

1 November 2017

Ambassadorial-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission

Guinea-Bissau Configuration, 21 August 2017

Chair's Summary

Background

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Guinea-Bissau Configuration held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on 21 August 2017 under the chairmanship of Ambassador Mauro Vieira of Brazil to discuss the recent developments in Guinea-Bissau and to hear a report of the Chair's visit to the country. Senior officials attending included the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador João Soares da Gama; the Permanent Representative of Togo, Ambassador Kokou Kpayedo, in his capacity as Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNIOGBIS, Mr. Modibo Touré; a representative of the Women's Facilitation Group, Ms. Fatumata Djau Baldé (via VTC); and the Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO, Mr. Marc-André Franche.

Report on the visit of the Chair of the Configuration

1. The Chair explained that his consultations in Bissau highlighted the complexity of the political impasse. The Conakry Agreement, signed in October 2016, remained a fundamental reference for most political actors, although it continued to be the subject of conflicting interpretations. There were two distinct narratives regarding the negotiations in Conakry and if a decision was reached or not on a name for the position of Prime-Minister. Some interlocutors noted that the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC, in Portuguese) no longer controlled the National Popular Assembly, while others underlined that the 2014 elections gave a majority to the PAIGC, and that this could not be changed through the creation of a block of 15 dissident parliamentarians. He found that these different positions were not moving closer together.
2. The Chair mentioned that the efforts of the Group of Women Facilitators were a positive development. Most stakeholders noted that it had been effective as a confidence building measure. The Chair informed that, during their meeting, President José Mário Vaz was very supportive of this process.

3. The Chair also noted that he had the opportunity to be in contact with two other initiatives from the Civil Society. A network of youth organizations emphasized the need of having the youth population involved in decisions regarding policy. The Organizing Committee of the National Conference (OCNC) informed how they hoped to identify a model of national reconciliation that could be considered in a National Conference to be held in early 2018. The Chair expressed his view that the PBC can support these types of initiatives.
4. The National Election Commission (CNE) informed the Chair that a timetable for legislative elections in May 2018 was finalized and that it should be approved by the President of the Republic. The representatives of the CNE noted that it was necessary to update the voter registration lists prior to the elections and that this process should happen between January and March 2018. Some interlocutors underlined the fact that the mandate of the President of the CNE had already ended and the position is currently occupied “ad interim”. The Chair was also informed that the appointment of a new President of the Commission had to be approved by the National People’s Assembly.
5. The leadership of the Armed Forces conveyed the message that the military continue to maintain distance from the political crisis and reassured their strict respect for the constitutional order. Representatives of the police underline their efforts to maintain order and to respect human rights. They expressed interest in receiving training and equipments and in participating in international peacekeeping operations. Regarding public demonstrations, the Chair was informed that following confrontations between the police and demonstrators in April, the situation was calmer. However, some interlocutors declared that public demonstrations were restricted. Several stakeholders expressed concern about the negative effects of an eventual departure of ECOMIB.
6. The Chair noted that some of his interlocutors called for sanctions to be imposed on civilians, in particular on politicians for not implementing the Conakry Agreement. On the other hand, others expressed strong opposition to this idea, considering it interference in the countries’ internal affairs. Several actors affirmed that the economy was doing well. However, others noted that many people continued to struggle with the lack of health and education services.
7. The Chair informed that many stakeholders recalled that in 2015 the Brussels Round Table had pledged \$1.5 billion in support for the Terra Ranka program and stressed the importance that donors stand by their pledges. The Chair underlined that a solution to the current crisis would enable the international community to fulfill their commitments and provide support to programmes that will benefit the people of Guinea-Bissau.
8. Finally, the Chair informed that in Lisbon, on 28 July, he met with the Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese -speaking Countries (CPLP, in Portuguese), Maria do Carmo Silveira, when they discussed the role of the Community in supporting Guinea-Bissau.

Woman's Facilitation Group

9. Ms. Fatuma Djao Balde made a presentation on behalf of the Women's Facilitation Group. She explained that, during the preceding months, the Group organized bilateral meetings between the President and key actors and that a second round of discussions took place between 27 and 28 July. This dialogue involved the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the President of the Supreme Court and the Presidents of the PAIGC, of the Party of the Social Renovation (PRS, in Portuguese) and the group of 15 dissident parliamentarians. The other three political parties represented in the National Assembly were also invited to the second round of meetings. She explained that strict confidentiality was key to this process. Ms. Djao Balde underlined that the initiative successfully opened up lines of communications and reduced tensions among the main political actors.

Discussion

10. The Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau commended the efforts of the Women's Facilitation Group. He informed that he would be leaving his post in New York and thanked all for the strong support that was given to him and to Guinea-Bissau during his tenure as Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
11. SRSR Toure noted that the continued engagement of the international community was still needed and underlined that while progress had been made, the repeating occurrence of strikes and demonstrations indicated a high level of social frustration. He urged the international community to support the Security Sector Reform (SSR). He announced the launch of a \$39 million, 3-year joint programme on police, justice and corrections and welcomed the new PBF engagement with Guinea-Bissau beginning in 2018. Finally, he noted that while it would be risky for the upcoming elections to proceed without a prior political agreement, the electoral preparations needed to be initiated.
12. Ambassador Kokou Kpayedo noted that the situation of Guinea-Bissau continued to be a source of concern to ECOWAS. He recalled that while the ECOMIB mandate had been extended for three months conditional on the implementation of the Conakry agreement, two months later there was still no progress. He mentioned that discussions were still ongoing regarding sanctions.
13. Mr. Marc-André Franche, Chief of the Financing for Peacebuilding Branch of PBSO, stressed that, since the beginning of the ECOWAS process in September 2016, the international community had been unified in providing support to the Conakry agreement. He noted that the international community remained concerned about the impact of the political crisis on the human rights situation in the country, especially on civil and political rights. He noted that the PBF has been engaged in Guinea-Bissau through its 2015-2017 Peacebuilding Priority Plan and informed that likely areas for future engagements by the PBF included: empowerment of women and youth; support for dialogue and consensus building initiatives, both at the national and

regional levels; and the strengthening of democratic governance, rule of law and support to the upcoming elections.

14. Participants underlined that the international community had provided a consistent and unified support for Guinea-Bissau and for the Conakry agreement. However, many stressed that national actors must demonstrate leadership and political will to end the crisis. Some members noted that the current political situation was not due to ideological, ethnic or religious differences, but the result of personal differences. Many participants recognized the commitment of the armed forces to respect the constitutional order. There was a broad support for the efforts of the Women's Facilitation Group. Participants also underlined the need for inclusive dialogue and for civil society engagement in order to find a solution to the political stalemate.

Conclusion

15. The Chair noted that the significant presence of participants in the meeting attested to the commitment of the international community to Guinea-Bissau. He once more congratulated the efforts of the Women's Facilitation Group. He underlined the necessity of political and social reforms to end the crisis. He welcomed the new joint program announced by the SRSG and the continued engagement of the PBF. He stressed the need to guarantee open and transparent elections and the importance of the participation of the UN in this effort. He noted the wide support given to the ECOWAS political process, as well as the need for its implementation. He informed that he would present the report of his visit to Bissau and Lisbon during his statement to the Security Council on 24 August.