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Report of the Secretary-General on the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2048 \(2012\)](#) and [2103 \(2013\)](#), and covers major political, security, human rights, humanitarian and socioeconomic developments since my last report, of 21 August 2013 ([S/2013/499](#)).

II. Restoration of and respect for constitutional order

A. Political situation

1. Overview of the political situation in the country

2. Progress in implementing the Transition Road Map, in particular the key benchmarks related to the holding of presidential and legislative elections, remained slow during the period under review. On 22 August, the National Assembly unanimously agreed to amend the voter registration law to make provisions for “enhanced manual” and “digital” voter registration systems. Both systems provide for the holder’s photograph, thumbprint and serial number to be included on the voter card. On the same day, the President of the National Electoral Commission, Augusto Mendes, raised concerns over delays in starting voter registration operations, while the Civil Society Movement for Peace, Democracy and Development denounced what it described as “delaying tactics” by political actors aimed at postponing the elections in order to extend the transition period.

3. On 22 August, the Transitional Prime Minister, Rui Duarte de Barros, wrote to the Speaker of Parliament requesting that the National Assembly debate an amnesty bill that, as stated in the Transitional Pact and Political Agreement adopted by the National Assembly in May 2013, would provide “amnesty for the authors of the coup d’état of 12 April 2012”. The Party for Social Renewal (PRS) and sections of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) pledged support for the amnesty bill. On 9 September, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League issued an open letter to parliamentarians, urging them to reject the Transitional Government’s proposal. The bill failed to receive the required 51 votes and was rejected by the National Assembly on 10 September. The General Secretary of PRS



announced that his party would resubmit the bill and stated that amnesty was part of the “normalization process” under way.

4. On 28 August, the Council of Ministers met to discuss the electoral budget and timeline. During the meeting, which was open to representatives of multilateral organizations present in Bissau, the Transitional Prime Minister tasked a working group with reviewing the cost estimates of the electoral process and preparing simulations for the enhanced manual voter registration system and the digital voter registration system. My Special Representative, José Ramos-Horta, and the Transitional Prime Minister also convened a meeting of international partners on 28 August to convey the urgent need for financial support for the electoral process in order to end the political transition by the deadline of 31 December 2013.

5. On 29 August, the Transitional Prime Minister convened separate meetings with PAIGC, PRS and the Forum of Political Parties to discuss shortening some timelines in the Electoral Law so that the elections could be held closer to the transitional deadline. Representatives of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations attended those meetings. The political parties expressed their openness to a political agreement on the timelines for the presidential and legislative elections, which would obviate the need for a further review of the electoral legislation.

6. On 2 September, the Transitional President, Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, presented a final consolidated electoral budget of US\$19.3 million to the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations. The budget included provisions for out-of-country voting and a fully digital voter registration method.

7. At the request of the Transitional President, my Special Representative facilitated a two-day mission on 11 and 12 September by the Transitional Prime Minister, together with the Special Representatives of the African Union and ECOWAS, to Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire. The objective of the visits was to mobilize resources for the electoral process. The President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, and the President of Côte d’Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, as well as the President of the ECOWAS Commission, assured the delegation that ECOWAS was ready to fund a reasonable portion of the electoral budget. They also called on the rest of the international community to provide support. At a subsequent meeting of international partners on 17 September, my Special Representative stressed the need to move away from “controversies” over the budget and to focus instead on resource mobilization to avoid further delays to the start of the electoral process and to enable the crucial voter registration process to commence as soon as possible.

8. Speaking to the media on 2 October, upon his return to the country after participating in the general debate of the sixty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Transitional President attributed the delays in the electoral process to the “vested interests” of some members of the Transitional Government. He further stated that he intended to discuss with the ECOWAS Authority the possibility of preventing office holders from standing in the elections.

9. On 17 October, my Special Representative attended a meeting chaired by the Speaker of Parliament, in his capacity as the acting Transitional President, to discuss preparations for the elections. Participants included members of the Transitional Government, the Director-General of the technical electoral support office, representatives of political parties and civil society organizations, as well as members

of the diplomatic community in Bissau. During the discussions, funding pledges from ECOWAS (\$13 million, including \$6 million from Nigeria) and the European Union (€2 million) were confirmed. The Transitional Government announced that it would kick-start administrative preparations for the voter registration process, and called on political parties to nominate representatives to be accredited to the support office with a view to monitoring the electoral process.

10. The European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a €2 million grant agreement on 22 October, which will allow the disbursement of the European Union's contribution to the UNDP-managed electoral basket fund. The funds are earmarked for voter education and electoral operations. On 24 October, the Office of the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste announced the creation of a mission to support the electoral process in Guinea-Bissau, in particular the voter registration phase. The mission, which will work closely with the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and in partnership with the technical electoral support office, was allocated \$6 million to implement its mandate. The Government of Nigeria, in addition to its contribution of \$6 million through ECOWAS, also provided 25 four-wheel-drive vehicles and 25 computers in support of the electoral process.

11. The Central Committee of PAIGC met from 7 to 18 September to prepare the party's congress. The Committee decided that the party congress would be held from 7 to 9 November in the north-western town of Cacheu. During the meeting, the Platform for Unity and Internal Cohesion of veterans led by a former Prime Minister, Carlos Correia, advocated for a statutory separation between the political party leader and the incumbent to the post of Prime Minister. No consensus was reached on this proposal, however. Preparatory conferences to elect party congress delegates were held on 5 and 6 October in the party's 44 administrative sectors. On 15 October, PAIGC suspended the conferences to conduct investigations into alleged irregularities in the selection of delegates from the sectors.

12. On 3 October, the former Minister of Commerce of the deposed government, Botche Cande, read out to PAIGC members at a meeting in the eastern town of Gabu a letter dated 30 July 2013 written by Carlos Gomes Júnior in his capacity as leader of PAIGC. In the letter, Mr. Gomes Júnior complained that he and other key PAIGC figures had been "marginalized" by the party's leadership in Bissau on key issues, and that a letter to the party instructing them to raise with the international community the issue of security conditions for his return had been ignored. On 4 October, Mr. Cande expressed concern to UNIOGBIS about his personal security after being informed that the military were looking for him.

13. Earlier, on 8 August, Mr. Gomes Júnior had announced his plans to return to Guinea-Bissau and stand in the next presidential elections, during a press conference in Lisbon. The spokesperson for the Transitional Government, while welcoming Mr. Gomes Júnior's desire to return, stressed that the State would guarantee the security of the PAIGC leader as it did for every citizen, but that no special security arrangements would be made for him. This was later reiterated by the Chief of General Staff of the armed forces.

14. During the reporting period, PRS held various meetings countrywide to promote cohesion within the party and highlight the need to avoid confrontation, in anticipation of the elections. Political observers viewed the meetings as a way to take advantage of the divisions within PAIGC.

2. Overview of the human rights situation in the country

15. During the reporting period, the human rights situation in the country deteriorated further, with more cases of intimidation, threats, and restrictions of freedom of expression and assembly. On 29 August, Tito Marcelino Morgado, known in artistic cycles as “Masta Tito”, a Guinea-Bissau musician, was abducted by four men in civilian clothing, taken away in an unmarked vehicle, assaulted and warned not to perform again. The singer was later released. He had composed a song satirizing a public statement made by the Chief of General Staff of the armed forces in August. UNIOGBIS assisted the singer in obtaining medical treatment.

16. Also on 29 August, the President of the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League, Luiz Vaz Martins, was interrogated by the Judiciary Police for several hours as a result of a press statement issued by the League on 23 August. In the statement, the League confirmed that a citizen of Guinea-Bissau, who had been repatriated from Cape Verde after serving a sentence for drug trafficking, was alive, contrary to a public statement made by the Chief of General Staff that she had been killed. At the request of the State Information Services, Mr. Vaz Martins presented the individual to those services on 4 September. On 17 September, Mr. Vaz Martins informed UNIOGBIS that he was concerned about his personal security.

17. There were also incidents involving radio stations in the country. Radio Bombolom FM voluntarily suspended its programmes from 13 to 15 September in solidarity with Justino Sá, who was summoned by the Military Intelligence Services and questioned on 13, 14 and 15 September after criticizing promotions in the armed forces on 4 September during a current affairs programme aired by the station.

18. On 30 September, the director of a private radio station, Radio Jovem, was allegedly threatened by the military for having broadcast a statement made by the Chief of General Staff at an internal meeting with members of the State Information Services, which was highly critical of the Transitional Government and the Transitional Prime Minister. On 2 October, the President of the National Council for Social Communication, Ladislau Clemente Fernandes Embassa, issued a press release condemning the presence of “individuals” (identified as “military men” by Radio Jovem) on the premises of the National Radio and Radio Jovem. He also called on the “authorities” to abstain from acts that could hamper the effective exercise of freedom of the press. On 3 October, the spokesperson of the armed forces, Brigadier General Daba Na Walna, informed UNIOGBIS that no military personnel had been sent to any radio station to threaten or intimidate journalists.

19. In response to increasing concern over the human rights situation in the country, my Special Representative and the Special Representative of the President of the ECOWAS Commission in Bissau co-signed a letter to the Transitional President dated 19 September, referring to the continuing incidence of human rights violations and impunity in the country. The letter also referred to the climate of generalized fear created by inflammatory speeches, interrogations and beatings by the defence and security forces, and stressed the need for the transitional authorities to ensure respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of citizens. The Special Representative of the African Union, the European Union Ambassador and heads of mission of European Union member States subsequently expressed their support for the letter.

3. Regional and international efforts towards the restoration of and respect for constitutional order

20. During the period under review, my Special Representative continued to engage international partners both in Bissau and in other capitals to ensure a coordinated approach in efforts aimed at restoring constitutional order in the country and to mobilize support for the transitional process. He held regular consultations in Bissau and outside the country with the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and bilateral partners, including Brazilian authorities. All of these stakeholders agreed on the need to ensure the holding of elections as soon as possible.

21. On 16 September, ECOWAS deployed a five-day pre-election assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau to assess the overall political environment, in particular the feasibility of holding elections on 24 November as initially scheduled, and the security conditions. The mission met with a wide range of stakeholders, including the transitional authorities, civil society organizations and international partners. On 25 October, it presented its report and recommendations to the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in Dakar. In its final communiqué at the Summit, the ECOWAS Authority urged the transitional authorities and other political parties to expedite preparations for the holding of general elections before the end of 2013. It also directed the ECOWAS Commission to take all necessary measures to ensure the successful holding of the elections, particularly by deploying electoral observation and security missions.

22. On 18 September, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, issued a statement noting significant progress in Guinea-Bissau over the recent months. The Chairperson appealed to African Union member States and other international partners to urgently provide financial and other necessary support to enable the successful organization and conduct, within the envisaged timeframe, of free, fair, transparent and credible elections. She also reiterated the appreciation of the African Union to ECOWAS for its efforts in assisting Guinea-Bissau to successfully complete the current transition and promote lasting peace, stability, development and democracy in the country.

23. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union held its 397th meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government on 23 September in New York, following which it adopted a press statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. In the statement, the Council commended the Guinea-Bissau actors for the progress made in the transitional process and encouraged them to persevere in their efforts to create conditions conducive to the successful holding of elections on 24 November. The Council also urged all African Union member States to actively contribute to the mobilization of the necessary resources for the holding of credible and transparent elections.

24. On 5 October, the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, Xanana Gusmão, who is also the Chair of the Group of Seven Plus fragile States, arrived in Bissau for a three-day visit to the country. He was accompanied by a 28-member delegation, including the Secretary-General of the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) and former Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, and the Secretary of State for Administrative Decentralization, Tomas Cabral. Upon their arrival, the Prime Minister announced that the delegation had come to Bissau to express Timor-Leste's solidarity with the people of Guinea-Bissau and provide support to the country. During the visit,

the Prime Minister and his counterpart reiterated the commitment of their respective Governments to working together to help Guinea-Bissau to emerge from the current situation of instability. On 8 October, Mr. Gusmão sponsored a meeting among political, military and civil society actors of Guinea-Bissau, during which participants signed a symbolic agreement for peace, the National Commitment for Peace and Respect for Rule of Law and Democratic Principles. At the meeting, Mr. Gusmão reiterated his commitment to lobbying international partners to assist the country.

4. Efforts towards a democratic electoral process

25. Following the protracted discussion over the method of voter registration, UNDP supported the technical electoral support office and the National Electoral Commission in assessing the feasibility of election-related activities against the target date of 24 November. On 24 August, my Special Representative discussed with the Transitional President the two options for the voter registration presented by the experts of the Commission and the support office. The assessment conducted by those experts highlighted the need to reduce the legal timelines and the procurement time to ensure the holding of elections as close as possible to 24 November.

26. Following the presentation of the final election budget by the Transitional President to international partners on 2 September, ECOWAS, the European Union and Timor-Leste promptly pledged funds or in-kind contributions. The lack of financial resources has continued to hamper the ability of the National Electoral Commission and the technical electoral support office to launch key electoral activities, including voter registration. On 31 October, the Transitional Government announced that voter registration would take place in Guinea-Bissau and within the diaspora from 1 to 22 December 2013. On 15 November, the Transitional President issued a decree setting 16 March 2014 as the date of the elections.

B. Security situation

27. The security situation in the country remained fragile and became increasingly volatile. The continuing intervention of the military leadership in civilian affairs exposed the fragility of civil-military relations and exacerbated tensions already heightened by poor socioeconomic conditions and infringements on freedom of expression.

28. Addressing a two-day national conference, on 15 and 16 August, on security and counter-intelligence organized by the armed forces and attended by over 100 participants, including the Transitional Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament and the Prosecutor-General, the Chief of General Staff of the armed forces stated that he would relinquish his post only if an elected President signed a decree requiring him to do so. He warned that during the liberation war ethnicity had not been an issue and that the instrumentalization of ethnicity could result in an “explosion”. He accused the international community of using defence sector reform as a means to reduce the number of members of the Balanta ethnic group, to which he belongs, in the armed forces. He also warned that, if elections were not well organized and irregularities occurred, this would create problems for the country.

29. On 4 September, the Transitional President presided over a promotion ceremony for 18 military officers who had been elevated to the rank of general, including the Chief of General Staff and four other military officers. The latter five officers are

currently on the Security Council's travel ban list. The Transitional President stated that the promotions would not be an extra burden on the State budget, as those promoted were already receiving the emoluments of their new rank. Speaking to the media on that occasion, the Chief of General Staff reiterated the commitment of the armed forces to remaining subordinate to civilian authority and to contributing to a peaceful electoral environment. At a press conference organized on the same day, the armed forces spokesperson read a statement on behalf of the Chief of General Staff, advising, *inter alia*, that the army would not provide security to Mr. Gomes Júnior, should he decide to return to the country. In the statement, the Chief of General Staff also stressed that security sector reform should not be feared, but seen as a normal process. He called for the creation of an international commission of inquiry to shed light on those responsible for illicit drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau.

30. At an event organized in Bissau to mark International Peace Day on 21 September, my Special Representative recalled that the defence and security forces were guarantors of law and order and of the country's territorial integrity and independence, hence they should not threaten peace. He emphasized that any deviation by them from this mission undermined the country's independence and sovereignty. He added that the armed forces had no right to frequently alter the political order of the country since it was a prerogative of the people through civil society associations, political parties and other forms of participation in the country's political processes.

31. On 30 September, the Chief of General Staff accused the Transitional Government of corruption and denounced the lack of funds for the State Information Services and the armed forces, during a meeting with the Transitional Prime Minister, service chiefs and members of the State Information Services in Bissau. He also accused the Transitional Prime Minister of not being an effective leader and stated that the Transitional Government had been appointed with the assistance of the military. He suggested that the military could be appointed to Cabinet posts to restore order. The Chief of General Staff admitted that the military were involved in directly negotiating fishing licences with foreign fishing boats, arguing that this was being done because the defence forces lacked adequate resources.

32. On 8 October a group of people attacked the Nigerian Embassy in Bissau in reaction to inflammatory reports broadcast by some radio stations alleging that Nigerians were abducting children to kill them and use their organs. The National Guard fired into the air and used tear gas to disperse the crowd. On the same day, a Nigerian citizen was killed by a mob in the Massa Cobra neighbourhood in Bissau. About 400 Nigerians living in Bissau, including the Nigerian Embassy staff, spent the night at the base camp in Bissalanca of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB). The Guinea-Bissau Police Commissioner publicly stated that the allegations of child abduction were untrue and that the police had not received reports of such acts.

33. On 9 October, armed men stormed into four neighbourhoods in Bissau, indiscriminately attacking bystanders and breaking into private houses. Several individuals were injured, including a PAIGC parliamentarian and a UNIOGBIS national human rights officer. The attackers reportedly claimed that the beatings were being carried out in retaliation for the attack on the Nigerian Embassy on 8 October.

34. On 10 October, the Nigerian Embassy stated that the attack on its premises was aimed at discrediting the image of Nigeria, but that the country would continue to engage with Guinea-Bissau to support the transition process. The Prosecutor-General

announced on the same day that an investigative team would submit a report on the violent incident of 8 October within 20 days.

35. The United Nations human rights working group held an urgent meeting on 9 October and subsequently committed itself to supporting security and judicial institutions in conducting investigations into any reports of child abduction in the country. ECOWAS and the European Union condemned the attack and called on the Transitional Government to investigate it with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

36. On 14 October, the Transitional Prime Minister informed my Special Representative that 12 citizens of Guinea-Bissau allegedly involved in the killing of the Nigerian national had been arrested and that the transitional authorities were investigating the case, including allegations of incitement by radio stations. The following day, UNIOGBIS reminded the transitional authorities of their obligations to take all appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of UNIOGBIS and its personnel.

37. The ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal arrived in Bissau on 10 October for a two-day visit to discuss the latest security developments in Guinea-Bissau with the transitional authorities and the military leadership. Following the meeting, the Chief of Defence Staff of Côte d'Ivoire stated to the media that, while in general the situation in the country was normal, the level of security had fallen since September 2013. He informed the media that the delegation would consider appropriate measures to help Guinea-Bissau. He further advised that ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff wanted to contribute to improving the security environment in Guinea-Bissau ahead of the next presidential and legislative elections. At the ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit of 25 October, the ECOWAS Authority urged the ECOWAS Commission to expedite the implementation of the recommendations of the ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff.

38. A passing-out parade was held in Cumere, near Bissau, on 26 October, for 2,400 defence and law enforcement recruits who recently completed basic military training. On that occasion, the Chief of General Staff of the armed forces called on the military "not to take up arms against the people because those arms were bought with the money of the people to serve the people". Prior to the parade, some of the graduating recruits complained that from 22 to 25 October they had been subjected to severe beatings, exaggerated physical exercise and denial of food and water. They alleged that three trainees had died and several others had been injured as a result of the mistreatment.

39. On 5 November, the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Transitional Government, Orlando Viegas Mendes, was beaten by a group of armed men at his residence. He was medically evacuated to Dakar on 7 November, after seeking and receiving medical assistance from the United Nations clinic in Bissau.

III. Socioeconomic and humanitarian situation

40. The social and economic situation in the country remains fragile. Low levels of revenue collection and the suspension of budgetary support by Guinea-Bissau's development partners continued to have a negative impact on the ability of the State to meet its obligations. Adding to the variable and low prices paid to farmers for cashew

nuts, which have had a negative effect on food security in the country, the overall level of cashew nut exports remained far below the bumper crop of 161,000 tons in 2011, as a result of unfavourable external factors such as the global financial crisis. Internal revenues and budgetary assistance were markedly depressed, compared to 2012. As a result, the Transitional Government faced difficulties in paying civil servants' salaries on time.

41. On 28 August, in view of the increasing food insecurity, the Central Emergency Response Fund contributed \$3.2 million to the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and their partners to implement time-sensitive activities in support of the most vulnerable communities in the regions of Biombo, Oio and Quinara, which were the most affected by the poor cashew export season. WFP launched its food distribution activities in the three regions on 9 September within the framework of its immediate response emergency operation for Guinea-Bissau. The United Nations system has also been formulating joint proposals to mobilize additional funds for the country. To date, approximately \$10 million, including the contribution of the Central Emergency Response Fund, has been mobilized to implement joint activities in the country.

42. Health sector trade unions told the media on 18 September that they were suspending their strike action, which they had planned to start on that day and continue until 21 September, following an agreement with the Transitional Government for the payment of three months' salary arrears and two months of subsidies. On 30 September, State schoolteachers started a 60-day strike to demand the full payment of eight months of salary arrears to approximately half of the State schoolteachers, as well as better working conditions. The strike coincided with the formal opening of the school year on 28 September, compromising the possibility of a normal school year for a third consecutive year. The leader of the Confederation of Guinea-Bissau Students condemned the strike, called on the Transitional Government to intervene and warned of the long-term consequences of strikes in the education sector. He deplored statements by the Minister of Education of the Transitional Government that salary arrears were not his responsibility but that of the Minister of Finance.

43. According to the Ministry of Health, as at 14 October, 435 cholera cases, including 28 deaths, had been registered. Areas affected were the islands of Infanda, Kolbert and Udequeia, in Catió sector, and Cabedu and Calaque communities in Bedanda sector, Tombali region. UNICEF and other partners provided supplies and assisted the transitional authorities in setting up cholera treatment centres. The World Health Organization, with financial support from the European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), provided the Ministry of Health with medicines and rapid cholera test kits for responding to the cholera outbreak. A national cholera awareness-raising campaign was also conducted during the reporting period.

44. There were severe disruptions to water and electricity in Bissau due to strikes by personnel of the national electricity and water company of Guinea-Bissau, EAGB (Electricidade e Aguas da Guine-Bissau), over salary arrears and due to the inadequate availability of generator fuel. Besides the economic and social impact, the cuts negatively affected health and sanitation indicators in Bissau.

45. A mission from the African Development Bank visited Bissau from 26 to 29 August to assess the possibility of resuming support for infrastructure in the health sector, on a case-by-case basis, and financing the national emergency plan that was developed by the recently established National Commission for Planning and Strategic Coordination.

46. Since its creation on 24 July, the National Commission had been working towards developing a national emergency plan to address urgent needs in the areas of food security, health and education, in coordination with the different ministries and with the support of the United Nations. The plan was presented to the Transitional President and my Special Representative on 5 September, and approved by the Council of Ministers on 27 September. The budget for the plan is estimated at \$33 million, expected to be funded by the Transitional Government and international partners. About \$400,000 would be devoted to combating cholera, \$7.8 million to clearing salary arrears to education and health sector personnel, and \$16 million for food security activities. Some donors, in particular the World Bank and the African Development Bank, have pledged to contribute to the plan.

IV. Observations

47. It is critical that the Transitional Government and other national stakeholders remain committed to ensuring the restoration of constitutional order in the country through the conduct of credible and peaceful presidential and legislative elections. I am concerned that the transitional authorities have not made sustained progress in putting in place the measures necessary for the holding of credible elections to complete the transition process.

48. I commend the Governments of Nigeria and Timor-Leste, as well as ECOWAS and the European Union, for their prompt response to the appeal of the Transitional Government for electoral support and for their generous pledges and contributions. The onus is now on the Transitional Government to take the necessary steps towards the timely holding of the elections.

49. Undue delays in ending the transition could further affect the already fragile social and economic situation. Late or unpaid salaries, continuing strikes in the education sector, and the lack of basic services and utilities are aggravating social tensions in the country and providing fertile ground for disruptions to the electoral process.

50. While the organization of credible elections should remain the immediate priority, I call on the transitional authorities and national institutions to also focus on working together to alleviate social tensions and humanitarian hardships in the months to come to ensure a peaceful climate before and after the elections. In this regard, I welcome the approval by the Council of Ministers of the national emergency plan developed by the National Commission for Planning and Strategic Coordination. I also welcome the pledges made by the World Bank and the African Development Bank and I appeal to other international partners to assist the Transitional Government in implementing the plan. As the Transitional Government seeks through this plan to address urgent short-term needs in food security, health and education, I encourage all stakeholders to also look ahead to facilitate an agreement on critical issues to be addressed in the post-electoral period.

51. I am deeply concerned by the recent increase in the number of human rights violations and acts of violence in Guinea-Bissau. I deplore the killing of a Nigerian citizen, the beating of the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Transitional Government, and the attacks on the civilian population, including one parliamentarian and one United Nations staff member, as well as on the Nigerian Embassy. I urge the Transitional Government to ensure that credible investigations are carried out and that those responsible for those acts are brought to justice. I also call on the transitional authorities to investigate the serious allegations that members of the armed forces might have been involved, with a view to prosecuting the perpetrators.

52. I deplore the intimidation by security forces of representatives of the media, human rights advocates and artists. Such acts, which restrict the freedom of expression and assembly, could have a negative impact on the electoral process and undermine the democratic process in the country. I reiterate my appeal to the transitional authorities to implement the recommendations of the National Conference on Impunity, Justice and Human Rights held in Bissau in July. These include, inter alia, the establishment of an international and independent commission of inquiry to look into past gross human rights violations, the ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the establishment of national measures for victim and witness protection, and thorough investigations into any future human rights violations. I also reiterate the need for national stakeholders to implement concrete actions to fight impunity in the country and ensure that those responsible for political assassinations, including those committed in 2009, and other serious crimes such as activities related to drug trafficking and breaches of constitutional order, are brought to justice.

53. I would like to recall the declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels (resolution 67/1), which was adopted by the General Assembly on 24 September 2012. In the declaration, Member States committed themselves to ensuring that impunity would not be tolerated for serious crimes or gross violations of human rights law, and that violations would be properly investigated and appropriately sanctioned.

54. The lack of security is creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the population and does not facilitate the creation of an environment conducive to peaceful and credible elections. In this regard, I urge ECOWAS to enhance the capacity of ECOMIB, as announced in May by the ECOWAS Chiefs of Defence Staff on the occasion of their working visit to Guinea-Bissau. I call on the Security Council to consider providing support for a reinforced ECOMIB in order to ensure the security of the electoral process and to assist the future elected authorities in providing security for key national institutions as the national security capacity is being strengthened.

55. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team, under the leadership of my Special Representative, as well as to Guinea-Bissau's regional and international partners for their contributions to the efforts to restore constitutional order and promote peacebuilding in the country.