



STATEMENT
Of
H.E. MR. JOSÉ MÁRIO VAZ
PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU

AT
THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE
THE 71ST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 21ST 2016

- **Your Excellency, Mr. President of the General Assembly,**
- **Your Excellency, Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,**
- **Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honor and privilege for me to address this august Assembly for the first time since I entered into the Office of President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

First allow me to congratulate you, Mr. PETER THOMSON, as President of this Session, and to wish you the greatest success in your work. To your predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, thank you for your excellent work during the previous session.

I would also like express our appreciation for the theme chosen for this session, under your important sponsorship, which focuses on the issue of Sustainable Development

- **Mr. President,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

Guinea-Bissau understands this session to be an opportunity to strengthen the commitments as well as the division of responsibilities among all the international actors in the pursuit of the Agenda 2030 goals.

The Addis Ababa Program for Action for development financing approved by the General Assembly in July 2015 fosters new hopes with regard to financing for the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

The commitments made by the parties must be respected. The goals of Agenda 2030 and the Addis Ababa Program of Action are complementary and must be harmonized and aligned.

My country is strongly committed to do our part in implementing the commitments arising out of global and regional strategies.

Thus, we are proud of the fact that our National Development Plan is in line with many of the Agenda 2030 goals and also of the national authorities' political will to gradually adjust this strategic plan in order to fully accommodate the 17 Sustainable Development goals.

Guinea-Bissau has a very important natural capital to leverage for our development and for the preservation of the environment in the West Africa ecoregion. Thus biodiversity became an axis that cuts across all other aspects of my country's development.

- **Mr. President,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

Allow me to take this opportunity to briefly share with this assembly the current political situation and the efforts that have been made to overcome the institutional challenges that our country faces, particularly our political authorities.

Just before I traveled to attend this Session, thanks to the mediation of the Heads of State of Guinea Conakry and Sierra Leone, who were in my country recently – in accordance with a decision reached at the ECOWAS Conference of Heads of State and Government that took place in Dakar – an agreement was signed with a view toward overcoming the

current roadblocks in our parliament. This agreement was signed by the President of the National Popular Assembly, the Prime Minister, and the two main political parties.

The understanding reached deserves the full support of the President of the Republic, ECOWAS, and other partners of Guinea-Bissau, as an important step toward the easing of political tensions and a consensus platform that will allow us to ensure government stability until the end of the legislative term.

The endorsement of this understanding by the Heads of State of ECOWAS and the international community, who met yesterday to discuss the way forward to implement the agreement, opens a window of hope that all parties are strongly committed in establishing peace and stability to allow the signed agreement to be implemented.

Therefore, allow me to reiterate my commitment to do all that is required, through a frank and open dialogue with all active forces in our country in order to consolidate an environment of peace and social stability, which are indispensable for a process of stable governance in our country.

I should note, however, that the Bissau Guinean crisis today is no longer a political and military crisis, but merely and eminently a political and institutional crisis. I should also note that, from the outset of my term:

- There has not been a single shot fired by military or paramilitary personnel;
- No one has been killed or beaten for political reasons;

- There has been no reported cases of arbitrary arrest;
- There is freedom of expression, the press, and demonstration;
- No issues of human rights violations have been raised.

As Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, I would also like to reiterate to this august assembly our request for the United Nations support:

- For the Process of National Reconciliation that is underway in our country;
- For the participation of our Armed Forces in International Peacekeeping Missions;
- For the implementation of the important Safety and Security Sector Reform, namely with respect to:

I. The control of weapons and management of materiel;

II. The construction of armories and renovation of barracks;

III. The securing of funds for the reintegration of demobilized troops.

▪ **Excellencies,**

▪ **Ladies and gentlemen,**

The world today faces a giant challenge that consists of combating and overcoming the challenges of terrorism, drug trafficking, climate change and other evils that ravage our countries. These threats evidence the security challenge that we face on this planet that we share.

Our subregion, West Africa, figures in the geography of terrorist acts, which translate into an intolerable manifestation of barbarism and disdain for the most sacred values of humanity.

I take this unique opportunity to once again express my country's solidarity with the countries and peoples that are victims of terrorism and reiterate our commitment.

• **Excellencies,**

• **Ladies and gentlemen,**

Guinea-Bissau welcomes the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate and calls for its implementation as an uncircumventable tool to regulate international dialogue and cooperation among the States, which hold in their hands the fate of the planet.

Climate change poses an emerging risk for Guinea-Bissau. We are a coastal country, with an island portion and a high risk of sea level elevation, which poses a great threat to a significant portion of our territory. Therefore, climate change matters are some of the main priorities of our political action.

Accordingly, we are highly interested in participating in and closely monitoring the next summit on the oceans, which will take place in New York next year. Thus, Mr. President, you are at the right place for the mission that this assembly has assigned to you.

During the last year, we have observed an important development in the international context, namely the rapprochement between the

United States and Cuba, which we greatly welcomed. We hope that the normalization of bilateral relations may bring these two friends of Guinea-Bissau closer together.

In addition, we call for the implementation of the United Nations Resolution defending a two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine side by side with peace and security.

- **Mr. President,**
- **Ladies and gentlemen,**

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognize Secretary-General Ban KI-MOON, the Security Council, and the Peacebuilding Commission for their continued focus on, solidarity with, and ongoing monitoring of Guinea-Bissau, our people, and our authorities, even in an environment of multiple and complex challenges facing the world.

In addition, on behalf of the people of Guinea-Bissau, I would also like to recognize and thank ECOWAS, its Commission, and its Member States for their political, financial, and military support in the process of stabilizing, securing, and reforming the Safety and Security Sector.

I would like to offer a word of appreciation to Madam ELLEN JOHNSON, President of the ECOWAS Conference of Heads of State and Government, special thanks to President ALFA CONDÉ for his role in facilitating the dialogue in the political process in Guinea-Bissau, as well as our profound gratitude to President Muhammadu Buhari, President of Nigeria, for his unwavering support as head of the contact group for Guinea-Bissau.

I further convey our gratitude to all Heads of State in the Sub-region, who have given a high level of attention to Guinea-Bissau during the years while our political crisis persisted.

Our recognition of and gratitude to all other international partners, countries, and organizations, namely the African Union, UEMOA, European Union, CPLP, World Bank, IMF, ADB, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, FAO, UNFPA, and the International Organization of La Francophonie, which have always stood with Guinea-Bissau, supporting our country in the pursuit of paths to consolidate stability and promote development.

The support from our international partners, as demonstrated in the results of the Brussels Round Table, unequivocally translates into attention to the situation of the Bissau-Guinean State and people. As promised, we count on our partners' help to leverage economic development as the engine for peace and stability in our country.

▪ **Excellencies,**

▪ **Ladies and gentlemen,**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our appreciation for the United Nations and UNIOGBIS, which maintained their attention on and continued to monitor Guinea-Bissau, our people and our institutions, despite the multiple and complex problems that the world faces.

It is with great satisfaction that I highlight the indispensable role of the United Nations, through its Representative in Guinea-Bissau, Mr. Modibo Turé, whom I thank for his personal dedication in facilitating the dialogue and seeking solutions, as well as the strengthened consolidation of the democratic Rule of Law in Guinea-Bissau.

Finally, I wish you continued success as you conduct the work of this 71st Session of the General Assembly on behalf of the States and peoples of the world.

May God bless us!

Thank you very much!