

Speech by H.E. Ms Karen Van Vlierberge, Deputy Permanent
Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

Security Council Meeting on Guinea-Bissau

New York, 10 August 2020

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by thanking the various speakers for their presentations.

Belgium notes that the political dispute following the presidential election is still not fully resolved, despite ECOWAS' recognition of the election of President Sissoco Embaló on 22 April and the programme of Prime Minister Nabiam's Government on 29 June. Tensions and a climate of mistrust continue to characterise the political arena. In this context, the efforts made by ECOWAS and the Group of 5 must be recognised and supported. However, like the Secretary General, we call on all political actors in Guinea-Bissau to enter into an inclusive and sincere dialogue, including with civil society, in order to reach a consensus on contentious issues. This spirit of cooperation is also necessary in order to initiate a much-needed reform programme and a revision of the Constitution, all in accordance with the Conakry agreement and the ECOWAS road map.

Political stability is essential for socio-economic recovery; the pandemic adds an additional level of complexity to this challenge. In this respect, it is important that the measures taken by the authorities to combat this threat and its consequences take sufficient account of the situation of the most deprived groups, threatened by food insecurity, malnutrition and lack of

access to health care. The fight against the evils of drug trafficking and organised crime will also be crucial to preventing drug traffickers from exploiting the current situation in the country.

Finally, despite the challenges of the political context and the fight against the pandemic, it is crucial that the government and all state institutions ensure respect for the rule of law, freedom of expression and the protection of human rights. These are the essential ingredients for the country to return to the path of stability. Belgium calls on the government to investigate recent events, including the threats against members of parliament and the violent attack on the media.

Mr President,

We applaud the efforts of the Integrated Office, in partnership with the country team and the Office for West Africa and the Sahel, in the context of its closure. We reiterate that the transition must be as smooth and painless as possible for the country; the transition's success will depend on the Guinea-Bissau authorities taking ownership of the tasks of the Integrated Office.

The departure of the Integrated Office does not in any way imply that the international community is abandoning Guinea-Bissau. The monitoring of the situation by the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, along with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund, is positive. UNODC's work in the region will continue to be of crucial importance. It will be important to continue this support in the new phase beginning in Guinea-Bissau.

Let me conclude by expressing Belgium's full support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Sori-Coulibaly and the entire Integrated Office for their efforts to promote national dialogue and reconciliation in the country.

Thank you.