

Informal meeting of the Guinea Country-Specific Configuration of the PBC New York, 6 July 2015

Chair's Summary

An informal meeting of the Guinea Configuration chaired by H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas was held on Monday, 6 July 2015. The purpose of the meeting was threefold (i) to receive 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, (ii) to receive a last update ahead of the International Ebola Recovery Conference of 9-10 July 2015 and (iii) to receive an update on the activities of the PBF in Guinea.

1. SRSB Chambas welcomed the meeting he had with the Chair of the Guinea Configuration during the Chair's visit to Conakry (31 May - 2 June). He provided a detailed update of the developments during his latest stay in Guinea (the two weeks prior to the meeting of the Configuration) and of his efforts to assist Guinea in preparing for inclusive, credible and peaceful elections. He recalled that the inter-Guinean political dialogue kicked off on 19 June, with the international partners (UN, EU, OIF, ECOWAS, France and the US) present as observers. The Opposition had one issue that it wanted to be addressed before the start of the dialogue: the CENI should annul the calendar it had announced in March of this year for the holding of local elections (i.e. March 2016). After three days of discussions, the CENI accepted to withdraw the calendar and the parties moved to discussing the agenda of the dialogue with four elements: (i) the chronogram of the elections, (ii) the electoral register, (iii) the restructuring of the CENI and (iv) the special delegations at the local level (*délégations spéciales*). Mr. Chambas stressed that there was a consensus between the parties that the presidential elections will take place on October 11, 2015 and the issue was therefore not included in the agenda.

The SRSB noted that after a first week of dialogue it became clear that the parties remain divided. It was thus agreed that discussions should continue in smaller groups, whereby the representative of the OIF and the SRSB would assume an informal facilitation role at the request of the Government mediators and the parties. Following intense negotiations, an "accord d'étape" was submitted to the "Mouvance présidentielle" and the Opposition on 3 July 2015. The framework document sets out the issues where a consensus had been found as well as the two areas where no agreement exists: the reform of the CENI and the special delegations. The parties were asked to initial the document which was to guide further discussions: while the "Mouvance présidentielle", civil society and the observers from the international community did so, the Opposition refused to initial the text.

Concerning the reform of the CENI, the SRSB explained that the ultimate objective of the Opposition was to be allowed to change its representatives in the CENI in order to "re-establish parity". When the current CENI was established, it counted ten members of the Opposition, ten

members of the “Mouvance présidentielle” and five representatives of civil society. What then happened is that some of the representatives of the Opposition fell out with their party and the initial parity between political blocs dissolved. According to the law, once nominated, a member of the CENI can only be removed for “just cause” or resign voluntarily. A solution to the problem is therefore not easily found, in particular as it was the Opposition who insisted in the past on a political CENI while the Mouvance had argued for a technical CENI.

On the special delegations at the local level (which replace the municipal counsellors “*conseillers communaux*” since the expiration of their mandate in 2010), the Opposition argues that they work closely with the Government with an aim to exercise an undue influence on the electoral process. The Opposition insists therefore that either the local elections take place before the presidential elections or that all representatives at the local level (in 342 cities – “*communes*”) are replaced. The Mouvance offered to replace 28 special delegations that have been nominated by decree. Those 28 are incidentally in the major cities of Guinea. This is however not enough for the Opposition, and the situation remains blocked. The SRSG as well as the UN representatives in Guinea (see below) remained however optimistic that the dialogue will continue, be it indirectly.

In conclusion, the SRSG stressed the importance of the international community remaining engaged in the process. In this context, he emphasized the relevance of the technical support provided by the OIF and of the announcement by the EU of substantive financial support for the elections.

The briefing by the SRSG was completed, via VTC from Conakry, by the Resident Coordinator a.i. Louis Marie Bouaka and the UNDP Country Director Eloi Kouadio, who provided additional information on the technical and logistical aspects of the upcoming elections. Following the Needs Assessment Mission (NAM), a “*document de projet*” had been elaborated, which covers the following three elements: support for the elections, civic education and communication and technical assistance. The budget amounts to 21.3 million USD. The draft document has been shared with financial partners in Conakry and the EU has already announced a contribution of 10 million € (subject to pre-financing by the UN).

The Permanent Representative of Guinea welcomed the ongoing dialogue. He regretted however that the Opposition did not initial the “*accord d'étape*” taking stock of initial agreements reached. He further noted that the calls from the Opposition to manifest after the end of Ramadan are harmful to the process. He underlined that the good faith of the Government was evident. The changes in the composition of the CENI requested by the Opposition were illegal as, once sworn in, the members of the CENI are supposed to be independent. He noted that every time the Opposition realised that it didn't control the CENI, it asked to reform the electoral Commission.

2. Ambassador Touré also provided an update ahead of the International Ebola Recovery Conference. He noted that the Conference aims to finance the national recovery plans of the three affected countries as well as the recovery plan from the Mano River Union (setting out sub-regional

priorities). All plans cover a period of 24 months. Guinea focuses on establishing infrastructures and building capacities that will allow the country to better respond to similar challenges in the future. The recovery strategy also includes elements of social cohesion. The Ambassador recalled that on 28 June the Heads of State and Government of the Mano River Union met in Conakry and strongly urged the partners to meet the commitments made earlier in Brussels and Washington to support the three worst affected countries in the post-Ebola recovery. The UNDP Country Director added the importance of strengthening the resilience of the three countries and expressed hope that the goal of zero cases will be reached soon if the current levels of vigilance are maintained.

3. The Chair of the Guinea Configuration noted that her recent visit to Guinea had shown that further efforts were needed in the area of SSR, in particular concerning the reform of the police; of the employment of the youth and the empowerment of women. In this context, lessons could be learned from the fight against Ebola.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, called on the Guinea Configuration and its members to remain actively engaged in support of SRSG Chambas's efforts, building on the good experience of the 2013 legislative elections, when the PBC played a supportive role to SRSG Djinnit's facilitation of the dialogue.

He provided a detailed update on the activities of the PBF in Guinea. Since 2008, the PBF has invested about 57 million USD in peacebuilding activities through three Priority Plans. This investment has contributed to diffuse tension and violence during the transition of 2009-2010, the presidential elections of 2010 and the legislative elections of 2013. Furthermore, PBF support has provided a critical contribution to the SSR process, notably the peaceful retirement of about 3.800 members of the armed forces, significantly reducing the risk of instability and interference in civilian affairs. More recently, the PBF has been quick and flexible in re-programming 1 million USD for Ebola response activities, focused on sensitisation and communication around conflict-prone areas such as *Guinée Forestière*, where Ebola is now eradicated.

PBSO has been asked to provide additional support to create an environment conducive to the conduct of the elections. This support is critical as Guinea is a non-Mission setting and requires special attention and support. Potential project ideas discussed at the last Steering Committee in Conakry include:

- Electoral Monitoring, including an expanded version of the “*Cases de Veille*” in selected regions at risk; media support, community mediation, and early warning systems;
- Strengthening trust amongst political parties; and
- Support to electoral security through training and sensitisation on crowd management.

The Assistant Secretary-General stressed however that in addition to PBF funding, significant funding is needed in support of the electoral basket fund that UNDP is currently setting up and called on all to contribute.

As there were no requests for the floor and no issues under any other business, the Chair concluded the meeting, thanking all for their participation and in particular SRSG Chambas, the Resident Coordinator a.i. Bouaka and the UNDP Country Director Kouadio.