



**PERMANENT MISSION OF GUINEA-BISSAU
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT OF

H.E. MR. CARLOS GOMES JÚNIOR
PRIME MINISTER

OF REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF

THE *66th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS*
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, September 24th 2011

Your Excellency, Mr. President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,

Mr. Secretary General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My first words are of congratulations to Your Excellency, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to express our most sincere wishes for success in the fulfillment of the mandate you have just been entrusted with.

Similarly, I would like to convey to Mr. Joseph Deiss the recognition of Guinea-Bissau for the sense of engagement and dedication he devoted to the successful conduct of the work of the 65th Session of the General Assembly.

Let me also reiterate my congratulations to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, on his recent re-election, a result of the excellent work he has implemented to consolidate peace and development in the world.

I would like to take this happy occasion to salute the Republic of South Sudan for having joined the United Nations, thus becoming this organization's most recent Full Member.

Mr. President,

Today, September 24, Guinea-Bissau celebrates the 38th anniversary of its independence. This historic achievement was the first major victory of the Guinean people, and from this prestigious podium I pay due homage to our country's Freedom Fighters, whose courage and determination allowed us to obtain the Status of a Free and Independent State.

Mr. President,

As professed by our national authorities, and unanimously recognized by the international community, the Defense and Security Sector Reform is an urgent priority, the implementation of which could strengthen lasting peace and stability, and thus create conditions for sustainable development.

With the signing of the Tripartite Agreement Protocol or Memorandum of Understanding between the ECOWAS, the CPLP and the Government of Guinea-Bissau, which will take place at the margins of this session of the General Assembly, we will be able to make a major qualitative leap in the implementation of the defense and security forces reform, as well as in the effective implementation of the programs contained in the Roadmap.

Thus, in this context, Guinea-Bissau's commitment to mobilizing resources for the sustainability of the reform led to a decision to create a Special Pension Fund, in which we have deposited \$200,000 of the \$500,000 US dollars we pledged to the Fund until December 2011 as proof of our firm commitment to contribute 10% of the total resources required.

We therefore count on holding a High-Level Meeting with our development partners this year in order to obtain the financial and technical resources required to implement the reform, and we appeal to all our partners to participate in the High-Level Meeting and be committed to it.

Mr. President,

Drug trafficking and organized crime are a current discussion topic within our organization and, as is public knowledge, not only is the West African region to which we belong cited as a hub, but also Guinea-Bissau is often pointed as a transit point for illicit drugs.

Having full awareness of this reality and taking into account our known weaknesses, we are proud to say that we were one of the first countries to request the good offices of the United Nations, through the UNODC, to face this phenomenon with determination and skill.

In order to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, the Government adopted two important instruments through its Council of Ministers, namely a Political Declaration and an Operational Plan, which include large-scale actions in the following three areas: strengthening the legal system, strengthening the criminal justice system, and combating drug abuse and HIV / AIDS.

Alongside these measures taken at the national level, the Government strives to sign bilateral agreements to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking, keeping in mind that without a strategic cooperation between countries of origin, countries of transit, and countries of consumption of drugs, there will not be an effective fight against drug trafficking.

Therefore, we reiterate our appeal from this rostrum, as we have numerous times before, for help in controlling our maritime borders from countries that are better prepared to do so. We formally ask the support of the U.S., the European Union and its member States, as we cannot singlehandedly fight drug trafficking, which is increasingly powerful and more sophisticated as is known by all in attendance here.

Mr. President,

We are approaching the deadline set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, but despite ongoing efforts, Guinea-Bissau continues to face challenges with regard to basic sanitation, supply of drinking water and energy and to provide primary health services, to cite the most pressing issues.

The high rate of poverty that still prevails in our country has forced the government to adopt an ambitious agenda for the future, enshrined in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Document - PRSP II, and based on the pillars of stability, peace, economic growth and poverty reduction. This document defines the main challenges and recommends priorities for the next five years.

As a result of the serious and rigorous implementation of this strategy, the Government I have the honor to lead has already reversed this negative trend with success.

The current economic situation is clearly improving as a result of the progress made in the last two and a half years in terms of strengthening public policies and good macroeconomic performance, as is evidenced by our partners, especially the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

As the outcome of an excellent macroeconomic performance, the country reached the completion point of the HIPC Initiative, thus the forgiveness of about 90% of its external debt, and the recent reevaluation of its GDP growth rate, which is now fixed at 5.3%, and therefore higher than originally foreseen.

We have all the conditions to maintain and accelerate this trend during the next year.

To this end, in addition to relying on our own resources, which can now be devoted to poverty reduction programs, the Government will organize a Round Table of Donors in the first quarter of 2012 to mobilize the necessary financial resources for the implementation of these programs.

In this context, we appeal once more to the participation and contribution of all traditional donors who are interested in our country and who wish to support national efforts to overcome our current weaknesses.

Mr. President,

Let me once again welcome the creation of the "UN WOMEN", an entity that reflects the firm commitment of our organization to the struggle for gender equality and to ensure that women have the necessary conditions for a more representative and active participation in the process of transformation that is underway in our societies.

In this same context, my country is taking measures to uphold the dignity of women, including measures to promote their empowerment and the affirmation of their autonomy. I welcome the steps recently taken by the Guinean Parliament, which approved the criminalization of female genital mutilation and increased the penalties for trafficking of minors.

Mr. President,

Guinea-Bissau's status and credibility in the international arena depends largely on its ability to define and implement a foreign policy that takes into account the great universal values of democracy, freedom and human rights, which are also our values.

In our diplomatic efforts, we have to also be consistent with our historic commitments, and above all, faithful to all who selflessly helped us in the struggle for the affirmation of our dignity.

From this perspective, we welcome the decision of the Palestinian Authority to submit the request for recognition of the State of Palestine as a Full Member of the United Nations.

We encourage a constructive dialogue around the possibility of a peaceful coexistence and mutually advantageous cooperation between their respective countries and peoples.

This assembly takes place at a time when major changes are occurring in the Arab world. These changes call for greater political and social rights, and values such as freedom and democracy, and for this very reason, the Arabs have our sympathy and solidarity. We regret, however, the cases where transition incurs high costs in terms of human lives.

With regards to Libya, Guinea-Bissau fully supports the position of the African Union and expresses its full readiness to cooperate and strengthen the increasingly friendly relations and cooperation with the legitimate representatives of the Libyan people.

We urge the U.S. government to draw on the values that define this great nation and resume its relationship with Cuba, ending the embargo that has lasted for more than five decades, and freeing the Cubans still being held in its prisons.

Mr. President,

The responsibilities of the United Nations are increasing, and the globalization of the decisions that it is called to take becomes increasingly urgent.

The historical reasons which led to the establishment of the Security Council are no longer current. The demographic representation of the different regions of the world, the emergence of new countries and new geopolitical configurations force us to accept as natural the Reform of the Security Council.

It seems legitimate to desire the decisions of the Security Council to be more inclusive and participatory by giving our continent both permanent and non permanent seats, as intended by the African Union, because of the large representation of the African continent.

Mr. President,

Under the auspices of His Excellency the President of the Republic, Mr. Malam Bacai Sanha, the National Assembly launched a process of national reconciliation involving all the forces of the nation. This important initiative has contributed to the establishment of the climate of peace and understanding that now prevails the country.

To conclude, I avail myself of this opportunity to thank all friends and partners of Guinea-Bissau for their support and solidarity and to assure you that we will spare no efforts in consolidating peace and building a more just society to create better living conditions for the Guinean people.

Thank you