

**Informal meeting of the Guinea Bissau configuration of
the Peacebuilding Commission – 17 August 2015**
Chair's Summary

On 17 August 2015, the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an informal meeting Chaired by H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota. The purpose of the meeting was to receive an update on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, and to discuss ways for the PBC to respond to the escalation of the tension between President Vaz and former Prime Minister Simões Pereira.

In his introductory remarks, the Chair reiterated the PBC belief that Guinea-Bissau had been making good progress towards stabilisation and development since the elections of 2014 and the round table held in Brussels in March 2015.

He reported on the telephone conversation he had with SRSG Trovoada on Friday 14 August. President Vaz had indicated that his decision to destitute the Prime Minister and the Government was an act of sovereignty in line with the provisions of the Constitution of the country. He noted the flow of statements that followed the announcement of the destitution of the Government. He further observed that over the week end, the ruling party PAIGC had reiterated its support to Mr. Simoes Pereira, recommending that he should be reappointed as Prime Minister. The SRSG indicated that President Vaz did not intend to dissolve the Parliament, that so far there have been no confrontation and that the military had shown restraint, staying out of the on-going political crisis. He also noted that the evaluation of public resources management, which was one of the justifications given by President Vaz in demoting the Prime Minister, did not fall under the competency of the President, but under the competency Auditor. He suggested that the international community should avoid interference and give time to Bissau Guineans to resolve the current crisis.

The Chair noted that the PBC invested in these processes and in the overall peacebuilding agenda in Guinea Bissau; the goal is to prevent the escalation of the political crisis in a way that might undermine progress achieved so far, and risk to destabilise the fragile political and economic situation in the country.

He also said that during his last two visits to Guinea Bissau, in October 2014 and April 2015, he underscored the difficulties in the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister; he noted that constitutional issues such as the inadequacy of the current political system to delineate the spheres of competence of the organs of sovereignty remained a source of instability and fragility in an otherwise promising environment since the new Government took office in June 2014.

In his briefing, Mr Joao Honwana, Director of DPA/Africa II Division, recalled that despite high level engagement by the Secretary General, his Special Representative in Guinea Bissau, by the Presidents of Senegal and Guinea, by other regional and international partners, the weeks of growing tensions between President José Mário Vaz and Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira, the President had dismissed the government led by Prime Minister Simões Pereira on 12 August 2015. In reaction, the Prime Minister made a statement, defending the performance of his Cabinet and vowing to challenge the President's decision by all legal means.

On 15 August, the PAIGC nominated again Mr. Simões Pereira as the candidate of the party PAIGC for the position of Prime Minister, in response to the President's request to PAIGC to nominate a new Prime Minister, as the party that won the legislative elections in 2014, and in line with the country's Constitution. While the President has claimed that he has acted in full respect of the Constitution and the ruling party PAIGC acted in compliance with the party's statute, the mistrust between President Vaz and Prime Minister Pereira had resulted in a political impasse. Mr Honwana noted that this impasse reflected the internal divisions within the PAIGC.

Mr. Honwana noted that the security situation in the country remained calm, although the police and National Guard had visibly increased their presence throughout the capital. He also reported that ECOMIB had discretely enhanced its presence. A group of women civil society organizations in Bissau had organised a "march for peace" on 15 August; about 200 people had peacefully participated to the march. Pereira's supporters and a coalition of trade unions are were expected to stage protests outside the Presidential Palace on 17 August to demand his reinstatement.

SRSB Trovoada has delivered a public address, emphasising that the leadership that emerged from the 2014 elections embodied the hope for stability and for the country's economic and social progress, and underscoring that the recent events were undermining that hope. The SRSB continued to engage all concerned parties in an effort to find a mutually agreeable solution.

Mr. Honwana noted recent statements issues by the UNSC, ECOWAS, Portugal, Spain and the EU, expressing concern over the deterioration of the political situation and calling for dialogue as the only way to end the current stand-off. He concluded by suggesting that partners of Guinea Bissau should increase their efforts to avert a constitutional crisis that could increase the risks for political instability and violence. Partners should continue to call for dialogue and appeal for calm and timely resolution of the political crisis by the leaders of the country.

In his remarks, the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau indicated that the leadership of his country was working on a consensual solution. He assured members of the Configuration that calls made by friends and partners of Guinea Bissau had been well received in his country. He expressed his hope that the concerned stakeholders would arrive at conclusions that preserve the stability of the country. He noted that after his dismissal, the Prime Minister had called his supporters to restrain from violence. He further reported that the Head of the Army had made a declaration in which he reassured that the Army would stay away from this political crisis.

Member States welcomed the briefing and expressed concerns over the risks carried by the current crisis and its potential negative impact on the democratic gains, on the stability of the country, on the investment made by international partners, in particular the PBF and the round table of 2014. They thanked the Chair and Mr. Honwana for the briefing provided on the situation and on efforts under way to address the crisis. They particularly welcomed the coherence of partners' approach to the current crisis, as demonstrated by the content of statements made. In this regard, they underscored and encouraged the role of the region in supporting the quest for a solution to the current crisis. They noted that the nature of this crisis illustrated issues with the Constitution of Guinea Bissau that need to be addressed. In

this regard, the UNOGBIS and CPLP were mentioned as potential partners who would provide the expertise required by a revision of the Constitution.

Mr. Fernandez-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support, expressed his concern regarding the recent political developments in Guinea-Bissau. He reiterated that political dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the crisis is the only way out to preserve gains achieved so far.

ASG Taranco then recalled that the Peacebuilding Fund has invested significant resources to help the country re-establish constitutional order. He also informed that, on 24 June, the PBF has approved a new Peacebuilding Priority Plan, amounting to 10 Million USD to help the Government implement crucial reforms, including support to national dialogue and reconciliation. He expressed concern that the ongoing crisis could potentially have a negative impact not only on the implementation of the Peacebuilding Priority Plan but also on the wider support stemming from the March 2015 Round Table.

In his concluding remarks, the Chair indicated that the draft statement put forward before the meeting would be revised to incorporate key messages of the meeting and an expression of support to SRSG Trovoadá and his efforts undertaken in view of a lasting solution of the current crisis.
