

PBC Ambassadorial meeting on Guinea-Bissau

08 February 2019

Chairperson's summary of the Discussion

1. On 08 February 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Guinea-Bissau. The meeting was chaired by **H.E. Mr. Mauro Vieira**, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the PBC. The purpose was to provide updates on the overall political situation, including on the legislative elections scheduled for 10 March 2019, the socio-economic situation and development-related priorities as well as challenges related to efforts to counter drug trafficking and organized crime.
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair noted that Guinea-Bissau is at a critical moment, with the Security Council expected to renew the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) that expires on 28 February 2019. In this context, the Chair highlighted the importance of continued engagement by the PBC during the electoral cycle in 2019. The role of partnerships was highlighted, especially with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose engagement in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and via the presence of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) is vital in support of the implementation of ongoing reforms and to addressing issues related to counter-narcotics. The Chair also highlighted the need to maintain the current electoral calendar, starting with the legislative elections on 10 March 2019 through the presidential elections later in the year. He strongly appealed to PBC members to explore opportunities to mobilize resources and foster economic development in Guinea-Bissau in response to the continued economic slowdown that has a negative impact on the Government's ability to deliver basic social services, and which serves as a flashpoint for social unrest.
3. **Mr. Abdel-Fatau Musah**, Director for Western Africa Division, DPPA, noted that the electoral process was on track despite various challenges, with 730,000 voters registered by 25 January 2019. He described the publication of the provisional list of candidates by the Supreme Court of Justice on 4 February 2019 as an important milestone in this process, with three of twenty-four political parties rejected for not meeting the legal requirements, and also highlighted the drafting of the Stability Pact and preparation of the Code of Conduct for elections. With drug trafficking and transnational organized crime continuing to prevail in the country, the Director appreciated UNIOGBIS' efforts to strengthen the capacities of defense and security forces at border posts. If the Security Council decided to go ahead with the reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS on 28 February 2019, a full-scale transition planning, implementation and monitoring would be launched in close coordination with the UN Country Team based on preliminary arrangements already developed by DPPA, DPO and UNDP. The role of the PBC will remain imperative as a platform to sustain international attention, mobilize resources and share regular updates on the transition. The Director stressed that longer-term stability depends to a great extent on successful legislative elections on 10 March 2019 and the Presidential election that follows. He noted the timeliness of the Security Council's visit to the country on 15-16 February 2019, as it will provide the Council members an

opportunity to assess the situation on the ground and convey a clear message to Guinea-Bissau to bear responsibility for creating a conducive environment for peaceful elections.

4. **Ms. Awa Dabo**, Head of the Resilience Section in the Crisis Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), noted that while political stability is critical, the end goal must be sustainable development for the people of Guinea-Bissau. As indicated in the UNDP Human Development Report (2017), the past few years showed a drastic decrease in economic growth, living conditions and equal access to basic services, which has resulted in growing social tensions, including strikes by civil servants. She highlighted recent development frameworks and tools, including the Fragility Assessment (2016) and the National Development Plan (2018), are in line with the 2030 Agenda, the AU's 2063 Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA), that should help advance sustainable development in Guinea-Bissau. She highlighted five key priority areas as essential to achieve Guinea-Bissau's development agenda: (1) Reestablishment and improvement of current fiscal and financial management discipline; (2) Development of emergency programmes for the rehabilitation of infrastructure to restore basic services and create job opportunities; (3) Strengthening national institutions for effective delivery of reforms and capacity building; (4) Building new partnerships with the international community built on strong commitment by the government; and (5) Revamping of aid coordination mechanisms for resource mobilization, under the leadership of the Prime Minister.
5. **Mr. Pierre Lapaque**, Representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Office (UNODC) for West and Central Africa, explained that drug trafficking, transnational organized crime (DTOC), widespread impunity and institutionalized corruption are major obstacles to the country's peace and development. UNODC had been requested by the Government of Guinea-Bissau to help develop a DTOC strategy. He highlighted increased momentum and fruitful accomplishments in 2018 to counter DTOC through UNODC's cooperation with national authorities and other UN entities. The Representative appealed for continued Member State support before March 2019 when the available funding would come to a halt, forcing UNODC to withdraw. He noted five key DTOC priorities: (1) Countering maritime crime in coastal waters; (2) Development of a national action plan and tools on transnational organized crimes; (3) Strengthening capacity of the financial intelligence unit to counter financial crimes; (4) Development of national legal and institutional frameworks adhering to the UN convention against corruption; and (5) Capacity building of the criminal justice system, especially for judges and prosecutors.
6. **Mr. Tanou Koné**, Permanent Observer of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), described the role of ECOWAS in the development of peacebuilding efforts, most notably the Conakry Agreement, which has set Guinea-Bissau on the reform path. He reiterated ECOWAS' commitment to accompanying Guinea-Bissau towards sustainable peace and development, including through holding the legislative elections on the planned date of 10 March 2019. While optimal conditions exist for the proper holding of legislative elections, the Permanent Observer noted that the financial situation underpinning the elections preparation process may require additional resources and appealed to the PBC to redouble their efforts to fill the gap estimated at \$3 million to avoid this becoming a factor that undermines the process.

7. **Ms. Barrie Freeman**, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), noted that the meeting deliberations will inform the work of the PBC in Guinea-Bissau and the provision of strategic advice to the Security Council, which looks to the PBC as it shapes and adjusts its approach to the evolving situation in Guinea-Bissau, including the eventual reprioritization of tasks and reconfiguration of the UN presence in the country. She noted the country's positive advancement towards peaceful elections, including the development of an election Code of Conduct of conduct to ensure the peaceful participation of all registered candidates and their supporters. In this respect, the Deputy Head acknowledged the PBF's impact in ensuring inclusivity in preparations for elections and reforms, as the Fund promoted an inclusive approach to the constitutional revision process and produced, in collaboration with the Bissau law faculty, an annotated version of the current Constitution that is more accessible to the public; supported the Organizing Commission of the National Conference to draft the Stability Pact and serve as a forum for citizen engagement in the reform process; and helped CSOs build a monitoring system to assess progress in implementing the reforms as noted in the Conakry Agreement. The Deputy Head also expressed regret that political parties have not fully respected the new Gender Parity Law, which requires a minimum quota of 36% of women's representation in elections and hoped that the PBC would continue to advocate for implementation of the law and greater women's participation in politics, in furtherance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and in support of the PBC gender strategy. The PBF's support to increasing women's inclusion in politics and governance, including the activities of the Women's Council, was also highlighted.
8. **Mr. Ernestino Jorge Mango**, Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Guinea Bissau to the UN, underscored that while the legislative polls are necessary to put an end to the current political crisis, sustainable development cannot be done without consolidating democratic institutions. He informed that on 11 February 2019, the National Assembly would convene a session for the signing of the Stability Pact and the Code of Conduct by forty-nine political parties, civil society representatives and religious leaders, to be presided by the President of Guinea-Bissau. He highlighted the importance of the PBC's role as a platform to accompany the country through and beyond the election cycle towards stability, peace and development.
9. Member States welcomed the briefing(s) and raised the following points:
 - Commended the PBC meeting as timely and comprehensive, convened a week before the Security Council's planned visit to the country on 15-16 February 2019. The Council's visit to Guinea-Bissau was seen as an important opportunity to ensure the holding of upcoming legislative elections. The visit would also help the Security Council make well-informed decisions about the reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS. Several members expressed regret over PBC's absence in this visit and proposed that consideration be given for the PBC Chair's participation in the future visits of the Security Council to countries engaged with the PBC.
 - Strongly called on the national authorities and the population to ensure credible, peaceful and free legislative elections on the planned date of 10 March 2019, and the Presidential elections which will follow, both with respect for the Gender Parity Law. Some noted more support from the international community was necessary to ensure successful elections and appealed to the PBC to bring attention to resource and capacity gaps.

- Welcomed the PBC's unique ability to bring a holistic focus to Guinea-Bissau's challenges. Some delegations acknowledged that the PBC is the only platform in the UN that can look at issues from multi-dimensional perspectives.
- Highlighted the importance of the regional approach and the need to further strengthen partnerships with regional and subregional organizations. In this respect, several delegations commended the efforts of ECOWAS in resolving the stalemate on voter registration and the continued ECOMIB role in maintaining peace throughout the electoral process.
- Supported the Secretary-General's recommendations on the reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS and urged the Security Council to extend the Mission mandate by another year to ensure the completion of a peaceful electoral cycle and the transition plan to the UN Country Team.
- Several members, including members of the Security Council, called on the need to carry on the good practice from the transition experience of UNMIL in Liberia and keep PBC involved in Guinea-Bissau's transition planning, highlighting the role of the PBC in advising on the possible reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS, and further called for its active participation in the formulation of a transition plan should the Security Council adopt the Secretary-General's recommendation on 28 February 2019.

10. The Chair concluded the meeting and made the following recommendations:

- Political stakeholders of Guinea-Bissau to sustain their commitment to the Conakry Agreement, and for the Government to avoid further delays to holding the legislative elections.
- The international community to remain engaged in efforts to promote sustainable peace and development in Guinea Bissau and to provide emergency and targeted budget support to stabilize the public sector and avoid further instability in the country.
- Regarding the future of UNIOGBIS, the Security Council to better utilize the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration to support any possible transition effort in the country. It is very important that any reconfiguration plan takes into account that legislative elections are the first step in an electoral cycle, which should also include the presidential election.
- The mandate of UNIOGBIS should be renewed for one year. Continued support from the international community will be particularly relevant during this year, especially regarding peacebuilding activities. The PBC's role will be crucial throughout.