



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1233 (1999), by which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed and to submit a report to it on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). Subsequently, in paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 1580 (2004), the Council requested me to submit a written report to it every three months.

2. The present report focuses on developments since my last report on 15 December 2004 (S/2004/969) and contains my recommendations in response to the Council's request, contained in paragraph 10 of resolution 1580 (2004), to conduct a review of UNOGBIS with a view to adjusting its capacities to meet the requirements of its revised mandate.

II. Political situation

3. During the period under review, the country has remained peaceful, although the political situation is still difficult and complex. The Government has been engaged in preparations for presidential elections, which, as provided for in the Political Transition Charter, were envisaged by 7 May 2005. It has also obtained the necessary parliamentary consensus to pass the State budget for 2005, re-engaged in dialogue with its development partners and continued its efforts towards restoring the rule of law and improving fiscal management. While continuing to face a difficult financial situation, the Government was nevertheless able to pay salaries up to December 2004, in time for the end of year festivities, thereby dissipating the potential for social unrest.

4. The holding of the presidential elections within the time frame stipulated in the Political Transition Charter is a key benchmark for the full restoration of constitutional normalcy. However, the combination of the slow pace of electoral preparations and the demands, by most political parties, for a completely new voter register are likely to have an impact on the election date. A consolidated budget totalling €4.9 million euros for registration and electoral operations was submitted

to Guinea-Bissau's international partners on 17 January 2005. Portugal has responded by donating various electoral materials, while the European Union has also expressed its intention to donate €1.2 million.

5. Since some 20 political parties challenged the accuracy of the 2004 voter register and demanded a new voter registration exercise, the Government, the National Election Commission and political parties have agreed to carry out an in-depth revision of the electoral register involving the issuance of new voting cards. Agreement on this critical measure helped reach a subsequent consensus on the date of the elections, expected to be held in June 2005, which means that the timetable set out in the Political Transition Charter will not be strictly observed. The mutiny of 6 October 2004, which resulted in significant delays in the preparatory work, and the lack of financial resources are advanced as the main reasons for this delay, which can be considered reasonably justified.

6. On 28 February 2005, the National Popular Assembly began its new session. The agenda of the session, which will continue until 28 March 2005, includes a debate on an amnesty bill for all involved in various military actions from 1980 to 6 October 2004, as well as amendments to the Electoral Registration and the National Election Commission laws. Addressing that session on 1 March 2005, my Representative in Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardo Honwana, briefed its members on the political significance and practical implications of Security Council resolution 1580 (2004), especially with regard to the need to uphold the principles of justice and continue the fight against impunity.

7. In line with the Security Council's request in resolution 1580 (2004), I conducted a review of UNOGBIS aimed at adjusting its capacities to meet the requirements of its revised mandate. To that end, a United Nations multidisciplinary review mission visited Guinea-Bissau from 12 to 17 February 2005. Its broad objectives were to assess those aspects of the Office's mandate that could: foster political dialogue; ensure that credible elections take place later in 2005; enhance respect for the rule of law and promote transitional justice; enhance the overall administration of justice; develop local conflict resolution mechanisms; promote security sector reform; initiate programmes to eradicate small arms; and mobilize international support for Guinea-Bissau. The conclusions of the review mission greatly assisted me in setting out the recommendations contained in the present report.

III. Economic and social aspects

8. The economic situation in Guinea-Bissau improved slightly in 2004 with an increase in the country's GDP growth rate to 4.3 per cent, thanks, in particular, to a successful cashew harvest. In spite of this, the Government remains unable to pay the backlog of civil service arrears from 2003, domestic debt or salaries for January 2005.

9. Progress has however been made towards realizing better control of the public administration payroll. The preliminary results of the civil service census indicate a possible reduction of 8.3 per cent in the number of public sector employees. Probes into allegations of corruption are ongoing and the parliamentary inspectorate against corruption reported on 16 February that it had submitted to the Office of the Public

Prosecutor three cases of embezzlement from the State, totalling some \$420,000 United States dollars.

10. The Government's progress in re-engaging the support of its development partners has continued. The Vice-President of the World Bank for the Africa region, Gobind Nankani, visited Guinea-Bissau on 24 January 2005, and the Bank's Managing Director, Shengman Zhang, visited the country on 22 February 2005. The Bank is considering an interim support strategy package to be submitted to its Board for a proposed \$40 million credit. If approved, this credit would be devoted to energy, urban communications and community development projects in agriculture, health and education, and to direct budget support.

11. A mission from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visited the country in the first half of March to negotiate a staff monitored programme with the national authorities. The programme could be transformed into an emergency post-conflict assistance programme, depending on the outcome of the donor round-table conference, which is to be held later this year.

12. Parliament's unanimous approval of the 2005 State budget on 4 February 2005 made possible the holding of the donor mini-conference, hosted by the Government of Portugal in Lisbon on 11 February 2005. Donors at the Lisbon meeting, jointly prepared by the Governments of Guinea-Bissau and Portugal, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), assessed the Government's macroeconomic performance as generally acceptable. The main objectives of the conference were to prepare for the full round-table conference scheduled for the last quarter of 2005 and to mobilize resources to cover the gap of approximately \$40 million in the 2005 State budget. To that end, Portugal pledged €1 million. The Portuguese contributions and other pledges, including from the European Union, would be channelled through the UNDP-managed Emergency Economic Management Fund.

13. On 24 February 2005, an addendum to the strategy document and national indicative programme was signed between the European Commission and Guinea-Bissau allowing for the reallocation of the previously approved European Union grant of €9.5 million for budget support, administrative reform and the rehabilitation of social infrastructures.

14. The country is still coping with a locust invasion that started in December 2004, which has affected crops, including the important cashew cash crop. An early emergency response was provided with the assistance of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Portugal and Senegal and the technical support of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Efforts to protect the 2005 cashew crop from being severely affected by the locust invasion will continue. A key priority in that regard is to formulate a medium-term action plan, including capacity-building programmes for relevant national institutions and support to natural disaster management structures, the implementation of which would require the continued support of the international community.

15. The health and education sectors continue to suffer from inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of financial and human resources. The school year is, however, proceeding normally, with an increase in teachers' salaries and a higher number of school inspections.

IV. Military and security aspects

16. The Chief of General Staff, General Tagme Na Waie, carried out a series of sensitization meetings in all regions and barracks to promote the reconciliation of the different military factions, although the members of the military hierarchy removed from their posts after the 6 October 2004 mutiny have not yet resumed active duty. They are in their residences and no restrictions have been placed on their movements.

17. General Tagme visited his counterparts in Guinea-Conakry and Senegal in February to discuss bilateral security issues and the modalities of cooperation between their respective armed forces. Both neighbouring countries provided the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau with non-lethal military assistance.

18. UNOGBIS has continued to encourage the military leadership to initiate the reform of the armed forces. In this connection, General Tagme has stated his commitment to the reform process on several occasions. Three committees have been set up within the General Staff to examine the Defence Act and military regulations; retirement for members of the armed forces; and physical deployment of the armed forces. The committees started functioning in the last week of February in close cooperation with the Ministry of Defence. The armed forces are working with the Secretariat of State for Public Administration on the registration of all military personnel, with a view to obtaining accurate figures of military personnel in active service. UNOGBIS and UNDP are finalizing preparations to establish a small technical team to support efforts of the Government and the armed forces to plan and implement military reform.

19. At the 11 February 2005 donor mini-conference in Lisbon, Brazil committed itself to an initial contribution of \$500,000 for security sector reform. As requested by Security Council resolution 1580 (2004), UNDP is ready to channel these and any future funds through its existing Crisis Prevention and Recovery Thematic Trust Fund, specifically its Security Sector Reform and Transitional Justice service line. This arrangement will be similar to that of the Emergency Economic Management Fund, which has been providing a funding modality through UNDP to the Government to manage and finance its emergency budget. At the same time, the Netherlands has expressed interest in supporting a technical team for the formulation of the planning, methodology and programme formulation processes of the security sector, stressing the importance of including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the overall review process.

20. At the request of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, I dispatched a fact-finding and project development mission to Guinea-Bissau from 7 to 11 March 2005 to examine the challenge posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Working closely with the Government, UNOGBIS, the country team and relevant civil society bodies, the mission has established the operational and conceptual capacity-building needs for the national implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. It is expected that the project proposals developed with the mission's assistance will be supported by the Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures and by bilateral donors.

21. Meanwhile, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) has continued to provide administrative and financial management support to the demobilization,

reinsertion and reintegration programme, which is in its last phase. To date, among the 7,182 beneficiaries, 2,406 have already been reintegrated and 2,031 are expected to be reintegrated by June 2005. Since the programme will not be able to complete all the reintegration activities, it is applying for an extension to December 2005.

22. Under the supervision of the UNDP-supported national mine action coordination authority, progress towards the elimination of mine-related risks continues. By February 2005, the two national mine-clearance non-governmental organizations, Humaid and Lutcam, had removed 2,545 anti-personnel mines, 64 anti-tank mines and 40,439 pieces of unexploded ordnance and had cleared 789,075 square metres. The European Union has pledged €600,000 to support Humaid. In 2005, demining activities are expected to focus on the capital, Bissau.

V. Human rights aspects

23. The current human rights situation in Guinea-Bissau, where people do not enjoy full economic and social rights, must be seen in the light of the country's precarious economic situation. The full realization of civil and political rights is also difficult owing to under-resourced administration of justice and dysfunctional penitentiary systems.

24. To promote respect of human rights, UNOGBIS continues to maintain contact with State institutions concerned with the issue and is seeking to secure assistance to strengthen infrastructure and provide equipment and training. The Office is also currently working with the Ministry of Defence, the military high command and civil society to organize a "train the trainers" session on the promotion of human rights, the prevention of conflict and respect for constitutional order. UNOGBIS is also working with various civil society groups to encourage the population to vote, in particular, women's groups and the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League, which has been broadcasting programmes on local radio twice a week to inform the population of their human rights as well as carrying out sensitization programmes ahead of the elections. Furthermore, the Institute for Mother and Child, which was established by the Government in 2001, has held a national conference to explain in detail the terms of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the need for ratification of the optional protocol to the Convention.

VI. Observations and recommendations

25. Guinea-Bissau is still confronted with tremendous challenges. The State is still floundering and unable to effectively address the basic needs of the populace; military reform has still to be accomplished; a common vision has yet to be built among national stakeholders on how to foster peace, justice and reconciliation; and the old sources of conflict persist. However, in spite of those challenges, the country has improved noticeably since my last report.

26. The forthcoming presidential elections will put a formal end to the transition set in motion by the Political Transition Charter and will mark the full restoration of constitutional order in the country. In this sense, the elections ought to be a celebration of freedom of choice within the framework of a restored democratic

order and a demonstration of the political maturity of the politicians and the electorate of Guinea-Bissau. However, if poorly prepared and managed, the elections could be an additional source of tension and further instability.

27. I therefore urge national stakeholders to endeavour to create an environment conducive to peaceful, transparent, free and fair elections. A good beginning has been made by reaching consensus on the date of the elections.

28. For their part, UNOGBIS and the United Nations country team will continue to support the organization of the elections, concentrating on efforts to help lower tensions within and among political parties and to promote the adoption of a code of conduct by all political parties during the electoral period so as to contribute to the creation of a propitious political climate for a peaceful, fair and transparent poll.

29. The proposal to have the Parliament grant a blanket amnesty to all involved in military actions from 1980 to 2004 raises concerns of large segments of the population of Guinea-Bissau, including the civil society organizations of the country. My Representative in Guinea-Bissau has conveyed to the authorities the need to address this issue with a view to understanding the wider implications of such a measure on peace, security, justice and the rule of law.

30. In the light of the work that remains to be done to put the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau on a steady forward-looking track, and taking into account the findings of the review mission, I recommend that, within the framework of its revised mandate as outlined in Security Council resolution 1580 (2004), UNOGBIS focus on the following activities:

(a) To promote political dialogue with a view to generating a self-sustainable process of consensus-building on critical national issues, including: electoral matters; the role of transitional justice approaches to consolidating peace and national reconciliation; promotion of the rule of law; and reform of the security sector. This would require UNOGBIS to, inter alia, continue to provide its good offices, mediation and facilitation services; establish appropriate coordination mechanisms with ECOWAS and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP); identify and mobilize national actors for peace; and ensure that Guinea-Bissau is included in regional initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and ECOWAS;

(b) To develop, as a first priority, stable civil-military relations through a profound reform of the armed forces as an institution subordinate to democratic civilian authority. In the area of security sector reform, a multifaceted process that requires joint efforts by the Government and the country's bilateral partners, particular attention should be paid to the proper and dignified reintegration of demobilized personnel into civilian life, including a holistic approach to the reform of law enforcement agencies and the organs involved in the administration of justice, as well as the revitalization of the economy so as to sustain whatever progress might result from security sector reform. The United Nations system, ECOWAS and CPLP will be called upon to play a critical role in support of this process. UNOGBIS will also actively promote the development of effective coordination mechanisms among the various partners, donors and national stakeholders;

(c) To promote implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons as an urgent priority, in particular since the easy

availability and proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons has become a matter of great concern and a serious threat, not only to human security and stability in Guinea-Bissau, but for the entire West African subregion. In this regard, the United Nations system will work closely with the relevant authorities of Guinea-Bissau and the recently established ECOWAS office in the country to follow up and implement the recommendations of the fact-finding and project development mission that visited Guinea-Bissau in early March;

(d) To advance, in light of the fact that resource mobilization for Guinea-Bissau is invariably tied to the restoration of much-needed donor confidence through measurable progress in the reform processes and consolidation of stability in the country, a comprehensive and integrated United Nations peacebuilding strategy, under UNOGBIS coordination and with the support of the United Nations country team as a whole, as an important instrument to boost resource mobilization efforts;

(e) To adjust the use of its available human and financial resources as well as to seek supplementary resources in order to respond more effectively to the requirements of its revised mandate and undertake the activities described above. Specifically, some of the existing posts may need to be adjusted and new posts created, including (i) a Political Affairs Officer to assist with the increased workload, namely, liaison with ECOWAS and CPLP, facilitation of the process of political dialogue and liaison with donors and other international partners; (ii) a senior national officer to liaise with national actors; (iii) a Finance Officer from the United Nations Volunteers to help ensure the effective and efficient financial management of UNOGBIS; and (iv) a translator/interpreter in English/Portuguese. UNOGBIS will also require additional funding for travel to the subregion and throughout the country, outside of the capital, Bissau, and more frequent consultations with the Security Council and subregional organizations. Finally, the training line item should be reinserted in the UNOGBIS budget, both for languages, especially Portuguese and Creole, as well as for the specialized training of selected staff members in conflict management and facilitation skills.

31. The Security Council's agreement on the above recommendations would enable UNOGBIS to step up its efforts, working closely with the United Nations country team, towards integrating development and peace and security agendas within a cohesive peacebuilding strategy.

32. While the primary responsibility for completing the political transition, managing conflict, reforming the institutions and relaunching the economy of the country rests with the Government and people of Guinea-Bissau, I call on the international community to remain attentive and generous in its support for the country's efforts towards peace and progress. In this connection, I wish to commend the efforts of those development partners of Guinea-Bissau whose engagement and assistance have helped move the country along the path of progress in the period under review.

33. I also welcome the extension of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau of the Economic and Social Council and trust that it will continue to play the constructive role it has played to date in supporting the country to address its pressing short and longer-term development goals and in the mobilization of international support for Guinea-Bissau.

34. Finally I should like to pay tribute to the staff of UNOGBIS, led by my Representative in Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardo Honwana, and to the entire United Nations country team for their dedicated contribution to Guinea-Bissau's peacebuilding efforts.
