



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8470th meeting

Tuesday, 26 February 2019, 10.10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Ndong Mba	(Equatorial Guinea)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Dominican Republic	Ms. Morrison González
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Germany	Mr. Schulz
	Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	South Africa	Mr. Matjila
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to West Africa (13 to 17 February 2019)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to West Africa (13 to 17 February 2019)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the co-leads of the Security Council mission to West Africa from 13 to 17 February, that is, the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Adom.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the joint initiative of Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, the representatives of the Member States of the Security Council carried out a visit to West Africa, with my country, Côte d'Ivoire, being one of the two legs of the visit. To recall, the visit was devoted to experiences and best practices with regard to the transition towards peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, two countries that hosted United Nations peacekeeping missions. Those two countries experienced different routes out of crisis; and, owing to their own potential and the challenges they face, they are today experiencing different rates of economic and social development. In accordance with the usual practice, I should like to provide the Security Council with a brief account of our stop in Abidjan, which is the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire.

The Security Council delegation arrived in Abidjan on the evening of 14 February and was received in audience on 15 February from 8.30 to 9.30 in the morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Marcel Amon-Tanoh, and by Vice-President Daniel Kablan Duncan from 10 to 11. Speaking on behalf of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, Minister Marcel Amon-Tanoh outlined the strategy for ending the crisis and consolidating peace in Côte d'Ivoire, based in particular on the triad of economic recovery, national reconstruction and national reconciliation. He stressed that the success of that approach was primarily dependent upon strong national ownership

of the crisis-resolution process, the leadership of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, and his Government's constant commitment to implementing peacebuilding priorities. He cited as an example the reform of the security sector and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme — 72 per cent of which is being financed by their own funds — which allowed the Government to establish security and stability in the country and restore confidence among foreign investors.

Speaking on the national political situation, the Minister for Foreign Affairs reassured our delegation that Côte d'Ivoire was aware of the impatience on the part of some actors in the international community, who nevertheless recognize the remarkable progress made since 2011. Consequently, he reassured the Council delegation of the efforts made by the Government to safeguard social peace, including the organization in 2020 of transparent and credible presidential elections, which he said constituted an additional step in entrenching security, democracy and peace in Côte d'Ivoire. The Minister also stressed that the period from 2019 to 2020 would be devoted to stepping up the efforts of the Government in the social domain, with a view to a better distribution of the fruits of economic growth, which averaged 8 to 9 per cent over the past five years.

At the subregional level, while recalling the leadership of President Ouattara, who headed up the Economic Community of West African States in the early hours of the Malian crisis — the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire reaffirmed his country's commitment to playing a leading role in finding solutions to current security challenges and promoting peace and economic and social development.

In his audience with the Council delegation, Vice-President Duncan reiterated national priorities for strengthening security, peace and development in Côte d'Ivoire. Aid for the return of refugees, DDR, the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the promotion and protection of human rights, the fight against corruption, the strengthening of the gender dimension in conflict prevention and economic and social development efforts were the main focus of his address to Council members.

While stressing that Côte d'Ivoire ranks among the top 10 most reforming countries in the world according to the Doing Business index, and the top four with

the strongest economic growth, according to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Vice-President confirmed that the years 2019 and 2020 would see an increase in the social offerings provided by the Government. The Ivorian Government intends to devote 726 billion CFA francs to social programmes, with education and health as priority areas.

Following the audience with the Ivorian Vice-President, the Council delegation took part in a round table co-facilitated by Mr. Babacar Cissé and Mr. Yacoub El Hillo, respectively, the Resident Coordinators of the United Nations Development Programme in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. Mr. Cissé stressed the quality of the links between the United Nations system and the Ivorian Government in preparing for the withdrawal of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and in transferring residual activities to the United Nations country team. Their joint efforts focused on social cohesion and national reconciliation, the strengthening of the rule of law, the fight against gender-based violence, security institutions, including DDR, and the improvement of civil-military relations.

Mr. Cissé also recalled the pleas with bilateral and multilateral partners to mobilize the necessary funding for the implementation of the priorities of the national peacebuilding strategy, while emphasizing the crucial role of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. That support, along with good coordination of the efforts of the country team with the Ivorian Government, made it possible to reinforce the momentum towards peace established following the end of the post-electoral crisis.

For his part, Mr. El Hillo said that, after 25 years of being on the agenda of the Security Council, Liberia had committed itself to the path to peace, stability and economic development. He acknowledged, however, that, owing to structural fragilities linked to its history and cycles of political instability and community violence, unlike Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia still faced enormous challenges in consolidating peace. He emphasized that the drastic fall in economic growth — from 8 per cent to 1 per cent — the persistence of the root causes of the conflict, the difficulties in the national reconciliation process and the weakness of post-crisis accountability, the weaknesses in border control and maritime security to prevent all sorts of trafficking, were all vulnerabilities that must be resolved in order to avoid a resurgence of the Liberian conflict. With regard to the role of the United Nations country team, Mr. El Hillo stated that this crucial

element of the United Nations presence in a post-crisis country should be the subject of a prior assessment of its capacity to fully carry out its responsibilities in the context of peacebuilding assistance.

On the whole, we very much hope that the exchanges that followed the presentations by the two Resident Coordinators will serve to provide a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for peacebuilding in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

The Council visited the Republic of Guinea Bissau during the latter part of its mission, with regard to which, Mr. President, it falls to you to provide an outline to the Council. For the moment, as the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, I would like to express the sincere thanks of the Ivorian Government to the Security Council for having chosen our country for its visit to West Africa.

I cannot conclude my remarks without thanking the United Nations staff, including those from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, whose discretion and high sense of duty — and I think members will agree — assuredly helped make the visit a ringing success and fruitful exercise.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Adom for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Equatorial Guinea.

First of all, I join Ambassador Adom in reiterating my sincere thanks to Côte d'Ivoire, with whom we made up a very united team to lead the visit. I also thank the authorities of Guinea-Bissau for the warm reception, as well as the members of the Secretariat who worked on the organization and smooth roll-out of the visit, both in New York and on the ground. I am referring, of course, to the staff of the Security Council Affairs Division, with special thanks to Nikolai Galkin and his team, Annika Kohnert and Wifag Hadra in particular. My thanks also go to all the personnel deployed and involved in the preparation of the mission, namely, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), with special recognition to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. David McLachlan-Karr, the UNIOGBIS political staff, the Travel, Shipping and Visa Unit and the interpreters and the security officers who accompanied

us on the mission. The work of the entire great team was truly exemplary and key to the success of the visit, which took place from 13 to 17 February. On behalf of everyone, I express our deep gratitude to the team and we hope to continue working with the Secretariat to draw all possible lessons from the mission.

After Côte d'Ivoire, the Security Council mission continued on to the second phase of its visit to West Africa by travelling to Guinea-Bissau from 15 to 16 February to assess, together with the main political and civilian actors, the current political situation, especially the ongoing electoral process, the role of UNIOGBIS and humanitarian and security issues. In Guinea-Bissau, the members of the Security Council met with a large number of stakeholders, including Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, with the attendance of some members of his Government, and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David McLachlan-Karr, as the Special Representative was absent from Guinea-Bissau.

We also had very useful and in-depth discussions with representatives of partner organizations involved in the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau, the diplomatic corps and the group of five regional and international partners, comprised of the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the United Nations. The delegation also met with the President of the National Assembly, the leaders of the political parties with and without parliamentary representation, the President of the National Electoral Commission, the Vice-President of the Supreme Court of Justice, in the absence of the President, who was travelling abroad, and civil society representatives. In addition, we also had the opportunity to speak with His Excellency the President of the Republic, Mr. José Mário Vaz.

The Security Council went to Guinea-Bissau, on the one hand, to call on all political stakeholders to work to preserve the still-fragile achievements on their way to peace, stability and prosperity and to overcome their differences by always prioritizing inclusive dialogue, and on the other hand, to support the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in launching its electoral campaign, which took place on 16 February, with a view to holding the legislative elections on 10 March and the subsequent presidential elections later this year, in accordance with the legal framework. We all hope that the elections will be peaceful, free, transparent and credible, and that they

will contribute to putting a definitive end to the chronic instability and institutional crisis of the country.

In their meeting with Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, the members of the Security Council underscored the importance of the upcoming elections in promoting key institutional reforms, as stipulated in the Conakry Agreement of 2016, including reforms in the security, justice and public administration sectors. The Prime Minister described the Government's commitment to ensuring that the electoral process was transparent and the results credible by noting two important instruments that were signed at the National Assembly headquarters the day before our arrival, in the presence of President Vaz: the 2019 stability pact, which emphasizes the need for institutional reforms, and an electoral code of conduct, in which competing political parties pledge to respect election results.

The Prime Minister outlined a number of challenges to holding legislative elections, including such major difficulties as electoral financing, which he stated is due to the failure of donors to honour their commitments. Prime Minister Gomes stressed that the Government was facing pressure in trying to handle social grievances and maintain a consensual electoral process.

During their meetings, the Council members tried to clarify Prime Minister Gomes's assertions about the shortage of funds for the elections. UNIOGBIS and the National Electoral Commission confirmed that donors had provided \$2 million above the \$7.7 million fund established by the United Nations Development Programme for the elections. They argued that the Government was not covering the expenses for which it was responsible. As was discussed at the meeting with the United Nations country team, as well as during other meetings, after three and a half years the political crisis has ended up adversely affecting the economy by exerting budgetary pressure on the Government due to a decrease in State budget revenue.

The members heard assessments of possible attempts to obstruct elections during their meetings with the international community, political parties and civil society. However, several of those speakers said that this included senior Government officials. The leader of the main opposition party, the Partido da Renovação Social, drew attention to concerns about irregularities in the electoral process. That idea was also underlined by several other opposition political parties, as well as

civil society organizations; they pointed in particular to discrepancies in the voter census, as only 735,000 voters had been registered. Prime Minister Gomes and the President of the National Electoral Commission explained that ECOWAS was auditing the voter registry and that once the audit was complete, the Gabinete Técnico de Apoio ao Processo Eleitoral — the office for technical support in the electoral process — would correct any anomalies that had been identified.

During the visit, the presence of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), a military force of 600 personnel, was visible. In the meeting with the group of five, the ECOWAS representative noted that the Mission was costly and could be withdrawn in September 2019. Meanwhile, UNIOGBIS recommended the maintenance of ECOMIB in Guinea-Bissau, given that its role in the current context remains highly necessary.

Another issue raised during the visit was the constitutional reform envisaged in the Conakry Agreement to clarify the powers of the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. The representatives of the group of five warned that the priority should be the holding of legislative and presidential elections, as the parties had strongly opposing ideas with regard to reform. However, we were informed of the possibility that the reform of the Constitution would be pushed after the renewal of Parliament and that the Government was considering that possibility, which would be carried out by referendum.

On the other hand, our speakers highlighted the fact that Guinea-Bissau's problems have historically not been with the holding of elections, but in the post-electoral period. In that connection, there were discussions that revealed the weakness of Guinea-Bissau's institutions. In that regard, the need for the United Nations to continue to support Guinea-Bissau was highlighted.

At our meeting with Mr. Cipriano Cassamá, the President of the National Assembly, he said that a reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS should provide for continued assistance to address issues such as drug trafficking, child trafficking and corruption. The civil society representatives, while expressing their appreciation for the support of the international community over the years, made strong appeals to the mission for the continued presence of the United

Nations to provide solid support to Guinea-Bissau in the implementation of its reforms.

Among other issues, the role of the military was brought to the attention of the members of the Council and it was emphasized that it had been constantly removed from political disputes since the restoration of constitutional order in 2014. A representative of the group of five stressed that security sector reform depended on donors financing the pension fund. During the meeting with civil society organizations and President Vaz, Security Council members were asked to lift the travel ban sanctions that the Council had maintained against the 10 military officers involved in the April 2012 coup. Several speakers said that the sanctions should be applied to those who had caused the most electoral delays, who were not members of the military but rather the politicians.

It should also be noted that Council members met with representatives of civil society organizations. They discussed, among other issues, the humanitarian and security situation, in particular the issue of women's participation at all levels of the decision-making process in the areas of peace and security, including security, economic and social structures, which very often prevent many women from participating in elections. Security Council members encouraged the Government and other parties to continue to redouble their efforts to strengthen the political participation of women in all electoral and political processes. In that regard, they commended the adoption of the Parity Law, which seeks to ensure a minimum quota of 36 per cent representation of women in elections, local Governments and appointments to the National Assembly.

The last meeting of the members of the Security Council was with His Excellency President Vaz at the presidential palace on 16 February, which coincided with the start of the electoral campaign. Council members reiterated that the purpose of the Council's visit was to help Guinea-Bissau emerge from the political crisis and the importance of the legislative elections to be held on 10 March, as well as the presidential elections. President Vaz responded by giving priority to the legislative elections, which would be followed by a programme of institutional reforms. The Council members stressed to President Vaz the importance of dialogue in resolving the crisis and highlighted the regional and subregional repercussions of the political stalemate, the threat of transnational organized crime in Guinea-Bissau, drug trafficking and the fear that terrorists and extremists

would take advantage of the situation to further destabilize Guinea-Bissau and the region. That was the message that we conveyed to all political and civilian actors with whom we met.

We believe that the outcome of the visit is entirely positive. All our counterparts were receptive. It is now up to all political forces to set the country on the path to peace, stability and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Allow me to conclude this report by expressing my sincere thanks to all Security Council members,

whose active participation, collaboration, flexibility and understanding in the face of the very busy agenda of the visit allowed it to go smoothly.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to express appreciation to all members of the Security Council and the Secretariat who participated in the mission for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.