

Meeting of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission,

14 May 2018

Speakers:

- H.E. Mr. Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil and Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration
- Via VTC - Mr. David McLachlan-Karr, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (DSRSG) in Guinea-Bissau
- Mr. Tanou Koné, Permanent Observer for ECOWAS to the United Nations
- H.E. Mr. Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial-Guinea to the United Nations and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) on Guinea-Bissau
- Ms. Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head of PBSO
- H.E. Mr. Fernando Delfim da Silva, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations

Background

The Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on 14 May 2018 under the chairmanship of Ambassador Mauro Vieira of Brazil to discuss significant developments in Guinea-Bissau.

Report from the Chair of the Configuration

1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the participation of the speakers. He congratulated Mr. José Viegas Filho of Brazil, who was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres as his new Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and the Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). He said he looked forward to working as closely with him as he did with SRSG Touré during his tenure in the country.

2. The Chair outlined positive developments since the last PBC meeting on Guinea-Bissau held on 12 February 2018. On April 16, President José Mário Vaz appointed Aristides Gomes as the new Prime Minister on the basis of a consensus between the two main political parties, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) and the Party of Social Renewal (PRS). President Vaz also issued a presidential decree confirming that legislative elections will be held on November 18. These developments followed an Extraordinary Session of the Authority of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held in Lomé, Togo on April 14.

3. After almost three years of a political impasse, the Standing Committee of the National People's Assembly (ANP) of Guinea-Bissau convened an extraordinary plenary session of the parliament on April 19. The National People's Assembly then elected a new leadership for the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and extended its ninth legislature until November of this year, when the legislative elections are scheduled for. The members of the new Government of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes' were sworn in on April 26 by President Vaz

4. The Chair noted that notwithstanding these positive developments, key challenges remained going forward, including the implementation of other provisions of the Conakry Agreement, such as a review of the Constitution. He cautioned that financial challenges needed to be addressed to ensure a timely organisation of the electoral process.

Briefing from the DSRSG in Guinea-Bissau

5. The DSRSG noted encouraging signs that Guinea-Bissau may be emerging from its protracted political and institutional crisis. He recalled the recent developments and mentioned that on 24 April, an ECOWAS delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Togo visited Bissau to support the inter-party negotiations on the formation of an inclusive government. They held a series of meetings with the President, Prime Minister, leaders of the key political parties and the Guinea-Bissau P5, (ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU and CPLP).

6. The DSRSG informed that preparations for the legislative elections of 18 November were underway. UNDP and the Government of Guinea-Bissau have signed a Project Document for electoral support, with a total budget of USD 7.7 million. The project covers the total cost of technical preparations for cartography, an update of voter registration, and the practical administration costs of the elections. He highlighted the USD 1.8 million contribution of the Government of Guinea-Bissau to the UNDP basket fund and added that UNDP had also contributed USD 205,000 from project funds. A further donation from the EU is also expected. These contributions will allow UNDP to proceed with the urgent procurement of biometric equipment for the elections technical agency, GTAPE. He said that the procurement tender would be launched on 21 May, and that the National Electoral Commission plans to begin voter registration on 1 June.

7. The DSRSG emphasized that additional financial resources were still urgently needed to fill the existing funding gap of USD 5 million. He called on partners and the Peacebuilding Commission to assist in fundraising efforts to close the financial gap.

8. He underlined the importance of holding a national round table for dialogue and the negotiation and adoption of a stability pact, called for in the Conakry Agreement. The Pact would outline the principles going forward for constitutional reform, including the electoral law, a new law on political parties, and reform agendas on the security and justice sectors. The DSRSG affirmed that UNIOGBIS would continue to work with the UN Country Team in promoting activities aimed at consolidating gains already made under the Conakry Agreement and would reinforce efforts to facilitate intra-party dialogue and foster national reconciliation.

9. The DSRSG also reported that UNIOGBIS was currently being restructured to ensure that it responds to the key priorities of the new Security Council mandate. To this end, the Mission's work in 2018 would be clustered around three main work streams:

- a) strengthening the political good offices of the SRSR, mediation, preparations for elections and the constitutional review;
- b) combating drugs, organized crime and illicit trafficking; including work on anti-corruption, institution strengthening and fighting impunity;
- c) strengthening respect for human rights and gender empowerment.

10. He further noted that within the framework of these work streams, the implementation of six projects supported by the Peace-building Fund with a value of USD 7.3 million are well underway. These projects focus on strengthening civil society engagement in the peace and stability process in Guinea-Bissau, with emphasis on women and youth as agents for change.

11. The DGRSG acknowledged the support of the PBC and the PBSO for the Mission's vital peace-building agenda. He noted that if the elections were successfully conducted within the mandated timeframe and were followed by presidential elections in 2019, it would be the first time that a smooth and constitutional transfer of power would take place in Bissau-Guinean. He closed his presentation by stating that he shared the concerns raised by the Chair related to the challenges that must be addressed to put the country firmly on the path to peace, stability, and development.

Briefing from Office of the Permanent Observer for ECOWAS to the United Nations

12. Mr. Tanou Koné gave a chronological account of the political crisis in Guinea-Bissau and the role of ECOWAS. He reminded participants that the crisis began in 2015 when the President dismissed Prime Minister Domingues. He opined that Guinea-Bissau's semi-Presidential system contributed to exacerbating the crisis. This was followed by the creation of the group of 15 dissidents from the PAIGC, which led to the party's loss of its parliamentary majority. He noted, however, that the PAIGC maintained control of the ANP's Standing Committee and was thus able to withhold approval of agendas for parliamentary sessions and government budgets.

13. He said that President Vaz requested ECOWAS assistance to mediate a solution. President Alpha Conde of Guinea led the mediation effort, which resulted in the signature of two agreements: the Bissau Accord of 10 September 2016 and the Conakry Agreement of 14 October 2016. Mr. Koné recounted that notwithstanding these agreements, the crisis continued despite three ECOWAS Summits, several Ministerial Level Missions that travelled to Bissau and even a threat to withdraw the ECOMIB troops stationed in the country. He said that it was only after these attempts were not successful that ECOWAS decided to adopt sanctions for those refusing to implement the Conakry Agreement.

14. Ultimately, he mentioned that President Vaz agreed during an extraordinary session held by ECOWAS in Lomé on 14 April 2018 to nominate a consensual prime minister and to hold

legislative elections in November 2018. In addition, the two main political parties, PAIGC and PRS, agreed to prolong the current legislature until the November elections and to nominate a new leadership of the National Electoral Commission (CENI). Mr. Koné affirmed that it was the framework provided by the ECOWAS sanctions that had provided a path to the developments in the field.

Briefing by H.E. Mr. Anatolio Ndong Mba, Permanent Representative of Equatorial-Guinea to the United Nations and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) on Guinea-Bissau

15. The Permanent Representative of Equatorial-Guinea welcomed the positive developments in Guinea-Bissau and noted that Prime-Minister Gomes enjoyed great support from both the people of the country and the main political parties. He pointed out that the key challenges facing the new government were to establish a political environment of trust that would allow the holding of free and fair elections, and peacebuilding. He stated that he was confident that the country would overcome the crisis. He noted, however, that there were many challenges related to the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement. He thanked the configuration for its work on Guinea-Bissau, and noted the country still needed continued support from the international community.

Briefing by PBSO

16. Ms. Freeman congratulated the new Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) Mr. José Viegas Filho of Brazil, and thanked the outgoing SRSG, Mr. Modibo Touré for his efforts in support of the country and for his close collaboration with the PBC and PBF.

17. She congratulated the Government and the political parties for their spirit of consensus on the appointment of Prime-Minister Gomes and his cabinet, in addition to the decision to hold legislative elections on 18 November 2018. She noted that this is a historic opportunity for the country to break its longstanding impasse and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace and development. She encouraged donors to help close the gap in the election budget.

18. Ms. Freeman commended ECOWAS for its active and engaged leadership in the current situation in Guinea-Bissau and added that the country is a good example of international coordination and the value of speaking with one voice, as demonstrated by the P5. She highlighted the positive role of the PBC in these coordinated efforts.

19. She noted that in the wake of the High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, developments in Guinea-Bissau demonstrated the value of the sustaining peace approach – ensuring the coherence of international efforts in support of building and sustaining peace in a specific country context, with strong emphasis on inclusivity and partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. She emphasized the value of the

PBC under Ambassador Vieira's leadership of the configuration, as a convener and as an adviser to the Security Council.

20. Acknowledging the description of PBF projects provided by the DSRSB, Ms. Freeman congratulated the hard-working team in Guinea-Bissau and thanked them for their efforts to design and implement PBF projects that are nationally owned and adapted to Guinea-Bissau's context, with a strong focus on inclusion.

Briefing by H.E. Mr. Fernando Delfim da Silva, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations

21. H.E. Mr. Fernando Delfim da Silva paid tribute to the late ambassador of the Ivory Coast whom he described as having been committed to peacebuilding.

22. He stated that the people of Guinea-Bissau appreciated and greatly valued the collective support of the international community. He stated that the new government faced many challenges. He reiterated that the government would need both technical and financial assistance for the preparation and holding of the upcoming legislative elections.

23. He advised that the government will conclude its budget revision, after which it would have a clear picture of needs and realities. He thanked the configuration for its continued support to Guinea-Bissau.

Discussion

24. Participants expressed support for developments in the country, including the fact that the constitutional framework for free and fair elections would be respected. Members also underlined the engagement of ECOWAS and recognized the effective, preventive and deterrent role of ECOMIB, as well as the importance of ensuring its continuity until the necessary conditions for its withdrawal are fully met, at least until the 2019 presidential elections

25. They noted that the upcoming legislative elections in November of 2018 and the presidential elections scheduled for 2019 were important milestones. Several members noted that the need for both technical and financial support to carry out the elections. The European Union indicated that it would support the basket fund.

26. One participant pointed out that caution was still needed. Many underlined the importance of international support beyond the elections. Some participants emphasized the need for efforts to fight corruption, drug trafficking and increase youth and women's participation. The need to respect the pledges made by the international community for the Terra Ranka development plan was underlined.

27. Participants congratulated the newly appointed SRSG, Mr. José Viegas Filho, and thanked the outgoing SRSG, Mr. Mobido Touré, for his efforts in support of the country. Several participants agreed that UNIOGBIS would have a key role in preparing for the elections and in

supporting efforts for the reforms called for in the Conakry Agreement. They highlighted the need for continued good offices and international coordination in this context. Participants applauded the UN's coordination role, encouraged further cooperation among partners, and thanked the leadership of the Configuration. Participants called for the continued support of the international community, including the key role to be played by the PBC and PBF.

Conclusion

28. The Chair thanked all speakers for their presentations, and Configuration members for their input to the discussion. He summarized the statements made during the meeting, and announced that he would circulate to members of the configuration a draft statement he would make to the Security Council on behalf of the PBC on 16 May. The Chair indicated his intention to travel to Guinea-Bissau in the coming months and that he would be consulting with the Government Officials and UNIOGBIS to identify the appropriate time.