



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

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Tuesday, 10 September 2019, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Mevian Miaga
France	Mr. Michon
Germany	Mr. Licharz
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Mr. Lewicki
South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2019/664)

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau (S/2019/696)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2019/664)

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau (S/2019/696)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Guinea-Bissau to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, and His Excellency Mr. Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/664, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, and document S/2019/696, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Council today on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS).

Following the successful holding of legislative elections on 10 March, renewed political tensions resulted in a stalemate over the composition of the Executive Bureau of the National People's Assembly and delayed the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government. The situation was further complicated by the conclusion of President José Mário Vaz's five-year term in office on 23 June, amid differing opinions regarding interim arrangements for the office.

The decision of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of 29 June addressed those issues, enabling the swearing in of a new Government on 3 July and determining that President Vaz would remain in office until the holding of the next presidential elections, with limited powers, leaving the management of national affairs to the new Government.

Allow me to commend the Government for the unprecedented achievement of gender parity and the appointment of some highly qualified young people in the new Cabinet. That opens a new window of opportunity for inclusive governance in the country. The 31-member Government is composed solely from the majority alliance, reflecting the results of the legislative elections. However, the recent nomination and replacement of senior officials in key positions, including the new Commander of the National Guard, Rear Admiral Agostino Sousa Cordeiro, who is under European Union sanctions for his participation in the 2012 coup d'état, have triggered negative reactions from national and international stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the Government has adopted a seven-month emergency plan aimed at providing relief to key sectors, namely the education, health, infrastructure and public services sectors. It has also submitted its programme to the National Assembly for approval. However, given the current tensions within and among political parties, including within the majority alliance led by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde, the approval of the new Government's programme by the National People's Assembly will be a testament to the majority alliance's strength and ability to govern the country.

Since the inauguration of the Government, the political arena has been dominated by preparations for the presidential election. Several political parties have organized primaries to select their candidates, while some independent candidates have also emerged.

As we approach the 25 September deadline for the submission of candidacies to the Supreme Court for validation, we will continue to witness the emergence of new candidates.

Meanwhile, the electoral process remains fraught with challenges. Some political actors have expressed concern about the correction of the voters' register to regularize approximately 25,000 persons who were disenfranchised in the legislative elections, owing to their fear of fraud. They have also questioned the creation of the new position of Secretary of State for Electoral Management.

There is a general feeling of mistrust among national stakeholders surrounding the electoral process, which must be addressed before the election if we are to ensure a peaceful and consensual process and an outcome that is accepted by all. To address that, the group of five international partners in Bissau — the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations — has advocated for enhanced procedural control, transparent measures, information-sharing mechanisms and the development of a communication strategy on the voter register correction exercise. Ultimately, the joint message is that the country must remain focused on ensuring the timely holding of the presidential election.

Moreover, yesterday, 9 September, an ECOWAS ministerial delegation visited Bissau to assess progress in the organization of the election. In its final communiqué, it insisted that in the absence of consensus among all political parties on the voter register correction exercise, that the same voters register used for the legislative elections be applied for the presidential election. It also took note of the decision of the electoral bodies to hold the election in 2019, including the second rounds, if needed. The communiqué also requested a clarification of the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Electoral Management. In its response, the Government indicated today that the correction process will proceed for now but that the actual register will be updated only if the presidential candidates agree during an upcoming meeting at the Parliament.

Meanwhile, the initiatives taken by the Government and the electoral management bodies — the National Electoral Commission and the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process — to enhance general communication and consultations with political parties,

are steps in the right direction. To support that, the United Nations recommends the establishment of an all-inclusive stakeholders platform of national actors for information-sharing purposes. In the meantime, civil society organizations, including women's groups, have begun preparations for the establishment of a situation room to jointly monitor the election. They have also put in place coordinated efforts for the preparation and implementation of a code of conduct for the election.

The Government has developed a consolidated election budget that amounts to \$5.3 million. The United Nations is working closely with the authorities and the electoral bodies to fine-tune and finalize the budget. Additionally, the Government has committed to contributing to the electoral budget to cover initial expenses for the presidential election, amounting to \$730,000, in addition to paying the outstanding debt of \$1.6 million incurred from the legislative elections.

The voter register correction exercise, which started on 24 August, is the first of the major electoral activities and is expected to end on 24 September. However, less than one-quarter of the funding required for that exercise has been disbursed thus far. To address this, the United Nations Development Programme has contributed \$100,000 to the basket fund, while the Government has contributed approximately \$160,000 directly to both electoral management bodies: the National Electoral Commission and the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process.

Efforts to mobilize resources from the international community have yielded limited results so far. Several pledges and indications of interest have been made, but with no actual contributions. We expect the first batch of financial contributions from international partners to arrive before the first week of October. Should the funding arrive, it will be applied to the training of civic educators and of polling-staff trainers during October.

With 75 days left until the presidential election, it is important that funding be made available now, either bilaterally or through the United Nations Development Programme-managed basket fund, to ensure that electoral operations in the month of November — namely, the training, deployment and payment of polling and security personnel, as well as the movement of materials to all polling stations — are completed in a timely manner. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to encourage international partners to extend their generosity to Guinea-Bissau to provide the necessary

financial support for the election with urgency. Time is of the essence. The partner's contributions will be instrumental in ensuring the holding of the presidential election on 24 November.

Since the formation of the Government, UNIOGBIS has developed, with the Minister for Women, Family and Social Solidarity, a programme to promote the visibility of the eight women Ministers, support their outreach to the population and discuss key public administration programmatic areas from a gender perspective. UNIOGBIS has also supported a civil society network, including women organizations, in monitoring and advocating for key reforms during the post-electoral period.

The political environment continues to negatively impact the economic performance of the country and the living conditions of the population. The human rights situation continues to be negatively impacted by socioeconomic tensions, including targeted restrictions on freedom and civil liberties. Upholding these rights remains crucial to sustaining peace, stability and development in Guinea-Bissau.

Meanwhile, drug trafficking and organized crime continue to pose threats to peace and security in the country and beyond. The seizure by the judicial police of about 1,869 kilogrammes of cocaine on 2 September signals that Guinea-Bissau remains a transit route for drug trafficking, but also illustrates the enhanced capacity of the judicial police to combat the scourge. The signing on 2 August of a memorandum of understanding between Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia and Senegal to combat drug trafficking and organized crime along their borders is a commendable effort to tackle the cross-border threat. I appeal to the international community to provide financial and technical support to the Government of Guinea-Bissau in its fight against drug trafficking and organized crime in order to prevent losing the gains achieved thus far.

Pursuant to resolution 2458 (2019), measures have been put in place for the United Nations transition plan for the prospective closure of UNIOGBIS by 31 December 2020. As a first step, one regional office has been closed and the remaining three will follow by 31 December this year. Additionally, coordination structures to oversee and plan for the transition have been established in Bissau and at Headquarters.

The development of the United Nations transition plan, including a preliminary mission drawdown plan,

is ongoing. A full-scale transition implementation will be launched in close coordination with the United Nations country team, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the national authorities following the conclusion of the presidential election. The United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau has also engaged with the Government on the gradual transfer of the UNIOGBIS residual mandated tasks to the United Nations country team, UNOWAS and other partners.

With the arrival of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly in Bissau, as of 5 September, scaled-up engagement with the Government is planned, in particular after the presidential election. Meanwhile, UNIOGBIS and UNOWAS have already started strengthening their information-sharing arrangements and Special Representative Chambas of UNOWAS has increased his engagement with UNIOGBIS on the political process, having also visited Bissau twice this year.

The year 2019 is pivotal for Guinea-Bissau in terms of seizing the opportunity to end the recurring cycle of instability that has hampered its socioeconomic development for decades. The risk of further instability in the period leading to the presidential election is high, with political rivalries and poor economic prospects for the population. The role of national political stakeholders in ensuring stability cannot be overemphasized. All national actors must be mindful of their duties towards the people of Guinea-Bissau and the need to transcend narrow individual and party interests.

All efforts must be made to ensure the timely holding of an inclusive, credible and peaceful presidential election. Both the Government and the international community should abide by their commitment to providing resources for the election. In the longer run, key institutional reforms, including a constitutional review, will remain critical to consolidating the country's stability. Collaboration between all branches of power and in the National People's Assembly will therefore be vital in preparing the ground for an inclusive reform process. The sustained engagement of international partners will also be crucial to accompany Guinea-Bissau in its path towards lasting stability.

I would like to conclude by commending ECOWAS for its leading role and steadfast commitment to ensuring stability in Guinea-Bissau, including the maintenance of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau, despite

other security challenges facing the region. My sincere appreciation also goes to all partners, including the African Union, the CPLP and the European Union, for their valuable contribution to stabilization efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Vieira.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation to address the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). I also wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her comprehensive briefing today.

Guinea-Bissau is facing a critical moment on its path to consolidating democracy and strengthening its institutions. In spite of all the difficulties, legislative elections were successfully held in March. The country is now preparing for the presidential elections scheduled for 24 November, with a second round, if needed, foreseen for 29 December. A peaceful transition of power would be an historic achievement for the people of Guinea-Bissau. The steadfast support of the international community is therefore crucial at this important juncture.

I welcome the recent appointment of Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). I have already had the opportunity to hold a fruitful and cordial exchange with her, in which I reiterated the readiness of the PBC to support her mission.

The PBC configuration has been closely following the political situation in Guinea-Bissau and the planning process for the transition and drawdown of UNIOGBIS, as mandated by resolution 2458 (2019), adopted on 28 February. During its most recent meeting, on 6 May, the configuration received updates from Mr. José Viegas Filho, the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UNIOGBIS, and from Mr. Tanou Koné, Permanent Observer of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to the United Nations.

Following that meeting, the Peacebuilding Commission issued a statement calling on the political stakeholders of Guinea-Bissau to sustain their

commitment to the Conakry Agreement, underscoring the urgent need for the appointment of a Prime Minister and stressing the importance of holding transparent, credible and peaceful presidential elections in 2019, in accordance with the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau.

The new Government was formed three and a half months after the election, following the agreement reached during the Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, held on 29 June. The efforts undertaken by ECOWAS demonstrate its pivotal role in supporting political stability and the consolidation of democracy in Guinea-Bissau. The members of the configuration also welcomed Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) investments in Guinea-Bissau, particularly in the context of the legislative elections and the UNIOGBIS drawdown. They stressed the importance of ongoing PBF projects aimed at empowering women and youth, especially in the areas of fostering their participation in political advocacy and decision-making, conflict resolution and sustaining peace efforts. Finally, they commended the important work done by the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General, José Viegas Filho, and by the UNIOGBIS staff.

Today, we have heard Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita introduce the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/664). The PBC welcomes the report and commends the UNIOGBIS team and its leadership, as well as the Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs, for their support for the country's peacebuilding efforts and for the progress made in the planning of the mission's drawdown.

The PBC welcomes the appointment of a new Prime Minister and the subsequent formation of a new Government. While taking note that 11 women have been appointed to the Government, we encourage further progress towards achieving gender parity and similar progress in other institutions. We also encourage the national authorities and the people of Guinea-Bissau to ensure transparent, credible and peaceful presidential elections. We thank international partners who are providing the necessary financial support for this ballot, and we encourage partners to consider making further contributions. As I said, that will represent a milestone towards the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau.

Please allow me to highlight some key elements of the report that are particularly relevant to the peacebuilding agenda.

In that regard, I welcome the work done by UNIOGBIS in supporting the effective participation of women in national affairs within the framework of the women and peace and security agenda. UNIOGBIS collaborated with the United Nations country team and the Peacebuilding Fund in contributing to strengthening the active involvement of women in civil society consultations and facilitation efforts, thereby helping to encourage political dialogue in Guinea-Bissau.

Projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund continue to play a critical role in supporting political and institutional stabilization processes in Guinea-Bissau. Under the Peacebuilding Fund portfolio, consisting of 10 projects worth \$10.9 million, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team have supported the implementation of mutually reinforcing initiatives, including on dialogue, national reconciliation and the strengthening of the justice and media sectors.

The projects contributed to more inclusive and participatory legislative elections in March by providing election training for women and youth candidates, supporting the monitoring of the elections by domestic observers in collaboration with the European Union, empowering the media to provide more objective and non-partisan reporting on the elections, and financing multiple live radio broadcasts of meetings between the general public and political candidates.

With regard to the reconfiguration and drawdown of UNIOGBIS, the PBC has taken note of the guidance provided by the Security Council in resolution 2458 (2019) of 28 February. In our discussion at the meeting of 6 May, some PBC members encouraged flexibility concerning the reconfiguration, referring to the need to maintain the current configuration of UNIOGBIS until the conclusion of the presidential election. A suggestion was made to consider past good practices, including the possibility of supporting the development of a peacebuilding plan, as was done during the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, as a tool to support the country after the UNIOGBIS drawdown.

I reiterate the readiness of the PBC to support the reconfiguration exercise and provide timely and specific advice to the Security Council in that regard. I also thank the Peacebuilding Fund for its commitment to continuing to support key initiatives to ensure that ongoing peacebuilding priorities supported by the mission are not left unattended.

The presidential election in November will complete the electoral cycle in Guinea-Bissau. That, we expect, should enable the national authorities and the people of Guinea-Bissau to focus their attention on the national development agenda and implement the reforms outlined in the Conakry Agreement. In that regard, the PBC will continue to serve as a platform for the country to mobilize international support, including for the implementation of the development programmes identified in the Government's strategic development plan for the period from 2015-2025, known as Terra Ranka. The PBC will also continue to support the international community, in consultation with the Government, in considering ways to strengthen national institutional capacity to deliver peacebuilding and development objectives.

I also plan to visit Guinea-Bissau in October to engage with the Government and local stakeholders. The objective and the agenda of the visit will be discussed with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and PBC members, as per usual practice. I will share the report of my visit with the Security Council, in accordance with the PBC advisory role to the Security Council.

Once again, I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to brief the Security Council. I look forward to our continued cooperation in support of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Vieira for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the holding of this briefing on developments in the situation in Guinea-Bissau and thanks Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their excellent briefings.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the progress made by the authorities of Guinea-Bissau in resolving the crisis, in particular the peaceful holding of the legislative elections on 10 March, the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government on 3 July. My delegation also notes with satisfaction the decision of President José Mário Vaz on 18 June to set the date for the presidential elections for 24 November.

Those positive developments are the outcome of continued and robust dialogue among the stakeholders of Guinea-Bissau. They were also made possible through the support of the international community, in particular the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS has indeed remained constant in its support for the ongoing political process, while remaining firm in its call for all stakeholders to respect the commitments freely entered into under the Conakry Agreement and the ECOWAS Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau.

Despite the encouraging progress made in recent months, the sociopolitical and security situation remains fragile, as evidenced by the resurgence of tensions a few weeks before the presidential election. My country therefore urges all political actors in Guinea-Bissau to join forces to organize an inclusive, credible and peaceful presidential election on 24 November as a crucial step towards the conclusion of the electoral cycle and the preservation of achievements in the crisis resolution process. The steadfast commitment of local actors to forging a path to peace and stability should be supported by the international community and development partners, who must strengthen their level of mobilization around Guinea-Bissau.

With regard to the activities of UNIOGBIS, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the mission's support of political dialogue, the national reconciliation process and the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the ECOWAS Road Map. Furthermore, it notes the definitive cessation of the activities of the Bubaque regional office on 21 June, which marked the starting point for the closure of all regional offices by 31 December, in accordance with resolution 2458 (2019). In addition, my country welcomes the ongoing transition planning process and encourages the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to seize this opportunity to strengthen their cooperation with UNIOGBIS with a view to ensuring ownership of the activities to be transferred to the country and better management of post-election institutional reforms.

Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its full support for the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and ECOWAS, whose decision, taken at the 55th Summit of Heads of State and Government on 29 June, to extend the mandate of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau until April 2020 is welcome. Côte d'Ivoire urges them to increase synergies in support of the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and

the ECOWAS Road Map. My country also expresses its appreciation to Mr. José Viegas Filho, outgoing Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, UNIOGBIS staff, the United Nations country team and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel for their commitment to peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its call on all political actors in Guinea-Bissau to prioritize dialogue as a means of resolving their political differences and to resolutely join in the international community's efforts to promote a definitive and lasting solution to the crisis.

Mr. Mevian Miaga (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is with great satisfaction and enthusiasm that Equatorial Guinea welcomes the convening of this meeting, which allow us once again to analyse and share perspectives on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. My delegation would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Ms. Bintou Keita, and Ambassador Vieira for their comprehensive and useful briefings. We also welcome the presence of Ambassador Da Silva at this meeting.

This is a crucial year in terms of Guinea-Bissau moving quickly from the current political and institutional crisis to a phase that offers opportunities to promote the political and economic transformation of the country. I once again welcome the peaceful holding of legislative elections in March and commend the people of Guinea-Bissau on the great sense of responsibility and civic-mindedness it showed. Those were elections in which 21 political parties took part and more than 760,000 people — representing 85 per cent of the electorate — turned out to vote. The population's civic involvement has been amply demonstrated by what are remarkable and encouraging statistics for any political process. We welcome the election results and the work done by the National Electoral Commission, which, by remaining transparent throughout the process, has ensured that the results are credible and do not give rise to post-electoral incidences.

It is well known that the elections were crucial to ending the political stagnation experienced by the country since 2015 and to paving the way for a process of democratization, stabilization of peace and economic recovery. In addition, the massive participation of women in the electoral process should be praised. There has never been a greater number of women candidates or voters in the country's

entire history. The importance that the authorities have ascribed to women is reflected in the composition of the current Government, in which women account for 35.48 per cent. This represents a significant step forward in gender equality and makes Guinea-Bissau the first country in West Africa to have an inclusive and balanced Government, thereby giving both sexes the opportunity to showcase their ability to improve the population's living conditions.

However, the legislative elections were the first step to these ends and, as stressed in the seventeenth preambular paragraph of resolution 2458 (2019),

“all stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau should work to ensure short, medium and long-term stability through clear commitment and genuine inclusive political dialogue aimed at creating conditions conducive to finding viable and sustainable solutions to the country's social, economic, political and military problems, which would facilitate the implementation of key reforms and the strengthening of State institutions.”

The consolidation of these achievements through the stabilization of the country should translate into an obligation and responsibility for the new Government to organize credible, free, fair and peaceful presidential elections on 24 November. In this regard, it should be noted that, as was the case with the legislative elections, a fundamental element of successful presidential elections is international mobilization to ensure that the necessary funding is allocated to the smooth completion of the electoral process. Just yesterday in Guinea-Bissau, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) assessment mission and Prime Minister Aristides Gomes met to discuss the matter. We therefore encourage all partners and friends of Guinea-Bissau to spare no effort to that end and to fulfil their commitments.

In line with the press release of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of 11 June, Equatorial Guinea expresses its deep concern at the growing trend of drug-related crimes in Guinea-Bissau, which continue to be a major security concern and contribute to ongoing instability in the country. In that regard, the Government of Guinea-Bissau should strengthen national laws to better combat drug-related crimes. In that connection, we highly appreciate the joint efforts of United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the Judicial

Police and the National Guard, which led to the burning, three days ago, of more than 1.8 tons of cocaine seized on 2 September. That was the largest drug seizure in the history of the country. Guinea-Bissau is certainly not a narco-State. Like all other States, however, it is unfortunately affected by that phenomenon. We continue to commend the determination of the Judicial Police to neutralize drug traffickers.

With regard to the closure of UNIOGBIS at the end of next year, our position fully aligns with resolution 2458 (2019), which stresses the need to guarantee an efficient transfer of tasks and responsibilities from the mission to the United Nations country team, as well as to the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and other partners.

I conclude by stressing that Guinea-Bissau is a country with great biodiversity wealth and many assets, considering its relatively small size, and should be easier to manage. Unfortunately, persistent long-standing institutional problems do not help to promote economic development and ensure a bright future for all its citizens.

Guinea-Bissau can also boast that its elections have all been endorsed by the international and local communities. The problems always arise after the elections. The real difficulty is managing the post-election period. My country's Government does not want to see election results disputed again in the wake of the next presidential elections. We hope that citizens' votes will be respected.

As the Secretary-General stressed in his report (S/2019/664), the security situation could be adversely affected if political tensions persist in the midst of a worsening socioeconomic environment, currently characterized by strikes and long-standing claims by civil servants. We reiterate our call for the armed forces to remain neutral with regard to the political process and to protect the constitutional order.

That is why, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba intends to make his second and final visit to Guinea-Bissau before the presidential elections of 24 November and days before the start of the electoral campaign.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): First, I wish to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant-Secretary-

General for Africa, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the positive developments in Guinea-Bissau and to encourage the Bissau-Guinean actors to continue their efforts to consolidate the still fragile advances.

France in particular welcomes the holding of legislative elections in March, which was a major step forward. Although the post-election situation remains fragile, the responsible and commendable behaviour of all Bissau-Guinean civilian and military actors created a good environment for the elections.

These developments are indicators of the effectiveness of international community support. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge the decisive role of the Group of Five — the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations — in achieving those results. I would like to pay tribute to ECOWAS in particular, whose unwavering political, economic and military commitment has borne fruit, and which remains very involved in supporting its neighbours. I would also like to highlight the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, under the leadership of Ambassador Vieira, and that of its Fund.

The Security Council sent a mission to the country in February, co-organized by Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, which was important because it showed the Council's support for the holding of elections under good conditions. Those developments show that the tools we have collectively deployed in response to this crisis, including sanctions, have been effective.

As the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) enters the last year of its mandate, France expresses its support for the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly, who can count on our support in her efforts to support the Bissau-Guinean actors and implement the UNIOGBIS transition plan agreed in the Council.

Despite the progress I have mentioned, the political process in Guinea-Bissau must be consolidated. In particular, it is critical that the presidential elections be held in a peaceful atmosphere on the scheduled dates — the first round on 24 November and the second

round on 29 December. Adhering to that electoral timetable is key to avoiding a new political crisis. We therefore expect the Bissau-Guinean authorities to continue to mobilize fully in the technical preparations for the elections. In particular, it is absolutely essential to ensure the proper organization of the National Electoral Commission and to rapidly reach consensus on the revision of the electoral lists. Those elections will close the electoral cycle, and their success, in our view, is a necessary precondition for progress on the sanctions front, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/664).

In addition, the restoration of lasting peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau requires progress in other areas. In that regard, I would recall the importance of the swift implementation of all the political reforms provided for in the 2016 Conakry Agreement.

Moreover, as several speakers have noted, the fight against organized crime, in general, and drug trafficking, in particular, requires a resolute commitment from the Bissau-Guinean authorities and the continued support of the international community. The seizure of a large amount of cocaine, as mentioned by Ms. Keita, is also an encouraging sign of that commitment.

Finally, the reform of the security sector, which has already begun, with the support of UNIOGBIS, is key. Recent history has shown that there can be no long-term stability in the country without comprehensive security sector reform.

We are therefore at a pivotal moment. The coming weeks should allow us to confirm that Guinea-Bissau is truly on the road to lasting stabilization. The supporting role of the countries of the region and, more broadly, of the international community and the Council will be critical in the coming period. The Bissau-Guinean authorities can count on France to support their efforts.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira for their briefings.

At the outset, we would like to congratulate the Government of Guinea-Bissau for having held peaceful legislative elections on 10 March. The results have been characterized by international observers and by civil society as fair and credible. We welcome the appointment of the new Prime Minister and the establishment of the new Government.

We commend the efforts of international partners, such as the African Union, the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), for their support in the preparation of the most recent elections. The fact that the security environment has remained relatively stable during this period bodes well for the next step — presidential elections in November.

We also note that socioeconomic instability is closely related to political tensions. We would urge all the parties involved not to interfere so as to allow for the achievement of the priority goal. We also urge the Government to spare no effort to reach an agreement on a political framework that covers all key electoral issues.

Drug trafficking and organized transnational crime continue to pose a threat to the stability and national security of Guinea-Bissau. We wholeheartedly support the efforts of UNIOGBIS to serve as a partner to the Government, which has demonstrated its renewed commitment to improve the national response mechanism to combat drug trafficking and related crimes.

We also welcome the progress made in the prosecution of those responsible for gender-based violence and for intercommunal clashes fuelled by land disputes. However, impunity continues to give rise to a lack of trust in the justice system and dissatisfaction among the population vis-à-vis the authorities. Putting an end to impunity and strengthening the justice system is essential to building a peaceful and secure society in Guinea-Bissau.

The Dominican Republic commends the training efforts carried out by UNIOGBIS as well as the integration of women into human rights defenders teams, which are a key part of promoting a fairer and more inclusive society. In February, UNIOGBIS, in cooperation with the National Network of Human Rights Defenders, trained human rights defenders, including women from various regions of the country. This kind of training helps to raise awareness about the human rights dimension of the Stability Pact and the Code of Conduct and Electoral Ethics for the legislative elections.

The maintenance of peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau must be shored up through the promotion and upholding of human Rights.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking the Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and Ambassador Vieira for their comprehensive and detailed briefings on the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

We wish to focus on two points today: first, the political situation in Guinea-Bissau, and, secondly, the future of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS).

Belgium welcomes the successful holding of legislative elections in March, shortly after the visit carried out by the Council, which enabled us better to understand the challenges that country is facing. We welcome in particular the high level of participation and the strong mobilization of women, which are the indications of the democratic vitality of the society of Guinea-Bissau.

The appointment of a Prime Minister and a Government, especially the announcement that presidential elections will be held on 24 November, are encouraging news. We invite the Government to take the measures necessary to organize credible, free, fair and peaceful presidential elections. However, tensions and a climate of mistrust continue to characterize the political landscape. This is for us a source of concern, as we should not overlook the fact that political stability will contribute to socioeconomic recovery and to the combat against trafficking. The time has come for national political actors to play a positive and constructive role. In that regard, we believe that the sanctions regime remains appropriate.

Concerning UNIOGBIS, we would recall the importance of respect by all parties for all provisions of the Conakry Agreement, and also of the implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) road map. Belgium believes that in order to ensure an orderly transition, it is vital to avoid proceeding with undue haste if conditions on the ground are not suitable. The transition process of the United Nations presence in no way means that the international community is abandoning Guinea-Bissau.

For these reasons, we call for a greater involvement on the part of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Office for West Africa and the

Sahel and the strengthening of the country team and of the resources provided to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In the immediate future, Belgium calls for coordinated action between UNIOGBIS and the Group of Five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau: the African Union, ECOWAS, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations. The follow-up provided by the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the support provided by the Peacebuilding Fund are also important elements in the new chapter that will begin in Guinea-Bissau.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Belgium's full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Sori-Coulibaly, in the exercise of her functions.

Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. We would also like to express our appreciation to the briefers for their comprehensive inputs.

Foremost, let me express our appreciation and greatest support to the former Special Representative, José Viegas Filho, and his team, including the United Nations country team in Guinea-Bissau, for their tireless efforts in contributing to the peace and stability of Guinea-Bissau.

My intervention will be restricted to two points: the political situation and drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau.

On the political front, my delegation wishes to commend the Government of Guinea-Bissau for the significant progress achieved to date. Following the legislative elections on March 10, a new Government has been put in place, as well as a new Prime Minister. In this regard, we look forward to the presidential elections set for 24 November, which are crucial in continuing to set a trajectory of stability in Guinea-Bissau. In particular, we must commend the notable inclusion of women in the new Government, who now hold eight of 16 ministerial and three of 15 Secretary of State positions. Furthermore, we urge the parties to address the reforms stipulated in the Conakry Agreement.

South Africa would like to commend the work done by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, the Community of

Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union, the United Nations and international stakeholders and on their steadfast commitment in breaching the political impasse and their mediation efforts. We urge ECOWAS to continue safeguarding this welcome progress; the support of the international community is paramount in this regard.

The maintenance of regional stability in Guinea-Bissau is a necessary condition for further unlocking fragile regions of the area such as Mali and the other countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel and for promoting broader peace on the African continent.

As the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) continues its drawdown process, and in the light of the impending presidential elections, we must be prudent in our approach to ensure that we do not leave a vacuum. It is important that we safeguard the gains that have been accomplished by UNIOGBIS in partnership with the Government and regional bodies.

On the drug-trafficking challenges, South Africa commends the work being done by the new Partnership Coordination Forum on countering drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, and particularly recognizes the mammoth task that it is undertaking. South Africa supports the Secretary-General's call on the international community to support and curb this epidemic. Moreover, the regional implications of the drug-trafficking trade route are worrisome, as they are also utilized for arms and human trafficking. The recent seizure of a significant consignment destined for Mali underscores the urgency of providing support to curtail this pandemic. Most concerning is the fact that drug trafficking could possibly be utilized to fund and fuel terrorist activities in an already volatile region.

Lastly, the decades of political instability have made it difficult to implement public policy; consequently, the level of human development remains low in Guinea-Bissau. Most worrisome is the negative impact on young people in the absence of conducive socioeconomic conditions, as mobilization for terrorist activities may thrive as a result. It is therefore imperative for us as the international community to redouble our efforts to supporting continued peace in Guinea-Bissau while also supporting the aspirations of the African Union's efforts to silence the guns.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China)(*spoke in Chinese*): China listened attentively to the briefings by Assistant

Secretary-General Keita and Ambassador Vieira. China takes note of the Secretary-General's report on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2019/664).

China has closely followed developments in the situation in Guinea-Bissau. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, 2019 will be a pivotal year for the political and social life of Guinea-Bissau. Legislative elections were successfully held in March. In July, the new Prime Minister took office and successfully formed a new Government. On 24 November, Guinea-Bissau will hold a presidential election. We hope that all parties in Guinea-Bissau will make joint efforts to ensure that the election is carried out smoothly and on schedule. At the same time, the international community should continue to provide technical, financial and logistical support to election preparations based on the needs of the Bissau-Guinean Government.

China appreciates the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and countries of the region to promote the political process in Guinea-Bissau. All parties in Guinea-Bissau should act in the long-term interests of the country and its people, establish mutual trust through dialogue and consultation, build consensus, resolve differences, consolidate the positive progress achieved in the political process, make sound preparations for the presidential election and commit to improving living standards and promoting stable development in the country.

China has always supported African countries in solving African problems in African ways, and has supported ECOWAS and countries of the regional in continuing to play a constructive role in promoting stability and development in Guinea-Bissau and the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the ECOWAS six-point road map. We call on relevant United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations country team, to strengthen coordination and cooperation and provide targeted assistance to Guinea-Bissau based on respect for its sovereignty and will.

Development holds the key to solving all problems. China firmly supports the people of Guinea-Bissau in exploring a path of development suited to their national

conditions and has always respected their independent choices. Cooperation between China and Guinea-Bissau in the areas of agriculture, health and medical care, in the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, has made positive contributions to Guinea-Bissau's efforts to achieve food self-sufficiency, poverty alleviation and development.

China stands ready to work with international community to continue to play a positive role in promoting lasting stability and development in Guinea-Bissau and West Africa.

Mr. Clay (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Keita and Ambassador Vieira for their briefings today, which set out a broadly optimistic assessment of Guinea-Bissau's political trajectory. The United Kingdom shares this cautious optimism.

The successful conduct of legislative elections in March and the subsequent appointment of a Prime Minister and formation of a Government were significant steps forward, and we commend the Bissau-Guinean authorities and people on this progress. The turnout of 85 per cent in the legislative elections was an impressive signal of the commitment to the people of Guinea-Bissau to a democratic future for their country.

The next step in Guinea-Bissau's political transition is the presidential election in November. We hope to see the country build on the positive momentum generated by the legislative elections earlier this year. The United Kingdom notes the challenges set out by Assistant Secretary-General Keita today and calls on all Bissau-Guinean political stakeholders to put the national interest first and play their part in delivering a free, fair, timely, inclusive and credible election.

Like other Council members, we were encouraged to see the enactment of the new Parity Law on the Participation of Women in Politics and Decision-making Spheres, requiring a minimum representation of women in elections of 36 per cent. We urge Bissau-Guinean political parties to adhere to this law. A more diverse Government will be a stronger and most stable Government. We also commend Prime Minister Gomes for splitting his Cabinet posts equally between men and women, and we would be encouraged to see this law transferred to other national institutions in Guinea-Bissau.

We note in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/696) the commendable behaviour of the Guinea-Bissau military in the years following the 2012 coup. Should the presidential elections take place as scheduled in November in a free and fair manner, and pending implementation of the priority reforms as outlined in the Conakry Agreement and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau, the United Kingdom would be open to a review of the sanction measures currently imposed under resolution 2048 (2012).

The United Kingdom appreciates the supporting role played in Guinea-Bissau by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations country team and other United Nations bodies and offices, which have helped build a more robust and inclusive political environment. We welcome the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Sori-Coulibaly, and offer her our full support in carrying out her mandate.

The United Kingdom also recognizes the key role played by ECOWAS in holding political stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to account. We trust that ECOWAS will remain as engaged and vigilant as Guinea-Bissau prepares to hold its presidential elections in November and throughout the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement.

We also welcome the steps taken so far by UNIOGBIS in preparation for transition and note that these steps are a positive reflection of the political progress made in Guinea-Bissau. The United Kingdom continues to believe that December 2020 is a realistic deadline for the UNIOGBIS withdrawal from Guinea-Bissau. However, we will be ready to review this position should there arise a serious threat to peace and stability. It is our sincere hope, however, that such a threat does not arise and that the shared sense of optimism we have heard today continues to be well justified.

As UNIOGBIS prepares to withdraw from Guinea-Bissau and hands over key responsibilities to the United Nations country team and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), it is imperative that political stakeholders continue to engage positively with United Nations good offices and sustain their commitment to the Conakry Agreement until it has been fully implemented. In that context, we welcome

UNOWAS efforts to increase its engagement on Guinea-Bissau ahead of the departure of UNIOGBIS.

We hope that the political progress Guinea-Bissau has achieved in recent years can be maintained to carry the country out of its past and into a stronger, more stable and more democratic future. The primary responsibility for delivering this lies with the Bissau-Guinean Government. The United Kingdom, along with the international community, will continue to monitor the situation closely and work with the Government in support of this objective.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission configuration, Ambassador Mauro Vieira, for their very informative and comprehensive briefings.

I am heartened to hear about the positive developments in Guinea-Bissau, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/664). Much progress has been made on the political front in Guinea-Bissau, including the holding of legislative elections and the appointment of the Prime Minister. In addition, the general security situation in Guinea-Bissau remains relatively stable. We hope that this conducive environment can be maintained, particularly ahead of the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled to take place in two months. I would like to reiterate three pertinent points.

First, the presidential election planned for November this year is crucial. All Bissau-Guinean stakeholders must contribute positively towards enabling the completion of the electoral cycle in a peaceful and timely manner. It is important to note, however, that this is merely one step that should pave the way to surmounting the task ahead. The political will demonstrated by all parties thus far needs to be maintained in implementing key reforms, including revision of the Constitution, the electoral law and the law on political parties. These are prerequisite for Guinea-Bissau to be able to devote its attention to ensuring long-term stability and development for the benefit of its people.

This brings me to my second point — socioeconomic development. As Prime Minister Aristides Gomes has said, the Government must focus on improving the socioeconomic situation and the implementation of the Terra Ranka plan. As the name Terra Ranka suggests, we hope that the strategic development plan will

give the entire Bissau-Guinean population a chance to start afresh. We commend the partners that have pledged to support the plan, and call on the international community to continue supporting Guinea-Bissau, not only in its economic development but also in tackling various challenges, including the promotion of human rights and the fight against transnational organized crime.

Thirdly, Indonesia supports and commends the work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and the implementation of its mandated priorities. Having been present in the country since 2010, the mission has carried out important tasks, including fostering dialogue and reconciliation, strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing State capacity.

It is therefore necessary to ensure a seamless transition to the United Nations country team and other partners upon the expiry of its mandate in 2020. We welcome the establishment of the transition task force and reiterate the importance of national ownership in the transition process. We also commend the role of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as regional and subregional organizations, such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, in supporting various programmes, projects and initiatives in Guinea-Bissau. We hope that they can continue to play their crucial roles, particularly after the closure of UNIOGBIS.

Lastly, we look forward to the holding of the presidential election and the implementation of key reforms for the long-term stability and development of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank Ms. Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Ambassador Vieira for their valuable briefings. We also thank Mr. José Viegas Filho, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, for his efforts during his term as Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). We also congratulate Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau. We wish her every success in the upcoming period, especially during the electoral process and the drawdown of UNIOGBIS in 2020.

We are two months away from the presidential elections, due to be held in Guinea-Bissau at the end of November. This is seen as an important stage in achieving long-term stability in the country. We look forward to fair, transparent and credible elections being held within the time frame set for them. The successful legislative elections held in March have demonstrated that the national authorities can conduct elections successfully, with the support of the international community.

There are many positive aspects to be mentioned when discussing developments in Guinea-Bissau as compared to the previous period, which was complicated in terms of achieving the basic requirements of the Conakry Agreement, which to date is clearly the best option to achieve stability. We have seen the successful conclusion of a full presidential term for the first time in the history of Guinea-Bissau in the past 25 years. Moreover, we have witnessed the successful completion of the legislative elections and the formation of a new Government, as well as intensive efforts to overcome the various challenges facing the country.

There are important steps for Guinea-Bissau to take in the upcoming period, particularly ahead of the closure of UNIOGBIS. The first such step is the presidential elections, followed by the necessary reforms, especially constitutional reforms. We call on the authorities in the country to take advantage in the upcoming period of the support provided by UNIOGBIS with a view to ensuring the necessary reforms and building the State's capabilities in preparation for the drawdown of the Office.

Despite the stable security situation, challenges continue, especially with regard to transnational crime and drug trafficking in the country. The whole region suffers from those threats, which have been discussed in the Security Council on many occasions, the most important of which was the briefing held in December 2018, when we discussed the impact of such challenges on security in West Africa (see S/PV.8433).

We commend the Government's commitment to overcoming such challenges and the support of UNIOGBIS as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their tireless efforts, which have led to the seizure and confiscation of huge amounts of drugs on more than one occasion.

We appreciate the pivotal role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

in Guinea-Bissau through its ongoing support for advancing the political process in the country and the role of its military mission there. We fully support its efforts and those of the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

In conclusion, we welcome the steps taken by UNIOGBIS to prepare for its closure by the end of 2020. We commend its decision to establish an integrated task force to organize the drawdown of the Office. We believe that the United Nations should continue to play a role after the closure of the Office, particularly since Guinea-Bissau currently faces a difficult economic situation. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel must continue to provide support after 2020 in many of the areas within its mandate. Moreover, the Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in that regard. We welcome the projects that it is financing, as the role of the Commission will strengthen the efforts to maintain the current stability in the country, especially after the closure of UNIOGBIS.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting and thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

We would like to begin by highlighting the political progress made in Guinea-Bissau, such as the holding of legislative elections on 10 March after more than three years of political impasse, the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government. We welcome the active participation of civil society organizations and women in that process, which, with the assistance of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), allowed for the development of important initiatives, such as the Code of Conduct and Electoral Ethics.

We also highlight the fact that 24 November has been set as the date for holding the presidential elections. We urge the Guinea-Bissau authorities to work without delay on the organization and holding of those elections on the basis of lessons learned and with the necessary resources in order to promote the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and to foster dialogue and national reconciliation.

In that context, it will be important that UNIOGBIS continue to assist the country in organizing the elections,

in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2458 (2019). The entire international community must also be committed to addressing the technical, logistical and financial aspects and to encouraging widespread citizen participation, including of women and young people in particular.

However, we must bear in mind that, while such progress encouraging, the Government authorities must have the strong political will to advance towards peace, stability and socioeconomic development in the country.

We believe that it is essential, first, to continue working on the constitutional reform process, strengthening the rule of law and establishing inclusive democratic institutions, including security sector reform. Secondly, the ongoing threat posed by drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in the country must be addressed, while developing a consistent anti-corruption strategy. Thirdly, it is necessary to implement the socioeconomic reforms that the population so badly needs, which will allow the country's vast agricultural, mining and fishing potential to be exploited.

To that end, the full involvement of the national authorities, the strengthening of regional cooperation and the maintenance of policy and operational coherence among the various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed on the ground will be crucial. That is especially important in view of the upcoming withdrawal of UNIOGBIS, which will require a new type of partnership with the United Nations to enable an inclusive and successful transition process. In that context, we would also like to highlight the projects promoted by the Peacebuilding Fund, which play a fundamental role in supporting the political and institutional stabilization processes in Guinea-Bissau, as Ambassador Vieira just outlined.

We emphasize the work that the United Nations country team, together with the Peacebuilding Commission, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and the European Union are carrying out on the ground to promote economic growth, human development, the sustainable management of resources and the strengthening of the rule of law and governance.

To conclude, I would like to thank Mr. Viegas Filho for the important work he carried out, as well as to wish

Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly every success in her new role as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNIOGBIS.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): At the outset, let me thank Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita and Ambassador Mauro Vieira of Brazil for their very comprehensive and useful briefings.

We would like to congratulate the people of Guinea-Bissau on holding fair, credible and inclusive elections, with a high voter turnout of almost 85 per cent; it was very impressive. We also welcome the high level of participation by women voters and concurrently regret the low gender-diversity in the composition of Parliament. We encourage continued support for the effective participation of women in national affairs within the framework of the women and peace and security agenda.

At the same time, we encourage the elected members of Parliament to be mindful of their duties with respect to the people of Guinea-Bissau and to surpass individual and party gains for the sake of the collective interests and stability of their country. We remind all stakeholders that avoiding a new impasse over post-electoral power-sharing is a necessity to ensure stability in the long-term perspective.

Poland urges and relies on the Guinea-Bissau authorities to hold fair and credible presidential elections, to be held as announced on 24 November, with the assistance of the reactivated the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) High-level Steering Committee on Elections. We therefore call on Bissau-Guinean stakeholders to provide firm political direction and take leadership in the electoral process, step up the required technical preparations and empower the electoral management bodies to implement appropriate solutions for timely and credible elections.

Poland is concerned about the lack of sufficient action to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, issues that have been raised by a number of delegations, which remain a serious threat to national stability and security. In the same vein, the socioeconomic situation and macroeconomic climate, affected by the continuous political instability, is worrisome, even with the perspective of 2019 investments. In that regard, we believe in Guinea-Bissau's dedication to develop a national action plan and strengthen the capacity of the Financial Investigation

Unit, as well as legal and institutional anti-corruption frameworks. Ensuring worthier economic performance is necessary to combat tensions on the social front, and it needs political stability.

Last but not least, we support the progress made in the prosecution of gender-based violence and in addressing intercommunal violence related to land disputes. However, at the same time, we urge the authorities to establish the recommended national human rights institution, in compliance with the Paris Principles. Human rights are crucial for sustaining peace and ensuring long-term stability, development and security in Guinea-Bissau.

I conclude by highlighting how important it is that the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau continue to support the country in all the efforts I mentioned, especially in the autumn period.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the former UNIOGBIS Special Representative, Mr. José Viegas Filho, for his dedication and hard work, as well as to the UNIOGBIS staff, the United Nations country team, the Economic Community of West African States, the Group of Five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau and all regional and international partners. Likewise, I would like to warmly welcome new Special Representative Rosine Sori-Coulibaly and express our full support for her call. We believe that her extensive experience and wisdom will successfully lead us towards lasting developments in the direction of a stable and prosperous future for all Bissau-Guineans.

Ms. French (United States of America): We would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita for her briefing today, and Ambassador Vieira for all his important work in chairing the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The United States is pleased that Guinea-Bissau's leadership, with the able assistance of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was able to agree on a timeline for elections in 2019, and we welcome the legislative elections that took place in March. As the focus shifts to the presidential elections scheduled for 24 November, we must remain faithful to the consensus agreements that helped create the country's hard-won, although tenuous, stability. We look forward to free, fair and transparent elections on 24 November. We welcome the generous contributions that ECOWAS has made in both financial support and equipment. We encourage Guinea-Bissau's regional

neighbours and the international community to help support the Government's efforts to prepare for and carry out those important elections.

Along with the Secretary-General, we remain concerned about the continued threat that drug trafficking and organized crime pose to Guinea-Bissau and the broader subregion. We applaud the Bissau-Guinean police's seizure and destruction of two tons of cocaine in Guinea-Bissau in the past week, and we welcome the creation of a dedicated unit in the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau for combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. We urge continued support for strengthening the presence of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Licharz (Germany): Guinea-Bissau is a country in transition. The two briefers presented a mixed picture, and I would like to thank them for their very valuable input. We see progress in some areas on the one hand and challenges on the other hand. That seems to be a constant pattern for countries in transition. It is therefore important that the Security Council closely monitor the situation in those countries, at the same time that the United Nations as a whole offers assistance and support.

With the Peacebuilding Commission, we have a very strong tool to do exactly that. I would like to commend Ambassador Mauro Vieira and the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. We have the feeling that we have not yet tapped into the full potential of the inter-linkage between the work of the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Germany therefore very much supports a regular exchange between the country configuration Chairs and the Security Council.

With regard to the situation in Guinea-Bissau, as other colleagues have done before me, we call upon the Government to ensure credible, fair and free presidential elections in November. We welcome the efforts by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the Economic Community of West African States and the Group of Five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau to facilitate and support the electoral process, as well as to mediate between conflicting parties. We particularly commend the inclusion of the gender perspective and support for women's engagement in the democratic process. In that context, it is very important for the Government and the

judiciary to end impunity for gender-based crimes and human rights violations.

Transnational organized crime and drug trafficking remain major challenges. Therefore, we express support for the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It is important to empower national law enforcement authorities to effectively prosecute organized crime.

I would like to conclude with two points.

First, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2019/664). We very much look forward to being provided with more details on the timeline for the transition process that is mentioned in the report. We also welcome the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau.

Secondly, as my colleague of South Africa has mentioned, we call upon everyone to ensure that no vacuum will follow the end of UNIOGBIS. We need to avoid the possible destabilization of Guinea-Bissau. The Security Council has a special responsibility for countries in transition, in general, and for Guinea-Bissau in particular, in line with resolution 2458 (2019).

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita and the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mauro Vieira, for the information they shared.

We welcome the positive dynamic of developments in Guinea-Bissau. We are pleased to see that, early this year, the authorities and main political forces of the country were able to overcome their differences and successfully hold parliamentary elections in March. We also note the role played by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau in preparing for the elections.

It is no secret that the post-election period, when the new Parliament and Government were being formed, was marked by several challenges. The portfolio distribution process took a long time. However, we believe that there is nothing surprising or extraordinary about that, as it is part of the normal democratic process we have seen in many other countries. Furthermore, all those problems have now been resolved.

As has been noted today, the country is approaching a new important milestone. Presidential elections are scheduled to take place on 24 November. As we see it, if the elections are successful, it could be a turning point in the history of modern Guinea-Bissau. The country will finally turn the page of lasting political turbulence and create the conditions for making steady progress towards socioeconomic development. At this pivotal moment, we call on all public and political forces to behave responsibly, uphold national interests and seek to settle their disputes as soon as possible.

We are convinced that, at some stage, the issue of lifting Guinea-Bissau sanctions should come up for discussion in the Security Council, as they have been obsolete for some time now. The current situation bears no resemblance to the events of 2012. We respect the decision of the military to stay out of politics.

We continue to believe that the issue of restructuring the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau should be addressed in as judicious a manner as possible. We support the gradual drawdown of its work, but not before the end of 2020, in line with resolution 2458 (2019). By that time, the United Nations country team will have all the tools it needs not only to promote development in Guinea-Bissau, but also to help the country address challenges, such as drug trafficking, corruption and ensuring the proper functioning of State institutions.

In conclusion, let me welcome the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, Ms. Sori-Coulibaly, and assure her that we stand ready to work constructively with the entire United Nations team to resolve the outstanding issues in this West African State.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Da Silva (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to take part in today's meeting of the Security Council on Guinea-Bissau and to address members on the most recent developments in my country.

Allow me to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and Mr. Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the

Peacebuilding Commission. I also welcome the recent appointment of Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, whom we wish every success in conducting her mission in this phase of transition for the Office in the country.

Today's Council meeting is being held as Guinea-Bissau is firmly committed to completing the electoral cycle with the holding of presidential elections on 24 November. That election deadline will be an opportunity for the people of Guinea-Bissau to reaffirm the legitimacy of the institutions of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, which was already begun with parliamentary elections held on 10 March, in which 102 new Members of Parliament were elected.

Following the elections and under the proposal of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde, the majority party in the National People's Assembly, the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau reappointed Mr. Aristides Gomes as Prime Minister on 22 June. Under the Prime Minister's proposal, a Government was formed on 3 July, comprising 11 women out of a total of 31 members.

I stress the importance of the decisions taken at the most recent summit of the Economic Community of West African States, held in Abuja, to defuse the continuing crisis among national political actors.

In a few days, the Government will submit its governance instruments, including its programme and budget, to the National Assembly for assessment and possible approval, which will enable the Government to implement its programme. The Government is resolutely committed to preparing for the presidential elections to be held on 24 November. To that end, in consultation with other electoral institutions, it launched a voter register correction process on 16 August. It should be noted that this process initiated by the Government does not enjoy the unanimous approval of political actors or civil society, but we hope that with dialogue, the parties concerned will agree on the process.

The current political environment is marked by the seizure on 2 September by the Judicial Police of Guinea-Bissau of an unprecedented quantity of narcotics — approximately two tons of cocaine. That fact once again illustrates the extent to which our territory remains attractive for transnational organized crime networks, due not only to our

geographical vulnerability but also to the weakness of our institutions. It is also proof of the determination of the Bissau-Guinean authorities to fight tirelessly against this scourge, which has no other objective than to undermine our integrity as a sovereign State. This operation, known as Operation Navarra, led to the arrest of a dozen suspects, constituting a heavy blow to this criminal network. It would not have been successful without the support of our various partners, to whom I wish to pay tribute.

I would also draw the Security Council's attention to the need to strengthen cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking between the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations Office Against Drugs and Crime, without prejudice to the fulfilment of the

mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau set out in resolution 2458 (2019). Among other things, that would bolster the capacity of the national institutions involved in this area, which, as the Council is aware, are operating in extremely precarious conditions.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate my country's gratitude for the support it receives from the Security Council as well as from regional and subregional organizations, particularly the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union.

The meeting rose at 4.50p.m.