



2 December, 2011

To : Members of the PBC – Guinea Configuration

**Informal meeting of the Guinea Specific Configuration of the
PBC, New York, 21 November 2011**

Chair's Summary

An informal meeting of the Guinea Configuration chaired by H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, Chair of the Guinea Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, was held on Monday, 21 November 2011. The purpose of the meeting was to hear briefings on the state of preparations for the legislative elections, on the Security Sector reform and on recent developments in the area of national reconciliation.

The Government of Guinea was represented by H.E. Ambassador Mamadi Touré, Permanent Representative of Guinea to the United Nations. The meeting was attended by Mr. Saïd Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, UNOWA. Further briefings were provided by Ms. Angela Bargellini, Electoral/Political Desk Officer in DPA/Electoral Assistance Division, who reported on the Electoral Needs Assessment Mission conducted in Guinea from 10 to 18 July and on recent developments, and Mr. Ely Dieng, Senior Policy Advisor, Security Sector Reform Unit, Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, on his recent mission to Guinea and Dakar on the SSR process. The Chair also provided a briefing on her recent meeting with the Co-Presidents of the interim Commission for National Reconciliation, whom she had met with in the margin of the recent high-level event on peacebuilding in Kigali, Rwanda.

In her opening remarks, the Chair referred to the Statement of Mutual Commitments that identifies the “holding without delay of parliamentary and local elections as a key step in restoring trust and completing the transition to democracy”, and stressed the “need for the Government to engage in open dialogue with all political actors on issues related to these

elections”. She recalled the PBC commitment to “work with the Government of Guinea, the African Union, ECOWAS and other key stakeholders, and facilitate the strengthening of dialogue between the Government and all actors, especially political parties, with a view to reaching a consensus on issues relating to the parliamentary and local elections, including the electoral calendar”.

She noted that recent developments in this area were encouraging, referring to the meeting President Condé had with the leaders of major political parties on 15 November, the first such meeting since the presidential elections in late 2010, as well as to the pardon granted by President Condé to 25 people who had been arrested during the demonstrations of 27 September 2011.

In his briefing, SRSJ Djinnit highlighted the most recent developments relevant to peacebuilding, the most significant being the meeting the President held with the leaders of the major political parties, including the opposition.

The SRSJ reported that during the November 15 meeting, the President and the leaders of major political parties, including Cellou Dalein Diallo and Sidya Touré, had had an in-depth discussion on the organisation of the legislative elections. During that meeting, which lasted 3 hours and was seen by all key stakeholders as a constructive first step towards the restoration of dialogue and the holding of the elections, the President announced the setting-up of a « Committee for dialogue ». The President also committed to the following actions: CENI would engage dialogue with political parties on electoral issues, including the date of the legislative election; attempt to reconcile the voters’ list managed by SAGEM for the Presidential election in 2010 with the new system implemented by Way Mark; use his constitutional prerogatives to free some of the demonstrators arrested on 27-28 September.

SRSJ Djinnit qualified the meeting as an important landmark, and stressed the need for maintaining the engagement between the parties, nurturing the progress and the momentum generated, and encouraging the parties to move forward.

Briefing on elections

Ms. Angela Bargellini, Electoral/Political Desk Officer in DPA/Electoral Assistance Division, provided a briefing on the Electoral Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) conducted in Guinea in July 2011. A summary

of the NAM report is attached to this Chair's summary.

The NAM met President Condé, Prime Minister Fofana and other Government officials.

Ms. Bargellini referred to recent developments as an important step towards a consensus on pending electoral matters. She stressed that i) the UN had a key role in the upcoming elections, ii) inclusive dialogue was crucial iii) political and financial support by the PBC would be important to the success of the elections.

Following the briefing, representatives of the EU, Nigeria, Spain and Indonesia took the floor. They enquired about the chronogram of activities with regards to the preparation of elections, the budget of the elections, and any foreseen gap in the budget. They also wanted to know how the existing voters list will be reconciled with the new system. One representative requested more information electoral observation. There was also a desire to know if there was a genuine interest of the opposition for a successful election and a lasting peace, as well as a suggestion to take advantage of the lessons learned and good practices from recent elections in Africa and elsewhere. The representative of EU announced an amount of 5 million euro to support the organisation of the elections, adding that EU cooperation would follow a gradual approach, with the disbursement of funds earmarked for Guinea under the European Development Fund expected to take place once the calendar of the elections has been finalised.

The Representative of Guinea reaffirmed the determination of the Government and the opposition to complete the electoral process, referring to recent developments already mentioned by SRSG Djinnit and the Chair (the meeting of 15 November with the opposition, the setting up of a committee to work on pending electoral issues, and the amnesty granted to members of the opposition, arrested following the 27-28 September demonstrations) as positive steps towards the elections. He furthermore welcomed the deployment of an UN Electoral Advisor to Guinea.

Briefing on the Security Sector Reform, SSR

Mr. Ely Dieng, Senior Ely Dieng, Senior Policy Advisor, Security Sector Reform Unit, Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, provided a briefing on his recent mission to Guinea and Dakar on the SSR process.

His mission report is attached to this Chair's summary.

The mission had to face a number of important challenges and urgent tasks: i) finalising the budget of the actions; ii) completing the biometric census of the armed forces in December; iii) revising the legal framework of the SSR components; iv) setting up a human resources management system within the Defence Forces; v) processing the retirement of some 4300 soldiers (all of whom have more than 35 years of active service); vi) providing the Government with a high-level political SSR support as requested by President Condé, to complement the technical support provided through UNDP.

The estimated budget required for the retirement of 4.300 soldiers is 5.3 million USD, out of which the Government of Guinea will contribute 1.1 million and the PBF, together with other partners, will cover the remaining 4.2 million.

Representatives of Pakistan, Guinea, France, EU, Japan, Sierra Leone, Spain and Ukraine took the floor following the presentation by Mr. Dieng.

They welcomed the determination of the Guinean authorities to move forward with the SSR process, and acknowledged the steps completed so far. Most said they believe that SSR is key to the other peacebuilding issues. Overall, they expressed political support for the retirement project, while enquiring about further details. One representative wondered about potential risks of destabilisation linked to the census and the process of retiring some 4.300 security forces, suggesting that one should look at lessons learned from the retirement fund project in Guinea-Bissau.

Some referred to their on-going support and bilateral cooperation in the SSR area; they suggested other important SSR components to keep in mind, such as maritime security, the restructuring and training of the police and improving the civilian-military relationship.

The Permanent Representative of Guinea confirmed that the retirement of 4.300 soldiers was important for his Government. He acknowledged that it involved a certain political risk but stressed that this initiative had to be taken in order to professionalise the army and to reduce its budget. He expressed the hope that UN support to SSR would materialise soon, and voiced his satisfaction with the UN support to SSR being coordinated on the ground. He said that he hoped that the SSR would have made tangible progress by the time of the legislative elections.

Ambassador Touré concluded by confirming that the PBC was in a unique position to undertake advocacy for resource mobilisation in support of the Guinean peacebuilding agenda.

In his response to the points raised by members, Mr Dieng provided additional details on the retirement project: it will be implemented through a phased approach, starting in areas where the biometrical census has already been completed; the retirement criteria apply to those who have been in the army for more than 35 years, meaning those who were recruited between 1959 and 1975. He also confirmed that the lessons of the first phase, together with lessons learned from the retirement process in Guinea Bissau will indeed be used for the second phase, concerning the setting-up of a sustainable pension fund for the armed forces. The EU had signalled support for such a step. If this experience is conclusive, it may be possible to look at the extension of this pension fund model for other parts of the civil service.

Briefing on national reconciliation and other relevant matters

The Chair provided a brief report on her recent meeting with the Co-Presidents of the Interim Commission for National Reconciliation, whom she had met with in the margin of the recent high-level event on peacebuilding in Kigali, as well as on other activities she participated in during the Chairs' Group visit to Kigali and Tunis.

In Kigali, the Chair met with El-Hadj Mamadou Saliou Camara, the Imam of the Faisal Mosque in Conakry, and Mgr. Vincent Coulibaly, Archbishop of Conakry, who represented Guinea at the Kigali conference.

She recalled that the two Co-Presidents had been appointed in mid-August, and that when she visited Conakry early September, they had just begun their work. She reported that they had now developed their concept and had launched the process for consultations on national reconciliation.

The approach developed by the two Co-Presidents builds on a number of principles, including the following: perpetrators and victims of the violence of the last five decades can be found on all sides; faith plays an important role; it is important to draw from the cultural and traditional elements in conducting the national reconciliation process. Hence the integration of the concept of the “arbre à palabre”, where people come together to discuss their experience.

Two guiding documents (in French) have been developed: 1) The Road to

National Reconciliation and 2) Guiding the Process of National Reconciliation. Copies of these two documents were made available for members of the Configuration.

The process is articulated around five steps: 1) Prayer - role of faith; 2) Listening/nation-wide consultations; 3) Reflection and Analysis of results; 4) Recommendations for National Reconciliation; 5) Creating an institution / organ to guide and oversee the implementation of recommendations, the reconciliation process referred to in the Statement of Mutual Commitments.

The consultation process has started with the National Prayer that was organised on 28 September 2011, followed by an opening ceremony held at the Palais du Peuple in Conakry. The two booklets were distributed widely during that event. The time planned for the consultations is estimated at six months and the two Co-Presidents believe that, given the challenges of the consultations, this would be the minimum time required, as they have to work in several languages, with a majority of the population being illiterate, and with the time required to prepare the teams that will conduct the consultations on the local level.

The two religious leaders are working on establishing a framework and recruiting staff to help conduct the national consultations. It is expected that the President of the Republic will appoint the members of the Interim Commission.

The Imam and the Archbishop felt that it is important to safeguard the independence of the Commission; it would thus be preferable that the Commission receives financial support from the international community, rather than depending on the Government for resources. An initial request has been submitted to UNDP in Conakry to ask for support for the training of staff who will conduct national consultations at the regional, prefectural and local levels. The Chair of the Configuration suggested to coordinate the mobilisation of the international assistance to the work of the Interim Commission in view of the proposal submitted to UNDP.

The two Co-Presidents of the Interim Commission have also approached political parties to ensure they are involved in the process of national consultation (they had sent a letter to leaders of the political parties on 20 October, but hadn't received any answers yet by the time the Chair met them in Kigali).

Concluding remarks

In concluding the meeting, the Chair recalled that the first review of the Statement of Mutual Commitments adopted on 23 September as the instrument of engagement between the Government of Guinea and the PBC would come up in March 2012. For this purpose, the Chair suggested to plan a trip of a PBC delegation to Guinea in early 2012, which would be open to interested members of the Configuration.
