

**Informal meeting of the Guinea Country-Specific Configuration of the PBC
New York, April 1st, 2015**

Chair's Summary

An informal meeting of the Guinea Configuration chaired by H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas was held on Wednesday, April 1st, 2015. The main purpose of the meeting was a briefing and exchange of views with Mr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) (via VTC) as well as a briefing on the visit to Guinea by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) / Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) from 25 February to 4 March 2015.

At the start of the meeting, the Chair invited the Members of the Configuration to observe a minute of silence in memory of Mr. Thierno Diaoune, the National Coordinator for the UN Peacebuilding Fund, who was assassinated on his way home on February 6th, 2015.

The Chair noted that the Guinea Configuration faced two main challenges in 2015: the eradication of Ebola and the organisation of elections. Concerning the presidential elections, scheduled to take place on 11 October 2015, the Chair underlined that the PBC can act as the international community's voice from New York in critical moments of the process. If needed, the Guinea Configuration will convene meetings to offer Mr. Chambas a platform to interact with the Members of the Configuration. It will also seek additional opportunities to engage the political actors and prevent the type of violence witnessed in 2013.

On Ebola, the Chair recalled that since the outbreak, she worked with Configuration Chairs of the other two affected countries to draw the attention of the international community on the threats that Ebola poses to stability and societies, and called for an early thinking on the post Ebola recovery phase and related peacebuilding priorities. The Chair also recalled that the UN/UNDP conducted an assessment of the socio-economic impact of Ebola in view to plan the post Ebola recovery. The assessments concluded *inter alia* that peacebuilding gains have been reversed.

The Chair indicated that, in her view, a visit of the PBC Configuration to Guinea would be timely.

The Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of the PBSO, Mr. Brian Williams, summarised the findings and recommendations of the technical mission conducted by the PBF to Guinea at the end of February 2015. The mission aimed at paying due respect to the family of Mr. Thierno Diaoune and adjust the structure of programme management accordingly. The mission was also the occasion to assess new challenges in regard to the peacebuilding process in the country, in view of the upcoming electoral period and the Ebola response. The second part of the mission included

UNDP and DPA and focused on the deployment of a Peace and Development Adviser to Guinea. Mr. Williams highlighted how well-respected and appreciated the work of Mr. Diaoune was from all the segments of the Guinea society who strongly regretted the loss of his leadership and vision.

With regard to the electoral period, Mr. Williams informed the Configuration that following the mission conducted by SRSG Chambas, the Government had requested assistance from the international community: an electoral Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) from the Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) would be deployed to Guinea in the month of April. Key democratic institutions, including the National Institute for Human Rights (INDH) and the Constitutional Court (that will play an essential role in case of electoral disputes) were recently established. However, the situation remained rather tense and was exacerbated by the relatively slow progress in the eradication of the Ebola epidemic, which was increasingly becoming politicised. UNMEER was organising multi-party messaging to address this issue in view of the electoral period. Pending a conclusive political dialogue, it was therefore important to ensure close monitoring, especially in conflict-prone regions in the country. In order to do so the PBF was recommending supporting the “*Cases de veille*” project that intends to establish monitoring antennas across the country as soon as possible. The Joint Steering Committee was going to meet soon to discuss threats during the electoral period and identify possible additional support needed in areas including electoral security, conflict prevention in at risk regions and related mitigating measures.

The Peacebuilding Fund was also looking at ways of strengthening the Secretariat to the Joint Steering Committee by recruiting a Peace and Development Advisor placed in the Office of the Resident Coordinator who would also head the Secretariat. With regards to the status of the Security Sector Reform, Mr. Williams stressed the need to continue the High Level Strategic Support to the Presidency and highlighted the need to pay additional attention to the security sector and the justice reform, which was lagging behind, also due to the financial constraints that the Government was facing to address the Ebola response.

The representative of Guinea underlined the dramatic humanitarian, economic and social consequences of Ebola on the region. In Guinea, the epicentre had shifted towards the coast and the capital where the local authorities still faced resistance from the population. Concerning political/institutional developments, the representative of Guinea mentioned that the members of the Constitutional Court had been nominated on 30 March, 2015.

The representative of Italy agreed that 2015 was a crucial year for Guinea and the peacebuilding architecture. He stressed the need for a collective effort to help Guinea to ensure that credible and free elections will take place. On Ebola, he underlined that efforts must be redoubled now, in particular concerning the disbursement of the funds.

The PR of Sweden and Chair of the PBC welcomed the very timely meeting of the Guinea Configuration. He agreed on the regional approach to Ebola and recalled that on the 3rd of April he

would travel to the three most affected countries. He noted that the peacebuilding efforts would need to be kept high on the agenda in the context of recovery and that it was crucial to make sure that the affected countries came out stronger than before the epidemic struck.

SRSG Chambas recalled that UNOWA had been actively engaged in Guinea throughout the last years and that upon his arrival at UNOWA he had resolved that Guinea would remain a priority. The SRSG noted that during his visit to Conakry (from 17 to 19 February 2015), he met with the President, the Mouissance, the Opposition and the diplomatic corps. The Opposition *inter alia* insisted on the following points: (i) the holding of the local elections before the presidential elections, (ii) the reform of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), (iii) the revision of the electoral list and the electoral law, and (iv) the establishment of the Constitutional Court, the Court of Audit and National Institution on Human Rights (INDH), (v) the compensation of the victims of the 2009 and 2013 elections; which the opposition claims are part of the 3rd of July 2013 Agreement. On the Government side, the focus was clearly to give priority to the holding of the Presidential elections, as a failure to do so would lead to a constitutional crisis. According to President Condé, Guinea could not afford to organize both local and presidential elections at this point in time because of financial constraints and because of Ebola.

SRSG Chambas indicated that President Condé was very clear that Guinea was no longer in a transitional period. The President however agreed to international support as long as it respected the sovereignty of the country. In this context, the SRSG was pleased that President Condé agreed with his recommendation to ask for United Nations support to the election. A UN Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) would be deployed to Guinea from 11 April to 22 April, 2015 and UNOWA would join the Mission. In his meetings with the President and the Opposition, Mr. Chambas further underlined the need for dialogue and a constructive approach from both sides.

Following the announcement on 10 March of the dates for the Presidential election (11 October 2015) and the local elections (March 2016) by the CENI, the situation had however deteriorated. According to Mr. Chambas, the events had accelerated when on 17 March the Opposition decided to withdraw from the Parliament and to no longer recognize the CENI. On 28 March, the Opposition said no to a dialogue with the leading party. On the same day, President Condé declared a state of emergency because of the recent upsurge in Ebola cases. This was seen by some as a diversion from the political situation. On 30 March, the Opposition announced manifestations on April 2 (“*Journée ville morte*”).

SRSG Chambas recalled finally that the President had confirmed his interest in renewing the post of the SSR Senior Advisor to the Presidency highlighting the added value of this post in the past and the needs in terms of implementation of the SSR national policy.

The representative of Guinea took the floor again and underlined that in the context of the Ebola crisis, the decision of the Opposition to withdraw from the Parliament and the CENI and to call for demonstrations was incomprehensible. Concerning the decision of the CENI on the dates of the elections, the representative from Guinea stressed that the CENI was an independent body. He noted that the Agreement of 3 July, 2013 did not contain a clause stating that the local elections should take place before the presidential elections and that the text invoked by the Opposition was merely an additional document to the main Agreement that had been signed neither by the Opposition, nor by the Government. Finally, the representative of Guinea reiterated that his Government was open to collaborate and dialogue with all actors in order to organize inclusive and credible elections.

The representative of the European Union (EU) indicated that in light of the elections it was important to closely follow the developments on the ground and he encouraged all actors to engage in a dialogue, which for the EU was a key element in the preparation of the elections. He also reiterated that Guinea was amongst the priority countries having elections in 2015 and the EU would be active in the field of electoral observation, support to the media, amongst other. The EU representative also reiterated its appreciation for the collaboration between the EU and the PBF in providing electoral support so far.

The representative of the OIF (*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*) informed the Configuration that its new Secretary-General, Michaëlle Jean, had chosen Guinea for her first visit to Africa (22 March to 25 March, 2015). The Secretary General had meetings with the President, the opposition and civil society. The OIF reiterated its availability to provide support to the elections and that in this context it would shortly deploy a technical mission to Guinea.

Finally, the representative of Canada underlined the pro-active role of the three Configurations (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia) concerning the Ebola crisis, recalling the message that “if one country fails, they will all fail”.

The Director of PBSO, Mr. Kenny Gluck, recalled that it was important that Mr. Chambas could rely on the Guinea Configuration to support his work on building political consensus on the way forward and cited Guinea as a good example for the work of the PBF.

In response to some questions and comments, SRSG Chambas noted that when he visited Guinea (a second time) for the “*Forum des Forces Vives de la Guinée*”, organised by UNMEER, which was held on 12 March, 2015, he was pleased to see a spirit of unity in the fight against Ebola. However, now with the heating up of the political atmosphere, divisions were becoming apparent which could pose a serious threat to the response. He underlined the importance to reach political consensus and move to peaceful elections as just witnessed in Nigeria which he qualified as an example to follow. Mr. Chambas also indicated that he had met the new Secretary-General of the OIF in Paris and they

had agreed that UNOWA and the OIF should work together and organize a joint visit to Guinea to see what could be done to ease the tensions.

Before concluding, the Chair reiterated that the Guinea Configuration stood ready to support SRSG Chambas in his efforts and recalled the convening power of the PBC. Ambassador Lucas extended an invitation to the SRSG to continue the exchange of views with the Guinea Configuration over the months ahead.