

**Report of the Chairpersonship of
Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti as
Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the
Peacebuilding Commission**

(December 2007 - May 2013)

The Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established on 19 December 2007.

**The initial phase of engagement with Guinea-Bissau:
2007-2008**

The initial phase of the activities of the Configuration consisted of a comprehensive evaluation of the situation with a view to identifying the peacebuilding priorities and constraints, as well as resources and requirement through direct coordination and interaction with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and other national stakeholders. With this purpose, I visited the country in January, April and September of 2008. In April, I was accompanied by a delegation of the Configuration, composed by the PRs of Guinea-Bissau, Luxembourg, Portugal, Czech Republic, as well as the DPR of Gambia and representatives of Angola, Burkina Faso, Chile, Japan, Nigeria and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). During my visits, I met with Government authorities, representatives of political parties, civil society, the diplomatic corps and the private sector, as well as with religious and community leaders and the media.

Following consultations with the Guinea-Bissau Configuration, the Secretary-General announced the country's eligibility for the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). In April 2008, the PBF allocated the first tranche of resources, totaling US\$ 6 million, to finance quick impact projects for peacebuilding initiatives in Guinea-Bissau.

In support of the work carried out by the Configuration, the PBSO elaborated, in April 2008, a detailed mapping of the available financial resources and constraints for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. Important contributions to the document were made by the then UNOGBIS and UN agencies in that country, the European Union, the OECD, the African Development Bank, ECOWAS and by Brazil, Spain, France, Italy and Portugal. Moreover, in May and June 2008, the Configuration held thematic

discussions and prepared reference documents about the following high-priority issues for stability, peacebuilding and development in Guinea-Bissau: the legislative elections in November 2008, reform of public administration and measures to reactivate the economy, the strengthening of the justice system, drug trafficking, social issues, rule of law, security sector reform, and the energy sector.

The "Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau" was adopted by the PBC on 1 October 2008, after wide and intense consultations with authorities and civil society representatives of Guinea-Bissau, with the members of the Configuration and with regional and international organizations. The Strategic Framework became the guiding document for the engagement of the Configuration with the country and for our work in New York. Among other issues, the Strategic Framework defined the principles for cooperation with Guinea-Bissau, outlined objectives, priorities, challenges and risks for peacebuilding, established mutual commitments between the Government of Guinea-Bissau, the PBC and international partners, and listed actions by other important actors in civil society, such as religious and community leaders, women and representatives of the private sector.

The Strategic Framework took an integrated approach by focusing on peace and security as well as economic and social development issues.

The Guinea-Bissau Configuration played an important role in the organization and holding of legislative elections in November 2008. With the assistance of the Configuration, it was possible to close the financial gap for the holding of the elections and galvanize technical and financial support for key elements of the electoral process, such as voter registration, civic educational campaigns and staff training. The elections took place on the scheduled date, November 16. The international community welcomed the efficient organization, orderliness and transparency of the process and the high turnout of the polls.

Developments in the second year of engagement: 2009

The atmosphere in the country was one of relative stability and some economic progress, but the security and

political situation was still volatile. The situation deteriorated quickly when, on 1 March 2009, General Tagme Na Waie, Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces was brutally killed by a bomb attack against the barracks where he was stationed. A few hours later, armed men invaded the presidential residence and assassinated President Nino Vieira. Through a declaration issued on 4 March 2009, the Configuration condemned the assassinations and expressed profound concern regarding those tragic events. The Configuration also condemned, through a Declaration dated on 16 June 2009, the assassination of presidential candidates Baciro Dabó, the former Minister of Defense Helder Proença and two of his bodyguards. In the midst of this institutional crisis, the President of the Popular National Assembly, Raimundo Pereira, was nominated interim President according to the Constitution, and José Zamora Induta, Head of the Navy, was nominated as Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces. New elections took place in July, resulting in the inauguration of President Malam Bacai Sanhá in September 2009. The election was supported by the Configuration. I was present at the inauguration of President Sanhá and visited Guinea-Bissau in December of that year.

Developments in 2010

In January 2010, Ambassador Regina Maria Cordeiro Dunlop, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN, headed a delegation of the Configuration to Guinea-Bissau. The objective of those three visits was to reiterate the support of the Configuration to the Government of Guinea-Bissau, assess, alongside national stakeholders, the progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Framework, confirm the short-term priorities according to the conclusions and recommendations outlined in the review of the Strategic Framework, and exchange views regarding possible target areas for a second allocation of PBF funds for the country.

The situation seemed to improve when, on 1 April 2010, the military, led by the Deputy-Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces, Antonio Indjai, imprisoned Zamora Induta and the Chief of the Intelligence Service, Samba Djaló (both released in December 2010). They temporarily held Prime-Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior and "released" Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, who had taken refuge in UNIOGBIS since his clandestine return to Guinea-Bissau, after having been

exiled in Gambia and against whom there were serious accusations of involvement in drug trafficking and of having attempted a coup d'état against the Government. Following this incident, Antonio Indjai was appointed Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces by President Malam Bacai Sanhá, and Bubo Na Tchuto was nominated as second in line to the military command of the country, assuming control of the Navy.

The events that unraveled on 1 April 2010 marred the widespread optimism regarding the situation in Guinea-Bissau. In addition to the violation of the constitutional order, symbolized by the forced removal and substitution of Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces and the brief detention of the Prime Minister, the Government of Guinea-Bissau felt strongly threatened by a demonstration of force by the military. The national and international reactions were very strong. The Configuration reacted by not only condemning what had occurred, but also pressuring the civilian and military authorities of Guinea-Bissau to maintain peace and constitutional order. I conveyed these concerns to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guinea-Bissau in a letter dated 6 May 2010, to which he replied on 21 May 2010. The prolonged detention of the Rear-Admiral Zamora Induta, overthrown by force from the command of the Armed Forces, further stained the country's image. Important partners, such as the European Union, suspended aid to Guinea-Bissau, especially the resources allocated to the security sector reform (SSR). As a result of the strong pressure by the international community and important sectors of the Guinea-Bissau's society, Rear-Admiral Zamora Induta was released in December 2010.

Throughout 2010, dialogue between President Malam Bacai Sanhá and Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior was intensified and strengthened. The strong influence on the country's political matters notwithstanding, the military, including General Antonio Indjai, began to adopt a more discrete posture. The economic reality of the country had considerably improved. Progress in macroeconomic management, the reforms in public administration and finance, and the increase in cashew-nuts exports not only contributed to the economic growth of Guinea-Bissau, but also reduced dependency on external aid to meet Government expenses. The Configuration provided political support for the improvement of the country's economic management and encouraged international financial institutions (IFIs) to

support the Government of Guinea-Bissau. In November 2010, the Configuration held a meeting with the participation of representatives of the IMF and the World Bank, to discuss aspects related to development assistance to Guinea-Bissau. Following that meeting of the Configuration, I wrote a letter dated 1st December, 2010 to all members of the Configuration appealing to them to intercede with their Executive Directors at the IMF, so that they would favorably consider and approve debt relief for Guinea-Bissau at the Board's meeting which was scheduled for 13 December. Progress made in the economy enabled the country to reach the completion point of the IMF and World Bank's HIPC Initiative in December 2010 resulting in the relief of over 90% of Guinea-Bissau's debt to international creditors.

Developments in 2011

A new moment of optimism and hope seemed to emerge in 2011. Guinea-Bissau was facing a period of relative political stability and economic prosperity. In recognition of its national efforts for good governance, international partners began to have more confidence in the country and seek ways of strengthening their engagement with the Government. In July 2011, the Configuration supported the approval of the second Peacebuilding Priority Plan, elaborated by the Joint Steering Committee. The Secretary-General authorized a second disbursement of resources by the PBF, totaling US\$ 16.8 million. The second tranche would be directed towards security sector reform, including the establishment of a pensions fund for the military, the strengthening of civilian rule and rule of law, the promotion of political dialogue and national reconciliation and the creation of job opportunities for the youth, especially directed at vulnerable groups. Approximately 3 million dollars of tranche II would be allocated to the pensions fund for the military, which never materialized due to the events that followed the death of President Sanhá in January 2012.

In early September 2011, I once again visited Guinea-Bissau as Chair of the Configuration. I was received by Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior at a meeting with the participation of the Ministers of the Presidency; Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities; National Defense; Justice; and Economy, Planning and Regional Integration. Furthermore, I held separate

meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities, Adelino Mano Queta, and the Minister for the Economy, Planning and Regional Integration, Helena Embaló, with civil society representatives - especially youth, women groups and religious leaders - and with members of the diplomatic corps and heads of United Nations agencies in Guinea-Bissau. At the end of my visit to the country, I gave a press conference organized by UNIOGBIS.

In my conversations while in Guinea-Bissau, I tried to convey my impression that stability was enabling the country to make important progress, which was made evident by recent infrastructure work (paving of roads, public lighting, new buildings). Positive developments could also be seen in the economy, which had become more dynamic, with improvements in macroeconomic and fiscal management, the reach of the completion point of the IMF/WB HIPC Initiative, a record production of cashew nuts and relatively high growth rates. I emphasized that defense and security sector reform was very important and that the Configuration was willing to help in its implementation, especially in the immediate operationalization of the pension fund. I also stressed the important role of civil society in promoting political dialogue and national reconciliation and stated that the people and the Government of Guinea-Bissau bore the main responsibility for the success of the reforms and for the progress that was happening in the country. I underlined that Guinea-Bissau had all the conditions, including natural resources, to develop and prosper economically, a process that needed to be conducted and led by Bissau-Guineans themselves, with the support of international partners.

The Prime Minister thanked the Configuration for the support given to Guinea-Bissau, which, among other things, contributed to the positive results achieved in the consultations with the European Union, under article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, in July 2011, which aimed at resuming cooperation. He asked for support to leverage the implementation of the pension fund. He announced that the Government of Guinea-Bissau would immediately make available US\$ 200 thousand and, by the end of 2011, another US\$ 300 thousand for the fund (which were indeed delivered). Given the urgency of the situation, I suggested the implementation of a pilot project that could include, initially and with well-established criteria, the

retirement of a certain number of members of the military and of the security forces. The operationalization of the fund would continue in phases until it reached the totality of people eligible for retirement, including volunteers. I added that such a line of action could contribute to the immediate implementation of the fund, as it would facilitate financial disbursements from international donors, which could be made in installments.

As soon as I returned from Bissau, I convened a meeting of the Configuration with the objective of sharing my impressions of the visit and discussing the way forward with the members. I reported having seen signs of progress in Guinea-Bissau, both concerning stability and economic growth. I added that the Government of Guinea-Bissau was making considerable efforts to implement the key peacebuilding priorities. The Configuration prepared a "list of elements for the preparation of the high-level meeting on the pension fund for the Armed Forces and security forces", to be held in New York, as requested by the Government of Guinea-Bissau. At the following Configuration meeting, on November 4, the Minister for the Economy, Planning and Regional Integration, Maria Helena Nosolini Embaló, made a presentation about security sector reform (SSR), concerning, in particular, the implementation of the pension fund for the Armed Forces and security forces of Guinea-Bissau. Minister Embaló stated that the Bissau-Guinean authorities were taking the necessary steps to make the fund operational as soon as possible - they had already approved the necessary laws and regulations and the Government was seeking to raise awareness among international partners.

Developments in 2012

The situation seemed to be heading in the right direction. However, the death of President Malam Bacai Sanhá on 9 January 2012, profoundly altered Guinea-Bissau's political environment. The leaders of the country turned their attention and activities almost exclusively to the presidential elections, which had to be anticipated.

After intense consultations between the interim President, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and political parties, including main opposition forces, the date of 18 March 2012 was consensually established for the

holding of the presidential elections. During a meeting of the Configuration on 6 February, I underlined that the political situation in the country remained fragile and that it was fundamental for the Configuration to intensify its efforts in support of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. I urged the Configuration to act on two simultaneous fronts: the continuation of efforts towards the launching of the pension fund for the Armed Forces and security forces, and the support for the organization and holding of the presidential elections on 18 March. I wrote a letter dated 14 February 2012 to the members of the Configuration seeking support for the elections through financial resources and/or electoral material. My plea was positively and generously answered. The resources made available to Guinea-Bissau by international partners not only closed the financial gap for the holding of the first round of the presidential elections, but also generated a surplus that could have funded the second round, originally scheduled for late April but thwarted by the military coup on 12 April.

Through a Statement issued on 13 April 2012, the Configuration condemned in the strongest terms the forcible seizure of power from the legitimate Government of Guinea-Bissau that took place on 12 April 2012. The Configuration also condemned the arbitrary detentions, armed attacks and intimidation, and demanded the full protection of human rights and fundamental freedom of the people of Guinea-Bissau. The Configuration called on the international community, including regional and sub-regional organizations, to assist national stakeholders in preserving the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau.

The coup was particularly regrettable because it happened at a moment of relative stability and prosperity in Guinea-Bissau, when important progress was being made in multiple areas like institutional strengthening, economic recovery and financial management. The return to constitutional order became crucial for the continuation of such positive developments and for the international community to remain engaged with Guinea-Bissau. Since the coup, I have tried, in my capacity as Chair of the Configuration, to bring together the main partners of Guinea-Bissau, especially the members of ECOWAS and the CPLP, with a view to harmonizing positions for the implementation of a common strategy that could support Bissau-Guineans in their attempt to reach a consensual and

sustainable solution to the crisis. In addition to holding meetings of the Configuration, I informally consulted with the Ambassadors of Guinea-Bissau's main partners in New York, the Secretary-General and the representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as the former and the current Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau, Joseph Mutaboba and José Ramos-Horta, respectively.

Since the 12 April 2012 coup d'état, the work of the Configuration has suffered from the lack of legitimate and nationally and internationally recognized interlocutors in Guinea-Bissau. The restoration of constitutional order has thus become fundamental for the reengagement of the international community with the country. In the short run, the main challenge will be to encourage developments on the ground that can lead to an inclusive transitional arrangement and to the holding without delay of credible, free, fair and transparent presidential and legislative elections. The Popular National Assembly (the only body that continues to have certain national and international legitimacy and credibility) has a decisive role to play in the implementation of this process.

2013 brings some hope in spite of continuing uncertainty

At a meeting of the Configuration on 1 March 2013, the Executive Director of UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Yury Fedotov, noted that Guinea-Bissau has witnessed an increase in drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime, particularly in the aftermath of the April 2012 coup d'état. He also stated that, as many donors have frozen their financial support to the country after the coup, UNODC would have to discontinue even its minimal presence (one specialized consultant) in Bissau from April 2013. Following the meeting, I addressed a letter dated 1 March 2013 to the members of the configuration asking for financial support for UNODC activities in Guinea-Bissau, but due to the lack of funds, UNODC has had to end its presence in Bissau in April 2013.

The recent arrest of several Guinea-Bissau nationals, including the former Navy Chief of Staff, Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, on allegations of involvement in drug trafficking, and the indictment by US authorities of the

Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Guinea-Bissau, General Antonio Indjai, for, among other charges, conspiring to import narcotics into the United States, are clear indications of the need for the international community to maintain a permanent capacity on the ground to monitor the situation and to provide support to national authorities in charge of fighting drug trafficking.

The arrival of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau and head of UNIOGBIS, Mr. José Ramos-Horta, to Bissau in February 2013 has brought about important momentum to the joint efforts of the international community in the search for a solution to the current crisis and to medium and long-term challenges in the country. As SRSG Ramos-Horta has argued, it is important for the United Nations, and for sub-regional, regional, and international partners to work together to support a responsible, legitimate, and efficient State in Guinea-Bissau, one that operates according to the rule of law and is capable of providing security, basic services, and economic opportunities to the population.

On 10 May 2013, the Configuration held an informal meeting to exchange views on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. SRSG Ramos-Horta participated in the meeting. He outlined his approach to tackling the challenges of Guinea-Bissau and his expectations of both the PBC and the PBF. He highlighted the two-phase approach for the country proposed by the Secretary-General in his latest report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau (S/2013/262). The first phase, which would end once presidential and legislative elections are held, should aim at restoring constitutional order and creating a political environment based on trust and non-interference in the electoral process. The second phase should prioritize post-election stability, the strengthening of the State and of the social institutions that are central to democratic governance - particularly in the areas of security, justice and defense - and the functioning of the State's central and local structures.

The discussions held on 10 May 2013 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 2013, 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.

A country endowed with fertile lands, abundant rain, mineral resources and talented people, Guinea-Bissau is nevertheless among the planet's poorest. The active engagement of the international community with Guinea-Bissau will continue to be crucial, mainly through efforts to bring reconciliation and peace but also through investments aimed at revitalizing the economy, in sectors such as agriculture, mining, and fishing. The economic revitalization of Guinea-Bissau and the consequent creation of opportunities, especially for the youth, are essential for the efforts towards the implementation of security sector reform and for the fight against drug trafficking. Guinea-Bissau would greatly benefit from economic diversification, through the expansion of the agricultural and mining sectors and of the fishing industry, as well as from an improvement in the conditions of rural life through, for example, public policies aimed at education.

As Chair of the Configuration, I have believed in the need for an integrated approach for the efforts of the Configuration, encompassing not only political and security components, but also economic and social dimensions. I have also tried to encourage the PBF to apply this integrated vision to the financing of projects in Guinea-Bissau. Another of my continued concerns was to balance medium and long-term measures with immediate actions. The Bissau-Guinean State, whose institutions are still very fragile, has encountered huge difficulties to maintain stability, develop the economy and provide basic services to the population. The positive momentum which Guinea-Bissau was experiencing until April 2012, with important progress in the areas of public administration

and macroeconomic management, resulted in large part from the relative political stability of the previous years, if seen by the standards of the markedly restless history of the country. I do not believe that ethnic issues affect the situation in Guinea-Bissau, since there is a harmonious coexistence between its diverse ethnicities. Nonetheless, some groups, such as the "balantas", feel excluded from the economic life of the country and see the Armed Forces as the only path to social inclusion and access to the State. It is necessary to end the frequent interference of the military in the political life of the country and effectively ensure civilian control of defense and security institutions in Guinea-Bissau. To face such a challenge, it is important to keep in mind, among other issues, that the Bissau-Guinean military, especially the veterans who fought for independence, still see themselves as the upholders of the national sentiment and sovereignty. My tenure as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration ended with hope about the prospects for that country and the expectation that Bissau-Guineans will be able to overcome their divisions and work together in unity with support of the international community, including the PBC.

Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti

Ambassador

**Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the
Peacebuilding Commission**

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