

Guinea-Bissau: Upcoming elections vital to prevent 'relapse' into instability, says UN envoy

Highlighting the importance of the upcoming legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau, the top United Nations official in the country reiterated the importance of "far-reaching" reforms to prevent a relapse into political and institutional instability.

José Viegas Filho, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and the head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the country ([UNIOGBIS](#)) [called for](#) sustained international support for the West African nation.

"I therefore urge all international partners to maintain and increase their political, technical and financial support to help national institutions during and beyond the legislative and presidential elections," said Mr. Filho, briefing the Security Council for the first time since his [appointment](#) as the Special Representative.

Mr. Filho also informed the Council of some difficulties in the preparations for the legislative elections (scheduled for 18 November), including disagreements voiced by some political actors against the 30-day timeframe set by the Government for voter registration and delays in arrival of biometric kits.

On the other hand, the senior UN official also highlighted important developments, including the adoption of a new gender parity quota law, on 2 August, which establishes a minimum of 36 per cent representation for women in the lists of candidates for legislative and local government elections, as well as for appointments to key decision-making positions.

This, he explained, is a "significant development" for gender equality and women's empowerment in Guinea-Bissau.

Though the law will have to be reviewed by specialized committees of the national Parliament, as well as formally promulgated by the President of Guinea-Bissau, it should enter into force before the November legislative elections, [according](#) to UNIOGBIS.

Furthermore, Mr. Filho said that he continues to support the "full implementation" of the 2016 Conakry agreement, which set out a framework for a peaceful resolution to the [political crisis](#) plaguing the country since its independence in 1974.

Turning to the work of UNIOGBIS, Mr. Filho informed the 15-member Security Council of the Integrated Peacebuilding Office's support to national authorities in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime.

'Renewed sense of optimism'

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Also at the briefing, Mauro Vieira, the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN and the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, spoke of his trip to the country in July this year, during which he met wide range of interlocutors.

"My mission confirmed that there has been tangible progress in the implementation of the Conakry agreement and in the process of return to normality of the political life as compared to same period last year," he said, adding: "There is a renewed sense of optimism regarding the definitive solution to the protracted crisis and the upcoming elections are seen as a window of opportunity to this end."

He also outlined recent developments, including the appointment of a consensual Prime Minister and the formation of an inclusive government as major achievements towards the implementation of the Conakry agreement.