



COUP D'ÉTAT: ITS INEVITABILITY, LEGITIMIZING FACTORS & LESSONS FOR AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Following the death of Guinea’s ailing President General Lansana Conté, history repeated itself twenty four years after as the military have staged yet another coup. General Lansana Conté’s death was formally announced by the President of the National Assembly, El-Hadj Aboubacar Somparé, who called on the Supreme Court to formally declare a power vacuum and formalize a constitutional transition, and also tasked the military to man the country’s borders. Barely six hours after, the army led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara swiftly staged a bloodless putsch. In a state broadcast on radio and television, the 44 year old putsch leader announced the dissolution of the Government, suspension of the Constitution and creation of a thirty-two man governing council- *Conseil National pour la Démocratie et le Développement* (CNDD in similar manner to what Lansana Conte did 24 years ago).

WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING & EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning and Early Response Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program of 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.

Initial claims by the civilian government that they were still in charge completely died on Christmas day when Prime Minister Ahmed Tidiane Souaré succumbed to the ultimatum by the new junta requesting all former members of government and senior ‘loyalist’ military officers to surrender themselves to the junta headquarters at the Alpha Yaya military barracks. The Prime Minister finally ‘legitimized’ the coup by responding to the junta summon, pledging total allegiance to the new regime.

International reaction to the events in Guinea has been mixed and cautious. While the African Union¹ (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), and key world powers have called for a return to constitutional order, there seem to have been calls from other circles, notably President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, to recognize the new rulers of Guinea. The reaction from Guinea's political class, trade unions, as well as the masses has been that of endorsement of the coup leaders as the legal constitutional succession bid has suddenly died prematurely. The dilemma posed is how to reconcile between legality (a stance defended by ECOWAS, AU, UN and international community) and legitimacy enjoyed by the junta (with the support of the masses and influential section of the political class in Guinea).

This policy brief therefore:

- ❑ Attempts a critical analysis of the peculiarities of the present coup in Guinea and examines what makes it exceptionally popular that is has been largely welcomed by the major Guinean masses and major political and opinion leaders;
- ❑ Identifies the major issues at stake and their leverage on peace and stability in Guinea in the coming days;
- ❑ Envisages possible scenarios within the next six months; here we posit that the realistic case scenario is very likely, given the realities in Guinea today and informed by the unique history of the country.
- ❑ Finally, the brief proposes possible options for response (recommendations) and concludes that Guinea's political demise should be an eye opener for Africa.

WAS THE COUP D'ETAT INEVITABLE?

Events that have unfolded in Guinea, especially in the last two years and the analyses made by scholars, analysts and pundits clearly highlights the fact that there is a gradual but serious failure of democratic institutions in Africa. Secondly, the world seems helpless in dealing with symptoms and responding to early warning signs and analyses, making it difficult for a paradigm shift in dealing with conflicts in a vigorously preventive and proactive manner. The simple question to ask here is whether the coup d'état in Guinea came as a surprise.

Death of the President, End of an Era

The announcement of the death of heralded the instant confusion². The manner in which the announcement came sent a signal of things to come. Constitutionally, the President of the National Assembly, Aboubakar Somparé, was expected to take over the mantle of leadership but his media intervention was followed by another media drama by the Prime Minister

¹ As we were about to publish this briefing, the AU Peace and Security Council sitting in its 165th Session has just suspended Guinea from all AU activities in accordance with the relevant provisions of the AU Constitutive Act until the country returns to constitutional order.

² The confusion and panicky attitude was earlier witnessed during the Muslim Ramadan feast when a private national newspaper published a picture of a seriously ailing President and was arrested and forced to retract the picture and publish a healthy looking President.

surrounded by some Ministers making same announcement (as if to say they were in charge). Informed sources say the manner and procedure in conveying the message of the President's death was a demonstration of unpreparedness and lack of institutional capacity. The Supreme Court could have proceeded to swear in Speaker or President of the National Assembly. The idea that President Conté's loyalists would have tried to manipulate the transition process through the constitutional maneuvering to their favour may now be a forgotten speculation.

Except a sudden twist of events occur, the present CNDD junta have affirmed their grip on power. A decree has just been signed sending on immediate retirement all senior officers (mostly Generals) who had attained and surpassed the retirement age (70 and above). Among these officers is General Diarra Camara, former chief of army staff.

In a meeting with political leaders (on Saturday December 27, 2008), including the Speaker of the National Assembly, former ministers and leading opposition figures like Alpha Condé, Captain Camara promised an audit of government and warned that corrupt officials and those who enriched themselves inappropriately would face the law. Speaking on behalf of the former government and following an assurance from the coup leader that all former politicians are safe including their property and family members, the Prime Minister congratulated the junta for their 'bravery' and 'wisdom' and pledged allegiance and support to the new military regime, thus formally recognizing Captain Moussa Dadis Camara³ as the new President of the Republic of Guinea.

International condemnations by prominent bodies and countries have started pouring on. But Guinean and pundits are asking what Constitution in reality we are talking about, given the fact that President Conté had weakened the same constitution that is now being invoked. Following the incapacity of the President to perform his duties as a result of terminal illness, the constitution should have been invoked and President Conté should have stepped aside since long. Parliament's mandate expired more than one year ago and thus, the National Assembly President lacked the legality to push his argument. The post of a Prime Minister remained a position of political expediency and convenience that was forced on President Conté. Its relevance may now be challenged. What is clear is that the death of President Conté has certainly marked the end of an era.

Military Coup was Predicted

In its last two published policy briefings on Guinea,⁴ WANEP had predicted that the possibility of a military takeover in Guinea. Our July 2006 briefing in particular reiterated that the battle for the succession of the prestigious political seat in Guinea had begun. We identified four principal contenders to the Guinean highest office: (a) Insiders of the regime (men of the presidential entourage) positioning to out-smart one another; (b) Officers of the Guinea army who may take advantage of the infighting and claim the seat to 'put order' in the house; (c) the President's

³ Until the military takeover, Captian Moussa Dadis Camara, a graduate from the Adbel Gamar University in Conakry who joined the military in 1990 was the director of fuel section at the Alpha Yaya Diallo Military Barrack. He seems to enjoy popularity among his colleagues.

⁴ See WARN policy briefings of July 2006 and April 2007 (www.wanep.org). We also emphasized the likelihood of this scenario in our "not for public consumption" briefings with ECOWAS.

joker in the person of his own son; (d) and the opposition and other democratic forces in Guinea.

Analyzing the chances of insiders of the regime to succeed President Conté, WANEP stated: "Among these are names like the President of the National Assembly, Aboubakar Somparé who is the rightful constitutional successor, and who must organize elections within the stipulated time [60 days] in case of a constitutional vacuum. However, there is the likelihood that that he may be shoved aside.... His capacity to mobilize the PUP ruling party dominated National Assembly to respect the Constitution would determine the trend of events were there to be a vacuum at the head of the Executive. Whatever the game to be played, Somparé would enjoy the support of the international community if the forces of legality would triumph."⁵

On the possibility of army officers taking over power, WANEP equally had this to say: "An army takeover is an unconstitutional move that would be condemned at all cost both internally and internationally. There are those who would argue that history has always repeated itself and the fact that Lansana Conté did it in 1984, someone else would do it again.... It is difficult to say who may emerge as the military contender because of the various interest groups. The ethnic, clan and generational divisions notwithstanding, the military remains a potential contender to the Presidency in Guinea, and they may draw their inspiration from Mali (of Ahmadou Toumani Touré-ATT) and more recently Mauritania. They would argue that given the likely degeneration to chaos or anarchy as a result of egoistic and sectarian tendencies, a centralized and hard-handed regime is needed to pull Guinea back on the rails, even if this would be in the backdrop of sanctions from sub-regional, regional and international community. After all, Guinea had been in a quasi sanction status for many years now, they would conclude."⁶

WANEP was not alone in highlighting the probability of a military takeover. Many other analysts, including the International Crisis Group (ICG) warned of a simmering coup d'état in Guinea. It was not therefore surprising that there was a coup d'état immediately President Conté died. In fact, others had expected a coup much earlier.

The Military in Guinea Politics under General Lansana Conté

Popular revolts all over the world have succeeded because the military have always sided with the masses. Guineans anxiously expected their military to be on the people's side, during the riots of 2006 and early 2007. This did not happen, although some Guineans still uphold that during the violent demonstrations the military remained to a greater degree neutral while the police and mercenary soldiers opened fire on demonstrators.

For the government sympathizers and supporters, the army remained loyal and republican by defending the institutions of the republic, including the office of the President, Commander in-chief of the armed forces and Defence Minister. The loyalty of the Guinean armed forces (FAG) had been exemplary except for the February 1996 mutiny and arrest and incarceration of suspected and presumed instigators. Despite the economic hardship that has gripped Guinea for many years, constant provision of amenities, motivations and other benefits such as housing

⁵ WARN policy brief, July 2006 (www.wanep.org).

⁶ Ibid.

allowances, food (rice given at highly subsidized rates) and regular promotions kept the military morale to a manageable level. In addition, President Conté had maintained the portfolio of Defense Minister to himself even though ill health compelled him to cede some of the responsibilities to his chief of cabinet, Colonel Kandé Touré, a veritable loyalist and tribesman.

Notwithstanding, late General Conté restored the military pride that was almost lost during the last years of his predecessor, Sekou Touré. The command and control of strategic and key positions remained in the hands of trusted men, most of who are from the minority but very influential Soussou ethnic group (the late president is himself a Soussou).

However, a peculiarity worth mentioning (which we analyzed in previous briefings) is the apparent clash between the generational 'ideologies' of the Russian trained soldiers of the old order and the French trained Saint-Cyriens graduates, as well as American trained officers. Despite the strong grip that President Conté managed to have on the soldiers, the growing war of generations at all ranks of the army was evident. The young and brilliant soldiers, most of who are university graduates felt insulted by the old and less educated soldiers whose only source of power was their avowed loyalty to President Conté⁷. This cleavage may continue in the present dispensation, may be assuming a different form. The coup leader hinted this when he said he was not afraid of a counter-coup.

During the February 12, 2007 announced promotions for instance, young officers of the Alpha Yaya Diallo camp (from where the present coup leader emerged) almost went on full scale rampage but for the energetic intervention of the armory division of the Presidential Guards from Camp (Barracks) Biro. Given the trend of events, it was therefore obvious that a possible military intervention in case of a sudden power vacuum was almost inevitable. Yet, this move is against the constitution and ECOWAS protocols, particularly the Democracy and Good Governance protocol (that gives zero tolerance to all unconstitutional ascension to power) that Guinea has been one of the first countries to ratify,⁸ as well as the AU Constitutive Act.

PECULIARITY OF GUINEA'S COUP & FACTORS LEGITIMIZING JUNTA'S CAUSE

The tussle between legality and legitimacy in the reaction to the coup in Guinea is a major dilemma policy makers would have to jostle with in proferring way forward in the transition crisis at hand. In a swift reaction to the coup, the AU strongly condemned the coup which according to the communiqué is in flagrant violation of the Guinean Constitution, the Algiers Decision of July

⁷ Late president General Lansana Conté strategy of assuring his security and loyalty by creating an army within the army through preferential treatment of the Presidential Guards-*Bataillon autonome de sécurité présidentielle* (BASP), numbering about 1000 soldiers and the *bataillon autonome des troupes aéroportées* (BATA, a group of elitist commandos) may have worked against the late President's wishes and interests as the head of the special forces are not the ones in control in Guinea today. President Conté's son, Captain Ousmane Conté is a member of the BASP.

⁸ This may also be a window of opportunity for ECOWAS to engage the military junta in seeking redress of the current situation.

1999, the Lomé Declaration of July 2000, the Constitutive Act of the AU, and the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.⁹ This was quickly followed by a formal suspension of Guinea from the AU.¹⁰ ECOWAS through the President of the Commission, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas and current Chair of Heads of State and Government, President Umaru Yar'Adua unequivocally condemned the coup and re-echoed the zero tolerance of accession to power through unconstitutional means as enshrined in the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), and threatened the suspension of Guinea if the situation is not reversed.¹¹ Donor countries like the United States and EU have all threatened to withhold aid to Guinea if constitutional legality were not restored.

Nonetheless, if the legitimacy of coup d'états were judged by popular reaction, then Guinea's coup can be categorized as a coup with a difference for a number of reasons discussed below.¹²

Loss of Confidence in Old Regime

The people of Guinea in their huge numbers seem to have lost confidence in the government of late General Conté and all that it represents (or have traces of). General Conté's regime had become notorious for endemic corruption, flagrant nepotism, and dysfunctional state institutions as well as a collapsed economic infrastructure despite the country's endowment with rich solid minerals. No doubt therefore that many Guineans believed that respecting the constitutional provision wherein the President of National Assembly becomes the President until elections are organized within 60 days is tantamount to maintaining a regime of 'Conte without Conte,' that is, continuation of the same old regime.

This fear was also echoed by the former Commissioner of the AU Commission, His Excellency Alpha Oumar Konaré who on RFI (Radio France International) cautioned of a possibility of a 'Conté without Conté' regime. This skepticism emanates from the blatant failure of the President of the National Assembly to mobilize Parliament to formally inform the Supreme Court of a power vacuum when late President Conté was known to be seriously ill and incapacitated to perform his presidential duties. The perpetual postponement of the legislative elections, political pundits and analysts alleged, cannot be unassociated to the unpopularity of the (then) ruling party (PUP). It was believed that the PUP would lose majority in parliament and the president could be impeached due to his failing health should the legislative elections hold as expected.

Yearning for Change

⁹ Communiqué of the 164th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the AU, Addis Ababa, 24 December, 2008.

¹⁰ Communiqué of the 165th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the AU, Addis Ababa, 29 December, 2008.

¹¹ During its last Summit of Heads of State and Government that held on December 19-20, 2008 in Abuja, ECOWAS had instructed the mediator to Guinea, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babaginda (former military leader of Nigeria) to pursue his mediation efforts in Guinea.

¹² Far from being acquiescent of the unconstitutional move by the military, this section attempts a presentation a picture of the reality in Guinea as monitored by our staff on official assignment in Conakry, Guinea.

The personalization of the state and confiscation of all power in one man's hands had subjected Guineans to a state of fatality, paralyzing the country to a standstill. Moves at institutionalizing a political dialogue to break the impasse in Guinea led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the opposition and the government. This only succeeded in creating a semblance of progress but the deadlock remained as the government seemed reluctant to create a veritable independent electoral body. The trade union led strike that orchestrated the January-February 2007 riots was severely suppressed by the army, and more 100 lives were lost.

The same army in 2008 went on rampage, followed by the police, and in each of these instances, the army seems to have proved a point-- that they are in charge, and can do and undo. It is therefore logical that if the military that was seen as the sole obstacle to change is now leading the change, the obvious response from the helpless masses is support, whether passive or active. Fear of further intimidation has been transformed into total endorsement of the military putsch. The only challenge can only come from another faction within the military. Thus, the burning desire for change in Guinea made things possible for the coup makers. The accumulated grievances of the masses, civil servants, security forces and political actors found solace on one thing--the departure from the scene of President Conté.

Bloodless nature of coup

A significant development that has indirectly given legitimacy to the military junta in Guinea is the bloodless nature of the coup d'état. In addition, so far, there have been no reported cases of mass arrests and torture (as is case in most coups). This picture has turned the putsch leaders into heroes and this was evident in the massive street support they received from the crowds in the streets of Conakry. If the basis for judging a military coup is popular perception, then Captain Mousa Camara and his CNDD junta seem to have garnered enough support and stand a chance of consolidating their recognition the more.

Appealing messages

Coup plotters in Africa have always justified it on corruption and power abuse by previous regimes. Coup leaders have always raised expectations in their early days in power. By harping on the issues that the people want to hear, the junta has succeeded in winning the masses on their side. Captain Mousa D. Camara's message on Saturday December 27 was appealing to the ears of his listeners.

To the former members of government, the junta leader gave signs that he would not embark upon a witch-hunt. Even if this may be temporal, it was (and is) enough relief and bargain for their legitimacy. To the politicians of the opposition, the junta assigned them to bring proposals on way forward and promised free, fair and transparent elections by end of 2010.¹³ To the trade

¹³ This two year period may be a strategy to have a margin of maneuver to bargain a 12-16 months transition.

unions and civil society, the junta promised an audit of the government, fight against corruption, drug trafficking and related crimes which they blamed on the past regime.

Memories of the spectacular looting of state coffers by serving ministers reported in Guinea sometimes ago immediately it was rumoured that President Conté had died are still fresh. Observers are worried that the same looting scenario might have repeated itself and the determination to commission an audit of state funds is enough assurance to assuage the anxious and expectant Guineans. This would be the first time that an audit of state coffers is conducted in Guinea.

KEY ISSUES THAT WOULD DETERMINE GUINEA'S STABILITY

This section examines the critical issues and stakeholder variables that may determine the course of peace and stability in Guinea in the forthcoming months.

The key issues include the following:

Settling the dilemma of Legality versus Legitimacy

This is a dilemma that confronts both the military junta and key actors like ECOWAS and the African Union. Will ECOWAS and AU stick to the legal side in order not to set precedence? If yes, how would this match with a seeming determination of Guineans who have quasi legitimized the junta? The return to constitutional legality may not be feasible but a compromise must be worked on how to shorten the period of a handover to a democratically elected government.

Dealing with International Isolation

Related to the legality-legitimacy issue is the international isolation that the military junta must deal with. While it is clear that the junta leaders may suffer sanctions by the international community as well as regional organizations, the ability convince the world that the military would stand by their words and deadlines would determine the pace of restoration of normalcy in Guinea. So far, only Senegal as a country has called for the recognition of the military junta and admonished fellow neighbours to steer clear of meddling in whatever form. Whether this action by a neighbour, and key ECOWAS member would influence the official stance by ECOWAS, remains to be seen.

Laying Foundation for Free, Fair and Transparent Elections

Whatever may happen to the junta, one of the greatest tasks of the transition (whichever form and name it may assume) is how to lay a foundation for free, fair and transparent elections. While new and sharpened ideas may evolve from ongoing consultations between the junta and the opposition, they should build on breakthroughs that the opposition in Guinea made during the stalled dialogue with the government prior to the January-February 2007 general strike. These include issues related to the agreement on the status of the opposition, financing of the opposition during and after elections, reform of the electoral process including creation of an

independent electoral commission (CENI). Establishing a viable electoral register and other reforms would rekindle hope in democracy and change of power through the ballot box as against the fixing of results by government officials to please a particular regime.

Maintaining a Republican Army

Much has been said about the domination of the army by officers from the late President's ethnic Soussou group. Although dealing with this may be a long term issue, care must be taken when handling sensitive issues relating to command and control of the army. Any abrupt attempt to make sweeping measures at redressing this imbalance may antagonize some interests and result in a major crack within the system. One of the major elements of stability in Guinea is the maintenance of a republican army no matter the ethnic diversities.

Building and Sustaining Viable States Institutions

The failure of a smooth transition in Guinea (as earlier discussed) can be attributed to the lack of strong state institutions capable of sustaining democracy and good governance with adequate checks and balances. The regime of late President built a personality cult just like the Ahmed Sekou Touré regime, and that weakened the state and its institutions that now need urgent reconstruction.

Containing the Regional Ramification of the Crisis

There have been tensions along several of Guinea's borders. The most serious at present stems from the alleged seizure by Guinean military elements of the Yenga strip of land in Sierra Leone on the far side of the Makona River boundary. The region is believed to have diamonds. There have also been clashes along the Malian border attributed alternatively to disputes over land or cattle rustling. Tensions along the Ivorian frontier related to civil conflict in that country have subsided during the past year, but might ignite again in the event of political turbulence. Insurgency in Senegal's Casamance region and political violence in Guinea-Bissau can impinge on the Guinean frontier. The allegation of the CNDD of mercenaries invading Guinea through neighbouring countries following their military coup tends to lend credibility to the fragility and porosity of Guinea's borders and threat of a regional ramification of the crisis if not contained.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Our scenario building is premised on the reaction of the international community to the coup and possible outcome of the "interventions." Though events would seriously be determined by the diplomatic prowess of the military junta and attitude of the international community, the following scenarios are projected for the next 3-6 months period.

Best case Scenario (probability rating: unlikely)

Pressure from the international community results in a u-turn and the military decides to hand-over power to President of the National Assembly despite the recent dramatic events. An

amnesty is guaranteed the junta leaders. Presidential elections are conducted within 60 days from the date of the swearing in of the transitional government as per Constitution. The new president convenes a sovereign national conference that reviews the Constitution and a referendum organized to endorse the changes and Guinea's rebirth is proclaimed.

Realistic Case or Middle Case Scenario (probability rating: very likely)

The ruling council of the CNDD respects its commitments and wins large national and international support, despite mild sanctions. The junta reduces its projected handover period by one year and promises to hand over to an elected government by December 2009. Meantime, a transitional government is formed with more civilians than the six previously announced headed by a civilian Prime Minister who initiates positive reforms within governmental institutions, revise the constitution through a national referendum, review mining and other contracts and crack down on corruption through effective legal instruments. Free, fair and credible legislative elections are organized and the elected government represents the dawn of true and vibrant democracy in Guinea.

Worst case scenario (probability rating=Likely)

Power struggle within the junta ranks and isolation by the international community create profound tension within the country. The initiated reforms of the CNDD military regime are undermined by top military officers and former governmental officials. Due to the passion for change, the inexperienced and youthful exuberance of the military ruling council perceives any challenge to their authority as sabotage and resorts to violent reprisals and heavy handedness. Fear of military dictatorship mounts and national and international pressure heightened for a return to democratic rule. Sanctions are levied and the socio-economic conditions deteriorate due to internal and external crises. Popular uprising follows, leading to renewed confrontation between the frustrated youths and the military as generalize violence is unleashed. Symbols of the state, such as governors' offices, prefects' residences, or police stations are attacked and pillaged and a counter-coup is staged in the midst of a blood bath.

OPTIONS FOR RESPONSE AND ACTION

The following recommendations or options for response are proposed.

Military Junta

- ❖ A critical element confronting the military junta in Guinea is how to buy legitimacy. The military Junta must be open to ideas, work with political parties and civil society, stand by its words and do what Jerry Rawlings and Ahmadou Toumani Touré were able to do to Ghanaian and Malian political scene. This however would be done in the background of sanctions, wait--and --see attitude, as well as hardship.

- ❖ Respecting engagements and moving out when it is time to do so is not an easy task since, as the saying goes, absolute power corrupts absolutely. All eyes are on the military and it is their discipline, uncorrupt nature and transparency that would earn them the support of the masses (and later the international community that still doubts).

Political Parties

Weakened by years of intra-opposition rivalry, the Guinean opposition has been unable to provide a credible alternative force throughout the regime of General Lansana Conté. The main opposition leaders like Ousman Bah (who succeeded late Siradiou Diallo) of the UPR, Alpha Condé of RPG-RDA, Bah Mamadou and to a lesser degree Jean-Marie Doré have not been able to constitute a united front to challenge the system.

- ❖ The strength of Guinea's democratic future lies in the viability of the political parties in general, and the opposition in particular. Efforts must be made to strengthen political parties in Guinea institutionally.
- ❖ After years of struggle and sometimes bickering among themselves, the present context provides an opportunity for key figures like the veteran Bâ Mamadou, president of the UFDG (*Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée*) and spokesperson of the opposition coalition (*collectif des partis de l'opposition*), former Prime Minister Sidya Touré, Alpha Condé, Jean-Marie Doré and others to unite and assert themselves.
- ❖ Political dialogue in the framework of the dialogue between the opposition and the government started since the Conté dispensation should be pursued and the process enlarged to include all the major actors and stakeholders particularly, the trade unions, rest of civil society, and other associations.

The Trade Unions, Media and rest of Civil Society

In January 2007, the coalition of trade unions regrouping the *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs Guinéens* (CNTG) and the *Union Syndicale des Travailleurs de Guinée* (USTG) spearheaded the strikes that crippled the country.

- ❖ This positioned the Guinea trade unions and it would be illusive to relegate to the background in whatever political process that will unfold.
- ❖ The labour union, civil society including the media should play a watch dog and monitoring role vis-à-vis the commitments made by the military junta.
- ❖ ECOWAS and development partners should support the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in establishing a civil society based national early warning and early response programme in Guinea in an effort to pre-empt the outbreak of violence. This programme will consistently update relevant stakeholders about developments in Guinea during this crucial transition period.

- ❖ The fact that the media is a potential source of information, education and entertainment, it is imperative to support the emergence of a more robust and vibrant media in Guinea in this particular context. This would empower the media to play the role a watch dog and sound the alarm bell anytime violations occur.
- ❖ The rest civil society should take advantage and assert itself and occupy the space that it theirs. Civil society organizations should therefore consolidate and coordinate their efforts and be encouraged to join in the search for the re-birth of Guinea through effective programmes and partnerships that work. Donor support would be very critical in this direction.

ECOWAS and International bodies

ECOWAS' ability to remain engaged is primordial to sustainable peace and stability in Guinea. It is also instructive that the ECOWAS engagement has reinforced the argument that best practice in conflict prevention in Africa must be led by African initiatives and institutions.

- ❖ Guinea is one of the countries that have ratified the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. This provides a good window of opportunity for engagement.
- ❖ The carrot and stick policy must continue to be used. The cautious approach by ECOWAS informed by realities on ground is welcome. By giving indications to the effect that the regional body would seek for ways to engage the junta, ECOWAS has recognized the difficulty imposed on ordinary Guineans by key actors.
- ❖ ECOWAS should engage civil society organizations and other key actors and support their initiatives to take the country forward using formal and informal avenues (track one and two diplomacy). After all, if chaos descends into Guinea, it is the entire sub-region that would be engulfed and it would be same ECOWAS that would be expected to act.
- ❖ The AU's decision to suspend Guinea fits in its mandate. However, observers may like to see the AU (and other organizations) play a more robust and proactive role, and should have even done so when it became clear that President Conte was unable to fully discharge of his duties. Perhaps to avoid further embarrassment, the Guinea case should serve as food for thought and challenge on how the world operates its crisis/conflict prevention systems. Should the world wait again for another coup before sit tight regimes in Africa¹⁴ start building viable institutions and not personality cults?

¹⁴ Perhaps it is time the AU should start addressing the issues in so called stability island countries and ensure a democracy power alternation in Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Libya, Uganda and Zimbabwe (to name but a few). In these countries, the opposition has been destroyed and personality cult, sycophancy, and civilian dictatorship (worse than military regimes in most cases) are their affronting legacy.

- ❖ The UN should work in tandem with ECOWAS and AU and complement one another and must not be seen to be going alone, relying on experts who may not have a passion and stake in West Africa. ONUWA has so far set the pace and this must continue, avoiding duplication of efforts and resources.

Development Partners

- ❖ The coup d'état has finally pasted Guinea on the radar of the world and revealed a challenge that must be dealt with. The socio-economic transformation of Guinea is fundamental to resolving the country's long term structural challenges. Development partners must seek innovative and partnerships in the quest to transform Guinea to benefit from its resource potentials.
- ❖ The international community and development partners should sponsor a referendum to revise the constitution as well as organization of the legislative and Presidential elections. However, it is important to keep the pressure for a return to constitutional order rather than being complacent in the face of progressive reforms.

CONCLUSION

The critical issue is Guinea now is how to build a consensus on way forward. In so doing, the debate of legality and legitimacy would continue unabated. That the Guinean Constitution and ECOWAS, AU and others protocols have been violated is a fact. In line with principles and rule of law, the military junta deserves the isolation and rejection from the comity of nations. The peculiarity of the Guinea coup d'état cannot be overemphasized. The power vacuum created by the death of General Lansana Conté and the subsequent coup d'état is an indictment of Africa as a whole. Coming just shortly after Mauritania and the neighbouring Guinea Bissau, the demon of coup d'états is back again. The question the world must seek an answer to is why people are still resorting to coups as a way of changing leadership. It may not be Guinea that is in trial; it is African democracy that is under threat. Another important element too begging deep reflection is whether the world would ignore the will of the Guinean populace and insist on legality. While the fear of setting precedent may determine the reaction of the international community, the fact is that it is time to re-open the debate of democratic governance in Africa. After Guinea, who is next?