

The Peacebuilding Commission
Ambassadorial-Level Meeting on Guinea-Bissau

13 March 2023

Chair's summary

1. On 13 March, the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Ronaldo Costa Filho, convened an Ambassadorial-Level meeting on Guinea-Bissau to debrief the Commission on his visit to Guinea-Bissau from 14 to 16 February. The Configuration Chair was accompanied by the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) Head of Mission and Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Peacebuilding Support, and the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations during the visit.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair informed about the exchanges with various stakeholders during the visit to Guinea-Bissau, emphasizing national ownership as guiding principle of the Commission's engagement. He shared that the national interlocuters welcomed the ongoing accompaniment with the country through the PBC and the PBF. The Chair underscored the importance of Guinea-Bissau's stability in light of increasing regional instability. He recognized the government's efforts to finance 70 percent of the electoral budget for the 4 June legislative elections and stressed the need for international assistance to cover the remaining costs. The Chair identified a willingness among stakeholders to participate in the elections despite some misgivings of the opposition parties that might lead those to question the results. In that vein, he stressed the need for inclusive political dialogue, including with civil society. The Chair informed of socio-economic challenges, including difficulties in the provision and access to basic services, and the lack of capacity to effectively combat drug trafficking, calling for strengthened international support. He underscored the need for continuous support to the country in the long-term, with a view to consolidating democracy and implementing needed reforms.
3. The ASG for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, emphasized the importance of trust and confidence building among stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau, particularly between the state and its citizens. The ASG stressed the need for increased political dialogue among electoral authorities, the government, political parties, and the civil society in the electoral process and beyond. She further emphasized inclusion, empowerment, and participation of women and youth in Guinea-Bissau, informing of a visit to a PBF-supported project in Bissau that provided leadership skills training to young women. The ASG further underscored the important role of partnerships to advance peacebuilding and highlighted the current interventions of the IMF and the World Bank in Guinea-Bissau, encouraging continued alignment of UN and IFI efforts in support of national priorities. She noted

examples of successful South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Guinea-Bissau and the value of exchange between countries to advance peacebuilding. The ASG highlighted several PBF supported projects in Guinea-Bissau, including projects that promote trust and confidence building, inclusive dialogue, women's and youth empowerment, and combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

4. The OIC and DSRS of UNOWAS, Ms. Giovanie Biha, underscored the importance of the electoral process to cement stability and democracy in Guinea-Bissau and noted existing challenges faced by the country and region. She outlined the good offices of UNOWAS to encourage political actors to resolve outstanding differences through constructive political dialogue and underlined the importance of the need to implement reforms, as stipulated in the 2016 Conakry Agreement, in the post-electoral period. The OIC and DSRS acknowledged the efforts of the President in the region in his capacity as Chair of ECOWAS and encouraged Guinea-Bissau to set a positive example for the region by creating enabling conditions for inclusive political dialogue, consensus, and the respect of fundamental freedoms. She confirmed the continuous engagement of UNOWAS with UN entities and (sub)regional organizations and informed of a joint UNOWAS-ECOWAS mission to Guinea-Bissau. The DSRS commended Guinea-Bissau's efforts to advance women's political participation and urged for the broad implementation of the women participation-related legislation. She appealed to the international community for increased attention and support to Guinea-Bissau in combating illicit and drug trafficking for peace and stability in the country as well as in the greater region.
5. Members States welcomed the visit and trip report as well as the briefings and made the following observations:
 - They welcomed the national ownership of the electoral process and stressed the importance of holding timely, free, fair, inclusive, transparent, peaceful, and credible elections. They commended the national financing of the majority of the electoral budget and called for additional international support to cover the budgetary gap.
 - They urged all political stakeholders to engage in inclusive dialogue and underlined the importance of ensuring inclusion, as well as the empowerment and participation of women, youth, and civil society in the electoral process and beyond.
 - They commended President Embaló's efforts in the region as Chair of ECOWAS, and encouraged the strengthening of partnerships with (sub)regional organizations.
 - They welcomed PBF investments in Guinea-Bissau's peacebuilding priorities, including women's and youth empowerment, and combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. They also welcomed the good offices of UNOWAS in Guinea-Bissau and the region.

- Member States acknowledged the country's progress in macroeconomic stabilization, noting engagements with international financial institutions and highlighting the recent 3-year extended credit facility arrangement between the government and the International Monetary Fund. They further encouraged the exploration of new funding avenues, including involving the private sector.
 - They stressed the continued accompaniment of Guinea-Bissau beyond the elections based on the principle of national ownership and underlined the importance of implementing reforms. Recognizing the government's efforts, they emphasized the need for strengthened international support to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime and promote socio-economic development.
6. In his concluding remarks, the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Samba Sané, emphasized the government's commitment to holding free, fair, inclusive, and credible legislative elections in June and highlighted the unprecedented national funding of 70 percent of the electoral budget. Referring to structural challenges in Guinea-Bissau, he noted the President's determination to bring lasting peace and stability to the country. Ambassador Sané reiterated the President's call for strengthened international assistance in combating drug trafficking, including through support for increased intelligence capacities as well as logistical support. He further welcomed support to enhance women's and youth electoral participation. The Ambassador recalled Guinea-Bissau's history as background to current challenges and underlined the importance of implementing the reforms, highlighting the importance of security sector reform and the constitutional review process.
7. Concrete Action Points/ Recommendations:
- Increased financial support to close the budgetary gap for the legislative elections in June, possibly through the basket fund managed by UNDP or through bilateral support.
 - Increased assistance for national efforts to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, particular in the area of maritime security, including through logistical support.
 - Strengthened support to advance the country's socio-economic development, particularly regarding the provision of basic services in the fields of health and education.
 - Continued advocacy for the broad implementation of the legal quota for women's political representation, including in the statutes of the political parties.
 - Continued use of the PBC as a platform for cross-country and regional exchanges and sharing of good practices for peacebuilding and sustaining peace.