

**Report of the visit of the Chair of the PBC Guinea Configuration to Conakry  
(31 May - 2 June 2015)**

**I. Objectives and content of the visit**

The Chair of the Guinea Configuration of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) visited Guinea from 31 May to 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2015, with the following objectives:

1. To sustain the attention of the international community on the recovery efforts and peacebuilding needs of Guinea following the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) and to ensure that peacebuilding priorities receive adequate support and attention in the national Ebola recovery strategy and in international support mechanisms, including the IFIs and the UN, in particular in view of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Meeting on Ebola on July 10, 2015.
2. To discuss with the various actors in Guinea the opportunities for the PBC to support efforts under way to create a conducive environment for the holding of free, peaceful, inclusive and credible elections.
3. To examine the priorities for the Guinea Configuration in 2015 in the three mutually agreed areas of engagement: national unity and reconciliation, security sector reform and youth and women's employment.

The Permanent Representative of Guinea, Ambassador Touré, took part in the visit.

The Chair was granted an audience by the President of the Republic, H.E. Professor Alpha Condé. She moreover met with the Minister for Human Rights and Public Liberties, who is also the political focal point for the PBC, the Delegate Minister for Defense, the Minister for Security and Civil Protection, the Minister for Territorial Administration and Decentralization, the President of the National Assembly and members of the Bureau of the Assembly, the President of the Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), the Co-President of the Provisional Commission for reflection on national reconciliation (*Commission provisoire de réflexion sur la réconciliation nationale* - CPRN), senior officials from several ministries and representatives of civil society and the international community in Conakry (the detailed program of the visit can be found in annex 1 of this report).

## II. Main points/results of the visit

### 1. Concerning the recovery efforts and peacebuilding needs of Guinea following the Ebola epidemic

The Ebola epidemic, which broke out in March 2014 in the *Guinée Forestière* region, had an impact on all aspects of life in Guinea and in particular worsened the dire socio-economic conditions of the Guineans, increasing the risk of social unrest. The epidemic has exacerbated the rift between the authorities and some local communities. Among the three most affected countries, it is in Guinea that population resistance to efforts to combat Ebola has been the most violent.

The issue of resistance figured prominently in the discussions with the Guinean actors and the international partners, while violent protests were underway in Kamsar at the time of the visit. The various interlocutors could not identify a key explanation for the violence and in particular for the pockets of resistance persisting in some regions of the country. Alongside cultural apprehensions, the lack of trust between the people and the Government / State institutions, the manipulation of the youth and the politicization of the epidemic in the context of upcoming elections were mentioned.

While significant progress has been made in the fight against Ebola, all parties agreed that it was necessary to redouble efforts to achieve zero cases and to maintain such a result. At the same time, it is necessary to start the post-Ebola recovery efforts. The closing of UNMEER and the need for a well-organized transition to the UN Country-team were stressed in this context.

The Guinean actors regretted the disastrous impact of the epidemic on the economy of the country and stressed the need for major international support for an economic recovery. The importance of strengthening the infrastructures and basic social services in the country, as well as the general resilience of Guinea was also mentioned. It was hoped that the resources provided in the framework of the fight against Ebola could be used in a post-Ebola recovery context (ambulances, equipment etc.).

More generally, there were calls to take advantage of the “lessons learned” from the fight against Ebola. The commitment of civil society (women, youth, religious leaders), the establishment of “community watch committees”, the recruitment of women and young people for awareness raising campaigns have *inter alia* been mentioned as examples from which inspiration for future programs could be drawn from. The fight against the stigmatization of survivors, the special needs of women, who have been disproportionately affected by the epidemic, and the care of orphans were identified as other issues that must also be addressed.

### 2. Regarding the electoral process and the support for dialogue between all actors

Following the announcement by the CENI that presidential elections would be held on 11 October 2015 and that local and community elections would be postponed until March 2016, the Opposition resumed demonstrations in April-May, some of which were accompanied by violence. It also

suspended its participation in the National Assembly (which prevented the adoption of certain laws that require a two/third majority, such as the organic law amending the Electoral Code).

The two sides mutually accuse each other: the Opposition considers in particular that the holding of local and community elections after the presidential elections contradicts the annex to the agreement concluded on 3 July 2013, and that the special delegations at the local level (which replace the municipal counsellors (*conseillers communaux*) since the expiration of their mandate in 2010), aim to exercise an undue influence on the electoral process. The Opposition also contests the composition of the CENI, stating that it no longer reflects the parity agreed in 2013. It requests that, prior the start of any political dialogue, the CENI suspends its preparation of the elections and annuls the electoral timetable. According to the Government and the *Mouvance présidentielle*, no commitment as to the date of the local and community elections was made in 2013 - the annex in question was never signed by the parties - and the insistence of the Opposition to hold local elections first aims only at steering the country towards a power vacuum as the presidential elections need to be held in 2015. The Government considers that the Opposition is in bad faith and requires that it comes to the negotiating table without any preconditions.

The President of the CENI recalled the constitutional obligation to hold the presidential elections 90 days before the expiry of the mandate of the President (December 2015). There is however no legal obligation to hold local elections within a certain timeframe, even if the mandates of the locally elected officials have indeed expired in 2010. Notwithstanding, the CENI began working on local elections in 2014, but this work was delayed by the Ebola outbreak. For technical reasons (change of operator, need for a new census etc.) the organization of local elections is no longer possible in 2015. As the parallel organization of local and presidential elections is not possible either for logistical and budgetary reasons, the CENI has taken the decision to postpone the local elections until early next year, and to focus on the presidential elections. He underlined that the CENI is a political, but not a politicized institution, and that it pursues a technical mission, i.e. the practical organization of the elections.

*The need for a continuous dialogue between all stakeholders*

During the various meetings, Ambassador Lucas called on the political actors in Guinea to engage constructively in a process of dialogue in order to agree on the organization of the forthcoming elections. She called for the establishment of a permanent framework for dialogue and stressed the importance of finding a creative and constructive solution in the interests of the population. The Chair of the Configuration emphasized the urgency of a dialogue without preconditions on either side, four months before the upcoming date for the elections, and highlighted the availability of the Guinea Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to stand with the Guinean actors, in the same way as during the legislative elections in 2013.

Many of the interlocutors of the Chair called for a greater involvement of the international community.

It should also be recalled that the visit of the Chair of the Guinea Configuration coincided with that of the SRSG Chambas, allowing for a coordination of their messages. In a press statement dated 1<sup>st</sup> of June, the Special Representative called on all parties in Guinea to redouble their efforts to ensure the organization of elections that will safeguard peace and consolidate the democratic process in Guinea.

While stressing that both sides should make concessions, the President of the Republic was optimistic that an agreement will be reached soon in order to move towards the preparation of free and inclusive elections. He was of the opinion that that all parties agreed that the presidential elections should be held on October 11, 2015.

#### *The technical and financial support for the elections*

The Chair of the Configuration also discussed issues related to the organization of the elections as such, and following up on the Needs Assessment Mission (NAM), the possibilities for the PBC to support the efforts for the mobilization of technical and financial resources for the elections.

The President of the Republic stated that the CENI needs some technical strengthening. One of the weaknesses of the CENI is communication. In this context, he welcomed the support provided by the OIF and the deployment of the five consultants to the CENI. Beyond that, the needs would be mainly of a financial nature. President Condé however questioned the budget put forward by the CENI, indicating that Government authorities would soon make an inventory of the means that had been provided for the legislative elections of 2013 (ballot boxes, voting booths, cars etc.) and on that basis determine the additional needs.

The President of the CENI meanwhile situated the gap for the financing of the presidential elections between 50 and 58 million USD. However, no detailed budget was available on the date of the visit.

During her meetings, the Chair of the Configuration emphasized the importance of receiving as soon as possible a detailed and justified budget to enable the mobilization of resources. Please note in this context that the Delegate Minister for Defense mentioned that the budget of the CENI does not include a budget line for the security of the elections (cf. FOSSEPEL...).

### **3. Concerning the priorities of the Guinea Configuration in 2015**

During her discussions, the Chair of the Configuration took stock of the three priority areas for peacebuilding in Guinea with the national and international partners:

#### *Security and defense sector reform*

Much progress, on the normative and institutional level, has been made regarding the reform of the security sector and in particular at the level of the army. A decisive step was taken with the adoption of the national strategy in terms of priority actions (*Stratégie Nationale d'Actions Prioritaires* - SNAP):

that *momentum* has to be maintained and the full implementation of the normative framework to be ensured. A major challenge in this regard is the mobilization of resources.

The Delegate Minister for Defense underlined the need for well preparing the retirement of the military, stressing that a well-planned retirement is an important factor of stability. This is especially true in the current context of transition to a “normal” system of retirement where it is important to manage the expectations of the military. Proper guidance and proper information of the military are necessary to ensure a peaceful process. In this context, the post of Minister for Veterans, who is not linked to the Minister for Defense, as well as a specialized agency to accompany the veterans, have been established.

Concerning the illegal recruitment of some 7.000 young people at the time of the Transition, a census of the youth was held and those who passed the vetting procedure were integrated into the ranks of the army.

According to the Minister for Security and Civil Protection, there is a significant imbalance between what has been done at the level of the armed forces and what has been done for the other security forces. Of the 13.000 police officers and agents of civil protection, 10.000 (that is to say over 75%) have not received any basic training. The number of police officers is also inadequate, with only one policeman for 1.400 inhabitants. Furthermore, the police lack means and equipment. This situation - lack of training, lack of equipment, insufficient numbers - is of particular concern against the backdrop of the recent political demonstrations. The urgency of a reform of the police was also emphasized by the President of the Republic.

In terms of the justice reform, following the “*Etats généraux de la Justice*” in 2011, efforts have focused in particular on training (of judges, clerks, lawyers and bailiffs). A Supreme Council of the Judiciary (*Conseil supérieur de la magistrature*) with sanctioning powers has been established. Efforts are also underway to ensure the independence of judges. A new law on judicial organization is currently being discussed by the National Assembly. The revision of the Penal Code is underway, and in this context, the abolition of the death penalty has been proposed.

The strengthening of the criminal justice system (from the preliminary investigation to the implementation of the sentence) was identified as another important challenge. The prison of Conakry, planned for 300 people, currently hosts more than 1.300 people. One month ago, the construction of a new prison outside of the capital has started.

Finally, the investigation into the events of 28 September 2009 advances. More than 420 persons were heard and eight individuals have been indicted.

#### *National reconciliation and unity*

As regards national reconciliation, the Chair of the Guinea Configuration was able to speak to the Co-president of the Provisional Commission for reflection on national reconciliation (*Commission provisoire de réflexion sur la réconciliation nationale* - CPRN), Monseigneur Vincent Coulibaly, who

underlined that there can be no successful reconciliation without clear political will and without technical and financial support from the international community.

The delegation was given a document summarizing the activities of the CPRN (attached to this report as annex 2). On 25 March 2015, the national consultations - listening to the grievances of the population and to their expectations for national reconciliation - were launched. Once consultations are over, the CPRN will write its report and submit it to the Head of State, in principle in December 2015. The President will then decide about the next steps; the CPRN not being a Commission in charge of reconciliation (or even reparations), but a Commission for reflection; a fact that, according to Monseigneur Coulibaly, victims' associations often have difficulties to understand.

It was noted that Guinea is one of the rare countries to have adopted two National Action Plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325, which calls upon Member States to ensure that women can participate fully and on an equal footing with men in all efforts of peacekeeping and the promotion of peace and security, and calls upon all stakeholders to increase the participation of women and take into account gender equality in all areas of peacebuilding.

During the audience with the President of the Republic, Professor Condé mentioned also the project of exhumation of the mass graves present in Guinea and the identification of the deceased with DNA testing, so that families may finally be given closure by burying their loved ones. Underlining the importance of such an act for national reconciliation, the President asked for the support of the international community and the UN in this regard.

#### *Women's and youth employment*

The President of the Republic insisted on the high priority of women's and youth employment and called for further UN support to this effect, beyond the projects currently funded by the Peacebuilding Fund.

The particular role of women and youth in the electoral context was raised by numerous interlocutors. They must not be manipulated by political stakeholders. As was the case for the legislative elections in 2013, women can play an important preventive role. In this context, the project of the “*Case de Veille*”, steered by the NGO COFFIG (“*Coalition of women and girls for dialogue, peacebuilding and development*”), was raised as a good model to follow.

As indicated above, it was also recommended to capitalize on programs implemented in the fight against the Ebola epidemic and use them, where necessary, as a model for women's and youth employment projects.

### **III. Conclusions and next steps**

Concerning the Ebola epidemic, the Chair proposes to continue to work together with the Chairs of the PBC Configurations of the two other affected countries, in particular to maintain the international community's attention on the priorities of peacebuilding and post-Ebola

reconstruction. The next step will be the International Conference on post-Ebola reconstruction, convened by the Secretary-General on 9 and 10 July, 2015.

Concerning the elections in Guinea, the Guinea Configuration stands ready to accompany Guinea in the process of organizing free, peaceful, inclusive and credible elections, as it did during the legislative elections of 2013. The Guinea Configuration can act as the voice of the international community in New York, at crucial milestones of the political process. It can also offer a platform to SRSB Chambas for coordination with Member states and relevant regional and sub-regional organizations. The Configuration further stands ready to inform and mobilize concerning the practical organization of the elections.

Regarding the three priority areas of engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission in Guinea, it will be important to define concrete projects in the sectors identified during the visit, in close coordination with the Peacebuilding Fund and the international and bilateral partners.