

**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

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

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 wi