

**Guinea Bissau Country-Specific Configuration
Report from the Chair's Visit
September 10-12, 2008**

I. Introduction

1. The Chair of the Guinea Bissau country-specific configuration undertook a fact finding visit to the country from September 10-12. The primary purpose of the visit was to gain a first-hand perspective on the recent political developments, including the preparations for the upcoming elections; to discuss the next steps in the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement with Guinea-Bissau and the process for the finalization of the Peacebuilding Strategic Framework and its Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism.
2. During the visit the Chair met with the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defense, the Army Chief of Staff, the Head of the National Electoral Commission, leaders of the major political parties, representatives of civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic community resident in or accredited to Guinea-Bissau, UNOGBIS and the UN Country Team. (See annex I for the visit programme)
3. The visit helped to forge a partnership with the new government of Guinea Bissau and identified options for PBC's continued engagement with the country.

II. Main Findings

Political Developments and the Elections

4. The political situation in Guinea Bissau remains stable following the creation of a new government on 5 August. Civil society organizations and international partners expressed confidence in the new government while stressing that its primary mandate is to conduct legislative elections on November 16. They further noted that the change of government took place peacefully and within the constitutional framework. Stakeholders also welcomed the fact that the new government includes several ministers from the previous administration, thus ensuring the much needed continuity in leadership.
5. The new government has also stressed its intention to move forward on all the necessary reforms in the areas of SSR, drug trafficking, and discussions with the IMF on macro-economic issues, while primarily focusing on the preparations for the elections. In this context, the government and all other stakeholders highlighted their interest in the PBC and also stressed the strategic importance of the PBC's continued engagement.
6. Many stakeholders also noted the fact that the recent attempted coup d'etat was aborted, representing a significant break from the political instability of the past and

showing positive changes in the security sector institutions and greater respect for the democratic process. In relation to the coup attempt, the President indicated his desire to see Rear Admiral Jose Americo Bubi Na Tchuto, the former Chief of the Navy, tried in a court in Guinea Bissau or in the region.

7. All stakeholders stressed that the legislative elections scheduled for 16 November must take place in accordance with the agreed schedule. The Chairman of the National Electoral Commission, El Hadj Malam Mane, noted that the preparations for the elections are underway. Voter registration has been completed with a landmark 94.5% registration rate. Electoral teams have been deployed to seven regional electoral commissions and voter sensitization programmes have started. Political parties were expected to submit their lists of candidates by the 15 of September. The international partners have made significant contributions and pledges in support of the elections. It is important that these pledges be fulfilled as soon as possible. However, a funding gap associated with the government's sovereign costs still remains. The government noted that an audit of the salary arrears of past elections, supported by the EC, has been concluded and indicated its intention to make every effort to pay the arrears. However, the international partners may have to show flexibility in the use of the election funding for the payment of salary arrears, if necessary.

Security Sector Reform

8. Authorities reaffirmed the central importance of the security sector reform to peacebuilding and political stability. The Minister of Defense noted that the government is committed to meeting its obligations as outlined in the SSR plan of action. He also noted that the government has concluded, with UNDP and EC support, the census of the armed forces to be followed by a census of the ex-combatants of the Liberation War and the paramilitaries. The President and the Prime Minister also mentioned the importance of the continued DDR and in this context welcomed the planned training of 30 senior demobilized army officials in Brazil, with the support of the Government of Brazil and ECOWAS. The Minister of Defense appealed to the international community to make available the resources pledged towards the SSR action plan. He also expressed serious concern with the slow pace of progress in the implementation of the PBF supported project on the rehabilitation of the military barracks, due to cumbersome and lengthy bureaucratic procedures.

Drug Trafficking

9. The Minister of Justice underscored the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of Guinea Bissau to monitor its borders and to identify, arrest and bring to justice individuals involved in drug trafficking. While acknowledging the support of traditional and non-traditional donors in the reform of the justice sector, the Minister expressed concern with the lack of funding available following the Lisbon conference. She stressed that the government continues to lack logistical support, equipment and training to properly respond to drug trafficking. Furthermore, the leader of one of the

political parties noted with concern risks associated with the possible influx of drug-related resources into the electoral process.

Public Sector Reform and the Economic Situation

10. The Minister of Finance stressed that the changes in the government have not adversely impacted the reforms in the public sector. Important initiatives are underway such as the launching of an integrated and transparent system of public finance management. This programme, which is supported by the EC, ECOWAS and the government of Cote D'Ivoire, will allow for greater centralization and transparency of data from customs, the treasury and the revenue collection.
11. The Minister and several other stakeholders welcomed the announcement of the second allocation from the IMF Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance (ECPA) programme and the initiation of discussions on a possible Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) programme following the 29 October visit of the IMF staff mission. This could set the stage for the speedy completion of the HIPC initiative and much needed debt relief in mid 2009.
12. Reforms are also ongoing in reducing the number of public servants and streamlining the government's payroll. The Finance Minister noted that the effective conclusion of the DDR process will greatly contribute to these efforts. He also stressed the government's intention to pay in the coming days salary arrears for the months of July and August.
13. The reactivation of the economy remains a critical challenge for Guinea Bissau. Two thirds of the population lives under two dollars a day. To make progress the country needs to achieve two digit growth rates to double its current per capita GDP of \$214 in 12 years. Economic activity is heavily dependent on the agricultural sector, however only 37% of the arable land is currently cultivated. An underlying factor in the reactivation of the economy is the development of the country's infrastructure, especially the energy sector. In this regard, authorities welcomed the recent World Bank contribution of two generators, which increased the electricity supply available from 1.5 MW to 3.0 MW. The Finance Minister also requested support from the PBC in expediting procedures for the provision of an additional generator (15 MW) from the World Bank.

Social Issues and Cholera

14. In the meeting with the UNCT, the upsurge of the cholera epidemic was raised as a major social concern and a growing emergency. UNICEF and WHO in particular requested support and additional resources to be able to adequately respond to the current crisis. As of 11th of September, a total of 5,674 cases have been recorded, with 115 deaths (fatality rate at 2.0%). The cholera epidemic—which is a recurring problem during the rainy season—points to severe deficiencies in the public health sector as well as a lack of basic sanitation, waste disposal infrastructure and adequate

energy supply to enable the provision of portable water. Efforts to address the current emergency must also take into account the need to overcome these structural issues through robust political leadership and better coordinated and resourced support from the UN agencies and other international partners.

Peacebuilding Fund Projects

16. Many stakeholders expressed disappointment with the slow pace of the implementation of the PBF quick impact projects. Of the four approved projects, only the project on elections is currently under implementation. The other three projects dealing with youth employment, prisons and military barracks rehabilitation are still in the set-up phase. National counterparts expressed concern about the procedural delays and the limited capacities of UN implementing agencies. They also emphasized the importance for implementing agencies to have a strong presence in the country in particular in the case of UNODC and UNOPS. Some stakeholders noted that further delays in the PBF implementation could have a serious negative impact on UN's effectiveness and image in the country.

III. Options for Moving Forward

17. In all meetings, the CSM Chair discussed options for continued PBC engagement, in particular the timing for the finalization of the Peacebuilding Strategic Framework. There was overwhelming support for the proposal to move forward with the adoption of the Strategic Framework as planned from the government, civil society and political parties (with the exception of a leader of one of the political parties). Stakeholders also stressed the need to maintain PBC engagement throughout the electoral process and expedite the implementation of the quick impact PBF projects.
18. In making the arguments for moving forward with the adoption of the Framework, government representatives, civil society and party leaders, noted that governments may change but the peacebuilding priorities of the country will remain the same. These challenges and priorities for peacebuilding have been identified in a number of sectoral and thematic plans and have been well captured in the Strategic Framework.
19. Stakeholders also stressed that the Strategic Framework should not be seen as the document of the government but that of the country, representing the country's peacebuilding agenda. Many also underscored the active participation and contribution of civil society organization in the drafting of the Strategic Framework. Stakeholders underscored that the challenges ahead are urgent and efforts to address them should not stop in the lead up to the legislative elections. Several interlocutors noted that the adoption of the Framework would send a positive signal to the government and all other stakeholders and will maintain the much needed momentum for reforms. It will also create an enabling environment for the preparations of the elections, since the elections are the first priority area in the Framework. Finally, one stakeholder noted that the work of the PBC has created high expectations among the

population and any delay in the adoption of the Framework would have a negative impact on the political stability of the country.

20. The President and the Prime Minister confirmed their intention to reconstitute the National Steering Committee and appoint a new Co-Chair. The Steering Committee is expected to review the Strategic Framework before its formal adoption in New York.¹ Stakeholders also expressed willingness to continue the technical work on the matrix for the monitoring and review mechanism.

IV. Recommendations

21. Based on these findings and observations, the Guinea Bissau country-specific configuration may wish to consider the following recommendations:
 - Formally adopt the Peacebuilding Strategic Framework as soon as possible, after its final endorsement by the National Steering Committee in Bissau; (adoption in late September or early October was suggested by the Government)
 - Continue the technical work on the matrix for the monitoring and review mechanism, and aim for its expeditious adoption, preferably by the end of October;
 - Plan to convene the first semi-annual review meeting by mid 2009, to allow the new government to fully review the document;
 - Call on all international partners to fulfill their pledges for the elections and show flexibility in the use of the available resources to cover sovereign costs, if necessary;
 - Call on the government of Guinea Bissau and the National Electoral Commission to make every effort to finalize preparations for the legislative elections so that the elections can be held on time (November 16) and in accordance with international standards;
 - Raise awareness about the cholera epidemic and call on all international partners and UN agencies to increase their support to address the current emergency;
 - Encourage UN implementing partners to expedite the implementation of the PBF projects by strengthening their capacities and streamlining procedures;
 - Advocate for a more coherent and integrated UN presence in Guinea Bissau to more effectively support the peace consolidation efforts of the government and other national stakeholders;
 - Follow-up with the World Bank on the rapid provision of generators to Bissau;
 - Ensure the continuity of regular dialogue with the IMF in the lead-up to the IMF staff mission to Guinea Bissau in October.

¹ Since the return of the mission, the Government has appointed a co-chair and has called a meeting of the Steering Committee for Thursday, 18 September.

Annex I. Programme

Visit of the PBC Country-Specific Configuration Chairperson, Ambassador Maria Luiza Viotti, to Guinea-Bissau 10-12 September 2008

10 September - Wednesday

12:05	Arrival in Bissau
15:30 – 16:30	Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Conceição Nobre Cabral (Venue: MFA)
16:45 – 17:45	Meeting with Minister of Defense, Mr. Marciano Barbeiro (Venue: Ministry of Defense)
18:00 – 19:30	Meeting with the Civil Society (Venue: UNOGBIS)

11 September - Thursday

08:00 – 08:45	Meeting with PRID Party Leader, Mr. Aristides Gomes (Venue: UNOGBIS)
09:00 – 09:45	Meeting with PRS Party Vice-President, Mr. Vença Gomes Naluak (Venue: UNOGBIS)
10:00 – 10:45	Meeting with General Tagme Na Waie (Venue: Armed Forces HQ)
11:00 – 00:00	Meeting with the President of the Republic, General João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira (Venue: Presidency)
12:30 – 13:30	Meeting with the Minister of Finance, Mr. Issufo Sanhá (Venue: Ministry of Finance)
13:30 – 14:45	Working lunch Meeting with UNOGBIS and UNCT (Venue: UNOGBIS Conf. Room)
15:00 – 15:45	Meeting with the President of the National Electoral Commission (Venue: UNOGBIS)
16:00 – 16:45	Meeting with PUSD Party Leader, Mr. Augusto Mango

(Venue: UNOGBIS)

17:00 – 18:30 Meeting with Diplomatic Missions
(Venue: UNOGBIS)

12 September – Friday

09:00 – 10:00 Meeting with the Minister of Justice, Ms. Carmelita Pires
(Venue: Ministry of Justice)

10:30 – 11:15 Meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Carlos Correia
(Venue: Primatura)

13:00 – 13:45 Meeting with the PAIGC Party members, Mr. Sedi Bá & Mr. Serifo Baldé
(Venue: UNOGBIS)

13:45 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 – 15:45 Debriefing with UNOGBIS
(Venue: UNOGBIS)

15:45 – 16:30 Press briefing
(Venue: UNOGBIS)

17:00 Departure to Dakar

20:00-22:00 Informal debriefing with the Diplomatic Community in Dakar

Annex II. Composition of the Delegation

Ambassador Maria Luiza Viotti, Chair of the Guinea Bissau CSM, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations

Mr. Alexandre Nina, First Secretary, Brazil

Ms. Vina Nadjibulla, Strategic Planning Officer, PBSO

Mr. Jari Mustonen, Associate Strategic Planning Officer, PBSO