

REFERENCE:

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal meeting of the Guinea-Bissau Country Specific Configuration
10 March 2014

Chair's Summary

Background

- On 10 March 2014, the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Country Specific Configuration, H.E. Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, held an informal meeting to share with the Configuration the findings of his recent mission to Guinea-Bissau from 20 to 24 January. He also shared his views on the way forward for the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in the post-election period. Mr. José Manuel Ramos-Horta, UN Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), briefed the Configuration on latest developments in Guinea-Bissau. From the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), Mr. Kenneth Gluck, Director and Deputy Head, took part.

Recent developments in Guinea-Bissau - Briefing by SRSG Ramos-Horta

- SRSG Ramos-Horta called attention to the holding of the National Congress of *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné-Bissau e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC), from 2 to 11 February, and the election of Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, former Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), as its President, with over 60% of votes. This was followed by PAIGC's selection of a candidate for the Presidential Election, Mr. José Mário Vaz, a former Minister of Finance who was closely involved in the HIPIC process through which Guinea-Bissau was forgiven US\$1 billion in foreign debt at the end of 2010. As of 5 March, there were 21 presidential candidates inscribed. The SRSG pointed out that the high number of presidential candidates was a worrisome sign of political fragmentation and a potential source of instability. He added that on 3 March, the Transition President expressly announced that he would not be in the race for office thus respecting the understanding that had been reached at the beginning of his selection for leadership during the transition. The electoral process to restore constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau was entering an irreversible gear for elections on 13 April.
- The SRSG noted that, during the Security Council meeting, he had been asked whether the armed forces would accept the victory of a party or candidate that was not to their liking. The SRSG described three fundamental differences compared to 2012:

1. The contributions of partners such as Nigeria to the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau since the coup; the understanding that ECOWAS will continue to join hands with other partners to ensure a stable situation in Guinea-Bissau;
 2. The presence of ECOMIB and the simultaneous commencement by ECOWAS of the process of the modernization of the defense and security forces in Guinea-Bissau with the availability of the first tranche of US\$23million out of the US\$63million that ECOWAS had promised in support of the reforms including pension fund;
 3. The voter registration process, which for the first time resulted in a voter data base that prevents electoral fraud.
- The SRSG thanked Timor-Leste, Nigeria, and ECOWAS for their continued support and also to Guinea-Bissau for the achievement of a credible registration of 95% of estimated voters. The SRSG noted that the beginning of the restoration of constitutional order, of its own dynamics, could marginalize potentials for instability.
 - The SRSG underlined that elections were only a part of the process towards building peace. The challenge for Bissau-Guinean leaders and international partners would be to address the challenges of state rebuilding. The newly-elected leaders of Guinea-Bissau would need to present commitment and determination to pursue policies and strategies necessary to rescue their country from the status of a failed state. The important role of the international community, on the other hand, was also highlighted.
 - The SRSG noted that in the previous week, the Prime Minister had held a meeting with the main political parties during which the possibility of a regime pact for the next four to eight years had been raised. The terms of this regime pact that aims at providing the basis for the programme of the future elected government were prepared by the National Commission for Planning and Strategic Coordination. This Commission was set up by the transitional Government and received core support from the Peacebuilding Fund.
 - The SRSG underlined that the newly elected Government would face enormous challenges, and it was paramount that international partners stand ready to resume engagement with the country immediately following its installation. Guinea-Bissau had squandered its goodwill over the decades of instability and had also been a victim of a bad press that is fixated on the military and hardly pays attention to the plight of tens of thousands of people who could benefit from assistance. This situation, for many Bissau-Guineans, was not helped by corruption issues.
 - In this connection, the SRSG outlined a UNIOGBIS's proposal for a Governance Efficacy Amelioration Programme (GEAP), a document that includes a number of recommendations to achieve two purposes: 1) to assure partners who are considering budget support and foreign direct investment that the post-election economic environment will not be “business as usual”, and 2) to ensure the sharing with Guinea-Bissau of best practices in governance from around the world. The GEAP proposes that 16 internationally credible professionals, who could include credible and tested Bissau-Guineans, are co-located for five years as advisers with co-executive powers in the

critical structures of decision-making within the public service of Guinea-Bissau at a cost of approximately US\$4million per year.

- The National Commission for Planning and Strategic Coordination is, among other responsibilities, working with multilateral partners of Guinea-Bissau towards the preparation for a pledging conference most likely in the fall of 2014. The SRSG expressed his hope that the PBC Country Specific Configuration for Guinea-Bissau would stand side-by-side with the country to ensure that the success of the pledging conference.

Chair's mission to Guinea-Bissau

- The Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration shared with the Configuration the following main findings from his mission to the country from 20 to 24 January 2014, accompanied by the Assistant Secretary-General of PBSO, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins.

The political situation

- The Chair highlighted that all interlocutors recognized the importance of holding elections and adhering to the registration process. The Chair noted the recent visit to Sierra Leone by the UN Secretary-General to mark the closing of the UNIPSIL, and indicated that the constructive regional context presented an important opportunity and an incentive for renewed support to Guinea Bissau. The Chair also highlighted the invaluable contributions made by Timor-Leste, Nigeria and other partners in the region for the elections. The registration process enabled the exercise of civil and political rights and could also serve planning and policy-making purposes.
- The Chair welcomed the political developments highlighted by the SRSG, including the dialogue between the two main parties on a governing pact and code of conduct for the elections, which were important progress since his mission to the country.
- On the security situation, he underscored the importance to take into account the social, historical and political dimensions of civil-military relations in Guinea-Bissau. Meaningful and effective reforms would have to embrace a wide range of institutions and actors and support to different social segments, so that no social group would be perceived as being relegated to second class citizenship. There was a clear connection between essential reforms and the revitalization of the economy. The priority of the modernization of the armed forces constituted a national consensus, even among the military leadership. The Chair indicated that he had discussed the matter with the head of ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau.
- Support for difficult reforms must be ready from day one, he stressed. An elected government would have to be able to implement its decisions and international engagement must be forthcoming. Ensuring respect for election results is fundamental to the PBC's collective efforts.

The Chair, therefore, proposed issuing a statement before the elections supporting the PBC's common message in this regard.

Economic issues

- The Chair observed that the economic collapse has weakened the state's ability to ensure its minimal functions, including the payment of salaries for its civil servants affecting the most vulnerable segments of the population. On the other hand, according to many interlocutors, the withdrawal of international assistance did not particularly affect either the perpetrators of the coup or the political and military elites who stood behind it. The Chair pointed out the need to reassess the modalities of action by the international community when faced with such situations and possible ways through the UN to avoid such consequences.
- Food insecurity could be seen as a paradox for a country with abundant water, fertile lands and agricultural know-how, the Chair stressed. According to the WFP representation in Bissau, the organization should not need to be in the country. One of the main reasons behind food insecurity lies in the country's heavy dependency on the production and export of a single product, cashew nut. Alternatives to diversify the economy must therefore be developed. The Chair considered the scale of problems and needs in Guinea Bissau to be relatively small compared to challenges faced in other post-conflict situations. The Chair was also impressed with the human resources in the country which can be critical for development. He also referred to his meetings with women organizations being supported by PBF projects for women's economic empowerment, and highlighted their ability to bring together different ethnic groups and religious denominations and work for common agendas that are strategic to peacebuilding efforts.

Strategy for PBC re-engagement

- The Chair highlighted some points that would help strategize the PBC's collective engagement with legitimate authorities in the future.
 - Political coordination, in order to foster unity of vision and complementary support from of international partners. The partners in the region have a decisive role to play in promoting stability.
 - The vision of SRSG Ramos-Horta of intensive international support for state rebuilding following the elections and the GEAP will be at the core of PBC's efforts following the elections.
 - Three achievable core medium-term strategic objectives in institutional, social and economic, and security areas were presented by the Chair at the Security Council meeting on 26 February as a possible to guide for the PBC's engagement:

1. **Institutional area:** complete a full democratic electoral cycle with a constitutional transfer of power to newly elected officials, supported by technical cooperation and public administration aligned with the SRSG's proposals, and support to the political dialogue, including through social communication. Sustained engagement by the CPLP is important in this regard.
 2. **Economic and social areas:** make significant strides in social and economic indicators with a focus on food security and rural development. Responsible economic diversification remains key. The economic empowerment of women, who represent over 80% of the work force in cashew nuts harvesting, for example, is essential.
 3. **Security area:** Provide a platform for coordinating and strategizing international support for modernization of the security sector. Building on the important role played by ECOWAS in this regard, the Configuration can bring key actors together, deepening understanding of the political and social dynamics and assess the need for a comprehensive mechanism of re-integration of the military, civil-military dialogue, and reconciliation.
- Member States expressed their appreciation for the Chair's mission to Guinea-Bissau. They also thanked SRSG Ramos-Horta and his team for their continued efforts and commitment to ensure the success of the elections. There was support for the Chair's proposal to release a statement before the elections on 13 April, as well as for the Chair's three achievable core medium-term strategic objectives of the PBC's engagement.
 - For many Member States, recent developments allowed for "cautious optimism," but the need to monitor closely the electoral and post-electoral dynamics was stressed. PBC's role in the post-election period was highlighted, especially in terms of resource mobilization and long-term stabilization. The importance of international support to state rebuilding and the role of PBC in coordinating efforts of international and regional partners, in particular the AU, CPLP, ECOWAS, EU, and the UN, was also mentioned.
 - The Director and Deputy Head PBSO expressed PBSO's support to the SRSG for his work to ensure successful elections and for the period after elections. PBSO was ready to re-commit to the funding that had been suspended after the coup once constitutional order has been restored. It was encouraging to see PBC's ability to develop an strategic framework through which institution-building, security and developmental initiatives could be launched. Efforts by the Chair to raise regional and sub-regional support were a fulfilment of the PBC's role to bring together initiatives and support for these countries in a coherent and coordinated manner. PBSO would also support the new government authorities in carrying out their new initiatives.
 - SRSG Ramos-Horta reacted to comments by Member States. On the High-level National Commission for Planning and Strategic Coordination, he noted that the Commission was established following the successful experiences of other countries, to strengthen dialogue with

political leaders, traditional leaders and other stakeholders. The continuation of the work and mandate of the Commission beyond the transitional period would need to be decided upon by the incoming elected government authorities.

- On the pledging conference, the SRSG noted that it was likely to take place in September 2014, and the outcome of the conference would not be realised until 2015. He also pointed to the fact that negotiations on the foundations of the new government would take place until June, and there might be a gap between June to September. The timing of the response by the international community was therefore important.
