

## **PBC Ambassadorial-level meeting on Guinea-Bissau**

**6 May 2019**

### **Chair's Summary**

1. On 6 May 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. The purpose of the meeting was to update and exchange views on the political situation, particularly the recent legislative elections and preparations for the presidential election, and on the planning process for the transition and drawdown of UNIOGBIS based on Security Council resolution 2458 (2019).
2. In his introductory remarks, the Chair noted that Guinea-Bissau is at a critical moment. He welcomed the successful holding of the legislative on 10 March and expressed hope that a new Prime Minister and Government would be appointed soon. He underscored the role played by ECOWAS in supporting the political process in Guinea-Bissau.
3. H.E. Mr. José Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), provided a comprehensive briefing on the outcome of the 10 March legislative elections. He briefed on recent political developments, including current mediation efforts to help resolve the impasse over elections to the National Assembly's bureau, on preparations for the presidential election, and on the socio-economic situation. He provided an update on PBF program activities, the ongoing efforts of UNIOGBIS to help combat drug trafficking and organized crime, and planning efforts for the transition and drawdown of the mission. In concluding his briefing, he shared his views on four key challenges facing Guinea-Bissau: persistent and deep mistrust between the two main political blocs, fragile state institutions, the lack of vision for the development of the country, and the constrained and stagnating economy. In this regard, he called on the international community to remain vigilant and to continue assisting the country in its efforts to consolidate peace in Guinea-Bissau. He noted that the next ECOWAS Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, scheduled to take place in June in Abuja, Nigeria, would be an opportunity for the leaders of the sub-region to assess the situation and encourage the President to set the date of the presidential election as soon as possible. He also informed PBC members that he was at the end of his tenure as SRSB and Head of UNIOGBIS.
4. Mr. Tanou Koné, Permanent Observer of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recalled the high-level visit of the ECOWAS Mission to Bissau on 30 April, which encouraged the urgent appointment of a Prime Minister and establishment of the government. He reiterated the continuing engagement of ECOWAS to encourage Guinea-Bissau's political stakeholders to resolve the current impasse in the National Assembly and commit fully to implementing a peace and development agenda.

5. Mrs. Maria Antonieta Pinto Lopes D'Alva, Chargée d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Guinea Bissau, briefed on the status of elections for the bureau of the National Assembly, expressing hope that the current impasse over the election of the Vice-President would be resolved soon. She noted that the people of Guinea-Bissau had fulfilled their role by voting; it was important that political stakeholders fulfil their role in demonstrating to the population, in particular women and youth, the dividends of democracy. She expressed hope that the pace of UN support would not diminish after the drawdown of UNIOGBIS, and asked for the PBC's support to help address the development challenges of the country.
6. Ms. Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head of the PBSO, welcomed the peaceful conduct of the legislative elections in March, noting that the large voter turnout attested to the public's commitment to democratic governance. She noted further that several PBF projects had contributed to the success of the legislative elections, including a project implemented by UNFPA and UN Women in support of a situation room of civil society organization election monitors in Bissau, which was also supported by the European Union. Some 400 national monitors, including 150 women drawn from civil society organizations, were deployed across the country on election day. PBF had also supported the establishment of the Bafata Women's Radio, which played an important role diffusing tensions in the most disputed electoral regions. In view of the low representation of women in Parliament (with only 13 women elected to Parliament, the legislative elections did not reach the minimum quota of 36 percent of women's representation in elections, a point that was also highlighted by the SRSG), she offered that PBSO would continue to support advocacy efforts for greater women's participation in the political process, building on the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the PBC's own gender strategy. She expressed hope that the Guinea-Bissau Configuration will play a more visible role in helping to address the socio-economic situation, building on now well-established cooperation between the PBC, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, as well as ongoing cooperation with the EU and ECOWAS.
7. The members of the Commission welcomed the briefings. In expressing appreciation for the Chair's leadership for a timely and substantive meeting; they made the following observations:
  - They welcomed the successful and peaceful holding of the legislative elections on 10 March 2019; they congratulated the people and the Government of Guinea-Bissau for this important milestone.
  - They encouraged all political stakeholders to resolve the deadlock related to the election of the Parliamentary Bureau.
  - They underscored the urgent need for the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a Government, and for holding the presidential election in 2019.
  - With regards to the reconfiguration and drawdown of UNIOGBIS, some members noted that Security Council Resolution 2458 calls for a roadmap for the transition. Some

members encouraged flexibility concerning reconfiguration, referring to the need to maintain the current configuration until the conclusion of the presidential election.

- They reiterated the readiness of the Configuration to support the reconfiguration exercise. Some members pointed to the need to further discuss and define the kind of support the PBC could offer in the context of the reconfiguration. A suggestion was made to consider past good practices, including the possibility of supporting the development of a peacebuilding plan, as was done during the drawdown of UNMIL in Liberia, as a tool to accompany the country after the UNIOGBIS drawdown.
  - The members of the Configuration also welcomed Peacebuilding Fund investments in Guinea-Bissau, particularly in the context of the legislative elections. They also underscored the importance of ongoing projects aimed at empowering women, especially in fostering their participation in conflict resolution and sustaining peace.
  - The Configuration commended ECOWAS for its pivotal role in supporting political stability and the consolidation of democracy in Guinea-Bissau.
  - They reiterated their appreciation for the cooperation extended by Special Representative of the Secretary-General José Viegas Filho and the UNIOGBIS team.
8. In concluding the meeting, the Chair called for continued support by the international community to ensure that Guinea-Bissau continues to build upon positive gains. He reiterated the readiness of the Commission to support the reconfiguration exercise of UNIOGBIS, and to accompany the country in its efforts aimed at marshalling resources with a view to addressing the socio-economic challenges and the ongoing financial crisis. The Chair informed of his intention to visit Guinea-Bissau as soon as the new government was in place. He also indicated that he would continue to engage all relevant stakeholders, including regional organizations and multilateral financial institutions. He reiterated his and PBC members' appreciation for the cooperation extended by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General José Viegas Filho during his tenure as Head of UNIOGBIS and wished him success as he concluded his assignment in Bissau.