



December 4, 2008

POST -ELECTION COUP ATTEMPT & THREAT OF DESTABILISATION

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INTRODUCTION

In the early hours of Sunday November 23, 2008, the residence of the President Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira in Tion di Peppel quarters was attacked by assailant soldiers, killing one presidential guard and wounding others. This attack came barely days after November 16, 2008 parliamentary polls widely reported to have been free, fair and transparent. Immediate reaction from within Bissau, ECOWAS and the rest of the international community was swift and firm. In a press release issued on Monday after an emergency cabinet meeting, the Government of Guinea Bissau unreservedly condemned what it referred to as an attempted coup d'état and vowed to arrest and bring to book the perpetrators of such a heinous act. The population traumatised by years of instability quickly called for a mass demonstration in support of the democratic process and the country's drive towards stability.

WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING NETWORK (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program co-ordinated by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Through its WARN Program, WANEP is setting the stage for a civil society-based early warning and response network in Africa with emphasis on human security.

WARN covers the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-region including Cameroon and Chad. Our focus was initially the Mano River Basin countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. We have since expanded to cover the entire West Africa sub-region.

Since 2002, WANEP entered into an agreement with ECOWAS through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the framework of capacity building in Conflict Prevention. One of the goals of this agreement is to interface WARN with the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems to optimize early warning conflict prevention in West Africa. In view of this development, WANEP has been operating a liaison office located at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria since April 2003.

The swift and spontaneous reaction, ECOWAS¹ (and the rest of the international community) that have invested so much in Guinea Bissau to stabilize the country was firm and decisive. As early as Sunday November 23, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Jean Ping reacted by condemning any unconstitutional change of government in Guinea Bissau. He characterised the November 16 elections as satisfactory. He condemned any attempt to seize power by force in Guinea Bissau. On the same day, ECOWAS through the President of the Commission, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas expressed indignation on news of the attack on Nino Vieira's residence and condemned any attempt to truncate democracy, recalling the zero tolerance of accession to power through unconstitutional means as enshrined in the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001). The ECOWAS communiqué reminded the military and political class of their individual and collective responsibilities, a sort of warning

¹ ECOWAS, among other things gave \$500,000 for the organization of elections. In addition, an office of the ECOWAS Special Representative has been in place for many years.

that ECOWAS would not sit and watch Guinea Bissau destabilised again. The ECOWAS neighbour and major stakeholder in Guinea Bissau's stability—Senegal—reacted swiftly by putting its troops on the Bissau frontier on maximum alert.

This policy brief:

- Introduces the contextual realities in Guinea Bissau in relation to the political and security context;
 - Highlights the dangers Guinea Bissau situation poses;
 - Envisages possible scenarios we may expect within the immediate term (within 3 months)
 - Finally proposes options for response.
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BRIEF CONTEXTUAL NOTE

Guinea Bissau is a country known for its history of coups (real and alleged), mutinies and general military discontent. It is a country notorious for pervasive gun carrying culture. Thus, the coup game is well known in Guinea Bissau. With a population of about 1.6 million inhabitants, there are about 4,500 soldiers that pundits say is one of the most ageing army in Africa because its sizeable number of the military top brass is refusing to retire as retirement is synonymous to descent to poverty.

Parliamentary elections held in November 16, 2008 and according to preliminary observer reports, the elections that was meant to elect the 100 member national assembly was largely won by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC) that captured 67 seats. The Social Renewal Party (PRS) of former President Kumba Yala came second with 28 seats. Yala vehemently cried foul and threatened not to recognize "fabricated" results.

There were allegations that money laundered from drug trafficking was used during the elections campaign. Luxury cars were seen in campaign caravans. Tension and animosity between Kumba Yala and President Nino Vieira already resurfaced recently when the former accused the latter of implications in the much talked about drug trafficking in the country-thus facing a judicial prosecution to answer a case related to the allegation. Yala has called for an international enquiry into drug trafficking under Vieira's Government. Worth mentioning is the fact that Kumba Yala hails from the Balantes ethnic group to which most of the top brass in the military belong.

In late October 2008, ECOWAS, the UN Office for Drug Control (UNODC) and the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) organized a two day ministerial conference in Praia, Cape Verde to address the surging illicit drug trade that is taking West Africa hostage. Guinea Bissau, Guinea and to an extent Ghana were cited as countries hard hit by the surging drug trade. According to the press release by ECOWAS, it is estimated that about a quarter of cocaine consumed in Europe was trafficked through West Africa in 2007 alone. The street value of drugs trafficked through the region as at December 2007 stood at 18 billion US dollars. UNODC reported that 33 tons of cocaine was seized in West Africa in October 2007 alone. The entire continent had hitherto hardly seized a single ton of cocaine in a given year².

² ECOWAS: "ECOWAS Chairman Joins Ministers to Task Selves on New Anti-Drug Strategies" Press Release, Communications Department, Praia (October 27, 2008).

KEY THREATS & ACCELERATORS OF CONFLICT

Parliamentary Elections: Bad Losers Syndrome

The November 16, 2008 parliamentary elections, it was hoped, would constitute a unique opportunity for Guinea Bissau to take a major step towards the consolidation of democracy. It was also, perhaps, in the logic of the international community that believes that elections would end all political strife and usher in eras of legitimacy and stability. Unfortunately, Africa seems to be going through an elections crisis wherein results are challenged and everyone claiming victory. Recently, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia have all been hit by the electoral crisis. Kumba Yala's Social Renewal Party (PRS) is rejecting the verdict of the November 16 polls.

It is reported that army sergeant Alexander Yala, nephew to Kumba Yala and alleged main suspect behind the Sunday morning attack on the President's residence is at large. Kumba Yala was thus suspected to be involved in the plot although he has condemned the attack and also denied involvement. How related the two issues are would definitely be unravelled as investigations continue. However, there is risk of political harassment and witch hunting that may trigger an ethnic feud, which would in turn ignite more military wrath given the ethnic dimension of the army. The coalition of political parties (*Parti de la Rénovation Social* (PRS) and *l'Alliance des Forces Patriotiques* (AFP)) asking for the annulment is a sign that the crisis is far from over.

Narcotic and Anti-Corruption War

There is no way events unfolding in Bissau can be disassociated from the anti-narcotic war and the corruption that has entangled it. Any attempt to unmask the drug tsars would definitely be resisted at all cost. Recent reports from media, international organisations and intelligent sources alluded to the fact that some heavy weights in government may be directly aiding and abetting the 'lucrative' trade. Guinea Bissau has been cited as a transit point and international drug cartels will stop short at nothing to transform the country into a veritable narcotic state. The fact is that the Latin American syndrome is here in West Africa and it seems that the war on drug trafficking is being lost. Porous frontiers, poorly paid soldiers and security forces, lust for quick money, absence of viable economic activity, failing state institutions, and geographical realities with hundreds of unmanned small islands make Guinea Bissau extremely vulnerable.

The Army: A Perpetual Source of Instability

The antecedents in Bissau have proven beyond reasonable doubt that the army remains a critical issue in the quest for peace and stability in Guinea Bissau. This factor is historical and structural in nature and therefore needs a permanent and incisive engagement. This needs a financially viable and sustainable package. Donor initiatives, particularly donor conferences on Guinea Bissau took this particular issue on board but as it seems, there is still a wide gap between promises, commitments and delivery. Dealing with the military factor cannot also be exclusive of other development imperatives that Guinea Bissau urgently needs. Yet, the military factor is such a dangerous threat that must be addressed if peace and stability is to be achieved³. As recent as August, 2008, there were allegations of an

³ See Annex I on reported incidents of coups attempts in Guinea Bissau in the most recent past.

attempted coup by fugitive top military officers suspected to be aiding the drug cartels and enriching themselves. President Wade even warned in his recent media statements that drug dealers want to place 'their people' within the system and there is fear that the military is their target.

Neighbours Not Healthy Enough to Help

The dynamics of the regional implications of conflict in the Gaabu valley (Senegal, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia) are so intertwined that a regional approach will always be most desired if lasting peace is to be achieved. Initiatives by The Gambia to mobilize all parties to accept the elections verdict prior to the elections have now proved futile as opposition parties are calling for the annulment of the polls. Guinea that used to lend military (technical) support to Nino Vieira is not in good shape following social riots that resulted in a serious security stress and strained relations (with allegations that Guinea Bissau elements were used in violently quelling the Conakry riots). Senegal that openly responded to the coup attempt by putting troops on maximum alert because of its interest in the MFDC rebellion in the Casamance offered "to evacuate the President and family" if he so desired⁴.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

These hypothetical scenarios are envisaged in the next two-three month period.

Best Case Scenario (Plausible)

Guinea Bissau quickly regains its calm and the concerted efforts of the international community results in gradual improvements of the security situation. Opposition finally accepts the verdict of the polls after initial threats. The coup plotters are arrested, tried and sentenced to prison terms that serve as dissuasive measures (disincentives) to future adventurers. Mass rallies by the civil society legitimise the verdict of the polls and development aid star pouring into the country, including resources to support the ongoing anti-drug war.

Worst Case Scenario (Plausible)

The temporary calm that exist in the country suddenly transforms into a political impasse as Kumba Yala insists that the elections were rigged in his disfavour. Yala is implicated in the attack on the President's residence and his arrest provokes an uprising in the military and the ugly ethnic rivalry resurfaces. Chaos and anarchy ensues and the drug cartels take advantage and impose a fugitive leader in Bissau.

POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR RESPONSE ACTION TO AVERT CHAOS

This section proposes possible options for response action to avert a worst case

- ***Punish the coup plotters:*** Prompt and decisive action against the authors of Sunday's November 23 attack on the President's residence may be a dissuasive. Latest reports indicate the mastermind of the coup plot, Alexandra Tcham Yala has been arrested in Dakar, Senegal and would soon be repatriated to Bissau to face the law.

- ***The Army:*** The defence and security sector governance reforms that have been going on in Guinea Bissau seem to have no ending. This is a critical area that must be addressed beyond rhetoric. Concrete programmes of

⁴ President Abdulaye Wade, monitored on France 24, Sunday 23 November 2008.

laying-off or retiring of aged officers in exchange for good retirement packages must be contemplated. The gun carrying culture and mentality that everything can be achieved through the barrel of the gun must be replaced with an alternative offer. It is time to walk the talk. After more than three attempts to restructure the army, it is time to put this issue on the priority list.

- ❑ *No Peace without Development:* It is not whether poverty causes conflict or conflict nurses poverty – the debate that has remained open ended. What is certain is that Guinea Bissau is going to remain a “nuisance” if appropriate measures are not put in place to assuage the people’s sufferings. A helpless country that it has been for so long only buttresses the quest for quick money thus making the country vulnerable to the narcotic cartels. Money promised during fundraising sessions in Europe must be honoured by the donors.
- ❑ *Narcotic War:* For the anti-drug war to be won, concerted efforts and initiatives as outlined in the Praia Ministerial Conference of October 2008 must be followed up urgently and implemented. This is an international issue that must not be seen as an African matter. However, initiatives must not also be an excuse to undermine the sovereignty of any state. The ECOWAS elaborated plan of action must be assisted and sustained.
- ❑ *Collaboration between UN, ECOWAS and others stakeholders:* For preventive purposes, the ECOWAS initiative borne out of the Mediation and Security Council meeting in Ouagadougou, December 2, 2008 and previous and ongoing UN and others stakeholder initiatives should not only put Guinea Bissau on the priority list of international and regional engagement but to also make it an emergency agenda. The various responses must be seen to be cooperating rather than competing.
- ❑ Sustaining peace in Guinea Bissau in the medium to long term will require developing a national architecture for peace that will promote, enhance and facilitate dialogue regularly. It is important to appreciate that elections do not equal democracy. Fundamental to building a democratic culture in Guinea Bissau is to create a mechanism that will enable key political stakeholders to be able to talk to each other about the issues that divide them. Such a framework does not exist in Guinea. ECOWAS could support the development of such institutional framework which will have the added value of building local capacity for dialogue in Guinea Bissau.

CONCLUSION

Sitting in its last Mediation and Security Council Meeting in Ouagadougou on December 2, 2008, Ministers of Foreign Affairs from ECOWAS Member Countries set the ball rolling by adopting a series of very important measures to strengthen the security apparatus in Guinea Bissau and deal with emerging sub-regional security challenges. The ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council “agreed to protect the fledgling democracy in Guinea Bissau by supporting the on-going democratization process through the direct involvement of ECOWAS...and pledged to despatch a team of experts to assist in the investigation in view to determining those involved in the assassination attempt as well as the causes of the

persistent instability in the country.”⁵ This total commitment from ECOWAS and assurance to mobilize the international community to redeem their pledges and commitments to Guinea Bissau is a great way forward. WANEP salutes the ECOWAS courage.

One of the emerging challenges that Africa would have to confront in the years to come is certainly the issue of drug trafficking. The post-election threats in Guinea Bissau must be seen from this prism. Reports that the suspect and arrested mastermind behind the attempted coup, has ‘broken jail’ is worrisome and suspicious. Instability in Guinea Bissau is a threat to regional efforts at stamping out drug trafficking and international crime and even terrorist networks. It should be mentioned here that suspected terrorist attackers who killed French tourists in Mauritania were napped in Guinea Bissau. A failed state would be ground for serious destabilization in West Africa. Prompt and effective international response channelled through ECOWAS to bolster local capacities and consolidate democratic credentials could be an effective way to address the matter. This needs a ‘CNN’ factor so that the world attention is adequately drawn to the crisis for adequate national mobilisation through civil society (as has already been the case), and collective and collaborative approaches among the major stakeholders: Guinea Bissau authorities, ECOWAS, AU, UNODC, and countries of destination of trafficked drug, particularly European countries.

⁵ Release from the Ouagadougou Mediation and Security Council, December 2, 2008.

ANNEX I: GUINEA BISSAU COUP D'ETAT ATTEMPTS RELATED REPORTS IN ECOWARN

Type of incident	Locality	Date	Perpetrators	Summary of Incident
Assassination attempt on President	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	26 Nov.08	Soldiers, mutineers	The seven soldiers believed to have been involved in the last attack of the residence of president Joao Nino "Vieira" have been taken into custody by the chief of staff of the Guinea Bissau army, General Batista Tagme Na Wae. It was later reported that the alleged Bissau coup attempt leader Navy Sergeant Iàla N'chami escaped from prison in the north after being arrested the day before with four other accomplices. The legislative election was said to be free, fair, non-violent and historic for Guinea Bissau.
Armed attack on President	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	23 Nov. 08	Coup plotters	The president Joao Vieira was victim of a foil coup d'Etat attempt on Sunday morning, 23 rd November 2008. Armed men attacked the residence of the president of Guinea Bissau with heavy and light weapons. One presidential guard was killed and others sustained injuries. While seven assailants have been arrested so far, the rest has fled with weapons. Among them was Navy Sergeant N'Chami Iàla, suspected to be the brain of this attack.
Alleged coup plot	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	12 Aug.08	Coup plotters	Navy chief, Bubo Natchuto escaped from his house where he was under house arrest and was said to be somewhere in The Gambia. According to the Guinea Bissau army, military officer Bubo is under control of The Gambian authorities. Meanwhile, the private radio Galaxia broadcast on August 13 th a recorded message of Bubo refuting the false allegation claiming he is being pursued by the chief-of-staff of the army, general Tagme Na Wae.
Alleged coup plot	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	08 Aug. 08	Coup plotters	The Guinea Bissau Navy's chief-of- staff, Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, leader of a group of military officers allegedly involved in a coup attempts has been arrested. According to an army source, Bubo is under house arrest while investigations continue. An alleged foiled coup should have taken place on Thursday July 31 in order to overthrow the president Joao Nino Vieira. It was gathered that Bubo contacted several officers on phone to join him to overthrow the actual president Joao Vieira. Guinea Bissau is experiencing a critical political situation with the dissolution of the national assembly by the President Joao Bernado, one month after one of the majority party of the governing coalition, PAIGC, left the political "pact of stability" group.
Arrest of Navy Chief of Staff	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	06 Aug. 08	Guinea Bissauan Army	Radio Bombolom-FM at Bissau aired that the Guinea Bissau Navy's chief-of- staff, Americo Bubo Na Tchuto has been under house arrest for some days following his arrest related to the attempted coup. According to the same source, this officer has already tried to escape from his residence where a heavy military dispositive has been deployed. Bubo was recaptured yesterday near a village at about 30km from Bissau.
Illegal Arms and Ammunitions possession	Bula, Cacheu Guinea Bissau	25 Mar.08	Armed men	On Tuesday, 25 march 2008, seven well armed men, Guinea Bissau citizens have been arrested by the police for illegal detention of arms and ammunitions near Bula, at about 30km north of Bissau, the capital. Investigations are on-going to unveil the purpose of the weapons. It is unknown if theses armed men have any link with the rebels of the Movement of the democratic forces of Casamance (MFDC) an armed rebellion that has been fought since 1982 for the independence of Casamance in Senegal. Information gathered earlier on revealed that arms stolen in various barracks in Guinea Bissau or rented out by some personalities who had access to the arms and ammunitions depots, had been

				used by the MFDC to commit exactions during years in Southern Senegal. Number of armed group that operate along the border zones between Senegal and Guinea Bissau are collecting tens of thousands of head of herds including cow and Goats from farmers for more than 10 years now.
Arrest relating to coup attempt	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	29 Aug. 06	Bissau Armed force	It was reported in the press that two military officers were arrested in connection with a coup attempt against the government and assassination attempt on the life of the Chief of defence staff of the Bissau Guinean army. The two arrested are Commander Muhamed Lamine Sanha and Lieutenant Almani Alan Camara. <i>(Admiral Muhamad Lamine Sanha, chief-of-staff of the Navy, was killed in January 2007. He was implicated in several coups against the government and was an ally of Ansumane Mané who led a military rebellion against President Vieira in 1998 civil war)</i>



ANNEX II. WEST AFRICA: DRUG TRAFFICKING RELATED INCIDENTS AS REPORTED IN ECOWARN IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS

Type of incident	Locality	Date	Perpetrators/ Who is involved?	Summary of Incident
Seizure of cocaine consignment	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	21 Jul. 08	Guinea Bissau 's police	An aircraft transporting five hundred (500) kg of Cocaine has been pounded down by the police at the Bissau airport. Following the seizure, three suspected Venezuelans drug smugglers and one high level executive of the civil aviation administration have been arrested. It is recalled that the United Nations office of Drugs and crimes (Unodc) and the Guinea Bissau judiciary police have signed last week-end an agreement that would enable the disbursement of a fund of two million Euros from the European union. This seizure took place after the seizure of seven hundred (700) kg of cocaine at Luigi International airport in Sierra Leone.
500 sacks of seized cocaine	Bissau, Guinea Bissau	17 Jul.08	Judiciary police	According to the national press, two planes which came from Venezuela and Dakar have been seized at Osvaldo Vieira Airport in Bissau with five hundred (500) sacs of cocaine for few days now under an order from the government. One officer of the Guinea Bissau air forces was among the occupants of the flights. One of the aircrafts is said to have broken down and the pilots and crews have disappeared. Less than one week ago, a boat was intercepted by the judiciary police in the small town's harbour of Biombo, at 25 km of Bissau but authorities could not impound the said well-equipped with arms boat. The boat was allegedly carrying cocaine. The first case of cocaine trafficking in the country was recorded in the town of Biombo.
Arrest/detention of network of smugglers	Lome, Maritime region, Togo	05 Nov 08	Central office of illicit traffic of drug	An international network of hard drug smugglers has been dismantled in Lome. Members of the network mostly Colombians had started installing their arrear base in Lome where they are intended to discharge drugs imported from Venezuela. A plane planned to land in Niamtougou, 2 nd airport of in the north and the drug will be carried to Lome. A search in the suspect's house led to the seizure of sophisticated materials such as telecommunication materials, information technology materiel, arms and others objects related to drugs imported from Venezuela. Among people arrested were 8 Colombian, 1 Costa Rican, a Mexican, a Ghanaian, a South African and Togolese accomplices including one arrested in September in possession of 274 kg of cocaine.
Arrest of drug peddlers	Praia , Cape Verde	29 Sep. 08	the police	Two young women of 25 and 30 years old were arrested in Praia with 5kg of cocaine coming from Fortaleza, Brazil. With the direct flight between Fortaleza-Brazil and Praia, drugs smugglings between the two cities have been frequently reported.
Arrest of marijuana dealer	West point community, Monrovia, Liberia	24 Sep. 08	The Drug enforcement Agency (DEA)	Late Wednesday evening, the Drug enforcement agency detachment for West Point in Monrovia has arrested Johnny Nikan, a taxi driver for carrying Marijuana in three containers of five gallons in his taxi. This arrest happens barely two weeks after the DEA have arrested some people carrying a bag of Marijuana in the South eastern region.

Drug peddlers' arrest	Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire	23 Sep.08	Maritime brigade of the harbour security group	The maritime brigade of the harbour maritime group have seized several parcels of drugs, onboard a fishing dugout at Port Bouet municipality. It was 13 parcels of cannabis which weight each 25 kg for a total of 350 kg. The two conveyers: Niamkey Bon Kofi Denis and Kwame Essefy, a Ghanaian, were sent to the gendarmerie brigade.
Drug trafficker arrested	Santa Filomena, S.filipe, Fogo Island, Cape Verde	08Sep.08	police	A young man was arrested in Saint Filipe-Fogo Island with 30 doses of Cocaine and 16 unities of marijuana.
Arrest at airport	Kumasi, Ashanti region Ghana	21 Aug. 08	Police	Mohammed Joojo Mensah, a "cocaine man" was operated at the KATH in Kumasi on Wednesday 20 th Aug.08 and 73 pellets of cocaine were retrieved from his stomach. The pellets were removed in emergency surgery after two of them had already burst inside the stomach. It was said that Mohamed could not board the flight to Spain from Accra after experiencing a stomach ache. Relative in Kumasi came to his rescue and send him to the KATH where he is under heavy police guard.
Drug peddlers Arrest	Cape Coast , Central region, Ghana	29 Jun. 08	The central regional police	The Central regional police have intercepted 380 parcels of substances believed to be cocaine in the early hours of Sunday at around 8.00 am. The substances were being transported in a Toyota 4 Runner vehicle with registration number GR 1204 Y had been kept airtight in 19 travelling bags from Bogoso in the Western region to Accra. Samuel Mills Robertson, claimed to be businessman has been arrested while two Nigerian nationals identified only as Chukwu and Michael are on the run.
Drug peddlers Arrest	Santa Cruz, Cape Verde	13 Jun. 08	Police	Two Nigerians and one Cape Verdian were arrested with 1.5 kg of Cocaine.
Arrest	Nsawam-Aburi	30 May 2008	The Kibi and Nsawam police in a joint operation	The Kibi and Nsawam police in a joint operation in the early hours of Friday, 30 th May 2008 has impounded 399 kilograms of suspected cocaine in a Mercedes Benz truck with registration number GT 3359 Z, belonging to EVOWE Logistics company at Teshie in Accra. The 399 slabs of suspected drugs were buried in Cowhides in the vehicle. Anani Kwabena and Debli Kofi, two Togolese and Kofi Amenu, a Ghanaian driver have been arrested. Anani and Debli have departed from guinea on 25 th May (via Kumasi in the Ashanti region) to cart the illicit drugs to Ghana and were told to contact someone in Cote d'Ivoire.