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SECURITY COUNCIL SAYS DRUG TRAFFICKING UNDERMINES GUINEA-BISSAU PEACE

CONSOLIDATION, CALLS FOR URGENT STEPS TO CONFRONT THREAT

Presidential Statement Welcomes Regional Conference on Trafficking Issue, Gives Priority to Country's Request to Be Placed on Peacebuilding Commission

Noting with deep concern the threat that drug and human trafficking posed to peace consolidation in Guinea-Bissau and the stability of West Africa, the Security Council this morning called for the United Nations system and the country's Government to take action against those activities and other organized crime.

Through a statement read out by its President for October, Leslie Kojo Christian (Ghana), the Council also called upon the Government, with appropriate support from the international community, to take concerted action to safeguard the security of officials involved in combating those crimes.

The Council welcomed the decision by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to convene a regional conference later this year aimed at developing a regional plan of action to deal with the challenge.

It also welcomed the scheduled legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau in 2008 and called on all segments of the country's society to ensure that they took place in a peaceful and orderly fashion. It appealed to the international community to provide the necessary logistical and technical support to ensure the effective and timely organization of the polls.

Welcoming cooperation between Guinea-Bissau and international financial and development agencies, the Council requested the Secretary-General to present proposals on how best the United Nations could provide effective assistance in an integrated and holistic manner to national efforts towards stabilization.

Further, the Council expressed its intent to consider as a matter of priority the request from the Prime Minister that Guinea-Bissau be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding

Commission.

The meeting opened at 10:13 a.m. and adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

The full text of the presidential statement, to be issued as S/PRST/2007/38, reads as follows:

“The Security Council, recalling its previous statements on Guinea-Bissau, and having considered the latest report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) (S/2007/576), reaffirms its support for the continuing efforts to consolidate peace in that country.

“The Security Council notes with deep concern the threat posed by drug and human trafficking, which can undermine the important gains made with respect to rule of law, democratic and transparent governance. The Council further notes that the danger posed by drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau could have negative implications towards the region, as well as other regions.

“The Security Council is especially concerned over the security and safety of Bissau-Guinean officials involved in combating drug trafficking and organized crime. The Security Council, therefore, calls upon the government with appropriate support from the international community to take concerted action to safeguard the safety and security of those officials who are involved in combating these activities.

“The Security Council welcomes the decision by ECOWAS to convene later this year a regional conference on combating drug trafficking, aimed at developing a regional plan of action to deal with this challenge. The Security Council calls for urgent consideration of how the United Nations system might improve its support for Guinea-Bissau’s fight against international drug trafficking and organized crime. The Security Council recognizes the importance of containing and reversing the threat of drug trafficking to the peace consolidation process in Guinea-Bissau. The Security Council further recognizes in particular the important role of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC). The Council requests the Secretary-General to report on this matter as soon as practicable. The Council further welcomes the initiative to hold an international conference in Lisbon, Portugal on drug trafficking on Guinea-Bissau in December 2007.

“The Security Council also expresses its concern with the fragility of the democratization process in Guinea-Bissau, as well as persistent economic and social crisis.

“The Security Council welcomes the scheduled convening of legislative elections in 2008 and calls on all segments of Guinea-Bissau society to ensure that the elections take place in a peaceful and orderly fashion. The Council further appeals to the international community to provide the necessary logistical and technical support to ensure the effective and timely organization of the polls.

“The Security Council further welcomes the improved dialogue between the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the Bretton Woods institutions and urges the Government to continue to implement its commitments in the areas of fiscal responsibility, reforms of the justice sector

and good governance. The Council also welcomes the assistance provided to Guinea-Bissau by bilateral and multilateral partners, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union and the World Bank, and encourages their enhanced constructive involvement in the country.

“The Security Council encourages the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to carry out their commitment concerning security sector reform. The Council also takes note of the announcement made by the European Union and ECOWAS to make resources available in support of security sector reform.

“The Security Council recognizes the importance of a holistic approach in resolving the complex and multidimensional situation facing Guinea-Bissau, and requests the Secretary-General to present proposals on how best the United Nations could provide effective assistance in an integrated and holistic manner to national efforts, in order to contribute to the sustainable stabilization of Guinea-Bissau.

“The Security Council takes note of the letter from the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau requesting that Guinea-Bissau be placed on the Peacebuilding Commission, and expresses its intent to consider the request as a matter of priority.

“The Security Council reaffirms that peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau are critical for peace and security in the West African subregion. The Council recognizes the importance of the regional dimension in the resolution of the problems faced by Guinea-Bissau and, in this regard, welcomes the role being played by the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau.

“The Security Council recognizes and commends the important role played by the Representative of the Secretary-General and the staff of UNOGBIS, as well as by the United Nations country team, towards helping consolidate peace, democracy and the rule of law, and expresses its appreciation for their activities.

“The Security Council will keep the situation in Guinea-Bissau under active review.”

Background

The Council had before it the Secretary-General's report on developments in Guinea-Bissau and activities of UNOGBIS (document S/2007/576), which focuses on developments since the last report on the issue three months ago (document S/2007/401), in particular the Government's financial stability objectives and security sector reform and to improve political dialogue.

According to the report, the Government made concerted efforts to improve relations among the institutions of the State. A draft Government programme, outlining the main priorities, was submitted to the National Assembly Bureau on 27 August. It acknowledges that there is a need for profound reform of the justice sector, including the combat against organized crime and drug trafficking. The Government continued with its effort to improve relations with international partners and to enhance the country's external credibility in order to mobilize resources for its Minimum Public Finance Stability Programme.

The report states that, although there has been a marked improvement in Government revenue, there are still structural problems in curbing expenditure. On 13 July, Spain and Guinea-Bissau signed a multisectoral cooperation agreement worth €15 million, covering the area of democratic governance and the social sector. On 21 August, the Governments of Portugal and Guinea-Bissau signed an annual cooperation plan for 2007 worth some €10 million, as well as a memorandum of understanding for assistance in combating drug trafficking. The Prime Minister sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting that his country be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission.

In the security sector, says the report, the Security Sector Reform Technical Coordinating Committee, largely dormant during the first half of 2007, resumed its functions in June and made considerable progress, focusing on defence, security, justice and veterans' affairs. On 8 August, a defence cooperation agreement was signed by the Governments of Guinea-Bissau and South Africa in the areas of training, procurement, technology and health. The report of the United Nations inter-agency mission on reactivation of the small arms project was submitted for Government approval. UNOGBIS military advisers have provided guidelines and training materials for the preparation of a battalion to integrate the ECOWAS standby peacekeeping force.

The use of Guinea-Bissau as a transit point for illegal drugs coming from Latin America and bound for Europe raises ever more concern within the country and for the country's international partners, states the report. International assistance is needed to enable the country to control its borders and modernize its legislation. UNODC provided the judicial police with some investigative equipment and facilitated the establishment of links between Guinea-Bissau and INTERPOL. An officer of UNODC is expected to be deployed in Guinea-Bissau before the end of the year and ECOWAS plans to convene a regional conference on drug trafficking later this year.

The Secretary-General concludes in his report that, given recent developments on the ground, the time may have come to adopt a holistic approach to tackling the many complex problems that the country faces. The Secretariat and the country team are constantly reviewing and assessing various options to see how best the Organization can provide effective assistance for national efforts in order to contribute to the sustainable stabilization of Guinea-Bissau. The Secretary-General will submit specific proposals on the way forward.

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