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Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2343 \(2017\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) until 28 February 2018 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 provides an update on key political, security, human rights, socioeconomic and humanitarian developments in Guinea-Bissau since my report of 7 February 2017 ([S/2017/111](#)).

II. Major developments in Guinea-Bissau

A. Political situation

2. Since my last report, the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau has persisted, with no progress made towards implementation of the Conakry Agreement signed on 14 October 2016. The impasse at the National Assembly and the consequent non-approval of the Government's programme and State budget have further polarized positions in the country. Despite various initiatives aimed at genuine dialogue to resolve the institutional crisis, there has been no sign of a breakthrough.

3. On 6 February, the Government of Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embaló submitted its programme to the National Assembly. On 22 February, the 15-member Permanent Commission of the Assembly rejected the scheduling of an ordinary session to consider the programme on the grounds that the Government had not been formed in compliance with the Conakry Agreement, and that the programme was not submitted within the 30-day deadline set out in the Agreement. Only the nine members of the Commission from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) participated in the vote, while the remaining six members, from the Party for Social Renewal (PRS), abstained.

4. On 23 February, PRS, which is the second largest party in Parliament after PAIGC, submitted a petition to the Speaker of the National Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá, requesting the nullification of the Permanent Commission's decision and the convening of a plenary meeting of the National Assembly to consider the

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Government's programme. On 3 March, the Speaker issued a decision rejecting the request, arguing that the party lacked the legal standing to appeal the decisions of the Commission. On 12 April, the PRS parliamentary group announced its decision to participate only in plenary sessions of the National Assembly.

5. Meanwhile, in the light of the lack of progress in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement, the Mediator of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for Guinea-Bissau, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, sent his Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency, Naby Youssouf Kiridi Bangoura, to Bissau, on 8 and 9 March. Mr. Bangoura held consultations with the political leaders of the country and with members of the international community to discuss the Mediator's proposal for a reconciliation meeting in Conakry between the PAIGC leadership and the group of 15 parliamentarians who had been expelled from the party in January 2016. The proposed meeting did not materialize, however, owing to lack of consensus within the group of 15 parliamentarians.

6. From 10 March to 18 May, the President of Guinea-Bissau, José Mário Vaz, carried out a nationwide tour to seek the views of local stakeholders on national affairs. Throughout the tour, the President focused on three priorities: peace and stability; appropriate management of public funds; and the implementation of his "*Mon na Lama*" ("All hands on deck") agriculture project towards the achievement of food self-sufficiency. The tour ended in Bissau, where both the President and the Minister of the Interior stated that the Government of Prime Minister Sissoco Embaló would "not be dismissed because of international pressure".

7. A series of demonstrations marked the reporting period. On 9 March, a movement called "The Citizen" organized a protest in Bissau, demanding the resumption of the National Assembly's activities and expressing support for the President and the Government. On 11 March, the "Movement of Conscientious and Nonconformist Citizens" held a counter-demonstration in Bissau, calling for the resignation of the President. Although PAIGC did not express public support for the protest, many party militants reportedly participated in it. On 8 April, the Movement organized a vigil, which was attended by approximately two dozen people, urging the President to find a solution to the political crisis or call for early general elections. Police used tear gas against the demonstrators, arrested seven people and subsequently released them. On 22 April, the Movement and other civil society organizations held another demonstration, gathering approximately 1,000 people, which was conducted peacefully. However, during a demonstration organized by the same movement on 27 May, which involved about 800 participants, law enforcement personnel and demonstrators clashed, causing injuries to 18 demonstrators and police officers, according to hospital sources.

8. In the light of these developments, the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau, composed of representatives of the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations, issued a press release on 26 May, noting with concern the rise of tensions in the country, fuelled by inflammatory rhetoric, strikes and threats of violent street demonstrations. The group recalled previous declarations by ECOWAS, the United Nations Security Council and the European Union, urging political actors to show restraint.

9. On 2 April, the Executive Secretary of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, Maria do Carmo Silveira, arrived in Bissau for a four-day visit to consult with national and international stakeholders on the crisis. After her meeting with President Vaz on 5 April, the Executive Secretary stated that she had received assurances from the President that he would do everything possible to set up a platform for dialogue among the citizens of Guinea-Bissau.

10. On 23 April, following consultations in Conakry with the ECOWAS Mediator, President Alpha Condé, an ECOWAS ministerial mission arrived in Bissau, with the support of UNIOGBIS. The mission was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and included the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sierra Leone, the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea, the Chief of Staff of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal and the President of the ECOWAS Commission.

11. The ministerial mission consulted with international partners based in Guinea-Bissau during a meeting co-facilitated by my Special Representative and the ECOWAS Special Representative in Guinea-Bissau. On 24 April, the ECOWAS delegation met with civil society representatives, the Prime Minister, leaders of the political parties represented in Parliament, the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC and the President. The mission underscored the urgent need to implement the Conakry Agreement and to hold peaceful and credible legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019, respectively. It also informed stakeholders about plans to withdraw the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), starting from 28 April 2017, in compliance with the decision taken by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at the summit held on 17 December 2016 in Abuja. During consultations, the conflicting parties reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Agreement, while national stakeholders and representatives of civil society expressed fears that the withdrawal of ECOMIB could have a detrimental impact on security and stability in the country.

12. On 25 April, prior to leaving Bissau, the mission issued a final communiqué in which it recommended that, in the event of non-compliance with the Conakry Agreement, or lack of concrete steps to implement it within 30 days, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government impose targeted sanctions on individuals and entities that obstruct its smooth implementation.

13. The strong stance taken by the ECOWAS ministerial mission led to efforts to promote consultations among national stakeholders. On 5 May, the Government issued a statement indicating that the Prime Minister had invited political parties with parliamentary seats to consultations, on 2 and 3 May, within the framework of the Conakry Agreement. The statement noted that only PRS had accepted the invitation and added that the National Assembly was the appropriate forum for debating the crisis. Furthermore, the Government reiterated its determination to find solutions to the crisis and to ensure the normal functioning of the National Assembly.

14. On the same day, PAIGC issued a communiqué inviting members of the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from membership in the party to confirm to its Commission on Dialogue and Reconciliation their interest in being reintegrated as members. On 17 May, following a meeting with the Commission, former Prime Minister Baciro Djá expressed his willingness to be reintegrated into PAIGC. During a press conference held on the same day in Bissau, several other members of the group of 15 parliamentarians confirmed their readiness to engage in dialogue with the party's leadership, provided that discussions would take place outside PAIGC headquarters.

15. On 15 May, representatives of PRS, the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC and representatives of the New Democratic Party (PND) submitted a petition to the President reaffirming their support for both the Prime Minister and the President. However, in a letter dated 22 May addressed to President Alpha Condé, the president of PND, Iaia Djaló, clarified that the person who had signed the petition on behalf of the party had not been authorized to do so.

16. On 25 May, PRS held a rally in Bafatá, the capital of the Bafatá region. On the same day, in an interview with a local radio, the party's president, Alberto N'bunhe Nambeia, stated that international sanctions against political actors would not resolve but rather worsen the critical situation in the country.

17. On 1 June, a group of 18 political parties without parliamentary representation issued a press release blaming PAIGC and its president, as well as the Speaker of the National Assembly, for the situation in the country. The group called on ECOWAS to impose sanctions on PAIGC, its leader, the Speaker and their supporters for not complying with the Conakry Agreement.

18. On 24 May, my Special Representative convened a meeting with a newly established independent group of women's organizations, known as the women's facilitation group, to discuss concrete steps for women's engagement in the search for a consensual solution to the crisis. On 27 May, the Forum delivered a memorandum to UNIOGBIS, expressing the need to resolve the protracted divisions among political leaders and called for steps to end the continued exclusion of women in political processes. My Special Representative encouraged them to reclaim their rightful place in the national decision-making and peacebuilding arenas, including by enhancing their participation in the facilitation of dialogue among political stakeholders. In response, the women's facilitation group requested that UNIOGBIS provide technical and financial support for its engagement towards the resolution of the crisis. The Mission has provided such support.

19. The women's facilitation group subsequently met with the President, on 30 May, to advocate for genuine and direct dialogue with key political leaders. On the same day, the Forum issued a press release, appealing to political parties to engage in constructive dialogue for conflict resolution. On 2 June, representatives of the Forum met with my Special Representative to brief him on progress made in their facilitation efforts.

20. On 4 June, ECOWAS held the fifty-first ordinary session of its Authority of Heads of State and Government in Monrovia. In its final communiqué, the Authority: urged all stakeholders to comply with the provisions of the Conakry Agreement; extended the mandate of ECOMIB for three months to allow for the full implementation of the Accord; and affirmed its determination to institute, if needed, targeted sanctions against all entities acting to obstruct the smooth implementation of the Agreement. The Authority commended the continued non-interference of the Army in the political impasse, urging it to continue to maintain that posture; and directed the ECOWAS Commission to regularly assess, through a high-level ministerial committee, progress made towards implementation of the Agreement.

21. From 13 to 15 June, the Chair of the United Nations Sanctions Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#), Ambassador Elbio Rosselli of Uruguay, visited Bissau. His visit aimed at gathering first-hand accounts about the implementation and effectiveness of the sanctions measures imposed by the Security Council and to discuss related political developments. The Chair met with the President, the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and the Interior, military officers under sanctions, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, leaders of political parties, the group of 15 expelled PAIGC parliamentarians and representatives of civil society, women's and youth organizations. He also held discussions with UNIOGBIS staff and other international partners. Addressing the media on 15 June, Ambassador Rosselli welcomed the exemplary behaviour of the military and noted that he would present his conclusions to the Sanctions Committee and the Security Council for assessment.

22. On 19 June, PAIGC, on behalf of the political parties represented in Parliament, with the exception of PRS, submitted a document to the Guinea-Bissau-based group of international partners putting forward modalities for the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The document reiterated the proposal made by the Speaker in February 2017, which included a schedule for the implementation of the Agreement.

23. From 22 to 24 June, PAIGC held its first national convention in Bissau, gathering about 600 delegates. Former Prime Minister Baciro Djá, who held the position of third Vice-President of PAIGC prior to the crisis, participated in the event as an ordinary member of the party. The Convention adopted several recommendations, including the need to: clarify, through constitutional reform, the power and prerogatives vested in the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary, while maintaining the semi-presidential system; reform the electoral law and the political parties law; and minimize the recurrence of internal conflicts. The PAIGC convention also recommended that the president of the party have a say in the selection of the party's candidates for presidential and legislative elections, and reiterated the call for the appointment of Augusto Olivais as the consensus choice as Prime Minister within the framework of the Conakry Agreement. The Convention took place amidst heightened tensions between the mainstream membership of PAIGC and a faction of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians, who accused the party's leadership of excluding all militants and senior members of the party suspected of supporting the group.

24. During a meeting with religious leaders on 26 June, President Vaz called for unity among all nationals of Guinea-Bissau and stressed that national stakeholders should do their best to overcome the country's challenges within the following 90 days. He called upon PAIGC, PRS and the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from PAIGC to come to an agreement and to facilitate the adoption of the Government's programme and State budget, adding that, in the event of non-agreement, he would call for early elections.

25. From 5 to 10 July, as a result of the advocacy efforts led by the women's facilitation group, the President held bilateral talks with the Speaker, the Prime Minister, the President of the Supreme Court of Justice as well as the leaders of PAIGC and PRS. The facilitation group informed my Special Representative that key political leaders had agreed to resume regular consultations and consider options to resolve the crisis in line with the Constitution and the Conakry Agreement. The group seized the opportunity to request further advisory and programmatic support from UNIOGBIS.

26. On 17 July, the African Union Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué expressing support for ECOWAS mediation efforts and urging the President to lead the way forward in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. It further urged all parties to refrain from actions or statements that could escalate tensions and incite violence, and called for respect for human rights and freedom of expression. The Council also expressed concern over the planned withdrawal of ECOMIB by September 2017, calling on the international community to mobilize financial resources to support the continuation of the mission, and decided to undertake a mission to Guinea-Bissau within 2017 to follow up on the implementation of the decisions of the African Union and ECOWAS and to engage with national stakeholders on the way forward.

B. Security situation

27. Overall, the security situation has remained stable, but tense. The protracted political crisis led to an intensification of demonstrations and, although most of them remained peaceful, the reporting period was marked by increased confrontations between law enforcement authorities and protesters.

28. On 5 May, ECOMIB initiated a withdrawal to barracks in anticipation of a full withdrawal from the country at a later stage. On 4 June, 65 members of the Nigerian contingent were repatriated. However, the ECOMIB withdrawal was subsequently halted by the decision of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government to extend the mandate of the mission for three months, until 30 September 2017.

C. Human rights situation

29. During the reporting period, there was no significant progress in ensuring compliance of the National Human Rights Commission with the Paris Principles, notably the principle of independence from the Government. No significant progress was observed with respect to the investigation of past gross human rights violations and the creation of related accountability mechanisms.

30. On a positive note, UNIOGBIS recorded progress in a legal process initiated by national authorities following the illegal arrest, torture and subsequent death of a 34-year-old citizen at a police station in Bissau on 23 January. The Prosecutor General charged eight police officers with grievous bodily harm on 22 February and on 9 June, one police officer was sentenced to three years and three months in prison and was instructed to pay compensation to the victim's family. The other seven suspects were acquitted owing to lack of evidence.

31. On 9 June, the Government of Guinea-Bissau undertook a self-assessment of its record in implementing international recommendations in the area of human rights, stimulating national dialogue among State institutions and civil society actors, youth and women representatives and other key stakeholders, with the support of UNIOGBIS. The event included representatives of the judiciary, the National Assembly, the Presidency, the concerned ministries and secretariats of State, and representatives of civil society and the international community.

32. On 27 June, the National Council for Social Communication and an association of journalists issued statements denouncing attempts to restrict freedom of speech and press freedom through intimidation. On 30 June, the Government suspended the broadcasting by the public service broadcasting organization of Portugal (*Rádio e Televisão de Portugal*). In response, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League issued a statement condemning the decision and calling for a solution through dialogue.

33. UNIOGBIS documented incidents, including instances of detentions and the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officials during a demonstration held on 27 May, which were condemned by Guinea-Bissau's Human Rights League. Following a protest organized on 8 April by the Movement of Conscientious and Nonconformist Citizens, the police briefly detained seven demonstrators on the basis of a law that prevents the holding of meetings or demonstrations in public places located at a specific distance from certain institution buildings. The police later released them, following efforts at facilitation by UNIOGBIS.

34. On 1 June, the Ministry of the Interior issued a press release, forbidding the organization of demonstrations planned for 3 and 4 June by the Movement of Conscientious and Nonconformist Citizens and "The Citizen" movement, on the

ground that the events could threaten public order and peace. On 2 June, the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League condemned the position of the Secretariat of State and urged the Government to abstain from acts likely to restrict the right to hold demonstrations.

D. Social, economic and humanitarian situation

35. The period under review was marked by continued positive economic performance. Growth in the gross domestic product (GDP) for 2017 is projected at about 5 per cent, slightly lower than the 5.1 per cent level of 2016, but much higher than the Sub-Saharan African average of 2.6 per cent. This is the combined result of an increase in cashew nut production and exports, growth in the construction sector, a more stable macroeconomic framework, increased public revenues (by 32.4 per cent), and enhanced discipline in the management of public finances. Total production of cashew nuts is estimated to exceed 170,000 tons, with prices at historically high levels (producers were being paid an average of 1,050 CFA francs (\$1.75) per kilogram as at the end of June 2017). Despite the continued suspension of direct budget support, the Government has paid salaries on a regular basis and has covered some basic expenditures.

36. The Treasury Committee, which was established in 2016, and on which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank sit as observers, has improved its public expenditure management oversight role. The Committee has also provided a useful space for information sharing between the Government and its main development partners, focusing on greater fiscal discipline and transparency. However, additional and sustained efforts are needed to achieve greater efficiency in the allocation of public expenditure.

37. In May, IMF assessed the country's performance as being satisfactory overall, with tangible progress in the implementation of economic and financial reforms. Consequently, IMF approved an Extended Credit Facility arrangement in the amount of \$3.03 million in special drawing rights. In addition, the World Bank Group endorsed the New Country Partnership Framework for Guinea-Bissau in an indicative amount of \$90 million for the period from 2018 to 2021.

38. Despite the relatively positive economic performance, overall welfare and social conditions among the population remain challenging. Poverty remains high and pervasive, and there is limited improvement in the broader human development outcomes. In order to improve the availability and quality of data on poverty and to enhance understanding of the various dimensions of poverty, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a multidimensional poverty analysis in April 2017. The study is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

39. During the reporting period, strikes by labour unions in the justice and education sectors over delays in the payment of subsidies and salary arrears led to negotiations between the Government and the Union of Court Clerks, as well as with the two main teachers' unions. The agreements reached in both cases helped appease social tensions.

40. From February to April, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in printing and distributing primary school textbooks to 310,000 school-age children nationwide, in cooperation with the Global Partnership for Education, to improve quality of education in the country.

41. The World Health Organization (WHO) provided support to a joint mission organized by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Global Fund

to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the World Bank from 3 to 7 April. The mission assessed the conditions for the country's eligibility to new funding models for the next three years.

42. From 31 May to 4 June, the Ministry of Health, United Nations actors (WHO, UNICEF and UNDP) and other partners jointly conducted a national campaign for the distribution of long-lasting insecticide-treated nets. About 1 million such nets were distributed to protect more than 2 million adults and children from malaria. Malaria deaths in Guinea-Bissau are over 30 per cent higher than in other West African countries, accounting for 15.8 per cent of all deaths. Children under five years of age are disproportionately affected, accounting for around 41 per cent of all cases and 45 per cent of all deaths.

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

A. Fostering inclusive political dialogue and supporting national reconciliation processes

43. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS focused on helping to prevent the escalation of tensions and violence, improve the political climate, restore confidence among political leaders and to open the space for dialogue and consensus. My Special Representative worked closely with the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau and consulted with key stakeholders, including the political parties, representatives of civil society, religious, traditional and other leading opinion makers, urging them to advocate for dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

44. In the light of the polarized political situation and the lack of genuine dialogue among key stakeholders, my Special Representative sought to promote the consensus-building efforts of a group of women opinion makers. UNIOGBIS provided strategic guidance and support, while ensuring that the women's facilitation group retained full ownership of the initiative. As a result, the group took the decision to inform all key stakeholders of the need for an urgent and consensual resolution of the political stalemate. Their determination and genuine commitment have led to bilateral talks between the President, the Speaker, the Prime Minister and the President of PAIGC for the first time since the crisis erupted in August 2015.

45. From 8 to 11 February, with the support of UNIOGBIS and the Peacebuilding Fund, the organizing commission for the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development in Guinea-Bissau organized an international symposium on the theme "Facing the past to build the Guinea-Bissau of tomorrow". Over 250 participants attended, including the President, the Speaker, political leaders, representatives of national institutions, defence and security forces, civil society and academia. The organizing commission presented the results of consultations held at previous regional conferences and with nationals living in the diaspora from 2009 to the present date. At the end of the discussions, participants made several recommendations, including the need for the political leadership to engage in frank and open dialogue to unlock the current political impasse.

46. On 22 June, with the support of UNIOGBIS, the National Institute for Studies and Research launched a series of seven conferences on State reform. At the first

conference a debate was held on “The historical and sociological approach of the struggle for power in Guinea-Bissau”. On 6 July, the National Institute held its second conference on “Political parties and the challenges of social cohesion and national political stabilization”. About 50 scholars and students from Guinea-Bissau attended the first conference, and the number increased to 110 for the second conference. Both events were broadcast live on a local radio.

B. Review of Guinea-Bissau’s Constitution

47. During the reporting period, national stakeholders made no progress in implementing the Conakry Agreement as it relates to the review of the Constitution. In view of the political and institutional crisis, the ad hoc commission on constitutional reform of the National Assembly did not convene.

C. National security sector reform and rule of law strategies

48. UNIOGBIS continued to work in cooperation with the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union to assist national stakeholders in reviewing the country’s strategy for security sector reform, adopted in 2006, to include maritime security sector reform. The mission assisted national defence authorities to advance civil-military relations, including through support to the civil-military relations programme of the National Defence Institute and in the development of a national strategy for civil-military relations.

49. UNIOGBIS supported efforts by the Ministries of Defence and the Interior and the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, including a sensitization initiative launched on 25 May to provide guidance to military and security personnel to prevent interference in the political process and ensure subordination to the legal chain of command.

50. Consultations are ongoing between UNIOGBIS and the Government to address challenges related to the security sector reform, the demobilization and socioeconomic reintegration of military and security personnel.

D. Mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance

51. My Special Representative has convened regular meetings of the international and regional partners based in Guinea-Bissau aimed at fostering a shared understanding of the evolving situation and ensuring a coordinated approach and messaging by the international community.

52. At the regional level, my Special Representative stepped up his good offices to help facilitate and support a sustained, inclusive and coordinated engagement by ECOWAS. He travelled to Monrovia, Conakry and Dakar to discuss the objectives, timing and modalities of the ECOWAS ministerial mission to Bissau. Shortly after the ECOWAS summit in Monrovia, on 16 June, my Special Representative visited Lomé where he met President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé in his capacity as the new Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. They discussed short-term prospects, possible scenarios and support modalities for the conduct of a successful ECOWAS mediation process in Guinea-Bissau.

53. On 13 April, a visiting delegation of the International Organization of La Francophonie met with representatives of UNIOGBIS and the diplomatic community in Bissau. The delegation informed participants of its exchanges with

national stakeholders and reaffirmed the need to impress on stakeholders the importance of urgently implementing the Conakry Agreement.

54. On 12 May, the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission released a statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, commending the diplomatic efforts of ECOWAS and encouraging its leaders to continue the mediation process to end the political deadlock. The configuration reiterated support for the ECOWAS-brokered six-point road map and the Conakry Agreement, and expressed hope that the withdrawal of ECOMIB would be conducted in a way that would not undermine political stability. It strongly urged all key political actors to engage in dialogue and urged restraint, moderation and commitment to resolve the political crisis.

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

55. The political and institutional stalemate hampered UNIOGBIS efforts to assist national authorities in strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing the capacity of State organs, including the National Assembly. UNIOGBIS commissioned the International Institute for Security Studies to support national stakeholders in implementing the provisions of the Conakry Agreement relating to institutional reforms. The Institute carried out a technical mission to Bissau from 20 to 24 March to prepare the groundwork for the holding of consultations with national and international experts on a stability pact. It is hoped that the completion of the process will help create a climate conducive to peaceful and credible elections and lead to strengthened State institutions.

56. On 25 March, UNIOGBIS held two separate meetings in Bafatá, with the acting Governor of the region, Alfa Djaló, and representatives of civil society organizations and traditional leaders. The Governor and civil society representatives expressed support for the organization of local elections, which they viewed as a key step towards decentralization and local development, while also emphasizing the need to resolve the political impasse ahead of the elections.

F. Law enforcement, criminal justice and penitentiary systems

57. Against the backdrop of growing political tensions, UNIOGBIS advised relevant national authorities about the responsible use of force and best practices in the maintenance of public order, and on citizens' rights during demonstrations. UNIOGBIS also provided technical support and advice to the National Guard on the review and development of conduct and discipline policies, as well as appeal procedures and standards.

58. In addition, UNIOGBIS provided technical assistance to a conference on international police and judicial cooperation held in Bissau in May. Sponsored by the Portuguese rule of law consolidated assistance project and facilitated by experts from Brazil and Portugal, the event brought together about 100 law practitioners from Guinea-Bissau to discuss, inter alia: the linkages between the rule of law and criminal justice; the need for efficient inter-agency and transnational police and judicial assistance cooperation; the importance of combating serious transnational organized crime; and migrant smuggling. UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) supported the engagement of the National Audit Court with stakeholders on discussions of impunity and corruption in the public sector. UNIOGBIS and UNODC supported the National Audit Court in the organization of a workshop, on 27 April, on fighting impunity and corruption in the public sector.

59. UNIOGBIS helped reinforce the investigative capabilities of 34 National Guard Officers. The mission also contributed to strengthening the capabilities of Public Order Police officers in the collection and use of crime statistics to guide focused patrols. It further provided strategic and technical guidance for the development of strategic plans by law enforcement agencies.

60. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS worked closely with the Superior Council for Police and Internal Security Coordination to improve national inter-agency coordination of law enforcement agencies on methods to curb drug trafficking, sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in persons, the safety of maritime passengers and crime prevention strategies.

61. To extend the provision of justice services throughout the country, UNIOGBIS has initiated, together with the Supreme Court, the development of mobile criminal justice teams.

62. UNIOGBIS contributed to increased awareness of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) through support for technical evaluation visits by the Director General of Prisons to the detention facilities in Mansôa, in the Oio region, and in Bafatá. Working with the Director General, UNIOGBIS developed recommendations for the rehabilitation of the Mansôa facility.

G. Promotion and protection of human rights

63. Following regular monitoring and assessment of detention conditions by the UNIOGBIS Human Rights Section, the mission advocated increased compliance with human rights standards, including through dissemination to State officials and other stakeholders of a guide on the rights of detainees elaborated by UNIOGBIS, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice. Monitoring activities also covered conditions in medical facilities and the demonstrations and strikes organized during the reporting period.

64. From 21 to 29 February, UNIOGBIS trained 30 police officers, 30 National Guard officers and 45 military officers in Bissau and in the regions of Bafatá and Buba on the protection of human rights and gender equality. From 5 to 9 June, UNIOGBIS, in collaboration with the UNDP-funded Judicial Training Centre, concluded a series of training courses on human rights and the administration of justice for 40 civil and military judges and prosecutors, lawyers and members of the Judiciary Police, including five women. The training workshop focused on: women and children's rights in the administration of justice; the role of courts in protecting economic, social and cultural rights; the protection of freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion; and the right to peaceful assembly.

65. On 8 June, UNIOGBIS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a joint report on the right to health in Guinea-Bissau. In the joint press release issued on the occasion, my Special Representative stressed that the realization of the right to health has a strong link with the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, underscored the duty of the State to ensure the right to health, and called on donors to continue supporting the activities of the Government of Guinea-Bissau in this regard.

66. From 17 March to 9 June, UNIOGBIS helped enhance national capacity for the protection and promotion of respect for human rights and gender equality through the dissemination of recommendations made by international human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, the treaty bodies and the

special procedures of the Human Rights Council, to Government officials, parliamentarians, judges, prosecutors, civil servants, civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations.

67. From 19 to 23 June, UNIOGBIS concluded a series of training sessions for human rights focal points in the Army by providing a training workshop in Cacheu, capital of the Cacheu region, to 35 military officials, including one woman.

H. Combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

68. During the reporting period, UNODC and UNIOGBIS supported the actions of Guinea-Bissau's Transnational Crime Unit in order to strengthen its ability to conduct intelligence-based drug trafficking investigations, including through enhanced regional and international cooperation, as part of the West Africa Coast Initiative. They also supported the Anti-Trafficking Cell, within the framework of the international Airport Communication Programme.

69. In conjunction with training provided by the Brazilian Federal Police in the context of the Airport Communication Programme, UNIOGBIS and UNODC trained members of the Judiciary Police, the Public Order Police, the Immigration and Customs Services and INTERPOL on the threats of organized crime, drug-related issues, human trafficking, as well as corruption and its linkage to other crimes.

70. On 21 April, UNIOGBIS and UNODC provided strategic and technical guidance to enable verification, transportation and incineration of 46.3 kilograms of cocaine, 2 litres of liquid cocaine and 584.03 kilograms of marijuana, which were held by the Judiciary Police. Since the beginning of 2017, the Judiciary Police and the Transnational Crime Unit have reported seizures of 2.9 kilograms of cocaine and 392 kilograms of marijuana.

71. On 9 May, UNIOGBIS was informed of the approval by the National Guard of the report on the assessment of the terrestrial and maritime border posts, which had been prepared with UNIOGBIS support. Its approval enabled the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force to proceed with the refurbishment and equipping of select border posts. The mission also supported mentoring and training visits to the National Guard border posts to strengthen national technical capabilities for customs and migration.

72. UNODC supported the improvement of law enforcement capacities for maritime border control and patrols, including through the delivery, in June, of two boats, to be made available to Transnational Crime Unit, the Judiciary Police and the National Guard. UNODC also provided individual officers of the Crime Unit with ballistic protection equipment and a thermal night vision camera for undercover surveillance, as well as police uniforms and other individual items of police equipment.

73. On Bubaque island in the Bijagós archipelago in the Bolama region, UNIOGBIS provided technical assistance for working meetings between business stakeholders and law enforcement agencies in order to address weak border control, drug trafficking, illegal immigration and human trafficking. UNODC also supported the assembly of a prefabricated outpost for the Judiciary Police in Bubaque, which helped to increase its operational presence.

I. Incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding

74. From 27 February to 1 March, in the regions of Bafatá, Buba, and Quinara, UNIOGBIS, in partnership with the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, organized a training session on women's human rights and gender equality for 105 members, including 40 women, of the country's defence and security institutions. The training workshop focused on gender perspectives and the introduction of gender quotas in the recruitment process within the framework of the defence and security sector reforms.

75. On 8 March, the Government and civil society organizations celebrated International Women's Day, with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and in partnership with all United Nations agencies. On the occasion, the Institute for Women and Children presented the National Gender Policy and its action plan to the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Solidarity. On the same day, the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Solidarity officially launched its Gender Department, in partnership with UN-Women.

76. From 28 to 31 March, UNIOGBIS and five members of the national Women's Political Platform participated in a joint mission to the Gambia with the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel, organized with the support of ECOWAS, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, UN-Women, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund. The women leaders met with the national authorities and expressed solidarity with the people of the Gambia, especially women and girls, after the country's post-election crisis.

77. On 19 and 20 April, UN-Women organized a national conference on women's participation in decision-making processes to discuss the challenges facing women, and women in Guinea-Bissau society in general, in the current political situation and to make recommendations for peace and stability in the country. The conference, which was facilitated by the Women's Political Platform and the women's parliamentary caucus, brought together 198 participants, including 49 men, from women's organizations, the National Assembly and former female Ministers. On the occasion, UNIOGBIS delivered a training session on women and resource control to women parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organizations.

J. Preparation for legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019

78. On 28 March, the National Electoral Commission officially released the final report on the 2014 legislative and presidential elections in Guinea-Bissau. The event was preceded by a seminar on outstanding challenges ahead of the upcoming elections. During the seminar, the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Idrissa Djaló, informed participants of the intention of the Commission to draft relevant draft laws to submit to the National Assembly. He also stressed the urgency of updating the voters' register and the mapping of electoral constituencies, with a view to ensuring the smooth and timely conduct of legislative and local elections. Participants discussed the pros and cons of holding legislative and local elections separately or simultaneously. While some expressed preference for combined elections in the interest of time and cost, others favoured separate ballots, observing that civic education efforts would be required ahead of the local elections.

79. A United Nations electoral needs-assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau was undertaken from 25 April to 2 May, pursuant to a request by the Prime Minister for

technical and financial assistance to update the constituency delimitation and the voters' register ahead of the legislative and local elections. The members of the mission, who held consultations with representatives of the country's electoral management bodies and a wide range of national and international stakeholders, concluded that delays in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement had negatively affected efforts to advance dialogue and review the legal framework ahead of the legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019.

80. On 17 May, the group of international partners based in Guinea-Bissau met with President Vaz to convey their concerns over delays in implementing the Conakry Agreement. Addressing the media on behalf of the group, the Special Representative of the African Union in Guinea-Bissau reported that the issue of the legislative elections had been raised, including the preparatory steps required to ensure their integrity, fairness and transparency. He added that a resolution of the political impasse was necessary to enable preparations for the elections.

81. On 7 June, the Interim President of the National Electoral Commission submitted a proposed timeline to President Vaz for the 2018 legislative elections. When addressing the press at the end of the meeting, he refrained from publicly discussing details of the electoral calendar, but stated that local elections would take place 6 to 12 months after the holding of legislative elections.

82. On 17 July, the African Union Peace and Security Council issued a statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau in which it underlined the urgent need for "institutional arrangements" to enable the timely holding of elections.

IV. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

83. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS initiated the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations inter-agency strategic review mission to Guinea-Bissau, which was led by the Department of Political Affairs in December 2016 and outlined in my last report to the Security Council (S/2017/111, paras. 68-75). As recommended by the strategic review mission, and approved by the Council, in June, I appointed a new Deputy Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Deputy Head of UNIOGBIS, David McLachlan-Karr. The Deputy Special Representative will provide leadership and oversight of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions Section of UNIOGBIS and will lead the United Nations Country Team in Guinea-Bissau, in his capacity as United Nations Resident Coordinator. Mr. McLachlan-Karr presented his credentials to the President on 19 July. In line with the mission's recommendations, UNIOGBIS has initiated steps to redeploy staff to the Political Affairs Section to support the good offices of my Special Representative, as well as to ramp up the mission's rotational presence outside Bissau and to strengthen synergies with the United Nations country team.

84. Under the leadership of my Special Representative, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team continued to work with national authorities within the framework of the 2016-2020 Guinea Bissau-United Nations Partnership Framework.

85. On 12 April, UNIOGBIS and the secretariat of the Peacebuilding Fund organized a one-day retreat with the United Nations country team to reflect on the peacebuilding priority plan for Guinea-Bissau. The retreat was part of a larger effort to update and realign the priority plan to the political context and to develop short and medium-term perspectives for the country's peacebuilding portfolio, based on lessons learned and system-wide good practices.

86. In June, the joint programme on police, justice and corrections in Guinea-Bissau was finalized within the framework of the Global Focal Point arrangement. Following endorsement by the Government, the joint programme is expected to strengthen system-wide assistance to rule of law institutions, with the support of UNIOGBIS, UNDP, UNODC, UNICEF and UN-Women.

87. On 18 June, the World Bank and the United Nations adopted a plan to support national government capacity for the delivery of basic services. The plan aims to improve coordination and information sharing and to promote joint analysis, planning and programming between the two institutions.

B. Public information

88. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS adjusted its political communication strategy and, together with the United Nations country team, developed a joint United Nations communication strategy in line with the recommendations of the strategic review mission. It also strengthened its outreach in the Bubaque region through the deployment of one national United Nations Volunteer as a Public Information Assistant.

89. In addition, the mission: produced and broadcast 14 radio programmes in Bissau-Guinean creole language, focusing on its mandate, peacebuilding efforts, cultural diversity, malaria prevention and freedom of the press, among other issues; expanded the 50-minute live United Nations radio programme to include with a human rights segment and a 20-minute call-in session; issued a total of 30 press releases on United Nations activities; and translated into Portuguese and disseminated 12 relevant press statements from United Nations Headquarters. UNIOGBIS also drafted and posted 30 articles in English and Portuguese on its website. The mission also published about 180 posts in English and Portuguese on its Facebook page describing United Nations activities in Guinea-Bissau, including the good offices of my Special Representative. On 23 March, an external newsletter featuring the work of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau ("*I Kuma*") was launched, and a total of 3,000 copies were distributed throughout the country.

90. From 12 April to 10 May, UNIOGBIS, in partnership with civil society organizations, completed a round of community outreach meetings across the country to raise awareness of notions of citizenship, the rule of law, democracy and human rights, including the screening of a film, "The citizen and the State", produced by UNIOGBIS in 2016, and the dissemination of a guide on human rights elaborated by UNIOGBIS.

91. UNIOGBIS also supported an international conference on the negative impact of corruption organized by the national judges' association on 15 June, as well as outreach activities on the prevention of drug abuse and trafficking organized by the National Observatory on Drug Abuse from 27 June to 1 July.

C. Staff safety and security

92. The overall security situation in Guinea-Bissau remained calm despite the prolonged political stalemate. No significant incidents involving United Nations personnel were reported, except for one road traffic accident in which a pedestrian was injured.

V. Observations

93. The political crisis in Guinea-Bissau has continued over the last two years, with no immediate end in sight. In the absence of a settlement, there is a risk of further deterioration of the political and security situation, particularly as the 2018 legislative elections draw near. I urge the President, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the leaders of PAIGC and PRS, as well as all other political leaders to demonstrate genuine political will and sincerity and to act decisively to end the crisis through dialogue and consensus. These leaders are responsible for ensuring a durable solution, based on the ECOWAS road map and the Conakry Agreement. The United Nations remains committed to support their efforts in implementing the key reforms outlined in the Conakry Agreement before the elections.

94. I commend the mediation efforts led by ECOWAS, including its Mediator, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, and the outgoing Chair of the ECOWAS Authority, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia. I congratulate President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé of Togo on his designation as the new Chair of the Authority, and encourage him to continue the indispensable support of ECOWAS for a swift resolution of the crisis. I further welcome the extension by ECOWAS of the mandate of ECOMIB for three months, until September 2017.

95. I take note of the determination of the ECOWAS Authority to institute, if needed, targeted sanctions against those who obstruct the smooth implementation of the Conakry Agreement. In line with the ECOWAS position, I request that the Security Council consider all necessary means to ensure the speedy resolution of the crisis, should it persist.

96. I also take note of the continued non-interference in the political affairs of the country by the defence and security institutions of Guinea-Bissau, particularly the armed forces, and encourage them to maintain that posture while playing their constitutionally mandated role.

97. I welcome the increasing engagement of women in Guinea-Bissau in the political process and congratulate them on their role in facilitating dialogue between President Vaz and key political leaders. I encourage national authorities to increase efforts to reach equal participation of women in the country's decision-making processes.

98. I welcome the steps taken by relevant national authorities to assess the country's record in implementing international human rights treaty obligations and to follow up on the recommendations of the joint UNIOGBIS-OHCHR report on the right to health. I encourage the authorities to finalize the ratification of pending human rights instruments and to ensure that the statute of the National Human Rights Commission is aligned with the Paris Principles, including the principle of independence of the Commission from the Government.

99. In the context of multidimensional global and regional threats to peace and stability, I urge the national authorities to remain vigilant and to intensify their efforts for improved border management and maritime security. There is also a need for better operational capacity of law enforcement and criminal justice systems to fight drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. I call on international partners to support the country in this regard. International support is also required to extend community policing throughout the country.

100. I am concerned that progress on the reform of defence and security institutions has been delayed, hampering their modernization. I urge political leaders in Guinea-Bissau to resolve the institutional crisis and to facilitate reforms, and I call on all partners to support the country in implementing the changes required in this regard.

I also believe that a police academy and a military academy, which are to be established in the future, will act as critical enablers for the professionalization of defence and security personnel, and encourage partners to support the development of such national institutions.

101. Assistance in the functioning of the country's essential public services, especially in the education and health sectors, is indispensable. I welcome the sustained engagement of all international partners present in the country and their concerted efforts, in particular the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the African Development Bank, the West African Development Bank and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as bilateral donors. I encourage them to continue supporting Guinea-Bissau's national strategic and operational plan for the period from 2016 to 2020, and to honour the commitments made in the March 2015 donor round table in Brussels.

102. My Special Representative will continue to work closely with national, regional and international stakeholders to mobilize and invest financial, human and technical resources in designing and implementing programmes and projects to build greater resilience and better equip Guinea-Bissau to address challenges related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

103. To ensure the scaled up support of the international community for the political, development, security and human rights challenges in Guinea Bissau, I exhort the country's key political actors to demonstrate a high sense of responsibility by swiftly ending the ongoing political stalemate.

104. I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Modibo Ibrahim Touré, for their commitment and hard work, as well as to bilateral, regional and international partners for their continuing contributions to peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.