



REPÚBLICA DA GUINÉ-BISSAU

Statement by His Excellency

Mr. Carlos Gomes Jr.

Prime Minister

64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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Unofficial translation

Mr. President,

My first words are of congratulations to you, Mr. Ali Triki, for your election to the presidency of the 64th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Knowing your skill and vast diplomatic experience, we are convinced that this session will be crowned with success.

My country, Guinea-Bissau, which has excellent relations of friendship and cooperation with your country, Libya, welcomes your election and assures you its fraternal cooperation during your term.

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate and express the recognition of Guinea-Bissau to Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, for his performance and dedication to the successful conduit of the work of the 63rd Session.

Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki Moon, for his comprehensive report on the activities of our organization and the excellent work he has done towards the consolidation of peace and development in the world.

I would particularly like to congratulate you for holding a high-level meeting on climate change this past 22nd as a prelude to the Copenhagen Conference, to be held in December.

Mr. President,

Six months after the crisis provoked by the assassination of the President, we have restored constitutional normality, and the organs of State power are in a position to fulfill the role given to them by our Constitution.

We have just inaugurated the new President of the Republic, His Excellency Malan Bacai Sanha, democratically elected in elections deemed free, fair and transparent by all political parties and candidates, and by international observers.

The party that I have the honor to preside, the PAIGC, has a qualified majority in parliament, has a government of inclusion and now a President of the Republic out of its ranks. Never in the history of the country could such great conditions for stability be met.

We have thus created the conditions for implementing the pressing reforms that the country needs, in particular, the reform in public administration, with particular emphasis on the Defense and Security sector, as well as Public Finance, Decentralization, and Modernization of the state apparatus.

In this regard, I would like to highlight the role and contribution of sub-regional organizations such as ECOWAS and the UEMOA, the CPLP, the African Union and the United Nations, whose constant support has allowed our government to make substantive progress in the normalization of the country's political, economic and social life and development.

I would further like to highlight the substantial support provided by the European Union during the difficult period we went through. In addition, I would like to thank the brothers of the CPLP countries for their continued commitment and solidarity.

Mr. President,

The latest crisis situation in Guinea-Bissau resulted in the assassinations of the Head of State and the Chief of Staff of the Guinean Armed Forces.

Those tragic events surprised and shocked the entire Guinean society and the international community. They revealed the vulnerabilities of our Rule of Law and the weaknesses of the system of national defense and security.

In addition to strongly condemning these crimes, the Government immediately ordered the creation of a committee that would allow us to find the truth and make the perpetrators accountable.

Afterwards, concerned about the objectivity, transparency and speed of the process, our Government requested the UN Secretary-General to carry out an International Survey, conducted by the United Nations. In response to that and based on Resolutions of the Security Council, the Secretary-General urged the Government to continue its own investigation of those crimes, offering, however, to intervene with the African Union, ECOWAS and the CPLP to get the technical, financial, and other type of support that might be necessary.

Following the response from the Secretary-General, the government sent requests for support to these organizations, but has not received a response so far. The Government is truly looking forward to any assistance that can be offered by the African Union, ECOWAS and the CPLP.

We want to take advantage of our presence in New York to engage with all

these organizations, to ensure the conditions for a new dynamic to the work of the Inquiry Committee, and we consider the attainment of that objective an essential condition to ensure true justice, to contribute to the consolidation of the democratic rule of law and the protection and promotion of human rights.

We seize this opportunity to, from this podium, firmly and unequivocally reaffirm that we are against impunity. We will not be a party to it, nor give coverage to any type of crime. So I can assure you that the Government of Guinea-Bissau will do everything in its power to create the conditions for the committee to carry out its work in a peaceful, transparent and credible manner.

Mr. President,

These events caused a serious crisis in my country, leading to a radical change in the priorities of the government's policy, namely the necessity of holding presidential elections.

However, despite the gravity of the situation, the response of our institutions was swift and positive. The President of the People's National Assembly temporarily assumed the Presidency of the Republic, as provided in the Constitution, and a date was immediately set for the holding of early presidential elections, according to the Covenant of Understanding among the political parties.

The mandate of the interim president, just recently ended, was marked by the promotion of a constructive and frank dialogue between the civil society and the political society, particularly in clarifying the objectives of the reform of the Defense and Security sector, which is a crucial pillar for peace and stability in the country.

In Guinea-Bissau, the creation of the armed forces preceded the creation of the State itself, and the latter end up inheriting the burden of complex problems arising from the existence of an armed struggle for national liberation.

Like other countries that had a similar past, problems associated with this condition are not easy to overcome, especially when facing survival issues that plague all of society.

Aware of these facts, the Government held last May, with the help of development partners, the United Nations, ECOWAS and the CPLP, a Round Table in Praia, Cape Verde, to jointly evaluate the proposed Reform Program for the Defense and Security sectors.

The continuation of the reform program in the military and security forces, within which the establishment of a Special Pensions Fund is planned, specially designed to deal with these issues, can contribute to solving these problems once and for all.

Mr. President,

My government has just concluded a thorough assessment of our National Strategy for Poverty Reduction.

The results of this evaluation allowed us to conclude that we must strengthen our action on all the axes that define the strategy. It also enabled us, after careful consideration, to determine that the biggest impediment to the development of our country lies in the energy sector, and it was concluded that the first priority should be to develop an energy plan that solves this problem definitively.

Therefore, we would like to use this forum to ask our development partners that the interim review of our strategy to reduce poverty and its respective program is carried out as soon as possible so that we can organize, together with our partners, a Round Table to address the need to strengthen the technical, economic and financial cooperation programs with our country.

This Round Table that we want to organize under the billboard of Reconciliation and Development, will take into account the new strategic direction advocated by the Security Council, with the transformation of the current UN Mission in Guinea-Bissau into an Integrated Mission starting January 2010.

I believe I am in a position to say that by working selflessly within this framework and the resources that we get, we will be better able to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations, particularly with regards to the consolidation of peace and stability in our country.

The concern with the stability in the sub-region and the world at large, and with devoting more attention to promoting development, leads us to welcome with satisfaction, and encourage the policy of President Obama towards Africa, recently clarified during the visits made to some African countries, as well as the peace initiatives that are underway in the Middle East under their patronage. We also welcome with satisfaction the U.S. administration's policy towards Cuba, hoping that the lifting of the embargo may occur in the short term.

Mr. President,

For many years, we have been asking our development partners for a post-conflict program for Guinea-Bissau.

A country with such severe shortages as ours should not be abandoned to its fate, knowing the profound consequences that the political-military conflict of 1998/1999 left in all sectors of the socio-economic life of Guinea-Bissau.

The Guinea-Bissau that had foreign currency reserves to provide for six months of imports, and that paid regular wages to its State employees, can no longer honor its commitments because of the war.

I am therefore particularly pleased with the attitude of the African Development Bank, which, understanding the needs of a post-conflict country, turned an important part of the financial resources available to Guinea-Bissau into donations.

Likewise, we welcome the recent decision by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to negotiate and conclude a Post-Conflict Program with our government, which will soon be joining the Growth Facility and Poverty Reduction, contributing to further the cooperation with our key development partners. We hope this new and dynamic level of cooperation will enable us to benefit from the initiative for debt relief under the HIPC.

Allow me to publicly express our appreciation for the Heads of State of the UEMOA, Angola, Nigeria, the Leader and Guide of the Great Socialist Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as well as the CPLP and the European Union for their support to cover our budget deficit, which greatly contributes to the climate of peace we now live.

Moreover, we note the presence of South Africa, Brazil and India, which have been contributing significantly to the reduction of food shortage in our country through the IBAS program.

I would like to assure you that, while responsible for conducting governmental actions in Guinea-Bissau, we will strive to continue to earn the trust and support that the international community has deposited in us.

We will do everything for Guinea-Bissau to make strides towards the development and well being of its people.

Mr. President,

We are of the opinion that Guineans themselves should seek to resolve their internal problems, especially those arising from social, political, and military issues.

However, we are forced to recognize that the reasons for the cyclical crises that occur in our country are not only domestic. Factors such as transnational organized crime and drug trafficking in particular, have contributed to exacerbate the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

Taking advantage of our shortcomings in the control of sea and land borders, and in our administration, which is weak in some regions, as well as using sophisticated means, drugs were introduced in our country with the support received from influential people in state the apparatus.

My Government is committed to participating in all programs and initiatives that are adopted in the sub-region of West Africa to combat drug trafficking and

organized crime, convinced of the need to establish mechanisms for coordination and support to do this.

We are prepared to examine the possibility of participation, in our country, of foreign forces in joint surveillance missions of our land and maritime borders and airspace, in order to eradicate organized crime and all forms of trafficking in drugs, weapons and people, from or through the territory of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to state before this Noble Assembly, my commitment as Prime Minister and President of the historic party founded by Amilcar Cabral, the PAIGC, to strive to put Guinea-Bissau on the path of peace, national reconciliation and development. We will respect all the commitments made by my government, whether related to peace-building, policy dialogue, poverty reduction and creation of conditions conducive to economic growth and well being of the Guinean people.

I ask the international community, and our development partners who believe in our determination to end the cyclical crises and the recurring conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, to provide a new opportunity to our country for a true partnership towards sustainable development.

I want to thank all friends and partners of Guinea-Bissau for their solidarity and support. I can assure you that we will spare no efforts and will not be deterred by any obstacles in consolidating peace and political stability, promote national unity in Guinea-Bissau and to create better living conditions for the Guinean people.

I leave this podium with a very special thank you to all who contributed to this normalization, with particular attention, if you will allow me, to all members of the Contact Group, the Special Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, recently extinct, all members of the Security Council, as well as to the Secretary-General and his Representative in Guinea-Bissau.

However, the most sublime show of appreciation on our part would be to build a peaceful and prosperous Guinea-Bissau for all its children, which we will with all our might.

Thank You.