

**Summary of the visit to Guinea Bissau by H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota,
Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission Guinea Bissau Configuration;**

***Addendum: Summary of the Secretary-General Advisory Group of the Peacebuilding
Fund Meeting on Guinea Bissau (29 March 2015).***

19-21 April 2015

The Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, travelled to Guinea Bissau from 19 to 21 April 2015. His visit followed the donor round table meeting for Guinea Bissau organized by the European Union and UNDP in Brussels on 25 March 2015. At the donor meeting, the Government presented a ten-year national development plan focused on improving governance; eradicating poverty; improve the access to basic services; and promote economic opportunities for all.

The donor meeting also set the stage for a full re-engagement of the international community in Guinea Bissau, paving the way for a new paradigm of opportunity, as demonstrated by the unprecedented mobilization of 1.2 billion Euros. The national development plan will be the departing point for a series of institutional reforms to enhance a sustainable and equitable use of the country's natural resources.

After the Chair's visit to Bissau in October 2014, the configuration has repeatedly commended the remarkable achievements of the new authorities since their election and their commitment to bring stability and prosperity to the country. Moreover, a potential outbreak of Ebola, which represented a major concern last October, is no longer considered a threat to the country. The agenda of the PBC in Guinea Bissau for 2015 builds around the compounded effect of the positive momentum which was further reaffirmed by the Brussels donor conference.

During his three days visit, the Chair met with senior members of the Government, including President Jose Mario Vaz, Prime Minister Domingo Simões Pereira, the President of the Council of Ministers, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior, a variety of members of the National Legislative Assembly, as well as international partners like UNIOGBIS, EU, AU, CPLP and ECOWAS, including the Force Commander of ECOMIB. The main objectives of the visit was to express the continuing support of the PBC to the authorities and the people of Guinea Bissau and the steadfast commitment to provide assistance in advancing the government's priorities as outlined in the development plan, including through the implementation of key reforms, such as in the area of security sector reform.

The main outcomes of the visit could be described under two sub-themes: (1) the ongoing political dynamics and (2) the socio-economic perspectives.

1. Political dynamics:

Despite known factors of remaining institutional fragility, a general sense of opportunity and optimism to overcome differences of the past is felt across the wide spectrum of interlocutors met. The need to consolidate the recent gains by swiftly implementing the government's road map and address the root causes of past conflicts was expressed by all interlocutors.

The Chair noted that the governance of the country improves steadily despite grappling with the teething pains of a budding democracy. As already noted during the last visit of the Chair, the political actors feel increasingly the need to address important constitutional issues such as the adequacy of its current political system to delineate the spheres of competence of the organs of sovereignty. This question requires the leadership and engagement not only of the political actors, but also the views of the wider population through a dialogue process framed under a national reconciliation effort. The experience of the consultations with civil society organizations prior to the donor round table is a positive precedent of constructive dialogue to be replicated to address the constitutional issues.

Interlocutors with whom the Chair met underscored the importance of a coherent regional involvement in support to the national authorities, fully aligned behind the national priorities. Many interlocutors believed that a strong symbolic gesture was the fact that the President of Senegal attended the donor round table. Similarly, it was suggested that it would be highly regarded if other Heads of State were to undertake official visits to Guinea Bissau and reinforce messages of support.

The reform of the security sector (SSR) remains a critical area requiring sustained attention and cooperation of the international community. The authorities recognize that SSR is necessary to avoid possible tensions with the security apparatus as well as to overcome the perception of impunity. The Chair urged stakeholders to view SSR as a long-term process requiring coherent political, technical and financial support. The Strategic Council for National Defense is the organ responsible for leading the efforts to adopt a comprehensive new concept on national defense based on the real needs of the country in line with the principle of democratic civilian oversight over the security forces. The Chair is particularly encouraged by the fact that since his visit to Bissau and the time of drafting the present report, President Vaz signed a much awaited decree setting in motion the security sector reform process.

Another factor of vital importance for the success of SSR is the continuation of ECOMIB. There is widely shared view in Bissau that ECOMIB's presence should be

extended beyond its current mandate expiration in June 2015. Many people believe that it continues to play an essential role of deterrence and assurance to the authorities. The financial implications of its permanence and the regional support required for its functioning is a matter for which the PBC was requested to provide its support.

Fostering national reconciliation efforts was another issue discussed with several interlocutors. In this sense, the Chair was requested to mobilize the PBC to support the holding of a National Reconciliation Conference and a Colloquium on democracy in Guinea Bissau. Both events are being planned at the moment. The Chair was encouraged by the fact that holding these events demonstrate a healthy sign of introspective societal reflexion. This can in turn help the national healing process and raise the confidence of political actors about the country's commitment to advance along the democratic path.

2. Socio-economic perspectives:

In order to achieve socio-economic progress, overcoming chronic underperformance of national institutions to enable the delivery of social services, capacity building and inter-institutional coordination and coherence is required. Guinea Bissau possesses important resources to see significant progress in the short to medium term. With financial resources coming from the donor round table pledges, it is increasingly important to ensure efficiency and transparency in the use of funds. The PBC could mobilize technical support to enhance capacities, including the possibility of calling upon the diaspora to play an increasing role in national matters of governance and institution consolidation. One particular area mentioned by a government interlocutor was the need to improve the computer systems of the government to modernize tasks while increasing transparency, timeliness and efficiency. This would be particularly helpful, for example, to generate statistical data and improve planning or to ensure that the country possesses a functional system of civil registry.

The new impetus for cooperation must be founded on the country's development priorities to make sustainable use of its natural resources and economic potential. Although expectations must be carefully managed, the PBC could play a role in helping to promote foreign investment resulting in the generation of employment, especially for the younger working class. The adequate exploitation of the unique agricultural and fishery resources of Guinea Bissau carries the promise and potential for economic growth. To overcome the dependency on the sale of cashew nuts, many interlocutors agreed on the need to diversify the type of crops currently grown. One example cited was that Guinea Bissau is about to start exporting mangoes through a Spanish firm.

The PBC should also be aware that national authorities are making a great effort to review existing contracts with foreign firms extracting resources such as lumber, heavy sands and fishery in order to avoid enduring unfair practices.

3. Conclusions

The Bissau Guineans and the international partners are cautiously optimistic about the future of the country following the donor conference. Much remains to be done and vigilance is required to avoid any reversal of the achievements to date. Many observers believe that the success of Guinea Bissau is in the hand of its competent leaders and the population eager to see changes. This can be realized as long as every sector of society continues working hand in hand to strengthen a social contract based on accountability and commitment to advance the reforms. Maximizing the potential of women and youth as drivers of economic growth and progress shows promising potential and should be further supported.

Regarding the constitutional reforms, since not address all the thorniest questions may be addressed in the short term, politicians must show a great deal of personal responsibility to diffuse possible conflicts. There must be above all, respect for the rule of law.

The authorities deserve credit for the historic changes taking place in Guinea Bissau and the ownership they have displayed in carrying forward the agenda for development and reforms. In the new Guinea Bissau, politics should no longer be an instrument to serve narrow interests. The role of sub regional organizations and more generally from the neighbors will continue to be determinant for the foreseeable future.

Addendum: Summary of the Secretary-General Advisory Group of the Peacebuilding Fund Meeting on Guinea Bissau (29 March 2015).

The Prime Minister of Guinea Bissau and SRSG Trovoada of UNIOGBIS were invited to address the members of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Advisory Group by videoconference on 29 March to discuss the impact of PBF's engagement during the transition period following the relapse into crisis in 2012. From New York the Chair of the Guinea Bissau configuration, Ambassador Patriota, also participated.

Recalling that the PBF has been actively involved in Guinea Bissau together with the PBC, the Prime Minister acknowledged the important role of the peacebuilding architecture during the transition, once a political settlement had been reached to return to constitutional order, at a time when many other partners' programmes remained suspended. The Prime Minister also acknowledged the support from the UN – including small preparatory financing assistance from PBF – to organize the recent donor round table, attended by 90 delegations including President Macky Sall of Senegal. At the

round table PBF committed up to \$10 million for a new Priority Plan. In total an amount of \$1.9 billion was pledged.

The Prime Minister highlighted the important role played by Ambassador Patriota and the PBC in promoting Guinea Bissau on the international arena. Concerning the Peacebuilding Fund, the Prime Minister noted the establishment of a ‘lighter’ Executive Committee (composed by five members) to improve the efficiency of the management of the PBF-funded Priority Plan. Ambassador Patriota highlighted the high level, quality and inclusiveness of the current Government and noted his support for the areas of focus of PBF (SSR, RoL, access to Justice, dialogue and reconciliation, empowerment of women and youth). Ambassador Patriota committed to mobilize the PBC to monitor the disbursement of the resources pledged at the roundtable.

Members of the Advisory Group underscored the importance of civilian oversight of the security and defense forces, broader reconciliation and dialogue processes, the inclusion of civil society and the support role of regional organizations.