



Security Council

Distr.: General
29 July 2020

Original: English

Developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2512 \(2020\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) until the closure of the mission on 31 December 2020. The report provides updates on key political, security, human rights, gender and socioeconomic developments in Guinea-Bissau since my report of 6 February 2020 ([S/2020/105](#)). It also provides updates on the status of implementation of the UNIOGBIS mandate, as well as on progress in the United Nations transition process ahead of the drawdown and closure of the mission.

II. Major developments

2. Since my previous report, Guinea-Bissau has witnessed a protracted electoral dispute, including a legal challenge that was submitted to the Supreme Court over the results of the run-off presidential election of 29 December 2019. While the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) facilitated the resolution of the political impasse, the functioning of State institutions was considerably hampered. The security and human rights situation deteriorated owing to the involvement of the military in the political crisis. There were reports of arbitrary acts of detention, intimidation and threats against perceived opponents, including journalists. Fears of a resurgence in drug trafficking emerged, including in response to the reported return of indicted trafficking suspects and the replacement of officials of anti-trafficking agencies. The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the restrictions imposed to curtail its spread have added to the fragile socioeconomic conditions. At the same time, UNIOGBIS continued with the implementation of the United Nations transition plan, with the exit of the mission envisaged by 31 December 2020.



A. Political situation

3. Following the announcement by the National Electoral Commission declaring Umaro Sissoco Embaló, the candidate of the Movement for Democratic Change (MADEM-G15), the winner of the presidential election, Domingos Simões Pereira, the candidate of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (PAIGC), lodged a complaint with the Supreme Court questioning the methodology used to tabulate the votes. An ensuing stand-off between the Supreme Court and the Commission over the correct procedure was resolved on 25 February 2020, when the Commission complied with the Court's order, repeated the tabulation exercise and submitted its plenary report to the Court, still confirming Mr. Embaló as the winner. That prompted Mr. Pereira to file another legal challenge.

4. On 27 February, before the Supreme Court could issue its decision on the complaint, Mr. Embaló proceeded with his self-investiture as President. The ceremony was presided over by the Vice-President of the People's National Assembly and leader of the United People's Assembly – Democratic Party of Guinea Bissau (APU-PDGB), Nuno Gomes Nabiam, with security provided by the Presidential Guard of the outgoing President, José Mário Vaz. Meanwhile, the armed forces took physical control of all State institutions, including the Supreme Court.

5. On 28 February, Mr. Embaló issued two decrees, one to dismiss the Prime Minister, Aristides Gomes, and his cabinet and the other to appoint Mr. Nabiam in his place. Mr. Gomes described Mr. Embaló's self-investiture as illegal. He appealed to the international community for a return to constitutional order. Other national actors also expressed concerns that the country was heading towards political paralysis. ECOWAS, in its communiqués issued on 28 February and 1 March, expressed serious concern about the political developments, deplored the military's interference in politics and called for the immediate cessation of activities that threatened peace. It warned that perpetrators could face sanctions.

6. Also on 28 February, the PAIGC-led coalition in the People's National Assembly swore in the Speaker of the Assembly, Cipriano Cassamá, as interim President. The coalition cited constitutional provisions following the departure of Mr. Vaz as President. However, on 1 March, Mr. Cassamá announced his resignation, citing security concerns. He resumed his function as Speaker.

7. On 29 February, Mr. Embaló proceeded to swear in Mr. Nabiam as Prime Minister. The ceremony was attended by the Attorney-General, leaders of the opposition coalition and the military hierarchy, including the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, General Biaguê Na N'Tam.

8. On 2 March, Mr. Embaló swore in a new 32-member Government led by Mr. Nabiam, including 19 ministers and 13 secretaries of State. Three ministers and four secretaries of State were women. The new Government included representatives of MADEM-G15, the Social Renewal Party (PRS), APU-PDGB and allies close to other independent presidential candidates who had supported Mr. Embaló during the run-off.

9. On 3 March, Mr. Gomes issued a communiqué in which he denounced the takeover of national institutions by the military. He highlighted the need to uphold the safety and security of government officials and appealed to all civil servants to remain at home until the situation had normalized. On the same day, the Association of Journalists of Guinea-Bissau called for the immediate reopening of the country's public television and radio stations, which subsequently resumed broadcasting on 4 March.

10. Also on 3 March, the Nabiam-led Government held its first Council of Ministers meeting, following which it issued a communiqué in which it stated that the military forces that were guarding national institutions were following legitimate orders from the authorities. It was also stated that the challenge to the election results lodged by PAIGC was a fabrication. In a separate communiqué on the same day, the Government instructed all public officials to resume work.

11. On 4 March, Mr. Embaló presided over another meeting of the Council of Ministers, at which measures to resolve public service strikes, among other things, were discussed. Speaking to journalists after the meeting, he noted that the Constitution was at the root of the recurrent political crises and highlighted constitutional reform as a necessity.

12. On 5 March, General N'Tam issued a press statement in which he highlighted that the military presence in certain parts of the capital, especially at the presidential swearing-in ceremony, comprised officers belonging to the battalion of the Presidency, a unit under the direct command of the President. On 7 March, the dismissed Prime Minister, Mr. Gomes, addressed a letter to General N'Tam to request the restoration of order. He also requested the army to collaborate with the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) to normalize the situation.

13. On 8 March, APU-PDGB convened an extraordinary meeting of its Political Commission, chaired by Mr. Nabiam, in an attempt to address competing claims by political parties over who held the majority alliance in the People's National Assembly. At the meeting, 93 of the Commission's 133 members voted to revoke the parliamentary agreement with PAIGC and sign a new pact with PRS and MADEM-G15. However, most of the party's senior leadership, including the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, as well as the party's four other Members of Parliament, were absent. On 31 March, members of the parliamentary majority alliance issued a declaration in which they upheld the parliamentary agreement signed by PAIGC, APU-PDGB, the New Democracy Party (PND) and the Union for Change (UM) following the legislative elections of March 2019.

14. On 10 March, ECOMIB withdrew its personnel to their cantonment, at the request of Mr. Embaló. On 12 March, following a Council of Ministers meeting, a communiqué was issued in which the national defence forces were commended for submitting to political authority. The security forces and ECOMIB were commended for the maintenance of peace and security, and allegations of intimidation and threats against members of the Gomes-led Government were rejected. It was clarified that the order for ECOMIB to withdraw to its barracks was part of the measures adopted ahead of the expiration of its mandate and indicated that the national security forces would assume responsibility for guarding national institutions. The mandate of ECOMIB was due to expire on 31 March. However, ECOWAS reported that it had been extended to 30 June to allow the Mission to remain in Bissau until the staff had been repatriated, given the travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

15. On 12 March, the Movement of Conscious and Nonconformist Citizens addressed an open letter to me, in which it deplored the self-investiture of Mr. Embaló as President, the fact that ECOMIB had reneged on guaranteeing the security of the legitimate Government and the failure of ECOWAS to help to consolidate constitutional order. The Movement expressed concerns about the risk of civil unrest.

16. The PAIGC-led alliance continued to denounce the self-investiture of Mr. Embaló as a coup d'état and appealed to the international community to intervene to protect the legitimate Government formed after the legislative elections of March 2019. Meanwhile, the new authorities continued to consolidate power by replacing high-level officials, including the head of the Judicial Police, the Director of the National Guard and the National Commissioner of the Public Order Police.

17. On 18 March, following the global outbreak of COVID-19, Mr. Embaló issued a decree to close the country's borders and airspace, as a precautionary measure. On 27 March, through another decree, he declared a state of emergency, which after six extensions was, at the time of writing, in place until 25 July, in an effort to curb the spread of the pandemic. In a national broadcast on 11 April, he explained that the state of emergency, *inter alia*, suspended the rights to freedom of movement and assembly. The Council of Ministers also issued several decrees in April and May and on 9 July regulating the restrictive protocols. Meanwhile, the borders remained closed.

18. On 22 April, with the Supreme Court unable to rule on the legal challenge over the run-off presidential election, ECOWAS issued a communiqué in which it outlined a way forward to resolve the political and institutional crisis. It stated that, following its thorough analysis of the political situation and on the basis of the final results announced by the National Electoral Commission, the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS had decided to recognize Mr. Embaló as the winner of the run-off. ECOWAS called for the appointment of a Prime Minister and the formation of a new Government by 22 May, in accordance with the Constitution. It also stressed the need to expedite a review of the Constitution, subject to a referendum within six months, to ensure national stability. The African Union, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and my Executive Office issued statements in which they took note of the ECOWAS decision. On 1 July, the Security Council issued a press statement, also taking note of the ECOWAS decision; it expressed concern about the events that had resulted in the unfolding political and institutional crisis and strongly urged the population to respect the decision of ECOWAS and to work together to implement it without further delay. The Council also called upon the defence and security forces of Guinea-Bissau not to interfere in the political process.

19. Reacting to the ECOWAS decision, the Office of the Speaker of the People's National Assembly, in a press release issued on 24 April, argued that the resolution of the legal challenge over the run-off was exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the highest institution of the State. It was also noted that the validity of any post-electoral action must conform to the Constitution. The Permanent Commission of PAIGC, the party's leadership body, also criticized ECOWAS. It stated that Mr. Embaló's self-investiture was a coup intended to prevent the Court from ruling on the electoral dispute. It demanded recognition of the Government formed as a result of the legislative elections of March 2019, with a programme approved by the People's National Assembly.

20. On 27 April, a faction of the APU-PDGB party leadership issued a communiqué in which it reiterated its support for the PAIGC parliamentary alliance and commended its parliamentarians for upholding the agreement. They expressed their disagreement with the party leader, Mr. Nabiam, for associating with an illegal Government.

21. On 28 April, pursuant to the ECOWAS decision, Mr. Embaló held individual meetings with the group of five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau (the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations). He informed them of his intention to hold consultations with political parties represented in the People's National Assembly, as well as other national stakeholders, to reach consensus on the nomination of a Prime Minister and the formation of a national unity Government. On 29 April and 19 and 25 May, he also met separately with PAIGC, MADEM-G15, PRS, APU-PDGB, and PND, as well as the Speaker of the Assembly. UM declined the invitation.

22. On 7 May, ahead of a planned meeting of the PAIGC-led parliamentary majority alliance at the People's National Assembly, security forces blocked access to and

occupied the building. They prevented Members of Parliament and parliamentary officials from entering the building, citing “orders from above”. Hours later, the security forces left the building without incident. Later that day, the PAIGC-led alliance issued a communiqué in which it reiterated that a Government was already in place on the basis of the outcome of the legislative elections of 2019 with an approved programme. The alliance expressed openness to finding ways to restore constitutional order but with a defined road map to implement the ECOWAS decision in its entirety.

23. On 10 May, the Political Concertation Forum – PAIGC, APU-PDGB, PND, UM, the National Unity Party and the Democratic Convergence Party – wrote to the President of the ECOWAS Commission, requesting ECOWAS to ensure the implementation of and respect for its decision of 22 April by all political actors in the country. The group recalled that the results of the legislative elections of 2019 had determined the composition of the current People’s National Assembly and, as the Constitution required, the Government, which was the emanation of the balance of power decided by the voters.

24. On 17 May, Mr. Embaló met the President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, in the latter’s capacity as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, and the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, in their capitals. He stated that his objective was to consult on the way forward, including with respect to forging a Government of national unity.

25. On 21 May, PAIGC held separate meetings with political parties with parliamentary representation to seek consensus for a broad-based Government to be led by PAIGC and propose the establishment of a memorandum of understanding. MADEM-G15, PRS and APU-PDGB refused to sign the memorandum, stressing that, as a new majority in the People’s National Assembly, they should lead the Government. They nonetheless expressed readiness to engage in a search for a solution.

26. On 25 May, following a failed attempt to reach consensus on the nomination of a Prime Minister and the formation of a unity Government, Mr. Embaló requested the Speaker of the People’s National Assembly to facilitate stakeholder consultations in order to reach a common position by 18 June, for his consideration and decision by 19 June. Addressing the press, he said that all options remained open, including dissolving the Assembly in the absence of an agreement.

27. On 28 May, the Speaker of the People’s National Assembly launched consultations with stakeholders. However, following inconclusive talks and a meeting with Mr. Embaló, he announced that a plenary session of the Assembly would be held on 29 June to establish whether the PAIGC-led coalition or the coalition led by MADEM-G15 held the majority, which would qualify that bloc to appoint the Prime Minister and lead the formation of the Government. Mr. Embaló made public statements indicating that he would await the outcome of the session before deciding on the dissolution of the Assembly. Meanwhile, the ECOWAS deadline of 22 May elapsed and was informally extended to 22 June to allow Mr. Embaló to continue his political consultations, in the light of the COVID-19 movement restrictions.

28. On 28 June, Mr. Embaló issued a decree to dismiss five ministers in the Nabiam-led Government. The ministers, all Members of Parliament from MADEM-G15 and PRS, had not yet been replaced in the People’s National Assembly following their appointment to the new Government. The Constitution does not allow for ministers to also retain their parliamentary seats. The move allowed the dismissed ministers to resume their role in the Assembly as Members of Parliament, thereby boosting the numbers of the MADEM-G15 alliance in the anticipated tight vote the next day to

determine which of the two rival alliances (PAIGC or the Movement for Democratic Change) held the parliamentary majority.

29. On 29 June, the ordinary session of the People's National Assembly was held. There were 27 Members of Parliament from MADEM-G15, 21 from PRS, 1 from APU-PDGB and the sole Member of Parliament from PND participating in the session. In disregard of their party's call for a boycott, six PAIGC parliamentarians also participated, including the Speaker. That brought the total number of participants to 56 (out of 102), meeting the quorum of at least 52 Members of Parliament. With 55 votes in favour and 1 against, the Assembly approved an amended agenda to consider the Nabiam-led Government's programme, and subsequently voted to approve the programme.

30. It should be noted that the initial appointment of Mr. Nabiam on 29 February as Prime Minister had not been preceded by consultation with the political parties represented in the People's National Assembly, as required by the Constitution. However, on 29 June, the Assembly's majority vote and approval of his Government's programme conferred on his Government the parliamentary approval required by the Constitution.

31. Parallel to the unfolding People's National Assembly session on 29 June, PAIGC held a press conference to explain that the party had decided to boycott the session on account of poor security conditions and public health concerns related to the COVID-19 restrictive protocols. The party also cited irregularities regarding the composition of the presiding bench of the session.

32. On 1 July, the People's National Assembly session continued with the participation of the PAIGC Members of Parliament who had hitherto boycotted it. The leader of the PAIGC parliamentary group, Califa Seidi, reiterated allegations that irregularities had occurred at the meeting of 29 June, stating that the party would challenge in court the approval by the Assembly of the Nabiam-led Government's programme. On 3 July, the ministers dismissed on 28 June from the initial Nabiam-led Government were reinstated.

33. On 13 July, the President of the Niger, in his capacity as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, congratulated Mr. Embaló on the approval of the Nabiam-led Government's programme. He urged him to unite the population to ensure peace and stability and to comply with the ECOWAS road map in order to resolve the recurrent political and institutional crisis. He assured Mr. Embaló that ECOWAS would provide support for completion of the constitutional review under way in order to end the chronic instability.

B. Security situation

34. The security situation remained stable, but uncertain, especially given the visible role of the military in the political crisis. In the wake of the COVID-19 health emergency, there were reports of instances of excessive use of force by security forces to enforce lockdown measures, such as restrictions on movement and public gatherings. However, no major incidents were reported.

C. Human rights situation

35. Human rights violations increased. There were reports of excessive use of force, threats and intimidation against political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists. The state of emergency, while deemed necessary to curb the spread of COVID-19, constrained and restricted civil liberties and provided an enabling

environment for abuses. Although hate speech declined following the declaration of the state of emergency, inflammatory remarks against the international community, including the United Nations and its staff, increased.

36. Between 4 and 10 March, threats and abuses were reported against the Speaker of the People's National Assembly, the dismissed Prime Minister and members of his Government. The withdrawal of ECOMIB from the guard duty of State institutions and residences of government officials generated fear and panic, making perceived opponents of the new authorities vulnerable to intimidation and other abuses. On 24 March and 8 April, four Supreme Court judges reported acts of intimidation and threats that impaired the functioning of the Court.

37. Following the dismissal of the Gomes-led Government and the closure of media stations by the military, many journalists were threatened, particularly those active on social media. On 12 March, the Guinean Human Rights League condemned those threats in a press release. On 25 March, the Executive Board of Radio Capital FM wrote to General N'Tam to denounce persecution and attacks against a journalist by members of the military.

38. On 6 April, the Secretary of State for Public Order apologized to the population for the excessive use of force and inhumane treatment by security elements in enforcing lockdown measures. On 18 and 19 April, the Human Rights Defenders Network reported the arrest of 300 and 200 persons, respectively, including women and children, in attempts to enforce the lockdown. Additional cases of beatings of women by police officers were reported on 1 May in Mansôa (Oio Region) and on 13 May in Bissau, with a victim in Bissau hospitalized for physical injuries. No perpetrators were identified and no investigations carried out.

39. On 22 May, in Bissau, unknown armed individuals kidnapped the Member of Parliament and leader of the APU-PDGB parliamentary bench, Marciano Indi. He was released the same day, following an intervention by the Speaker of the People's National Assembly. He is one of the four parliamentarians from APU-PDGB who support the continuation of the APU-PDGB parliamentary agreement signed with PAIGC in March 2019. Also, on 20 June, a member of the PAIGC Permanent Commission, Armando Dias, was arrested and detained by police officers for allegedly being in possession of weapons found in a vehicle in which he was travelling with two other individuals. On the same day, the Nabiam-led Government issued a statement in which it acknowledged serious threats made against parliamentarians. The Government recalled that threats against and harassment of parliamentarians for opinions rendered in the exercise of their mandate were punishable by law. On 21 June, the PAIGC Permanent Commission issued a statement in which it detailed a series of events and acts of intimidation, including the arrest and detention of Mr. Dias. It claimed that, although Mr. Dias was in the company of two other individuals and was not the owner of the vehicle in which the weapons were allegedly found, he was the only person arrested. PAIGC further stated that the communiqué issued by the Government was "steeped in falsehoods", called upon ECOWAS and the international community to take note of the deterioration of political freedoms in the country and appealed to them to take measures to address it.

40. The conditions of detainees worsened owing to inadequate resources. Mr. Embaló pardoned nine male prisoners on 8 May, and other measures to reduce overcrowding in prisons were implemented, although the prison in Bissau remained at full capacity with 54 male prisoners. As a result, the observance of COVID-19 physical distancing protocols for detainees was affected.

D. Social, economic and humanitarian situation

41. The group of five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank adopted a common approach to support the country's contingency plan to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The group issued a joint statement on 27 March to shore up international support and ensure a collective intervention.

42. The Resident Coordinator, as well as the representatives of WHO and the World Bank, initiated dialogue with the new national authorities on humanitarian grounds to agree on the criteria for partner support. WHO continued to work with the Public Health Emergency Operation Centre, which was set up by an interministerial committee to define and implement COVID-19 related priorities. The changes in the leadership structure of the Ministry of Public Health, amid the pandemic, deepened existing coordination challenges within the fragile health system.

43. The European Union provided €1.3 million to WHO and €230,000 to non-governmental organizations for much-needed interventions. The World Bank also allocated \$6.5 million from its Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement project funds and pledged an additional \$6 million from its COVID-19 Fast-Track Facility. Both the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank are preparing projects to support the country's COVID-19 response and recovery plan. United Nations agencies have also mobilized funds to extend support.

44. WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reprogrammed their support to focus on preparedness and the response to the pandemic. The Public Health Emergency Operation Centre was revamped under WHO leadership and supported by UNICEF, WFP, UNDP and IOM. Surveillance at points of entry was strengthened, risk communication strategies were initiated, a national contingency plan was developed, funding mobilization strategies were put in place, the Centre's logistic accountability was enhanced and the National Hospital Simão Mendes is being refurbished for case management. To ensure the coordination of risk communication interventions, a United Nations COVID-19 communication task force, led by UNICEF, was established in March.

45. Following confirmation of the first two COVID-19 cases in Bissau on 24 March, 7 of the 11 health regions in the country registered cases, reaching over 1,949 confirmed cases, with 803 recoveries and 26 deaths as at 18 July. However, case management centres for isolation and quarantine have not been fully utilized, given that, in most confirmed cases, the individuals remain with their families.

46. Measures taken by the national authorities to curb COVID-19 have had socioeconomic consequences for the poor, especially those at risk of malnutrition and food insecurity. In addition to women bearing the burden of care, their food intake, nutritional status and ability to gain access to health-care services have been disproportionately affected and could lead to increased morbidity and mortality related to other underlying conditions.

47. A WFP assessment, conducted from 29 April to 11 May, illustrated that the food security situation deteriorated following the lockdown measures, leading to some households' reducing their food intake or borrowing food. About 63 per cent of households reported food shortages and 68 per cent reported not having stocked food, while 80 per cent faced challenges in gaining access to markets owing to curfews, lack of transportation or fear of infection. The assessment also revealed reductions in

cashew nut sales, with only half of the farmers able to sell or exchange part of their harvest at much reduced prices. WFP nutritional support is helping to mitigate malnutrition and its related health effects, including in the Bafatá, Gabú and Oio Regions. However, an inability to monitor patients regularly and difficulties in referring at-risk cases and in providing nutritional counselling to mothers remain challenges.

48. School closures created an additional burden for children in rural households, as 180,000 children were unable to receive WFP school meals. To support children and families, WFP distributed 197 tons of food to 45,000 children in 540 schools between 19 and 27 May. The exercise is to be repeated using food grown locally by women and youth smallholder farmers. The risk remains high of leaving behind vulnerable groups, such as women and girls who are victims of unreported cases of gender-based violence, persons deprived of liberty and persons with disabilities.

III. Status of implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

49. There was marginal progress in the implementation of the UNIOGBIS mandate. The protracted electoral dispute, coupled with COVID-19, demanded attention from national stakeholders and affected the mission's ability to engage on critical peacebuilding priorities. The situation hampered the political engagement of the United Nations with the authorities on the transition; nonetheless, UNIOGBIS made considerable progress in the transition planning process and drawdown plans for its eventual closure by 31 December 2020.

50. The mission, in consultation with the United Nations Country Team, developed a series of documents outlining peacebuilding priorities and entry points. They include inclusive political dialogue and reform of the political system; State-building and strengthening of institutions; combating of drug trafficking and organized crime; strengthening of judicial capacity and human rights; and empowerment, participation and full representation of women in all processes. The documents were further reviewed during a retreat held on 2 and 3 March for UNIOGBIS and the Country Team.

A. Implementation of the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the Economic Community of West African States Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau and the Economic Community of West African States road map

51. UNIOGBIS continued its engagement with national and international partners to maintain the momentum in political dialogue and lay the groundwork for the implementation of the critical institutional reforms outlined in the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the Economic Community of West African States Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau. My Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau encouraged national stakeholders to implement critical peacebuilding priorities necessary for stability. However, the protracted electoral dispute has stalled progress in that regard, including the proposal to create a high-level platform for extending strategic support to the national authorities in the implementation of the reform agenda. Consequently, my Special Representative has focused on supporting inclusive dialogue and confidence-building

measures, including by advocating that political stakeholders focus on dialogue and overcome the prevailing mistrust affecting the country's stability.

52. On 3 March, with support from UNIOGBIS and the Peacebuilding Fund, the network of civil society organizations published its first report on the reform process, covering the outcomes of workshops held in May and June 2019 on electoral and political party law, public administration, justice and security sector reform and the annotated version of the Constitution. The report contributed to the development of technical documents for academic and civil society participation in future consultations on the reform agenda.

53. The activities of the organizing commission of the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development in Guinea-Bissau, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, were limited owing to the political crisis and the state of emergency. Consequently, with UNIOGBIS support, efforts were refocused on awareness-raising tools, such as billboards displaying messages on reconciliation in Bissau and the regions. The mission, however, produced a video and a photographic exhibition of the history of Guinea-Bissau in preparation for the conference. A website was also created to enhance the visibility of the conference.

B. Review of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau

54. Through my Special Representative's engagement, national stakeholders confirmed their support for a constitutional review and a comprehensive reform agenda. The United Nations system consistently reiterated its readiness to support the process. However, since the previous report (S/2020/105), the uncertainties in the political environment have hampered the effective functioning of the People's National Assembly and its ad hoc commission for the review of the Constitution.

55. Against that background, on 11 May, the President issued a decree to establish a technical commission for the review of the Constitution with a three-month mandate to present a draft. On 12 and 14 May, respectively, he appointed and swore in the Commission's five members and four experts. Meanwhile, on 12 May, the Guinean Human Rights League expressed concern about the establishment of the Commission, describing it as a serious violation of the Constitution, on the grounds that constitutional review is the prerogative of the People's National Assembly. On 14 May, the National Civil Society Movement for Peace, Democracy and Development issued a communiqué in which it noted with concern the creation of the Commission during a state of emergency to undertake a legislative task. It appealed to all political actors to engage in dialogue to build consensus and for the Assembly to accelerate the constitutional review under way.

C. Promotion and protection of human rights

56. As part of efforts to build national human rights capacities, UNIOGBIS trained 30 members, including 11 women, of the Federation of Associations for the Defence and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Bubaque, Bolama region.

57. UNIOGBIS monitored high-profile cases, including the case of the Deputy Director of the State Intelligence Service, arbitrarily detained on 5 February at the Military Airbase barracks in Bissau, and advocated his release after a writ of habeas corpus was submitted on 22 February. In addition, the mission successfully advocated the eventual release of five detainees held in prolonged detention. It also monitored the case of the Minister of Justice under the Gomes-led Government, Ruth Monteiro, who was questioned and charged on 8 April with, among other things, possession of

a State vehicle. The charges and the restrictions on her movement were lifted on 23 April, whereupon she left the country on 28 April.

58. UNIOGBIS advocated the mainstreaming of human rights in COVID-19 response efforts and enhanced its collaboration with the Human Rights Defenders Network on early warning of and advocacy against human rights violations.

D. Combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

59. UNIOGBIS facilitated strategic coordination to enhance the capacity of law enforcement and justice institutions to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. Support was provided to operationalize the case management database that had been validated in December 2019. As a result, the database was populated with information to track and help to analyse drug trafficking and organized crime cases for high-level decision-making purposes.

60. UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also assisted the national law enforcement and judicial authorities with the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of drug trafficking cases, including the “Navara trial” in relation to the seizure of 1,869 kg of cocaine in September 2019. The ruling resulted in sentences of from 4 to 16 years’ imprisonment for the 12 accused (2 in absentia) and the confiscation of their assets. The defendants appealed to the Supreme Court on 8 April. Similarly, support was provided for the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in Bissau to conduct random inspections of major hotels to search for international criminals listed in the INTERPOL intelligence database, resulting in 13 suspects being detected and 1 arrested.

61. UNIOGBIS facilitated sessions on internal security for heads of security through the Policing and Internal Security Coordination Group to enhance the coordination and effective utilization of the Community Policing Forum. Sessions were held in Bissau and in the Buba regional model police station, with the latter resulting in the arrest of 11 suspects for illegal possession of cannabis in the Quinara Region. The seizure reinforced community confidence in the police. Furthermore, the Peacebuilding Fund approved a new project to address the destabilizing effects of drug trafficking and organized crime in Guinea-Bissau.

62. On 14 March, a Portuguese national was arrested by the Judicial Police at the Osvaldo Vieira International Airport with 83 capsules of cocaine, but was then released by officers of the National Guard. UNIOGBIS, in coordination with UNODC, is providing technical guidance to the Judicial Police on the investigation relating to that incident. Preliminary findings reveal that the suspect has since returned to Portugal. Furthermore, following the alleged entry into the country of suspected drug traffickers, UNIOGBIS and UNODC are monitoring the ongoing investigation and verification with INTERPOL in Portugal of the aircraft’s passenger manifest.

E. Incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding

63. UNIOGBIS organized several meetings with women leaders on promoting social cohesion, including a retreat in Djalikunda, Oio Region, from 21 to 23 February. Fifty participants, drawn from the major political parties and civil society, discussed ways to build consensus and underscored the urgent need for dialogue among political leaders. However, follow-up actions were hindered by the political and institutional crisis, which created rifts within the group and challenges for women’s mobilization.

64. In that context, UNIOGBIS engaged the Guinea-Bissau Women's Council to explore mediation options. However, the COVID-19 pandemic stalled efforts in that regard. Consequently, the mission calibrated its support to assist women's groups with advocacy, monitoring, reporting and coordination to ensure gender sensitivity in the COVID-19 response. UNIOGBIS also coordinated advocacy by the United Nations Gender Thematic Working Group for mainstreaming gender in the COVID-19 response and recovery effort.

65. Between 12 April and 3 May, UNIOGBIS, in coordination with UNICEF and national partners, provided technical and financial support for the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region. The support facilitated the Network's dialogue with the municipal authorities in Bissau for the preparation and management of a new market space created by the authorities to decongest the Bissau central market, where the sellers are predominantly women. Protective masks produced by an association of women with disabilities were provided. The market is managed by women and youth volunteers. The Network, local women and youth partners are exploring the possibility of setting up additional markets.

F. Mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance

66. In the light of the protracted electoral crisis, UNIOGBIS has intensified its engagement with international partners to harmonize strategies and common messaging to reinforce the ECOWAS-led mediation efforts. The group of five international partners has coordinated efforts to defuse tensions and advocate urgent investment in long-term stability.

67. My Special Representative has advocated the creation of a platform for reforms, with a similar format to the High-level Steering Committee on the Elections. It is envisaged that the platform will provide support for the country in its reforms, keep partners and relevant stakeholders abreast of the reconfiguration of the United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau and place the country high on the international community's agenda. On 24 February and 25 June, my Special Representative briefed the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on recent developments and explored avenues for the Commission to provide further support during the transition, as well as contribute to the coordination and coherence of peacebuilding efforts.

68. My Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel continued to provide regional support for the good offices efforts of my Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau by engaging with regional stakeholders, in coordination with the ECOWAS Commission and within the framework of the group of five, to address political challenges.

IV. Transition plan and drawdown arrangements

69. The planning and implementation for the transition and closure of UNIOGBIS by 31 December 2020 continued. The United Nations presence identified its peacebuilding priorities, including those tasks currently implemented by UNIOGBIS for which the United Nations Country Team or the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) would assume responsibility after the closure of the mission. The staff drawdown and liquidation plans were prepared, a Country Team capacity assessment was initiated and a broader capacity assessment of national, regional and international actors was to be conducted by September. A conflict analysis was completed and the drafting of the common country assessment is on

track. The completion of the assessment is a necessary step towards formulating the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2021–2025. A resource mobilization strategy in support of the Cooperation Framework is to be prepared upon the completion of the comprehensive capacity assessment and the common country assessment. The Cooperation Framework, once finalized, will ensure the consolidation of the peacebuilding gains achieved by UNIOGBIS and allow for continued United Nations support for national development priorities consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda. The transition calendar timelines for some of the milestones were slightly adjusted owing to the political crisis and the outbreak of COVID-19.

70. Regular meetings of the United Nations Integrated Transition Task Team, comprising UNIOGBIS, the United Nations Country Team and UNOWAS, were held. The discussions focused, inter alia, on assessing progress made in the implementation of transition activities and on reinforcing the United Nations footprint following the UNIOGBIS closure, including through the development of related projects on peacebuilding and sustaining peace to be funded by the Peacebuilding Fund.

71. On 26 March, a lessons-learned virtual meeting between UNIOGBIS, UNOWAS and the United Nations resident coordinators in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire was held. The exercise was instrumental to gaining knowledge and understanding of best practices and lessons learned to ensure a smooth transition process.

72. In order to preserve institutional memory and support the continuation of United Nations interventions in the country, UNIOGBIS prepared a set of background documents on achievements and lessons learned. A shared online repository of documents related to the reconfiguration of the United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau was also created.

73. To support the effective engagement of the United Nations Country Team in the transition, an interim transition adviser was seconded from United Nations Headquarters in February. The adviser is supporting the completion of the common country assessment, a review of the United Nations Partnership Assistance Framework 2020 workplan to incorporate the identified residual peacebuilding priorities and the Country Team capacity assessment to enable effective planning of the United Nations reconfiguration. The recruitment of a peace and development adviser to support political and peacebuilding analysis, as well as the recruitment of a long-term transition specialist and full staffing of the Resident Coordinator's Office, is ongoing.

74. A communication strategy for the mission's closure was developed by UNIOGBIS, in coordination with the United Nations Country Team, targeting internal and external audiences. Internal town hall meetings were held and broadcast messages were sent regularly to update staff on the implementation of the drawdown plan. External United Nations communication has focused on reporting on Security Council resolution [2512 \(2020\)](#) confirming the mission's closure, as well as providing updates on efforts to implement the drawdown and the transfer of residual peacebuilding priorities to the Country Team, UNOWAS and other partners. UNIOGBIS plans to work with the United Nations Communication Group, which it transferred to the Country Team in January, to launch the joint United Nations Guinea-Bissau website. The United Nations Population Fund will provide resources to the Communication Group to produce the United Nations radio programme and newsletter.

75. The mission's phased staff drawdown and liquidation are guided by the drawdown and closure plan. Phased in conjunction with the transition timelines for the transfer of residual tasks and functions, which was agreed upon in consultation with the United Nations Country Team and UNOWAS, the plan ensures a gradual descaling of resources. Emphasis is placed on the disposal of assets, site handover,

archiving and records management, staff drawdown and environmental restoration. Staff members have been notified of their termination dates. Of the current 121 staff, 93 will be separated by 31 December, while 28 will remain for the mission's liquidation.

76. The progress in transition planning and programming notwithstanding, the political crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on United Nations engagement with the national authorities, posing challenges for the effective implementation of the transition. It is envisaged that the validation of the peacebuilding priorities by the authorities and the completion of a comprehensive capacity assessment will resume following the approval by the People's National Assembly of the Nabiam-led Government's programme. The United Nations will engage with the new Government to ensure full involvement, participation and ownership of the transition process by the national authorities and will advance efforts towards producing a national development vision to formulate the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

V. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

77. On 2 and 3 March, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Country Team held a retreat to foster a common vision and shared approach for the transition process, as well as to identify challenges and opportunities. The Strategic Policy Group, composed of the heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and UNIOGBIS leadership, agreed on a common strategy and modalities to advance the transition. The Integrated Transition Task Team continued with transition activities, which included the formulation of the transition calendar, the drawdown plan, the transfer of residual mandated tasks and peacebuilding priorities and the development of related projects to be funded by the Peacebuilding Fund.

78. The programme management team, established in mid-December 2019, under the leadership of my Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator, continued to strengthen United Nations integrated planning and coordination for the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2021–2025, which will provide support for the residual peacebuilding priorities, following the drawdown of UNIOGBIS.

79. UNIOGBIS and UNOWAS further enhanced their cooperation in undertaking combined good offices efforts in support of the reform agenda. Together with ECOWAS, they launched a tripartite integrated cooperation and coordination mechanism for the UNIOGBIS transition on 3 June to increase coordination and ensure a seamless transfer of peacebuilding priorities from the mission to other stakeholders. It will meet monthly at the technical and principal levels until December. On 23 June, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, my Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel held their first tripartite meeting and agreed to intensify joint action to support national efforts to resolve the political crisis and ensure a seamless United Nations transition.

B. Public information

80. UNIOGBIS produced five radio programmes that were broadcast on 28 local radio stations to raise awareness about peace and reconciliation, the mission's

mandate and COVID-19 preventive measures. Over 100,000 people were reached. In addition, eight press releases were issued on political and mandate-related activities, including the United Nations transition.

81. Through funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNIOGBIS supported a youth group to set up a fact-checking team to trace and verify fake news about COVID-19 that was impeding the country's response, increasing mistrust and potentially triggering social unrest. The mission also supported the United Nations COVID-19 Communication Task Force in implementing the national contingency plan against COVID-19, including the training of 34 journalists, of whom 14 were women.

82. Similarly, with funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNIOGBIS extended its support to the journalists' union by assisting journalists in their career paths and supported the publication of the work of nine investigative journalists on various topics. In line with the transition plan, the UNIOGBIS Public Information Unit is continuing its efforts to develop a mission legacy report.

C. Staff safety and security

83. The overall security situation for United Nations personnel remained stable. While there were some minor road traffic accidents, the most significant incident was a burglary at the residence of an international staff member, resulting in the theft of personal belongings and United Nations assets. However, threats were made on social media against UNIOGBIS and UNDP staff members who were involved in monitoring and advocating the protection of the human rights of the Minister of Justice in the Government led by Aristides Gomes.

84. To ensure business continuity during the pandemic, the United Nations security management system deployed measures for the continuation of critical United Nations-mandated activities, conducted a risk assessment and put in place mitigation measures. Regular security broadcasts were issued advising personnel of the security situation, as well as reporting on national security measures regarding the state of emergency and curfew.

VI. Observations and recommendations

85. In the context of a protracted political and institutional crisis, exacerbated by the outbreak of COVID-19, I acknowledge the mediation efforts led by ECOWAS and supported by international partners, including the group of five, which allowed for a political solution to help to stabilize the situation. Deep-seated mistrust continues to exacerbate divisions among political actors, and concerted actions are required of all national stakeholders, with the support of the international community, to further stabilize the fragile governance system, ensure the effective functioning of State institutions and address other pressing political and socioeconomic challenges.

86. I took note of the ECOWAS decision of 22 April by which it recognized Mr. Embaló as the winner of the run-off presidential election of 29 December 2019. I note that the ordinary session of the People's National Assembly began on 29 June, at which the Assembly approved the Nabiam-led Government's programme. I urge all political parties to engage in inclusive and genuine dialogue to reach consensus on outstanding issues. I stress the urgent need for inclusive and participatory governance that will bring stability and create momentum for institutional reforms. The reform agenda remains critical to the stability of Guinea-Bissau. I further urge the President, the Government, parliamentarians and all political stakeholders to work collaboratively to enact the critical reforms envisaged in the ECOWAS road map, the

Conakry Agreement and the Stability Pact. Renewed efforts should focus on the implementation of the reform agenda in line with the ECOWAS decision of 22 April, in which the need to accelerate the constitutional review was stressed.

87. I urge the international community to continue to support national efforts towards the implementation of the reform agenda. I also encourage the international community to help to generate new momentum for inclusive collaboration with national stakeholders, building on the work already initiated, with particular emphasis on the review of the Constitution and electoral law and reforms of the security and judicial institutions. In that respect, I welcome my Special Representative's proposal to establish a high-level platform comprising national and international stakeholders to accompany the reform agenda. It is envisaged that the platform, when established, will help to build consensus among international and national actors and help to coordinate support to advance critical reforms.

88. The promotion and protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law are essential for peace, security and political stabilization. I strongly urge the defence and security forces to refrain from all interference in the political process, as that risks undermining peace and stability. I call upon the State authorities to ensure accountability for those engaging in acts of intimidation, including threats to life, hate speech and incitement to violence. I also encourage all stakeholders to help to create an environment conducive to respect for human rights and the rule of law, in particular for women and for perceived opposition representatives, and to refrain from actions that might fuel mistrust, fear or hatred among the population. Within the framework of the United Nations transition, the establishment of an independent national human rights institution, compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), remains a critical peacebuilding priority.

89. The political environment, coupled with a prolonged state of emergency, appears to be creating an enabling environment for drug trafficking and organized crime networks to regroup and resume their operations. The circumstances of the removal and replacement of heads of national security institutions, as well as security officers at the airport and border posts, may have had a negative impact on the effective functioning of those institutions. It is critical that the national authorities swiftly demonstrate their commitment to combating drug trafficking, including by supporting the full implementation of the national strategic action plan validated in December 2019. I also encourage the international community to continue to support the country in addressing the scourges of drug trafficking and organized crime. UNODC and UNIOGBIS will continue to closely monitor and report on the impact of the new political dynamics and the pandemic on drug trafficking and organized crime, with a view to helping to prevent traffickers from exploiting the current situation.

90. Guinea-Bissau has been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, given the poor state of its health infrastructure and public administration. I appreciate the support of the European Union and the World Bank, and the efforts made by United Nations agencies, to mitigate the health and socioeconomic fallout. I further appeal to the international community to extend additional support to help to build national capacity in the public administration. Targeted interventions in key areas such as basic services and economic recovery will be crucial to address the growing socioeconomic needs.

91. Despite the political challenges, there was progress towards the drawdown and closure of UNIOGBIS by 31 December 2020, including the identification of peacebuilding priorities to be continued by UNOWAS and the United Nations Country Team in particular. To further bolster integrated transition planning,

UNIOGBIS is to expedite the completion of the comprehensive capacity mapping, which is vital for finalizing the resource mobilization strategy and subsequently mobilizing the requisite resources to avert a financial cliff.

92. UNIOGBIS will continue to implement its drawdown plan in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team and UNOWAS, while remaining flexible and adaptive to the changing operational realities resulting from COVID-19. It will also ensure that the drawdown, closure and liquidation are undertaken with full regard for the environmental impact. Furthermore, the mission will work with the new Government to ensure national buy-in and ownership of the transition process and milestones.

93. I commend the ECOWAS leaders, particularly the President of the Niger, in his capacity as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, and all international partners for their tireless efforts towards long-term peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau. Sustained international engagement remains crucial for peacebuilding and reforms following the exit of UNIOGBIS. In this respect, I welcome the ECOWAS, UNIOGBIS and UNOWAS tripartite Integrated Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism to support the political and United Nations transition processes. I also commend the group of five international partners for the long-standing commitment to peace and stability.

94. Last, I wish to express my appreciation to regional and international partners in Guinea-Bissau for their continued cooperation with the mission. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations Country Team, under the leadership of my Special Representative, for their commitment and hard work. I commend the continued close collaboration between UNIOGBIS and UNOWAS on the political and transition processes, which is critical for ensuring a seamless United Nations transition.
