

**Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission
Guinea-Bissau Configuration, 12 February 2018**

Chair's Summary

Background

The Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on 12 February 2018 under the chairmanship of Ambassador Mauro Vieira of Brazil to discuss the recent developments in Guinea-Bissau. Senior officials attending included Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; H.E. Mr. Fernando Delfim Da Silva, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau; Mr. Tanou Koné, Permanent Observer of ECOWAS to the United Nations; H.E. Mr. Job Obiang Esono Mbengono, First Deputy Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea, Chair of the Security Council Committee Established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau; and Ms. Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head of PBSO..

Report of the Chair of the Configuration

1. The Chair informed that the main objectives of the meeting was an update on the latest political developments in Guinea-Bissau followed by a discussion that would inform his statement to be delivered at the Security Council on 14 February.
2. The Chair provided an update of the rapidly evolving political development in Guinea-Bissau since the last meeting of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration on 6 December 2017, highlighting the lack of implementation of the Conakry Agreement, the role of ECOWAS and the coordinated support from the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) and the European Union (EU).
3. The Chair mentioned the support of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to Guinea-Bissau through the approval of six new projects for Guinea-Bissau, totaling \$ 7.3 million, to be implemented between January 2018-June 2019. The Chair stated his opinion that support to Guinea-Bissau should go beyond PBF-funding and include consultations with different partners, including the World Bank and other international financial institutions. In this context, he announced his plan to visit Washington in the next weeks in order to discuss with representatives of the Bank about possibilities of cooperation with Guinea-Bissau.
4. Finally, the Chair informed Member States about his intention to visit Guinea-Bissau in the coming months to consult with a broad range of stakeholders on how the PBC could support peacebuilding efforts in the country and help the political actors to find a solution for the current impasse.

Briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

5. The USG for Political Affairs briefed the Commission on the significant developments that have taken place in Guinea-Bissau. He mentioned the appointment of H.E. Mr. Artur Da Silva as Prime Minister. He highlighted the role played by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government and traced the process that led to the decision on 6 February 2018 to impose individual and collective sanctions on 19 individuals whom the Authority assessed as “obstructing” the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The USG informed that this

development could unblock the political impasse and called for the support of the international community for these measures.

6. Following this analysis, the USG turned to a description of the human rights situation focusing on the events surrounding the PAIGC congress, whose opening on 29 January 2018 was interrupted by the police. He commended the efforts of SRSG Touré and the coordination between the “P5” in their joint call for the need to fully respect the rule of law and human rights, including the rights to peaceful assembly and political participation.

7. He recalled that, on 3 February, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union issued a joint statement to express concern over the protracted political crisis, condemn the violation of human rights and express support for the measures being taken by ECOWAS. Despite the coordination of the international community, the USG for Political Affairs underscored that the resolution of the crisis depended on the Bissau-Guinean stakeholders themselves, whose decisions also affected the socio-economic arena and donor engagement.

8. The USG noted the importance of the six PBF-projects approved by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) on 15 December for \$7.3 million, which will contribute to political dialogue and national reconciliation, socio-political empowerment of women and youth; and the strengthening of conflict-sensitivity in the media and the justice sectors. The projects are characterized by a high-level of integration of programmatic activities between United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and UNIOGBIS.

9. Concluding, the USG encouraged the PBC to send a signal of support to the ECOWAS Authority and to urge national stakeholders to expeditiously implement the Conakry Agreement as well as the ECOWAS Roadmap, and to ensure the conduct of credible elections within the stipulated constitutional timeframes.

Discussion

10. The Permanent Observer for ECOWAS underscored that ECOWAS had been engaged in Guinea-Bissau at the highest levels and had devoted considerable financial, human and military resources to the country. He detailed the mediation efforts of the sub-regional organization since the last PBC meeting, including the deployment of two recent high-level delegations, the convening of the extraordinary ECOWAS Summit of 27 January, and the imposition of sanctions as of 1 February. He further highlighted ECOWAS’ call for the strict respect of human rights and the rule of law, and for the military to retain a “republican posture”. He commended the level of cooperation among international partners and called on the international community to support ECOWAS efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

11. The First Deputy Permanent Representative of Equatorial-Guinea expressed concern about the prolonged political crisis in Guinea-Bissau since 2014. He opined that sanctions would not help to bring about consensus, and called for the international community to prioritize dialogue instead.

12. The Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau thanked all partners and speakers for their interest and constructive engagement in Guinea-Bissau. He described the current impasse around the appointment of a Prime Minister as a “crisis of consensus” and added that sanctions would not be helpful and could even be counterproductive to fostering this consensus. As a solution, he advanced the need for a compromise, which the recently-appointed Prime Minister could represent. He concluded by referring to “encouraging signals” from the new Prime Minister’s ongoing consultations with a broad range of political stakeholders.

13. Participants discussed the situation in Guinea-Bissau, with many underlining the importance of international support for a resolution of the political impasse, while some questioned the effectiveness of sanctions. However, there was broad agreement on the importance of a solution based on dialogue. Participants also agreed on the importance of the respect of the constitutional provisions regarding elections and the necessity to create conditions that would allow for free, fair and credible elections. In this context, they also called for the respect for human rights. They commended the Bissau-Guinean armed forces for refraining from getting involved in politics and stressed the importance of a continued presence of ECOMIB. Finally, participants highlighted the need for coordination of the international community and the role UNIOGBIS would continue to play in this regard in light of its upcoming mandate renewal. In this regard, a number of participants underscored the importance of increased political capacities in UNIOGBIS. There was broad support for the engagement of the Chair with the World Bank as well as his visit to Guinea-Bissau later this year to engage in consultations with national stakeholders.

Conclusion

14. The Chair summarized the statements made during the meeting, and stated that he would circulate a draft of his statement to the Security Council on behalf of the PBC. As main points, he identified (1) the reiteration of full support to ECOWAS roadmap and Conakry Agreement; (2) USG Feltman's statement, in particular the importance of holding elections within the constitutional timelines and providing UN support; (3) ECOWAS' briefing on Sanctions; (4) Equatorial Guinea's insistence on the importance of dialogue; (5) the importance of finding a consensual solution, in particular in support of a new Prime Minister; (6) the need to renew the mandate of UNIOGBIS; (7) the importance of other international partners, in particular AU, CPLP and EU. He noted that Brazil currently chairs the CPLP and that he would seek the organization's endorsement of his statement to the Security Council.