

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 Poffice 2le

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

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 eith

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.
