

**Informal meeting of the Guinea-Bissau
Configuration of the
Peacebuilding Commission**

Chair's summary

Friday, 10 May 2013

1. On 10 May 2013, the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission held an informal meeting to exchange views on the situation in the country. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. José Ramos-Horta, participated in the meeting.

2. In his briefing, SRSR Ramos-Horta shared with the members of the Configuration the findings of the broad and intense consultations he has conducted since his arrival in Bissau last February. While there has been some progress in the dialogue process among national stakeholders on the transition, he regretted that a new "regime pact" and a transitional roadmap, which would include an electoral calendar with a date for the next legislative and presidential elections, had not yet been agreed upon. However, he was hopeful, indeed confident, that these agreements would be reached in the very near future. He stated that the people of Guinea-Bissau are peaceful and friendly and have never turned to crime or ethnic violence. He underlined, nonetheless, that the continued vicious circle of political instability and assassinations have been a cost too high for the country's people to bear.

3. Against this backdrop, SRSR Ramos-Horta highlighted the two-phases approach for the country proposed by the Secretary-General in his latest report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau (S/2013/262). Phase one would cover the period until the elections and should include the adoption of a new "regime pact" and of a transitional road map; the formation of a more inclusive transitional government; and the organization and holding of credible, free, fair and transparent presidential and legislative elections. Phase two, after the elections and up to the end of the term of the newly elected government, would focus on post-election stability and the strengthening and the "re-building" of the State and social institutions central to democratic

governance. SRSR Ramos-Horta pleaded for the international community, including the PBC, to reengage with Guinea-Bissau in this endeavor, as the country will not be able to do it alone. The resumption of the Commission's work with the country should be based on a revised instrument of engagement (revised Strategic Framework), something that could be at least initiated even before a new government is elected. He concluded by expressing his hope that the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) would be able to provide its share of support to the ongoing peacebuilding efforts.

4. SRSR Ramos-Horta advocated that the people of Guinea-Bissau must absorb a new political culture in which elections do not lead to the division of the country or a winner-takes-all situation. Bearing in mind the enormous challenges that the people of Guinea-Bissau face, no single political group can alone manage the transition out of the deep hole into which Guinea-Bissau has sunk and towards lasting peace and prosperity. In that regard, it will be important for all major political parties to unite into a Government of national unity, following the next elections.

5. He added that, in the post-election phase, a broad coalition would provide power-sharing governmental efforts to rebuild the State that currently exists in name only. In that connection, additional material support will be crucial. The international community will be called upon to do its part. He informed on his intention to actively engage the new authorities and help them rebuild the institutions of the State, including by the co-location of international experts in key Government sectors for a period of up to five years, in order to completely reform and modernize the defense forces, the judicial system and public administration. The defense forces will need to undergo major rethinking on the basis of a sober analysis of the security needs of the country and adjusted to the financial resources available. The new Guinea-Bissau's Army must be more professional, imbued with a democratic culture, smaller and less costly yet more effective.

6. The delegations of Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Mozambique, Luxembourg, Portugal, Japan, European Union, Spain, South Africa, Timor-Leste and the US took the floor. In their statements, they coincided on the importance of the continuity of international engagement with Guinea-Bissau, including that of relevant regional

and international actors. Most participants advocated for the PBC to reengage with Guinea-Bissau as soon as political conditions on the ground allowed for it, and concurred with SRSG Ramos-Horta that a revised instrument of engagement should be timely drafted and adopted to that effect. Many delegations reaffirmed their commitment to the role of the PBC and the importance of its work, and, in this regard, enquired SRSG Ramos-Horta how the Commission could best assist the country at this critical juncture.

7. Many also stressed the importance of and need to continue supporting the UN/AU/EU/CPLP/ECOWAS concerted actions to help national stakeholders find a sustainable solution to the current crisis.

8. In general, participants recognized the positive steps towards reaching an agreement on a new "regime pact", a more inclusive transition and government, and the holding of elections before the end of the year. In that regard, some delegations called for the swift nomination of the president of the National Electoral Commission, and stressed that the main focus of a more inclusive transitional government should be the organization of the polls. Several delegations expressed their readiness to provide financial and technical support to the electoral process, should the authorities express a strong commitment to move ahead. A number of delegations stressed that humanitarian assistance as well as other programs in direct support of the population and civil society should continue.

9. Many participants regretted the end of the UNODC presence in Guinea-Bissau, which does not reflect the urgency and importance of combating drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime in the country. It was noted, in this regard, that the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) has already indicated to SRSG Ramos-Horta its willingness to seek ways to provide some catalytic PBF funding to support the resumption of UNODC's work in Guinea-Bissau. It was also noted that this should be done to complement ongoing initiatives such as the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI).

10. Reacting to the concerns raised, SRSG Ramos-Horta hoped that the resumption of UNODC work in Bissau could be

addressed, at least in part and in an initial phase, with the aid of the PBF. He emphasized the need to ensure that UNODC's presence in Guinea-Bissau be enhanced and extend beyond Bissau, to include the four proposed UNIOGBIS regional offices, which could operate as monitoring antennas. According to him, the recent actions by the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) have had an important political and psychological impact in Guinea-Bissau. Bissau-Guineans started to realize that crime does not pay. In this context, initial and discreet dialogue has been promoted to convince people to "gracefully disengage" with illegal activities. Mr. Ramos-Horta suggested that the PBC should continue providing support to peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. He noted that not much can be done without the needed resources from international partners. The reforms of the security and justice sectors will remain priorities, especially the "modernization" of the Armed Forces and of the security forces.

11. As this was the last meeting chaired by H.E. Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, the delegations that spoke during the meeting paid tribute to her steadfast commitment and dedication to the cause of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau and the outstanding leadership she demonstrated in the way she conducted the work of the Configuration over the past five and a half years. The representative of the PBSO echoed the tributes by member states and also thanked the Chair for her support to the Office. He also explained that the Guinea-Bissau Configuration had worked under difficult circumstances since its establishment in December 2007.

12. The Chair thanked SRSG Ramos-Horta for his insightful briefing. She commended him for his work on the ground, which in a few months has already been able to generate a more positive climate in Guinea-Bissau whilst facilitating a better understanding among international partners on how to help the country restore the constitutional order. The Chair stated that she had noted for the first time since the April 2012 coup d'état certain optimism in the interventions of the members of the Configuration. The Chair affirmed that the discussions indicated a way forward to the Configuration in the coming months: i) continue to follow closely the situation in Guinea-Bissau and support, in close coordination with SRSG Ramos-Horta, the efforts to find a sustainable solution to the current

crisis; ii) once key concrete steps are taken on the ground to restore the constitutional order, such as the formation of a more inclusive transitional government and the adoption of a new "regime pact" and of a road map providing for elections by the end of this year, resume the engagement with Guinea-Bissau based on a revised and updated Strategic Framework, which would take into account eventual new peacebuilding priorities in the country; iii) help mobilize the needed resources to enable an enhanced presence of UNODC in Guinea-Bissau; iv) once the transition is overcome, cooperate with the efforts to rebuild the Bissau-Guinean State, including as regards capacity-building.

13. In closing, the Chair expressed her appreciation to the members of the Configuration for the fruitful cooperation over the past five and a half years to promote peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. She said that Brazil will continue to make efforts for the stability, peace and development of Guinea-Bissau and that her successor, Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, will be ready to ensure the continuation of Brazil's Chairpersonship of the Configuration.

14. The meeting was adjourned.