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Developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2404 \(2018\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) until 28 February 2019 and requested that I report every six months on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and on progress made in the implementation of the resolution and the mandate of UNIOGBIS. The report also provides an update on key political, security, human rights, socioeconomic and humanitarian developments in Guinea-Bissau since my report of 16 August 2018 ([S/2018/771](#)).

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. Political manoeuvring intensified during the reporting period, in particular following the official launch of voter registration on 19 September. The inclusive Government led by Prime Minister Aristides Gomes faced several challenges in fulfilling its primary goal of organizing the legislative elections. The political parties of Guinea-Bissau argued repeatedly over the technical and legal aspects of voter registration and the electoral calendar, trading accusations of attempting to either rig the elections or deliberately delay the process. Some political parties questioned the transparency and credibility of the electoral process and called for the Prime Minister's dismissal. As a result of the political and technical obstacles encountered, the legislative elections could not be held on 18 November 2018.

3. While regular dialogue on the electoral process conducted among Prime Minister Gomes, the National Electoral Commission, the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process, political parties, civil society, the media and religious leaders managed to reduce tensions, the political atmosphere nevertheless remained unpredictable and marred by mistrust among the main political actors. The situation was further complicated following the decision of the Prosecutor General, on 2 December, to halt voter registration and investigate three technicians of the



Technical Support Office after allegations of malpractice in the management of the voter database and software were made by a group of 18 political parties with and without parliamentary representation. Despite that setback, the Government declared that voter registration had been successfully completed on 19 December, with data collected from over 90 per cent of the estimated eligible voter population.

4. The group of five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau – the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the United Nations – have remained actively engaged in assisting the parties in resolving disputes, helping the people of Guinea-Bissau to hold credible elections and supporting political and institutional stabilization efforts within the framework of commitments under the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau. During the reporting period, ECOWAS fielded two ministerial-level missions to Bissau to consult with the parties and to help them to overcome the challenges facing the electoral process. ECOWAS also fielded an audit team, at the request of the Government, to evaluate the integrity of the voter register.

5. On 23 August, the newly formed Movimento para Alternância Democrática (Movement for Democratic Change, MADEM-G15) party, led by dissidents from the Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde, PAIGC), officially launched its platform and presented its leadership at a rally in Bissau. The national coordinator of MADEM-G15, Braima Camará, encouraged party members to register to vote as soon as possible, and accused the Government of failing to start the voter registration exercise on time. In a press statement on 24 August, the leadership of MADEM-G15 demanded that both the Prime Minister and the inclusive Government be held accountable for the delayed registration process.

6. On the same day, the main opposition party, the Partido da Renovação Social (Party for Social Renewal, PRS) held a press conference in Bissau at which senior leaders accused Prime Minister Gomes of “unacceptable conduct” by flouting electoral laws. It also held the Government responsible for the failure to commence voter registration as scheduled, which, according to the spokesperson for PRS, it blamed on “administrative incompetence”, stating that the Prime Minister was “following a path of distraction and attempted fraud” ahead of the elections. PRS later joined MADEM-G15 in expressing concern that the Government was unfairly influencing the selection of agents and monitors for the voter registration process along partisan lines.

7. On 18 September, an ECOWAS delegation visited Bissau to assess progress on the electoral process. The delegation was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Geoffrey Onyeama, and composed of the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea, Naby Youssouf Kiridi Bangoura, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou. During the one-day visit, the delegation met with the relevant national authorities and political parties. In a statement to the media, the President of the ECOWAS Commission acknowledged the ongoing efforts towards organizing the legislative elections and urged the Government to accelerate preparatory work to meet the 18 November election date.

8. On 19 September, Prime Minister Gomes officially announced the start of voter registration. The President of the Guinea-Bissau, José Mário Vaz, registered on 20 September. The President stated that he had “fulfilled his commitment” to the international community by appointing a consensus Prime Minister, leading to the formation of an inclusive Government with the sole objective of organizing the legislative elections in November. The President praised the joint efforts of the

Government, the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and the National Electoral Commission and urged all eligible citizens to register. He also invited the media to support the exercise.

9. On 20 September, a group of political parties not represented in Parliament held a press conference in Bissau to express disappointment over the management of the voter registration process. The group accused the Prime Minister of lacking in transparency and urged the President to dismiss the Government. The national coordinator of MADEM-G15 alleged that the Prime Minister was manipulating the process to safeguard his presidential ambition under the umbrella of the ruling party, PAIGC. He appealed to the President, civil society groups, the National Electoral Commission and the Technical Support Office to ensure the integrity of the process and encouraged citizens to register. The President of the Assembleia do Povo Unido – Partido Democrático da Guiné-Bissau (United People’s Assembly – Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau, APU-PDGB), Nuno Nabian, demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister, threatening public protests should the call go unheeded.

10. On 24 September, while marking the 45th anniversary of the independence of Guinea-Bissau, the President called for peace and national unity, as well as for consensus among national stakeholders during the electoral process. He stated that the country’s democratic credentials would be boosted by the holding of successful legislative elections in November and appealed to all citizens to exercise their civic responsibility by registering and participating in the selection of candidates. He appealed to the Technical Support Office, the National Electoral Commission, political parties with and without parliamentary seats, regulators, civil society organizations and all citizens to participate in overseeing the voter registration process.

11. On 26 and 27 September, Prime Minister Gomes convened a series of meetings with representatives of the political parties represented in Parliament, civil society leaders, the Technical Support Office, the National Electoral Commission and the group of five international partners in Bissau to discuss the electoral calendar and to address rising concerns regarding the viability of holding the legislative elections on 18 November 2018. At the first meeting, the Technical Support Office and the National Electoral Commission presented new schedules for the elections based on alternate dates, namely 16 December 2018 and 27 January 2019. In a second meeting, after much debate, the Prime Minister requested the electoral management bodies to revert to the original date for the elections and to present a revised implementation plan that would ensure the completion of voter registration in time to allow the holding of the elections on 18 November 2018.

12. On 2 October, Prime Minister Gomes continued consultations with the National Electoral Commission and the Technical Support Office, along with the political parties represented in Parliament and the group of five international partners in Bissau. On the same day, the Minister of Territorial Administration, Ester Fernandes, announced that the electoral census for the legislative elections would run until 20 October and called on the people to register. On 12 October, she announced an extension of the registration process, noting the Government’s intention to comply with the 60-day timeline established by law for voter registration.

13. During his visit to Guinea-Bissau, on 5 October, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, met with President Vaz, the President of the National Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá, Prime Minister Gomes and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities, João Ribeiro Butiam C6. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission commended Guinea-Bissau stakeholders for the progress achieved in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and urged all people of Guinea-Bissau to take the necessary measures to

ensure the holding of credible, transparent and fair legislative elections on 18 November. He also announced that the African Union intended to deploy an observation mission for the elections.

14. At its 800th meeting held on 10 October 2018 in Addis Ababa, the African Union Peace and Security Council considered a report on its field mission to Guinea-Bissau, which was conducted from 27 to 28 July 2018, and received updates on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. Thereafter, the Peace and Security Council encouraged the Government and political actors to ensure that the elections were conducted in accordance with shared values and relevant African Union instruments; stressed the importance for political parties to accept the outcome of the elections and settle any election-related grievances through existing legal channels; and underscored the need for constitutional reform, with a view to clarifying, among other aspects, the powers of the organs of the sovereign State, in order to reinforce the rule of law and the separation of power and to maintain checks and balances in national political framework.

15. On 21 October, some 22 political parties, including PRS, APU-PDGB, MADEM-G15 and the União Patriótica Guineense (Guinean Patriotic Union, UPG), held a march in Bissau, which culminated in a rally in front of the Government Palace. Supporters of Botche Candé, an advisor to President Vaz on internal and external security, also participated in the political event, which was attended by approximately 5,000 people. During the rally, the leaders of the political parties criticized the voter registration exercise and called for a more transparent electoral process in line with the law. Contrary to their previous public statements, they did not call for the dismissal of the inclusive Government.

16. On 30 October, President Vaz held a consultative meeting on the legislative elections. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Gomes and representatives of PRS, political parties without parliamentary seats, civil society organizations, religious leaders and the electoral management bodies. Neither PAIGC members nor its allies attended the meeting. In his remarks, President Vaz took note of the report presented by the Prime Minister, in which he indicated that the legislative elections could not be held on 18 November, given the delays experienced in finalizing the voter registration. Instead, the Prime Minister proposed three alternate dates of 16 December 2018, 30 December 2018 and 27 January 2019. After nine hours of deliberation, no decision had been taken on a new date.

17. On the same day, PAIGC issued a press statement accusing President Vaz of sabotaging the electoral process and of planning to dismiss Prime Minister Gomes. The party also warned that delaying the legislative elections until 2019 would be “unconstitutional and illegal” and could reignite domestic political tensions.

18. On 5 November, an ECOWAS Ministerial Delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria visited Bissau to assess the electoral process. The Delegation met with the representatives of the group of five international partners in Bissau and issued a communiqué at the end of the visit encouraging the Government to scale up efforts to ensure the holding of the legislative elections by the end of 2018. The communiqué also called for a new elections date to be set, in consultation with ECOWAS.

19. Following the violent repression of a student demonstration on 8 November, President Vaz dismissed the Minister of the Interior, Mutaro Djaló, through presidential decree No. 19/2018, with immediate effect, citing a request by Prime Minister Gomes. No reference was made in the decree to a replacement and, at the time of writing, no such appointment had yet been made.

20. On 14 November, the President of the National Assembly chaired the opening ceremony of the last ordinary session of the Assembly for the current legislature. The session, which was extended until 13 December, included consideration of the final approval of the Parity Law on the Participation of Women in Politics and Decision-making Spheres, later enacted by the plenary on 22 November, and of the law on military justice, which was approved on 20 December.

21. On 16 November, Prime Minister Gomes met with all the legally registered political parties and civil society organizations, with the participation of the National Electoral Commission, the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and representatives of the group of five international partners in Bissau. At the meeting, the Prime Minister assured the political parties that the Government's objective was to register all potential voters. During the following weekly technical meeting on voter registration, chaired by the Prime Minister on 23 November, the ECOWAS Representative announced that following an official request by the office of the Prime Minister, an ECOWAS technical mission would be deployed to audit the voter registration database, in an effort to promote transparency and credibility.

22. In a short speech on 18 November, the date on which the legislative elections were initially scheduled to take place, President Vaz asked the people of Guinea-Bissau for their understanding to enable the electoral process to be carried out in peace and tranquillity, thus allowing all citizens of Guinea-Bissau over the age of 18 to register. President Vaz encouraged Prime Minister Gomes to continue the dialogue with all political parties, the Technical Support Office and the National Electoral Commission, to suggest a new date for the legislative elections.

23. On 29 November, a group of 18 political parties with and without parliamentary representation, including PRS, MADEM-G15 and APU-PDGB, held a press conference in Bissau, calling for the resignation of the Minister of Territorial Administration for her poor management of the voter registration process and for violation of the Constitution and electoral law. During the press conference, a member of the Executive Commission of PRS, Sola Nquilim, who had been Minister of Territorial Administration in the Government of Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embaló, stated that his party would pull out of the inclusive Government should the current Minister not resign.

24. On 30 November, reacting to the statement made the previous day by the group of 18 political parties, PAIGC accused the group, and PRS in particular, of violating the Conakry Agreement and its subsequent agreements and of attempting to discredit the voter registration process. PAIGC accused the President, PRS and its allies of deliberately stalling the electoral process in order to cause a government collapse or reshuffle.

25. On 3 December, PRS, MADEM-G15, APU-PDGB and the broader group of political parties met with the President of Guinea-Bissau and delivered an open letter outlining concerns and conditions for the continuation of the voter registration. On the same day, President Vaz met with Prime Minister Gomes and senior technicians from the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process to receive an update and seek clarification on the concerns raised. Later in the day, the Office of the Prosecutor General issued a letter to the Ministry of Economy and Finance requesting that three of the technicians (named in the letter) should present themselves before the court for an investigation.

26. On 5 December, the Prosecutor General announced that a decision had been taken to suspend all voter registration activities until further notice, while an investigation on irregularities was carried out. He specifically referred to irregularities reported by some political parties. The decision mentioned claims of falsification of voter cards and allegations of manipulation of voter registration data

originating in Nigeria. The decision also referred to the questioning of three experts from Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and other witnesses over the work performed by the Office, interference in the decision-making role and the lack of the continued presence of all political parties.

27. At the request of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria deployed two technicians to Bissau on 4 December to assist national technicians with the configuration of the voter registration server, in order to consolidate voter registration data and produce provisional lists and voter registers. On 5 December, the Nigerian technicians were temporarily detained by the Public Order Police on the orders of the Prosecutor General and prevented from entering the headquarters of the Technical Support Office in Bissau. The technicians left the country the following day.

28. On 12 December, the Prosecutor General issued an order for voter registration to resume. In the order, he requested the following: (a) an end to the suspension of the work of the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process; (b) that all political parties send observers to monitor the work of the Technical Support Office; (c) that the Technical Support Office provide all requested information to the representatives of political parties; and (d) that the interim Director General of the Technical Support Office conform to the terms of reference established for the position. In addition, the order indicated that the Office of the Prosecutor General would, from that point on, monitor and inspect all work undertaken by the Technical Support Office until the conclusion of the voter registration process.

29. Also on 12 December, an ECOWAS delegation, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and composed of the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, conducted another visit to Bissau. The delegation met with the President, the Prime Minister and the Prosecutor General of Guinea-Bissau. In its final communiqué on the visit, ECOWAS raised concerns regarding the political climate in the country and the interruption of the voter registration process. It called on the authorities to remove all hindrances to the continuation of the electoral process and to finalize the voter registration. The message also reaffirmed the need to set the date of the legislative elections before the fifty-fourth ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, to be held on 22 December, and the need for the elections to take place before the end of January 2019.

30. On 17 December, the Prime Minister held a meeting with representatives of the political parties to discuss the electoral process. Other participants included representatives of the National Electoral Commission, the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process, the Minister of Territorial Administration, representatives of the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau and a representative of the embassy of Nigeria in Bissau, accompanied by the two Nigerian experts from the technology company supporting the Technical Support Office in the voter registration process. During the meeting, the Nigerian experts presented the scope of their work, including their current activity, which entailed the provision of technical support to the Technical Support Office to ensure that the specifications of the software met the electoral regulations of Guinea-Bissau. At the meeting, scenarios regarding the electoral process were discussed and an expert assessment indicated that elections in January 2019 were technically impossible. However, scenarios for elections to be held on the following three dates were feasible: 17 February, 24 February or 10 March. In a communiqué issued later that day, the Council of Ministers announced that the voter registration process would end on 19 December and that the President of Guinea-Bissau would set the date of the legislative elections by decree. On 20 December, before travelling to Abuja for the ECOWAS summit, the President of Guinea-Bissau issued a decree setting the new date for the legislative elections as 10 March 2019.

31. The fifty-fourth ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS was held in Abuja on 22 December. In its final communiqué on the session, the Authority took note of the report of the Ministerial Monitoring Committee and expressed concerns about the delay in the conduct of legislative elections; took note of the new date for the parliamentary elections and encouraged Guinea-Bissau stakeholders to work towards holding those elections on 10 March; called on the political stakeholders of Guinea-Bissau to abide by their commitments to implement the road map adopted in Lomé on 14 April 2018; and mandated the Chairperson of the Authority to impose sanctions, on the basis of proposals by the President of the ECOWAS Commission, against political stakeholders who obstruct the electoral process.

32. On 26 December, the Supreme Court of Justice issued a statement inviting all political parties to submit, by 10 January 2019, the list of their candidates for the parliamentary elections. In the same statement, the Court requested that all candidates submit certification that they had fulfilled their individual tax obligations to the State.

33. During his traditional end-of-year message to the people of Guinea-Bissau, delivered on 31 December, President Vaz reiterated his call to carry out constitutional reforms in order to eliminate focal points of institutional instability and clarify the government system. The President recalled that, since the first multiparty elections held in Guinea-Bissau 24 years earlier, the country had never reached the end of a legislature without interruptions of the political cycle and without a coup d'état. President Vaz also highlighted his efforts to put an end to the political and institutional crisis that the country had experienced over the previous three years.

B. Security situation

34. The overall security situation in Guinea-Bissau remained relatively calm during the period under review. The armed forces have remained neutral and have not interfered with the constitutional order or the political affairs of the country.

35. The porosity of land, air and maritime borders and reports of drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime continue to remain sources of major concern and potential destabilizing factors. The security situation could be adversely affected by ongoing demonstrations by students against the prolonged teachers' strike, in effect since early October, and by the high rate of unemployment, as well as by a reported increasing presence in the country of individuals allegedly affiliated with violent extremism.

C. Human rights situation

36. The human rights situation remained largely unchanged, and impunity for past gross human rights violations continued to stand in the way of national reconciliation efforts. At the time of writing, the State had yet to take steps to address the various calls made by the Secretary-General and the Security Council to ensure effective and credible investigations in accordance with international standards into past serious human rights violations, including those linked to the killings of 18 March 2012 and the coup d'état of 12 April of the same year.

37. Limited capacities, a lack of political will and other constraints continued to hamper the State's ability to fulfil its obligations to respect and protect human rights. More progress is needed to ensure accountability for human rights violations. In the case of the alleged attempted murder in 2017 of the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, General Biaguê Na N'Tam, the military tribunal released 10 military

officers, 7 of whom had been arrested in December 2017, after the Supreme Court of Justice issued a writ of habeas corpus in their favour on 15 November 2018.

38. Although no gross human rights violations have taken place in the recent past, the human rights situation continued to be marked by targeted restrictions of the right to peaceful assembly recognized in the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau, as well as in regional and international instruments ratified by the State. On 8 November, police used force and tear gas to disperse public school students gathering for a demonstration that had not been authorized, owing to alleged non-compliance with normative orders. Eight protesters were injured and one was hospitalized. On 8 December, the Office of the Prosecutor General issued a warning declaring “zero tolerance” for any protests that do not comply with the Constitution and the existing laws of Guinea-Bissau.

Social, economic and humanitarian situation

39. The macroeconomic and financial context was marked by the downward revision of the 2018 gross domestic product projections, from 6 per cent to 3.8 per cent, by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission that visited Guinea-Bissau from 19 September to 2 October. The reduction is explained by fact that the 2018 cashew marketing campaign remained below expectations, yielding exports of only 145,000 tons of cashews. State revenues decreased drastically compared to the same period in previous years, including 30 per cent less in taxes collected. Overall, the political uncertainties in Guinea-Bissau caused a significant fall in domestic business confidence and a decline in overseas investment.

40. Public expenditures decreased by 5.5 billion CFA francs (17.6 per cent) during the current reporting period, from 31.5 billion (\$54.9 million) to 25.9 billion francs (\$45.1 million), owing mainly to the decrease in current expenditure, notably for salaries (29.1 per cent) and public debt service (51.0 per cent). IMF has expressed concern about the high interest rate on loans incurred by the Government, reportedly about 18 per cent, and about its ability to repay the debt.

41. The recent strikes that have affected the delivery of many public services, especially in the education sector, have also affected the timely payment of salaries. The academic year, scheduled to begin on 1 October, had not yet started at the time of writing, as public schools remained closed owing to a teachers’ strike. The teachers’ demands were grounded in issues pertaining to outstanding salaries and improved contractual conditions, some of which had been agreed to with prior Governments.

42. On 5 December, Prime Minister Gomes was summoned by the National Assembly to explain delays in the payment of salaries to civil servants and address efforts aimed at ending the teachers’ strike. He acknowledged the financial constraints and a recent directive from the West African Economic and Monetary Union to limit government spending on public sector salaries to 35 per cent of the State budget.

43. Given the limited availability of reliable data on social indicators, the Government is implementing the sixth multiple indicator cluster survey, with technical assistance from the United Nations Children’s Fund and financial support from the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme and the United Nations Population Fund. Data collection began in early November to establish estimates for key indicators that could be used to assess the level of progress made towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal targets in such areas as health, nutrition, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and education. The survey, previously conducted in 2014, is based on a representative sample of 7,000 households. The initial results are expected to be available by June 2019.

44. Guinea-Bissau is especially vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters, such as floods, droughts, pest invasions and disease epidemics (cholera, meningitis, measles and yellow fever), given the weak capacity for disease control and surveillance. Food insecurity, weather disasters and naval accidents have also posed significant risks. As a consequence of the storm and flooding that hit Bissau, Bafatá, Gabú, Cacheu and Quinara on 26 June, approximately 4,420 buildings and structures, including houses, classrooms and markets, were completely or partially destroyed, leaving 2,000 families homeless. The insularity of the State also poses major developmental challenges. According to the World Risk Index for 2018, Guinea-Bissau ranked 19th out of 172 countries, reflecting its strong exposure to hazards that leave the country particularly vulnerable, owing to its poor economic and social situation.

III. Status of implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

45. UNIOGBIS continued to implement its revised mandate in accordance with Security Council resolution [2404 \(2018\)](#), focusing on the following three priorities: (a) support for the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and facilitating an inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation; (b) the use of good offices to ensure inclusive, free and credible legislative elections; and (c) the provision of technical support to expedite and complete the review of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau.

A. Implementation of the Conakry Agreement, the ECOWAS road map, political dialogue and a national reconciliation process, and the strengthening of democratic governance, including through urgent reforms

46. UNIOGBIS continued to engage with key national and international partners in Bissau to help to foster political dialogue and national reconciliation and lay the ground for the implementation of the institutional reforms envisaged in the Conakry Agreement for the post-electoral period. In that regard, my Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau maintained regular contact with key stakeholders, including the President of Guinea-Bissau, the Prime Minister, the President of the National Assembly, the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, senior criminal justice and law enforcement officials, representatives of the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and ambassadors to Guinea-Bissau. He also liaised with leaders of political parties and representatives of civil society, including women's groups, youth groups and religious leaders.

47. In meetings with my Special Representative held on 21, 23 and 24 August, Prime Minister Gomes reiterated his hope that the legislative elections would take place as scheduled on 18 November, but acknowledged that there would be delays in starting the voter registration process as a result of the late arrival of biometric kits to supplement the small number of kits currently held by the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process.

48. From 24 October to 1 November, my Special Representative travelled to Conakry, Dakar and Abuja for consultations on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. In Conakry, he met with the President of Guinea, in his capacity as ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau, and the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, who

was visiting Guinea. In Abuja, he met separately with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria and with the ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, General Francis Behanzin. During his visit to Dakar, my Special Representative met with the ambassadors of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to Guinea-Bissau. In his consultations, which were centred on the electoral process, interlocutors stressed the need for harmonized messaging and positions among the international community.

49. With financial assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNIOGBIS provided support to the organizing commission of the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development in Guinea-Bissau. In September, members of the organizing commission held a two-day retreat in Bula to consolidate their understanding of the reconciliation scenarios and to strengthen their capacities to present and discuss those scenarios in their future regional consultations.

50. The Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission continued to serve as a platform for keeping international attention focused on Guinea-Bissau. My Special Representative, together with representatives of ECOWAS, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the World Bank, were invited by the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration to provide briefings on the political situation in the country, including on preparations for the legislative elections, at meetings held in August and November 2018. At the informal interactive dialogue of the Peacebuilding Commission held on 31 August 2018 and attended by the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, my Special Representative stressed the importance of sustained international engagement and support in helping to resolve the political crisis in the country.

B. Timely conduct of legislative elections

51. My Special Representative continued to advocate for the timely holding of the legislative elections during his interactions with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau, reiterating that the United Nations was available to help in achieving that goal.

52. The multi-donor basket fund for the electoral project has a budget of \$7.7 million. At the time of writing, \$9.9 million had been mobilized for the fund, of which \$7.9 million had been received, with agreements signed for a further \$2 million.

53. UNIOGBIS and UNDP established a United Nations Integrated Electoral Team for coordinated activities in support of the electoral mandate. The Team continued to provide technical advice and expertise to the electoral management bodies on all matters relating to voter registration and planning for the polling phase. In December, the Team deployed nine regional electoral advisers, who will each support the regional election commission offices in the organization and conduct of electoral operations. Similarly, UNDP, through the basket fund, continued to provide technical, financial and material assistance to the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and the National Electoral Commission in support of the overall electoral process.

54. On 11 December, UNIOGBIS met in Bissau with the ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), as part of plans to support the national law enforcement agencies in establishing a command post to provide security for the forthcoming legislative elections. The operations of the command post would include the monitoring and prevention of electoral violence. During the meeting, UNIOGBIS and ECOMIB discussed measures for collaborating with national law enforcement agencies and providing them with the technical expertise to secure the elections.

ECOMIB welcomed the initiative and called for further discussions, integration with existing measures and subsequent engagement with the appropriate national agencies.

C. Review of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau

55. Between August and December, UNIOGBIS provided financial and technical assistance to the ad hoc commission of the National Assembly on the review of the Constitution. Of the 38 participants taking part in the discussions, 5 were women. UNIOGBIS observed the discussions, which featured engaging debates on controversial provisions of the draft Constitution, including those considered to be root causes of the political and institutional instability in Guinea-Bissau. The ad hoc commission achieved a partial revision of the articles of the draft Constitution.

56. With financial assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNIOGBIS also provided support to the Faculty of Law of Bissau to develop an annotated text of the current Constitution. The text will ensure that the constitutional provisions are interpreted in a coherent and consistent manner and will provide knowledge, explanations and resource material to support the overall Constitution review process and facilitate public discussion.

D. Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing the capacity of State organs

57. UNIOGBIS partnered with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre to deliver nine training sessions on electoral security and the prevention of violence in August and early September. The course benefited 238 members of internal security institutions, the military and civil society organizations in Bissau and in the regions covered by the mission's field offices. The course covered, inter alia, the rule of law and security aspects relating to the electoral process; community early warning mechanisms; and skills for the provision of electoral security throughout the elections cycle, including during the pre- and post-election periods.

58. In furtherance of the joint program on police, justice and corrections, within the framework of the global focal point arrangement for the police, justice and corrections areas in the rule of law in post-conflict and other crisis situations, UNIOGBIS continued to co-locate personnel in criminal justice and security institutions. The co-location will help to enhance efficiency in the implementation of national strategies on public security and on countering drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, as well as penitentiary management, in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules). UNIOGBIS has also initiated a co-location with the Office of the Prosecutor General and strengthened collaboration with judicial magistrates to follow up on professional standards and case management and progression through the entire chain of law enforcement and criminal justice, with a focus on drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

59. On 6 December, UNIOGBIS completed a two-month training cycle for the armed forces, held in Bissau. Through its Senior Military Adviser, the mission organized the training of 49 military police officers (including 2 women) to enhance their knowledge and professional capacity on matters of conduct, discipline and constitutional governance. The Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces supported the efforts of UNIOGBIS, emphasizing that the military would continue to invest resources in training opportunities to enhance the conduct and image of the military, both locally and abroad.

E. Promotion and protection of human rights

60. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS continued to monitor the situation of human rights in the country, with a focus on the right to participate in the political and public spheres, including the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, access to information and freedom of speech. UNIOGBIS also continued to advocate and systematically monitor the rights of persons deprived of liberty and promote international human rights standards for the treatment of detainees, conducting 21 visits to prisons and detention facilities. During the period under review, State authorities released 30 individuals under prolonged detention.

61. From 6 August to 21 September, UNIOGBIS, in partnership with UNDP, the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and the National Electoral Commission, held a series of training sessions in Bissau, Bafatá, Cacheu and Quinara, for key actors involved in the electoral process, reaching 200 participants, 160 of whom were women. Similar training sessions were held on 5 and 6 November and on 20 and 21 November in Bissau, in partnership with the Federação das Associações para a Defesa e Promoção dos Direitos das Pessoas com Deficiência (Federation of Associations for the Defence and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) for 60 participants, including 30 women. The training sessions helped to raise awareness among key actors nationwide about the protection of human rights in the context of electoral processes, in particular the right to participate in the political and public spheres, including the right to vote and to stand for elective office, and the importance of meaningful participation in the conduct of public affairs.

62. On 27 and 28 November, UNIOGBIS conducted a sensitization workshop on human rights and military justice at the National Assembly, with the participation of 73 parliamentarians, including 13 women. The dialogue helped to provide a more inclusive and progressive perspective on the alignment of the current draft code of military justice with the constitution of Guinea-Bissau and international human rights law and other international standards.

63. From 12 to 18 December, UNIOGBIS conducted a six-day retreat with members of the specialized commissions on constitutional and human rights, as well as on defence and internal affairs. The discussion resulted in a revision of the draft military code to align it with international human rights standards. The draft, adopted unanimously by the National Assembly, was submitted to the President of Guinea-Bissau on 20 December.

F. Combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

64. UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continued to provide strategic and technical support to state institutions to consolidate information, analysis and reporting on drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in Guinea-Bissau, as well as to improve professional standards, cooperation, coordination and partnerships. To ensure national ownership, UNIOGBIS provided secretariat support as the co-chair of the outcome group on peace and security, rule of law and governance of the Partnership Framework between Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations. The outcome group convened nine sessions with a strong focus on comprehensive approaches to countering drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

65. Between 17 September and 12 October 2018, UNIOGBIS, in cooperation with UNODC, conducted a specialized course on enhanced surveillance systems, intelligence and international cooperation to combat drug trafficking and other forms of transnational organized crime for 78 national law enforcement officers, including

nine women drawn from the Judicial Police, the National Guard, the Public Order Police and the Security Information Service.

66. A high-level national dialogue on combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime was launched through a conference that was held in Bissau on 28 and 29 November, co-chaired by my Special Representative and by the Minister of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and Parliamentary Affairs, Agnelo Augusto Regalla, on behalf of the Prime Minister, identifying the elements of a national strategy and strategic and operational recommendations for updating an operational plan on combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, corruption, money laundering and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

67. UNIOGBIS and UNODC also provided strategic and technical support in strengthening border management through the implementation of the project funded by the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force to improve border control capabilities and support the West Africa Coast Initiative. Four border posts, Buruntuma and Pirada (Gabú Region), Contabane (Tombali Region) and Jegue (Sao Domingos Sector, Cacheu Region), were refurbished and their services in terms of border control and management were enhanced.

68. During the first week of December, UNIOGBIS engaged in expert meetings with Portuguese immigration and customs authorities based at Humberto Delgado Airport in Lisbon, under the auspices of the ongoing Airport Communication Project led by UNODC to foster international cooperation against drug trafficking and organized crime. Since July 2018, 14 suspects have been arrested and a total of 24 kg of cocaine seized at Osvaldo Vieira International Airport in Bissau. That represents a 40 per cent increase in suspects arrested and 300 per cent increase in drug seizure compared with the previous reporting period.

G. Incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding

69. The Parity Law on the Participation of Women in Politics and Decision-making Spheres was formally adopted on 2 August in the National Assembly and enacted on 22 November. UNIOGBIS provided technical and financial support to the advocacy efforts of several women's organizations in Guinea-Bissau, which were instrumental in the passing of the law. On 3 December, the President of Guinea-Bissau promulgated the Law, which was published in the December edition of the Official Gazette.

70. The entry into force of the Parity Law and the process triggered by its implementation and enforcement are expected to introduce long-lasting changes in power relations between men and women, in particular in the political sphere. The Law applies to lists of candidates presented by political parties for legislative and local elections. Its stated objective is the promotion of gender equality through enhanced equal opportunities for men and women by establishing a minimum representation of 36 per cent for each gender on lists for elected positions. UNIOGBIS continues to work with partners, including through Peacebuilding Fund projects, to strengthen women's capacities for political participation and as candidates in elections.

71. On 13 August, my Special Representative wrote to the heads of the five political parties represented in Parliament, inviting them to address the inclusion of gender issues in parties' programmatic platforms. On 12 September 2018, representatives of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau issued an open letter on the Parity Law, urging decision makers to make the next parliament a more inclusive and representative place that truly reflects the diversity of Guinea-Bissau.

72. On 20 September, the Plataforma Política das Mulheres (Women's Political Platform, PPM), with United Nations support, organized a national conference on the participation of women and girls in politics and decision-making, which was attended by some 150 women. The conference was aimed at boosting the number of women included on the lists of candidates from political parties in the upcoming legislative elections. At the event, which was closed by the President of the Rede das Mulheres Parlamentares (the women's caucus of the National Assembly), Suzi Carla Barbosa, representatives of political parties signed a commitment for the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of the Parity Law.

73. UNIOGBIS was also invited to attend the ECOWAS workshop on gender inclusivity and effective mediation in West Africa, held in Abuja from 3 to 4 October, and facilitated the participation of a representative of the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region.

H. Mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance

74. On 31 August, my Special Representative chaired a meeting of representatives of the group of five international partners in Bissau and high-level representatives of Angola, Brazil, Cuba, France, Nigeria, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Spain, to share the key points of the briefing he had given to the Security Council the previous day on the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

75. On 19 November, my Special Representative chaired a meeting of international partners to discuss recent political developments and progress made in preparation for the legislative elections. Representatives of Angola, Brazil, China, France, Guinea, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, the United States, the African Union and the European Union participated in the meeting. International partners were united in their view that the legislative elections should take place in 2018, in accordance with the Constitution. They further conveyed their concern regarding the lack of clarity on the date of the elections. International partners also stressed the need for continued dialogue among national stakeholders in an effort to find sustainable solutions to the political challenges facing the country.

76. Between September 2018 and January 2019, my Special Representative co-chaired, together with the President of the National Electoral Commission, five meetings of the High-level Steering Committee on Elections. The purpose of the meetings was to provide international and national partners with an update on the status of preparations for the legislative elections and to discuss resource requirements.

IV. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

77. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [2404 \(2018\)](#), a strategic assessment of UNIOGBIS was conducted from 28 September to 4 October. Following the assessment, I recommended that UNIOGBIS be reconfigured as a streamlined special political mission and its tasks reprioritized to focus on the use of good offices and the coordination of international partners. I also recommended that the intervention be carried out in three phases, marked by the gradual transfer of tasks from UNIOGBIS to the United Nations country team, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and international partners until the mission's final exit no later than 31 December 2020. Further details are provided in my special report on the strategic

assessment of the mission (S/2018/1086). Preliminary transition arrangements are being discussed by the Mission jointly with Headquarters. These arrangements include plans for a training session on transitions and the development of a road map that is cognizant of transition best practices and lessons learned from other contexts, in order to inform the UNIOGBIS transition process. Pending a Council decision on the recommendations put forth in my special report, and based on the renewal of the mandate, a full-scale transition planning, implementation and monitoring effort will be launched, incorporating the Council's decision.

78. On 8 November, a stakeholders' workshop was conducted in Bissau with United Nations country team members, representatives of UNIOGBIS and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities, as part of the mid-term review of the Partnership Framework between Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations for the period 2016–2020. The aim of the workshop was to validate the draft report on the mid-term review to ensure the alignment of development actions with national priorities, national ownership and efforts to make the Partnership Framework more effective.

79. From 26 to 29 November, a Sustainable Development Goal action campaign team, led by UNDP, visited Guinea-Bissau in preparation for a mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support mission, a common approach adopted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to frame its support for the achievement of the Goals. The team prepared a multi-stakeholder action plan for the national roll-out of the MY World global survey in Guinea-Bissau for 2019 and consulted extensively with national stakeholders.

B. Public information

80. UNIOGBIS continued to raise awareness on the mandate and nationwide activities of the mission, including the good offices of my Special Representative and the United Nations country team, through a variety of media, including outreach campaigns, press releases, a website, articles, photos, videos, social media posts, radio programmes and external newsletters in both Portuguese and English (*I kuma*). Three publications were dedicated exclusively to the electoral process. UNIOGBIS conducted cross-country awareness campaigns on voters' rights and duties and on the importance of elections. Support was provided to the National Electoral Commission and the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process in designing their communication strategies and voter registration awareness campaign. Strategic communication advice was also provided to the organizing commission for the national conference on reconciliation.

81. Since August, UNIOGBIS activities in support of the media sector, funded through the Peacebuilding Fund, have included: (a) support provided to five community radios to convert to green energy; (b) the creation of an independent media consortium to manage common resources and training facilities for journalists; (c) the revision of media laws and regulations, including the adoption of a code of conduct for news coverage during the electoral period; (d) support provided to Rádio Mulher de Bafatá, a women-run radio station based in Bafatá, the second-most populated region after Bissau and traditionally the stage of the toughest electoral disputes; and (e) capacity-building for media managers.

C. Staff safety and security

82. The overall security situation for United Nations personnel in Guinea-Bissau remained stable. In the context of a reported increase in common crime, especially

robberies and thefts, one house break-in and one burglary were recorded, each involving a female United Nations international staff member at night, with no injuries or physical violence suffered by the victims.

V. Observations

83. I remain concerned by the slow progress in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the ECOWAS road map, which are aimed at resolving the political crisis in Guinea-Bissau. Despite initial gains achieved between April and June 2018, including the nomination of a consensual Prime Minister and the formation of an inclusive Government, the situation in Guinea-Bissau remains fragile. The persisting mistrust among the political actors in the country and the corresponding political manoeuvring remain obstacles to the smooth advancement of the electoral process. I reiterate my call to all political actors in Guinea-Bissau to put their country and their people first and address their differences through constructive dialogue. That is essential to achieving the political stability required to bring about the much-needed progress and sustainable development to which the people of Guinea-Bissau aspire.

84. The need for sustained international engagement in Guinea-Bissau cannot be overemphasized. I commend the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, in his capacity as Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority, the President of Guinea, Alpha Condé, in his capacity as ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau, and all international partners in Guinea-Bissau, including the group of five, for their tireless efforts and engagement. The United Nations remains determined to continue its support for Guinea-Bissau. At the same time, the good faith and political will of national stakeholders are essential to enable the country to continue along its path to political and institutional stability. Those who obstruct the political process should be held accountable. In that context, I take note of the deliberations of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS on Guinea-Bissau during its fifty-fourth ordinary session, as well as the press statement on Guinea-Bissau issued by the Security Council on 27 December.

85. Guinea-Bissau is at a critical juncture. All political actors have a responsibility to work together in a constructive manner to create the conditions conducive for the holding of credible, inclusive, transparent and peaceful legislative and presidential elections. In that respect, I take note of the new date set for the legislative elections, 10 March 2019. With respect to the mobilization of the resources required for those elections, I welcome the generous financial support provided by donors, which has ensured the full funding of the electoral assistance project.

86. I call on the relevant national authorities to safeguard, promote and protect the right to participate in the political and public spheres, in particular in the context of the upcoming elections. That includes ensuring respect for the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and opinion. National institutions, including the judiciary and the police, should abide by their legally mandated duties and refrain from partisan political alignments.

87. The timely completion of the constitutional review process is important and would contribute to the ongoing stabilization efforts. I therefore encourage the ad hoc commission of the National Assembly on the revision of the Constitution to carry out the activities of its workplan that remain pending. I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to continue to support the important work of the Commission.

88. Respect for human rights is an essential prerequisite for stability, peace and sustainable development in Guinea-Bissau. The establishment of an independent national institution for the promotion and protection of human rights, in compliance

with the Paris Principles relating to the status of such institutions, and of an effective interministerial commission on human rights, to follow up on and implement recommendations from regional and international human rights mechanisms, should remain a central goal for Guinea-Bissau.

89. I am encouraged by the approval of the Parity Law on the Participation of Women in Politics and Decision-making Spheres, which was enacted by the National Assembly on 22 November. I encourage all political stakeholders to ensure its swift implementation, including by ensuring that the next legislature is more representative of the people of Guinea-Bissau.

90. Drug trafficking and related transnational organized crime remain a potential threat to peace and stability. Guinea-Bissau is highly vulnerable to transnational threats and violent extremism recorded in the region. Addressing those issues requires support for the entire criminal justice chain and robust multilevel collaboration among civilian, political and security actors, in consultation and coordination with international and regional partners. The strengthening and enhancement of land, maritime and air border control will be critical for stability and democratic governance in the country.

91. The planned exit of ECOMIB forces following the conclusion of the electoral cycle will require a thorough assessment by ECOWAS and assistance to existing national capabilities to protect State institutions and ensure public safety so as to enable a smooth withdrawal by ECOMIB and prevent any security vacuums.

92. The current mandate of UNIOGBIS expires on 28 February 2019. As the country enters a new electoral period, which is expected to last through the middle of 2019, the role of UNIOGBIS will remain critical. I count on the support of the Security Council to endorse the recommendations set out in my special report on the strategic assessment of the mission. Those recommendations include a reprioritization of UNIOGBIS tasks and a three-phased intervention leading to the gradual drawdown of the mission by 31 December 2020. In that regard, I recommend that the mandate of UNIOGBIS be extended for another year.

93. I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team, under the leadership of my Special Representative, José Viegas Filho, for their commitment and hard work, and to bilateral, regional and international partners for their significant contributions to peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.