



Security Council

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Progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 33 of Security Council resolution [2458 \(2019\)](#), is my fifth report on the progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. It provides an update on relevant developments since my previous report, of 28 August 2018 ([S/2018/791](#)), and includes recommendations on the continuation of the sanctions regime in the post-electoral environment, in line with paragraph 12 of resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#).

2. In fulfilment of the request from the Security Council in its resolution, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs undertook an assessment, in consultation with the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). The key findings are set out below.

II. Key findings

3. Since my previous report, there have been encouraging signs of progress towards addressing the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau, following considerable regional and international mediation and facilitation efforts. For the first time since the country's independence in 1974, a President was able to complete a full term in office. According to the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau, the presidential term of José Mário Vaz ended on 23 June 2019. Despite the end of his constitutional mandate, Mr. Vaz will remain in office, albeit with reduced powers, until the holding of the presidential election, set for 24 November 2019. Meanwhile, the twice-postponed legislative elections were held peacefully on 10 March 2019 and deemed credible by international observers. A new Prime Minister, Aristides Gomes, and Government have been appointed, and the National People's Assembly has legally constituted its executive bureau. A new attorney general has also been appointed, although the majority coalition has complained that the appointment procedure was not in conformity with the decision by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at its summit of 29 June 2019.



4. It has been more than seven years since the Security Council adopted resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#), under which a targeted travel ban was imposed on members of the military who had played a leading role in the coup d'état of 12 April 2012. Since then, throughout the legislative and presidential elections of 2014, the legislative elections of 2019 and the periods of political tension and impasse in the country, the military has remained apolitical and has taken other steps to professionalize its personnel and functions.

5. In the course of this assessment, and in the light of the role played by the military since 2014, there were calls for the Security Council or the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#) concerning Guinea-Bissau to positively consider reviewing the sanctions list, in the event of the peaceful conclusion of the presidential election in November and the transfer of power to the new President. Interlocutors also offered the view that such an approach would serve as further encouragement to the current professionalization efforts of the military.

6. However, the root causes of instability have not been fully addressed and the political situation remains fragile, with the country facing continued challenges (see [S/2019/664](#)). Continued vigilance is therefore required to ensure that no other security force or civilian political actor in the country, regardless of political or institutional affiliation, can exploit differences among the political parties and threaten the constitutional order. For this reason, sanctions can and continue to play a positive role.

III. Sanctions in Guinea-Bissau

7. There have been no changes to the sanctions regime established by the Security Council pursuant to resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#) since my previous report. The travel ban measure remains in place and the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#) concerning Guinea-Bissau contains the names of 10 individuals, all members of the “military command”, responsible for the coup d'état of 12 April 2012.

8. During the past 12 months, the sanctioned individuals continued to perform their functions as part of the armed forces of Guinea-Bissau. Since August 2018, there has been no indication of those individuals travelling outside Guinea-Bissau. Since my previous report, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#) concerning Guinea-Bissau has not received requests for travel ban exemptions.

9. As repeatedly noted in my previous reports, the impact of United Nations sanctions in Guinea-Bissau has surpassed the travel ban restrictions imposed under the resolution. All interlocutors continue to agree that sanctions have had, and continue to have, a positive effect in deterring the direct involvement of the armed forces in the political situation.

10. The swift imposition and lifting of ECOWAS sanctions on 19 individuals, on 4 February and 31 July 2018, respectively, as part of efforts to restore democratic governance and ensure respect for the rule of law were also effective.

IV. Progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau

11. A significant political development since my previous report was the peaceful conduct of legislative elections in March 2019. The elections resulted in six political

parties – the Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde), the Movimento para Alternância Democrática (Movement for Democratic Change), the Partido da Renovação Social (Party for Social Renewal), the Assembleia do Povo Unido – Partido Democrático da Guiné-Bissau (United People’s Assembly – Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau), the União para a Mudança (Union for Change) and the Partido da Nova Democracia (New Democracy Party) – forming the new parliament, which was sworn in on 18 April 2019. However, shortly after the elections, tensions emerged between the majority coalition, comprising the Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, the Assembleia do Povo Unido – Partido Democrático da Guiné-Bissau, the União para a Mudança and the Partido da Nova Democracia, and the opposition regarding the posts of Second Vice-President and First Secretary of the Executive Bureau of the National People’s Assembly. Differences among the President, political parties and other stakeholders also emerged around the appointment of the Prime Minister, the Attorney General and the Government (see [S/2019/664](#)).

12. I commend the Group of Five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau, in particular ECOWAS and the African Union, for the efforts and engagement that helped the people of Guinea-Bissau to overcome the impasses relating to those issues. The country visits by ECOWAS and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, along with the visit by the Security Council in mid-February 2019, were instrumental in assisting all parties to resolve the political and institutional deadlocks affecting the country. While those external efforts have helped to overcome the impasses, the willingness and ability of the newly elected authorities to cooperate independently remain to be seen, especially in the context of reforms of the Constitution, the electoral law and political party framework, the defence and security sectors and the justice system, and in the light of the fast-approaching presidential election.

13. It is also noteworthy that the military did not interfere in politics during periods of post-electoral tensions. Moreover, the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, General Biaguê Na N’Tam, has taken steps to publicly communicate the army’s stance of non-interference in politics while acting internally to maintain the discipline of military personnel from commanders to rank-and-file members, including through frequent meetings of the chain of command, messages delivered to country troops, troop exercises, intensive patrolling in units, restricted access to weapons and ammunition, and frequent professional and awareness training programmes (see [S/2019/664](#)).

14. Beyond non-interference in the political arena, the military, with the support of UNIOGBIS and its partners, has also engaged in professionalization activities. For example, 30 members of the military, including 20 women, participated in the military observers’ predeployment course of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre from 13 to 24 May 2019 in Bissau to enhance their knowledge of conduct and discipline, gender, human rights, the role of the military in democracy, and negotiation and mediation skills. The course was aimed at providing military advisers in Guinea-Bissau with skills for future participation in peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, 132 members of the military, including 17 women, participated in four training sessions in April and May 2019 to develop the capacity of the armed forces to conduct human rights training within the ranks.

15. As in previous years, the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau maintained its presence and vigilance throughout the reporting period and continues to play a crucial stabilizing role in the country, as a deterrent to possible spoilers. On 29 June, the ECOWAS Authority extended the mandate of the Mission for an additional six months, beginning on 1 October 2019.

V. Recommendations on the continuation of United Nations sanctions

16. Five years have passed since the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. During that time, the military has remained apolitical throughout the legislative and presidential elections held in 2014 and 2019. Moreover, the military, with the assistance of UNIOGBIS and its partners, has taken steps to revitalize and professionalize its personnel and functions. As a result of the non-interference of the military in politics, Mr. Vaz became the first President to complete his constitutional term in office since the country's independence. At the same time, over the past five years, the country has continued to witness cyclical political and institutional crises resulting from differences among political actors, including the President, the Government, the legislature and political parties, which have the potential to politicize the defence and security forces.

17. The Security Council may wish to maintain the sanctions regime for a limited period, taking into account the political situation in the country, as a deterrent to potential spoilers, regardless of their political or institutional affiliation, who seek to endanger the constitutional order. With regard to the military, in the event of a peaceful presidential election and transfer of power, the Council and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#) concerning Guinea-Bissau may wish to consider reviewing the sanctions list accordingly.

18. Should the constitutional order be at risk and the situation during and after the presidential election warrant it, the Council may then wish to consider my previous recommendations concerning the sanctions regime (see [S/2018/791](#)).
