluation period has resulted in corrupt officials being removed from office. Resulting decisions, however, were limited to certain cases and seemed to have stemmed more from political motives rather than from a serious desire to fight corruption. The general public outcry over serious corruption in all sectors and the public's demand to fight it is rising. According to assessments by international agencies and observers such as the World Bank and the Economist Intelligence Unit, corruption is a serious problem in Burkina Faso and rampant at all levels. Investigative journalism becomes particularly risky if reporters pry into the involvement of the elite in corruption cases. The country's dysfunctional judiciary prevents any effective prosecution of corruption cases.

Anti-corruption
policy

16 | Consensus-Building

Major political actors agree on the tenets of a market economy. A consensus over the tenets of democracy is driven by opportunism rather than a deep conviction of the benefits of such a system. Consequently, further democratization is carried out only with reluctance and in response to civil society and foreign pressure. Given the opportunity, politicians currently in power would prefer to return to autocratic rule. Burkina Faso's traditional society structures, and the country's various governmental regimes following independence, were known for their ability to build consensus amid a spectrum of conflicts. Currently, polarization characterizes politics in the country. In many areas, key political and social actors differ on development goals and how to attain them. The Sankara era continues to define the social and political climate of Burkina Faso. The enthusiasm for former President Thomas Sankara peaked in 2007, which marked the 20th anniversary of his overthrow. Most supporters are young people who were born after Sankara's death, yet many identify with this "national hero," regardless of the former president's beliefs and policies, as a way to express discontent with current conditions and their desire for change. Sankara's revolutionary reform policies, which espoused an African society based on socialist principles and a grassroots-based economic system, live on in the memory of many Burkinabè. These ideals, sometimes considered reflective of a "true" democracy based on fair distribution and a strong farming community, remain popular; a market economy in contrast is looked at disapprovingly. Today, over a dozen parties claim to be based on Sankarist ideals. Divisions among such parties and their inability to form a coalition have prevented them from capitalizing politically. The majority of the population has yet to benefit from a socially responsible market economy, while suffering the negative effects of privatization, restructuring and liberalization, now more difficult because of the global economic crisis.

Consensus on goals

It is unclear how the exclusion or co-option of anti-democratic veto actors takes place. Clearly, those who do not favor rapid democratization (in the sense of increased transparency and equality of opportunity) exist within the ruling system. Evidence of co-option is seen in the culture of impunity surrounding events such as the assassination of former President Thomas Sankara or journalist Norbert Zongo, as well as in the exercise of political pressure through punishment or remuneration, based on the logic of a neo-patrimonial system. Citizens who challenge the regime through NGOs or labor groups are often excluded from society and frequently slandered for being "anti-democratic." With regards to the military, civilian authorities have generally maintained effective control over the security forces. However, signs of a growing politicization of the military are reason for concern. The extent to which army officers influence political decisions or exercise veto powers is unclear, though ties between some members of the military and the ruling party are well-known, and security personnel seldom face legal action over offenses committed.

Anti-democratic
veto actors

In Burkina Faso, societal cleavages are increasingly manifested in social conflicts or tensions. While the government has repeatedly managed to prevent the escalation of conflicts with a minimal amount of concessions, current economic challenges have added fuel to a fire that has the increasing potential of raging out of control with the growing discontentment of the security forces and challenges to the government's powerbase. Another significant issue is the friction between nomads and farmers over overgrazing. In some cases, government authorities have been incapable of peacefully settling violent conflicts or to prevent them altogether. Failing to investigate violent clashes properly and to punish those responsible perpetuates a vicious cycle of revenge. De-escalation measures enacted by clarifying judicial interpretations and sovereignty questions in a contested border region between Burkina Faso and Benin, however, has been a successful case in conflict management. Traditional chiefs still enjoy a high level of authority, which can be exerted successfully in mediation efforts. This, for example, was the case when the highest chief of the Mossi ethnic group involved himself in negotiations with soldiers during protests in 2008.

Cleavage /
conflict
management

The willingness of the government and the parliamentary or extra-parliamentary opposition to cooperate with one another was low during the period under review. However, numerous civic organizations, sometimes in cooperation with the parliamentary opposition as well as the media, succeeded in exerting considerable influence over the political agenda to shape economic and social welfare policy. Influence diminishes, however, when it comes to issues such as impunity, the courts or corruption.

Civil society
participation

Progress made in consensus-building has in no way satisfied the need for a more comprehensive policy to come to terms with the country's past. On the contrary, the government regime interpreted Burkina Faso's history in a way that was self-serving, neglecting some relevant historical facts, during the 20th anniversary celebrations of former President Thomas Sankara's overthrow. The country has yet to establish anything resembling a truth and reconciliation commission, for example, to examine past human rights violations. The political leadership has not addressed past acts of injustice or initiated processes of reconciliation.

Reconciliation

17 | International Cooperation

Burkina Faso remains one of the major recipients of European Union external assistance, with €29 million earmarked as part of the 10th European Development Fund (2008-2013), as contained in a bilateral agreement signed in December 2008. These funds are mainly for programs and projects aimed at macroeconomic reform, basic infrastructure strengthening and, to a lesser extent, assistance to improve political and local governance. Equally, the influx of funds from other bilateral and multilateral donors remains high and is increasingly allocated as grants, reflecting

Effective use of
support

donor satisfaction with ongoing reform measures. President Blaise Compaoré's ongoing mediation efforts in Côte d'Ivoire crisis and his political engagement on the continent have further improved bilateral relations with Western governments. Cooler relations with France have existed for some time. Compaoré fostered Burkina Faso's position as one of France's closest and most influential partners in sub-Saharan Africa. After Burkina Faso was accepted into the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and selected for funding as part of the U.S.-sponsored Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) in 2005, international relations were cemented in other political and military areas. Examples include the completion of training of a second battalion of Burkinabè troops under the U.S. military's African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program; preparing the deployment of troops with the United Nations/African Union Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), for which Burkina Faso has designated its foreign minister as official mediator; hosting a visit of the U.S. deputy secretary of state; hosting high-level talks of the U.S. military's unified African Command (Africom) over securing an African host country for the Africom headquarters; as well as hosting meetings in Ouagadougou between six U.S. senators, President Blaise Compaoré and Prime Minister Tertius Zongo, to discuss regional security and Africom. While donors seem to remunerate Compaoré's growing reputation as a regional peacemaker by assigning him increasingly important duties in political and security issues, these issues still play a quite limited role in the country's democratic transformation.

The president seems to have largely silenced external criticism over his continuing lack of democratic commitment by presenting himself as a reliable partner in African conflict resolution efforts. Successes in this area have helped President Blaise Compaoré strengthen his domestic support. His central mediation role in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis, for example, became a matter of national pride, which made even his fiercest critics acknowledge his achievements.

Credibility

Moreover, credibility was increased when Burkina Faso became one of the first countries to prepare a full PRSP in 2000, to which donors have progressively aligned their support. The country is now set to present a new PRSP in 2009-2010. A technical secretariat established by a range of donors in 2005 has been supporting Burkina Faso in the implementation of the Rome and Paris declarations on aid effectiveness, leading to a joint strategy in 2007, called the Plan d'Action National de l'Éfficacité de l'Aide (PANEA), which shall be finalized in 2009. The government is actively taking the lead on issues of donor harmonization, as noted by the World Bank and the European Commission, with the overall objectives of further aligning foreign aid to the country's priorities and improving predictability and coordination. Based on that, and combined with his engagement with regional cooperation, security and conflict resolution, specifically in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, the government is considered credible and reliable by the international community. Slight reservations in terms of democratization and liberalization exist; however, as described above, successes in economic reform and security matters

seem to obscure the lack of commitment to implement democratic reforms. Relations with Taiwan have intensified and several new aid agreements have been signed during the evaluation period. Being one of only five African states to retain diplomatic ties with that country, Burkina Faso so far has resisted all attempts by China to break its ties with Taiwan in return for substantial amounts of aid and duty-free access to China's enormous market.

Working within a regional context is a key element of Burkina Faso's statehood: more than 60 ethnic groups live beyond the state's borders; nomads and migrant workers depend on pastures and jobs in neighboring countries; the fight against desertification and trafficking is impossible without regional collaboration; seaport access is dependent upon agreements with neighbors to the south; and the CFA franc pegs the country to other states with the same currency. Burkina Faso's economically and politically important relationship with its closest regional partner, Côte d'Ivoire, has been difficult, but has improved immensely. President Blaise Compaoré has become central to the complicated Ivorian peace process, as he sits on two of the key bodies established to oversee the implementation of the 2007 Ouagadougou agreement. His mediation efforts were endorsed by offering him the presidency of ECOWAS in 2007. The increased high-level contact between Compaoré and the Ivorian political elite has also led to a resumption of bilateral cooperation. In 2007, the CDP took part in a "peace caravan" in Côte d'Ivoire and discussions were held on reopening Burkinabè trade routes through the port. Humanitarian assistance, thereby heavily supported by international aid organizations, has been granted to hundreds of Tuareg refugees from Mali and Niger who fled fighting between their states' armies and rebels. Compaoré's past as regional troublemaker only caught up with him when the first significant revelations about his leading involvement in the Sankara assassination emerged during hearings of the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The immediate impact, however, did not go further than to the opposition's call on Compaoré to explain his role officially, while also hoping the commission as well as the International Criminal Court trial against former Liberian President Charles Taylor in The Hague would reveal the truth about Burkina Faso's implication in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts.

Regional
cooperation

Strategic Outlook

Little has changed during the period under review in terms of Burkina Faso's democratic transformation. The country's efforts have stagnated and President Blaise Compaoré's tactical moves have been aimed more on remaining in power rather than promoting democracy. Instability in all areas has increased. The 2007 legislative election did not result in a situation of more balanced power sharing between the ruling party and the opposition. Instead, the CDP managed to consolidate its grip on power, furthering its participation in a highly neo-patrimonial system that obviates equality of opportunity. The weak, highly fragmented opposition was unable to capitalize on the population's increasing discontentment with political, economic and social conditions, further strained by the consequences of the global economic crisis. Compaoré, again, demonstrated impressive political skills in succeeding in broadening his support base, such as by strengthening his central role as mediator in the Côte d'Ivoire conflict, acts that repeatedly seem to distract from his government's shortcomings. However, increasing tensions within Compaoré's core base of support, the country's security forces, pose an unpredictable threat to stability. Burkina Faso is confronted with a potentially explosive situation, as growth in violent crime and a general lack of confidence in the police and the judicial system has led to a wave of vigilante justice; a growing gap between the poor and the small wealthy elite strains civil society; and a growing number disaffected youth rail against poverty conditions and a bleak future. To address these issues, and compared to actions taken in the unstable 1990s, President Blaise Compaoré should enhance the state institutions' legitimacy through the following steps. First, he must strengthen the functioning and independence of the country's justice system. Secondly, he must enhance transparency and accountability in all areas of Burkina Faso's political, social and economic life through serious anti-corruption measures. Thirdly, Compaoré should allow an electoral reform process to provide an opportunity for political change through fair elections. A range of necessary amendments have already been proposed by opposition parties and civil society groups toward this goal. Fourthly, he should establish a truth and reconciliation commission-like institution to help Burkina Faso's establish its true history, including its role in regional conflicts. Lastly, he must address the serious fractional tensions within the CDP. The party's possible split, and Compaoré's attempt to build up a new power base, is difficult to foresee.

Despite the global economic crisis, the government will need to continue its economic reform program to meet its poverty reduction objectives. A reformed cotton sector, rising gold exports and a good harvest should provide the basis for achieving a real GDP growth rate per capita of 4%. However, the better targeting of poverty alleviation measures is an urgent task upon which the government has not yet fully embarked and which also faces structural constraints. In light of lower international energy and food prices, the temporary measures introduced in March 2008 will need to be reversed, and tax and customs reform will need to continue to keep the fiscal deficit at bay.

Burkina Faso's stabilizing role as a regional peacemaker was positive during the period under review. Thereby, it must be appreciated that Compaoré dropped a dangerous strategy in seeking political support by playing the nationalistic and ethnic card. While international partners should further support this conflict management engagement, they shouldn't forget about monitoring also the country's internal democratization process and criticizing obvious deficits.