

Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Guinea-Bissau
13 November 2019
Chair's Summary

1. On 13 November 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an ambassadorial-level meeting on Guinea-Bissau under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Mauro Vieira, Chair of the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration. The purpose of the meeting was to brief the Commission on the Chair's recent trip to Guinea-Bissau and to update on recent developments in the country.

2. In his opening remarks, the Chair updated the Commission on his trip to Guinea-Bissau from 22 to 24 October, during which he met with a number of stakeholders, including President José Mário Vaz, Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Communities, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Electoral Management, and high-ranking officials from the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the National Commission for Elections and the Technical Office for Electoral Support. He also met with presidential candidates or their representatives, political parties and civil society organizations, including women and youth networks. During the visit, the Chair stressed the necessity of holding the presidential election as scheduled on 24 November in order to move forward with reforms identified in the Conakry Agreement and the implementation of the development agenda. He noted a general sense of mistrust among stakeholders and emphasized to political actors that any political differences must be addressed through dialogue or through the judiciary. The Chair welcomed the coherent response from ECOWAS, the UN Security Council, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the African Union and the European Union following President Vaz's dismissal of Prime Minister Gomes on 28 October, acknowledging the legitimacy of Prime Minister Gomes' government in accordance with the decision of the ECOWAS summit on 29 June 2019. He highlighted the instrumental efforts by the P5 group consisting of ECOWAS, CPLP, the European Union, the African Union and the UN, in keeping the electoral calendar on track. He underscored that continued joint efforts and common messages from the international community would be critical after the election, particularly if a run-off was necessary. The Chair reported that interlocutors in Guinea-Bissau had acknowledged the continuous engagement of the PBC and the catalytic contributions of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), particularly in light of the drawdown of UNIOGBIS, and expressed appreciation for ongoing initiatives that aimed to empower women and youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts.

3. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly,

via VTC, welcomed the Chair's timely visit to Guinea-Bissau. She gave an account of the political developments following President Vaz's dismissal of Prime Minister Gomes and highlighted the important role that ECOWAS played in ensuring that the situation remained calm. She stressed that the risk of further destabilizing actions called for continued coherent engagement from the international community. She informed the Commission that preparations for the presidential election on 24 November were progressing well and that the electoral campaign, which started on 2 November and would continue until 22 November, had proceeded without violent incident. SRSO Sori-Coulibaly reported that the UN system was working intensely to advocate against the use of incendiary language to ensure a conducive environment for a peaceful election. With support from the PBF, a two-day workshop on messaging for campaign directors of presidential candidates and civil society organizations was held to ensure that campaigns were devoid of hate speech and incitement to violence. She noted that the international community remained actively engaged in the electoral process, including through financial contributions, but informed that there was a gap of approximately USD 1.5 million to be covered that would likely affect the operations for a second round if held. In addition, SRSO Sori-Coulibaly underlined that the sustained engagement of the international community would remain essential in the critical post-election period and noted the important role of the PBC in support of initiatives that aim to strengthen civil society, build institutions and promote reconciliation.

4. The Permanent Observer of ECOWAS, Mr. Tanou Koné, thanked the Chair for the invitation to brief and highlighted the good cooperation between the PBC and ECOWAS. He recalled that the ECOWAS Commission had been engaged in the situation in Guinea-Bissau for the past five years. He informed of the Extraordinary Summit of ECOWAS Heads of States that had taken place in Niamey, Niger, on 8 November to discuss the situation in Guinea-Bissau based on the report of the ECOWAS Ministerial Follow-Up Committee, which emerged from their mission to Bissau on 3 November. He reported that a communique had been issued following the Summit that reiterated their full support for Prime Minister Gomes and his government and urged them to continue to carry out their duties, in particular in preparation for the presidential election. Furthermore, the ECOWAS Heads of State had demanded the immediate resignation of all members of the 'new government' appointed by President Vaz and threatened individual sanctions. He also noted that the ECOWAS Heads of State had decided to strengthen the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) to respond to challenges before, during and after the elections, including through an increase in troop numbers and a possible reinforcement of its mandate, as well as deployment of election observers. He further informed that Chiefs of Defense Staff from several ECOWAS countries had arrived in Bissau that day in preparation for a high-level visit of ECOWAS Heads of State from Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria to Bissau on 16 November, to convey the Summit's outcome decisions to President Vaz. He reiterated that ECOWAS would remain seized of the situation and urged international partners to remain

united in support of regional efforts that aim to ensure the smooth completion of the presidential election and to promote peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau.

5. The representative of the Permanent Mission of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations, Ernestino Jorge Mango, thanked the Chair for his commitment to peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau and the demonstrated leadership in the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration. Noting that the electoral process was underway and that the campaign period had started as planned, he expressed gratitude for the continued international support that would be necessary for the completion of the election cycle as well as for the implementation of the government's development programme.
6. The Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office, Ms. Barrie Freeman, noted that the meeting coincided with the heightened level of Security Council attention to the concerted efforts by the UN, the African Union and ECOWAS to help address the precarious political and security situation in Guinea-Bissau. She noted that PBC accompaniment has centered around the political and institutional reforms outlined in the Conakry Agreement and the government's strategic development plan for 2015-2025. She congratulated the Guinea-Bissau Configuration for its persistence in sustaining international attention to the country's long-term peacebuilding priorities. She reported that PBF projects continued to support political dialogue and harness the power of women and youth as change agents to promote their positive role in political stabilization processes and involvement in systemic reforms. She informed of a recent press statement by youth groups to demand President Vaz' respect for the Constitution as an example of how youth in Guinea Bissau are applying the skills they have learned. She further informed that the election monitoring and situation room operated by civil society organizations during the legislative elections in March, and supported by the PBF and the European Union, would be replicated for the presidential election. In conclusion, she reiterated the commitment of the Peacebuilding Support Office to support the Configuration's plan to accompany the peacebuilding work of the SRSG and all relevant UN entities on the ground through closer engagement with the World Bank and the African Development Bank.
7. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:
 - They commended the proactive leadership of the Chair of the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration and welcomed the coherence in UN response, noting the similar messages conveyed during the recent visit to Guinea-Bissau by the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee.

- They praised the efforts by ECOWAS and the decisions made at the ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit on 8 November. They acknowledged the primacy of regional engagement, which had been further affirmed by the early November visit of the PBC to the Mano River Union.
 - They stressed the importance of observing the electoral calendar and ensuring free, fair and transparent elections as planned. They urged stakeholders to refrain from any actions furthering destabilization or mistrust that could undermine the elections.
 - They emphasized that peace must be sustained and consolidated with continued efforts by the UN, including the PBC, with a view to the longer term, in particular during the drawdown of UNIOGBIS. They underlined the importance of women's and youth engagement in immediate crisis management as well as in long-term peacebuilding.
 - They reiterated their continued commitment to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Guinea-Bissau and the commitment of the PBC to mobilize support for peacebuilding priorities, particularly during the transition of UNIOGBIS.
8. In his concluding remarks, the Chair thanked the Government of Guinea-Bissau, the briefers and the participants for their continued engagement and noted that the holding of peaceful elections would represent a milestone in the stabilization of the country. He called on political stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to sustain their commitment to holding the presidential election as planned and to solve differences through dialogue and refrain from all forms of violence. He emphasized the possible need for new contributions from the international community in the event of a second round of elections. Regarding the mandated reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS, the Chair reiterated the willingness of the PBC to contribute to system-wide coherence between UNIOGBIS, the country team and all relevant international and regional actors as well as the readiness of the Commission to support the reconfiguration exercise. In conclusion, the Chair informed that he intended to issue a press statement from the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration.