

Informal meeting of the Guinea Country-Specific Configuration of the PBC
New York, 20 May 2015
Chair's Summary

An informal meeting of the Guinea Configuration chaired by H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas was held on Wednesday, 20 May 2015. The purpose of the meeting was threefold: to receive a briefing on the Electoral Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) which took place from 13 to 22 April 2015; to hear a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) on the latest developments in Guinea, and, finally, to prepare the Chair's visit to Conakry foreseen from 31st May to 2nd June 2015.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Nanitelamio, Chief Electoral Officer at the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), who led the NAM, shared the main findings and recommendations of the mission; the report is currently being finalised.

Key findings include the following: 1) the political environment in Guinea is characterised by a total lack of trust among political actors, who are mainly divided into two blocks; the major deadlock is around the sequencing of presidential and local elections. On 10 March, the Electoral Commission (CENI) announced that the presidential elections would take place in October 2015 and that local elections would be postponed to 2016. Following this announcement, the Opposition, who was expecting the local elections to take place before the presidential elections, withdrew from the National Assembly and started weekly protests. The Opposition believes that without holding local elections first, there will not be a level playing field for the presidential elections; 2) the security risk, given the violence which marred recent protests and the threat by the Opposition to extend demonstrations to the rest of the country; 3) the funding challenge: for the presidential elections, the total budget estimate is USD 75 million; the Government of Guinea has provisioned USD 35 million in its budget, leaving a funding gap of USD 40 million [*note: the budget for local elections is estimated to be an additional USD 43 million*].

Mr. Nanitelamio indicated that various stakeholders had cautioned the mission that elections might not take place if the political environment is not improved, and had called on the UN to facilitate a political dialogue as in 2010 and 2013.

The main recommendations of the NAM are as follows: 1) the political deadlock needs to be resolved and the dialogue be resumed; in this context, the UN have a role to play, under the leadership of SRSG Chambas; Mr. Nanitelamio noted also that a political team has been deployed to Conakry; 2) UNDP should prepare an electoral assistance project to assist the CENI, Civil Society Organisations & other stakeholders in election-related matters; 3) the International Community should consider providing both technical and financial support; 4) national Stakeholders should resume the political dialogue without delay and without preconditions.

Mr. Nanitelamio concluded that as of now the environment is not conducive to the holding of free and credible elections. The first step should be the resolution of political divergences through dialogue, only then the electoral process can proceed.

The representative of Guinea noted that Guinea is looking forward to receiving the final report of the NAM. He stressed that the Ebola epidemic had a negative impact on all socio-economic aspects

of life in Guinea and has affected progress in various areas. Multiple projects based on the Statement of mutual commitment have been slowed down or stopped. For example, the Commission for national reconciliation (*Commission de réconciliation nationale*) only recently resumed its activities. The visit of the Chair was therefore very timely. The representative of Guinea also underlined the importance of the visit in view of the International Ebola Recovery Conference to be convened by the Secretary-General on July 10 in New York.

The representative regretted the decision of the Opposition to withdraw from the National Assembly and to call for manifestations, noting that the manifestations undermine peace and social cohesion. He stressed that the accusations of the Opposition against the Government were not justified as the agreement of 3rd of July 2013 didn't contain any understanding on the holding of local elections. He recalled further that it's not the Government but the CENI that is in charge of establishing the chronogram of the elections.

Given the current deadlock, the President had invited the leader of the Opposition to a meeting on May 8. While the latter first declined the invitation, he finally accepted it and the meeting was taking place just now. The representative of Guinea expressed the hope that this first meeting would lead to a more permanent dialogue between all stakeholders. In conclusion, he stressed the resolve of the Guinean authorities to work with all its partners for the organization of free and credible elections.

The Permanent Observer of the OIF informed the members of the Configuration about the support provided by the Francophonie, following a request by President Condé for technical assistance to the CENI, including the ongoing deployment of five experts to Guinea.

The representative of the European Union underlined the need to establish an inclusive, sustainable dialogue, and the crucial role of SRSG Chambas in this regard. He called also for the association of the international community to the intra-Guinean dialogue, with an observer status. The representative encouraged the pursuit of concerted, united diplomatic demarches by the international community, in support of a real political dialogue.

The representative of France agreed with Guinea on the destabilizing effect of Ebola and stressed that France will continue to stand with Guinea to get to zero cases. Concerning the political process, France stressed its full support for SRSG Chambas' efforts to promote a political dialogue, in continuity with the constructive role played in 2013 by former SRSG Djinnit and in a spirit of "preventive diplomacy".

The representative of Brazil underlined that the danger of Ebola is that it has threatened not only macroeconomic stability but also food security, human capital development, and private sector growth. Concerning the political situation, he encouraged the PBC to deepen its dialogue and support to Guinean institutions, particularly the CENI, in order to keep Guineans united. He stressed that inclusiveness will also be crucial for the ongoing democratic process.

The Configuration then heard a briefing by SRSG Chambas, via teleconference.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General welcomed the upcoming visit of the Chair of the Guinea Configuration to Conakry. The visit would send a good signal that the UN remain engaged and are willing to accompany Guinea in order to create a conducive atmosphere for free

and fair elections that will be accepted by all parties. In his contacts with the Guinean authorities and with key leaders of the Opposition, Mr. Chambas constantly underscored the need for political dialogue. Like the previous briefer, he stressed that the major dividing issue was the sequencing of the local and presidential elections, while recalling that according to the Constitution the Presidential elections have to be held before November 2015. In a context where Ebola was still striking, it was important to ensure a peaceful atmosphere, both to address the challenges of Ebola and remove the obstacles to the elections.

SRSG Chambas had planned to visit Guinea on 14 and 15 May, but following consultations with the Guinean authorities, he had decided to postpone his visit until after President Condé had met Opposition leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo. That meeting had taken place the same morning and, according to an initial feedback from Mr. Diallo, it was a good meeting (a one hour *tête-à-tête*) where the President had been in a listening mood. SRSG Chambas recalled that, in a statement dated 11 of May he had commended the President for reaching out to the Opposition and Mr. Diallo for accepting the invitation. He indicated that he understood that after today's meeting, the President would continue consultations with other stakeholders, that he would convene a broader roundtable of dialogue, to find a consensus on the key issues. SRSG Chambas thought that this first meeting was a good beginning and expressed the hope that the process would now move forward.

The SRSG expressed furthermore the hope that with the opening of a political dialogue, the Opposition would exercise restraint and suspend demonstrations to give a chance to the consultations. He hoped that the issue of sequencing presidential and local elections would be addressed. He also mentioned the need to suspend the manifestations in view of the continuing challenges posed by Ebola. He stressed his intention to go to Conakry soon to facilitate dialogue and follow-up on the first meeting between the President and the Opposition leader; he invited the Chair to do the same during her visit.

SRSG Chambas also called on the PBC and the international community to assist Guinea in the organization of credible elections; he stood ready to coordinate international & regional support to the dialogue and to the electoral process. In this context, Mr. Chambas announced that the African Union was envisaging the nomination of a Special Envoy to Guinea. He encouraged Guinea to welcome international support for the electoral process, referring to Nigeria that had just benefited from external expertise in its elections to enhance its national capacities.

The Chair referred to the role played by the Guinea Configuration of the PBC in 2013 and indicated that the Configuration stands ready to support the work of SRSG Chambas. She welcomed the meeting between the President and the leader of the Opposition, expressing the hope that these talks would provide a foundation for a sustained dialogue. The Chair highlighted the main aspects of her upcoming visit, referring to the draft ToR which had been previously circulated to the Members of the Configuration, and indicated that she would report to the Configuration upon her return from Conakry.
