

Supporting the democratic process in Guinea-Bissau

Thank you, Mr President. Let me start by thanking SRSB Ms Sori-Coulibaly and Ambassador Filho for their briefings, which set out clearly the achievements that Guinea-Bissau has made, but also some of the challenges which remain.

I'd also like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Niger to this Council. As current chair of ECOWAS, Niger has a vital role to play in supporting the democratic process in Guinea Bissau.

Mr President, the peaceful holding of legislative and presidential elections in 2019 were significant steps forward in Guinea-Bissau's political transition. We commend the Guinea-Bissau authorities and people on this progress, and we welcome the ongoing neutrality of Guinea-Bissau's military and security forces in the political process.

We are concerned, however, by the political instability we have seen following the election. The uncertainty that this creates risks undermining the democratic process and damaging public confidence in the electoral system. We call on all political actors to work together to resolve the situation as quickly as possible so that a new government can be inaugurated and focus on the important work of consolidating democracy and providing development and stability for its people, as per the 2016 Conakry agreement and the ECOWAS Roadmap.

Mr President, the United Kingdom appreciates the supporting role played in Guinea-Bissau by UNIOGBIS, the Peacebuilding Commission, the UN Country Team and other UN bodies and offices, which have helped build a more robust and inclusive political environment. We thank Ms Sori-Coulibaly for her work and will continue to provide our full support to her in carrying out her mandate.

The United Kingdom also welcomes the key role played by ECOWAS and the "Group of Five" in holding political stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to account. We trust they will remain as engaged and vigilant throughout the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement.

Given the recent progress, the UK supports the drawdown of UNIOGBIS by December 2020 and we are confident the steps are underway to ensure a smooth transition. It is important that key tasks are handed over to UN agencies or other actors, such as the UN Country Team on Development and the UNODC on drugs trafficking and transnational crime, and that these agencies are sufficiently resourced to accept the tasks.

As UNIOGBIS draws down, the good offices of Mr Chambas, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for UNOWAS, will be increasingly important in accompanying Guinea-Bissau on the path to greater political stability. The Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund will also play a helpful role in ensuring the continuity of support for peacebuilding tasks.

It is vital that political stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau continue to engage positively with the UN good offices and sustain their commitment to the reform agenda until the Conakry agreement has been fully implemented.

Mr President, in conclusion, we hope that the political progress achieved in recent years can be maintained to carry Guinea-Bissau out of its past into a stronger, more stable, 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 and work with the government in support of this objective.

Thank you, Mr President.