

Speech: Continued progress in Guinea-Bissau

Thank you very much Madame President and may I also thank Ambassador Zerihoun and Ambassador Mauro Vieira for their briefings and although he's left us for technical difficulties I'd like to thank Executive Director Fedadov. It was important to hear from him given the specific threat of organised crime in Guinea-Bissau.

Madame President, like others who have spoken so far, the UK welcomes the recent progress that we have seen in Guinea-Bissau and that progress is considerable. A consensus Prime Minister after some months of difficulty, a date for legislative elections, and the formation of an inclusive government are all signs that good sense and consideration for Guinea-Bissau's stability have trumped narrow political interest.

But I think we would all need to witness continued progress before we are all able to be convinced that this really is a new reality. We need Guinea-Bissau's leaders stick to their political agreement: it is an agreement for the country's future and their people's future and it must not be held hostage to personal disputes. We need unity behind preparations for elections, now only six months away. And we need unified steps towards political and constitutional reform in line with the concrete commitments made in Conakry.

We have already seen how civil society – whether religious leaders or women's mediators – have acted in the country's long-term interest. We would urge Guinea-Bissau's leaders to create opportunities for their meaningful participation in political processes. We know in this Council that political settlements which are inclusive are political settlements which last.

It is clear that we would not be discussing progress in Guinea-Bissau without the patient leadership shown by ECOWAS. We urge ECOWAS to continue its engagement to see the political crisis through, and in return we in this Security Council to remain united in our support for ECOWAS and all the very impressive things that they have been doing.

Madame President, in February the Security Council renewed the mandate for UNIOGBIS with a narrower focus on good offices. While the situation on the ground has changed, the mandate remains just as, if not more, relevant.

In the short-term, the priorities must be consolidating the political settlement and delivering the elections. Continued good office support will be required in the medium term to see through political reforms. We also welcome the deepening focus on transnational organised crime and illicit drugs, which are security threats not only for the country but for the region and the international community at large.

Madame President, we welcome warmly the briefing of Ambassador Vieira and

agree with him on the importance of the sustaining peace approach. Given a changed political environment on the ground and a refreshed mandate, the appointment of the new SRSG José Viegas Filho is timely and welcome. He has an opportunity to bring renewed direction and drive to refocusing and slimming down UNIOGBIS as per the February mandate and delivering the priority tasks at hand.

But let me in the same token, in the same vein offer the sincere thanks of the United Kingdom to former-SRSG Modibo Touré. Despite the obstacles UNIOGBIS has faced, he demonstrated genuine commitment to Guinea-Bissau through to the end of his term and helped deliver the positive progress we are discussing today.