



**REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU**

**STATEMENT**

**TO**

**THE GERAL DEBATE OF THE 72<sup>ND</sup> SESSION**

**OF**

**THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**DELIVERED**

**BY**

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**PRIME MINISTER**

**New York, September 21, 2017**

**Your Excellency, Mr. President of the General Assembly**

**Distinguished Heads of State and Government**

**Mr. Secretary-General**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

I am honored to stand on this podium and speak to the international community gathered here in the full expression of our universality.

Allow me to convey greetings from the Bissau-Guinean people to all of you - distinguished Heads of State and Government, representatives of the member States of the United Nations who came to add pomp and substance to this General Assembly.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajcak, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, who was elected President of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

To your illustrious predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson, I would like to express our recognition of his performance and wish him continued success in his remarkable diplomatic career.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

As we all know, the world today is full of complex and grave challenges:

- Hotspots of political instability and geopolitical tension around the world, the seriousness of which cannot be overlooked by statesmen and citizens of the world;

- The scourge of terrorism, which unfortunately does not seem to abate, is a phenomenon that deserves our unanimous condemnation;
- The human tragedy of migration waves, particularly those coming through the Mediterranean, the saga of refugees;
- Gaping social inequality, the expanding geography of poverty, and the intensity of human suffering, which we can see in vast areas of the planet;
- The sorrow of racial, gender, and religious discrimination;
- The threats of climate breakdown on a planetary scale with prospects of frightening, and not unlikely, consequences;

In short, it is not difficult to imagine how many of the "pains of the world" land at the United Nations on a daily basis, requiring the attention and constructive engagement of the international community represented here!

**Mr. President,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The United Nations has a long history of solidarity with and commitment to Guinea-Bissau. It began with our Struggle for National Liberation and has not been broken ever since.

Our goal is to further strengthen our institutional engagement with the United Nations.

In so doing, we are merely reaffirming our firm belief in International Law, Peace and Security among Nations; Social and Moral Progress of Humanity, which are the values on which the United Nations was created.

**Mr. President,**

We continue to experience a period of institutional challenges in Guinea-Bissau, for which the Conakry Accord laid out a solution in October 2016. These are challenges related to the functioning of some of our core political institutions, namely parliament and the government.

But it is with profound gravity that I inform you that civilian peace reigns in my country.

There are no reports of Universal Human Rights violations that merit complaints or are worthy of concern.

**Public Safety** indicators related to people and property follow a normal pattern.

Regular payments are being made to **Public Servants** as well as on the foreign debt service and internal arrears.

The **marketing** campaign for our main export crop – cashew nuts – broke all records, which had a positive impact on the social environment in Guinea-Bissau.

Recently, our **Public Finance** controls were praised by the **International Monetary Fund** and other multilateral partners.

The **State** and **Civil Society** are very far from any political breakdown.

Indeed, we are fortunately not counting the dead or injured in Guinea-Bissau nor are we assessing any damages to public property resulting from a breakdown in the authority of the State.

The last ECOWAS Summit, which convened in Monrovia, laid a bet on the Bissau-Guinean people's determination to internally resolve the problems related to the political and institutional impasse that has set in my country for the last two years.

In this regard, we are pleased that the African Union, in its most recent summit convened in Addis Abeba, the CPLP Council of Ministers meeting in Brasília, and the United Nations put the political situation in Guinea-Bissau back on their agendas.

With the patience, wisdom, and solidarity of our international partners – ECOWAS, the African Union, the CPLP, and the United Nations Secretary-General, who is maintaining his Special Representative in Guinea-Bissau – we will overcome the political and institutional impasse that persists in my country.

**Mr. President,**

We have taken note of this General Assembly's agenda, which, in fact, is largely consistent with our own hopes and concerns.

The sub-region – of the Economic Community of West African States – where Guinea-Bissau is located has significant potential for economic growth, consistent poverty reduction, and sharing of social welfare.

There is nothing unattainable in our dream do drive – at the sub-regional level, together, in peace, in security, and with productive work – the inclusive social progress that we all desire.

We have examples of success in our sub-region. But we also see distressing signs in the ECOWAS horizon: signs of

potential threats to both the internal constitutional order of the States and geopolitical stability in the sub-region.

Terrorist actions are seriously affecting **Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria**, with clear and grave consequences for peace, social cohesion, and stability.

Guinea-Bissau fully supports the pooling of efforts in the context of the **Sahel G5**, advocates for the integrity of **Mali**, and calls for an all-out fight against terrorism in all of its manifestations.

Indeed, in order to face so many challenges at the same time, namely internal security, preservation of the territorial integrity of States, and peacekeeping within the space of ECOWAS, we need help.

We therefore count on the United Nations and all of its specialized agencies, as well as all of our international partners.

Only if we worked together will we be able to transform our sub-region into a bastion of peace and internal security and, by extension, a bastion in the service of international security.

**Mr. President,**

The "Sustainable Development Goals" are our challenges.

But no development strategy is worthy of such title if, in the case of Guinea-Bissau, it does not begin by placing the issue of **Food Security** squarely and sustainably at the core of its concept.

To let Guinea-Bissau – a country with a widely recognized agricultural capacity – slip into dependence on large

volumes of imported rice every year was certainly one of the worst economic policy mistakes that were made.

The challenge we face is very clear: it is the **political and economic challenge** of food security; it is the **moral challenge** of overcoming poverty; it is the **test** of ensuring a situation of "**zero hunger**" in Guinea-Bissau.

With this focus in our approach, we are merely restating, with other words, Point 1 in this General Assembly's Agenda: "**Promoting health through the life-course.**"

I will surprise no one when I say that there is no positive health indicator that remains standing against the violence of **Poverty, Hunger or Malnutrition;**

There is no way to bring down the **morbidity** and **mortality** indicators that assail us – as a result of the scourges of AIDS, Malaria, diarrheal and infectious diseases – without sustained poverty reduction, if we do not successfully take on the moral challenge of "zero hunger."

At a more specific level – that is, with respect to the health care that we provide to our populations, particularly **Children and Women** in reproductive age – we have made progress in my Country.

However, given that the State alone is unable to guarantee this *public service* to the entire population, we continue to rely on international cooperation, on United Nations support through its specialized institutions.

But **Health** and **Poverty** are not the only elements that go hand in hand.

We also do not see how, in the context of poverty, of extreme nutritional deficiency, we can aim for good **Education** for our children.

**Mr. President,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Twelve percent of Guinea-Bissau's territory are **ecologically protected areas** according to recognized scientific criteria.

In this regard, I can say without hesitation that one of our most important educational achievements has been the development of a vigilant **ecological awareness**, of an increasingly sharp and active sense of environmental responsibility, especially among the youth in Guinea-Bissau – the foundation of our future.

But we are realistic: we have a long road ahead of us, much effort to be made in order to ensure environmental sustainability as we economically exploit our natural resources.

We consider the **Paris Accord** to be a fundamental victory in harmonizing the States' environmental policies, and in their promotion worldwide.

**Mr. President,**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

We must enhance our relations with the **People's Republic of China**, a country that has been our friend since the difficult years of our Struggle for National Liberation.

As the "**One China**" policy is consistent with Peace and Security in the region and with China's yearning for its unity to be restored, we reiterate our full solidarity with the People's Republic of China.



The **Security Council** reform continues to be a need that the international community has rightly highlighted. Guinea-Bissau's position is the same one that we, as an African country, advocated for and adopted within the framework of the African Union.

To the **People of the Republic of Sierra Leone**, who has suffered so harshly with the natural disaster that has assailed their country, I express the solidarity of the People and the Government of Guinea-Bissau.

We also offer our solidarity to all the countries that have been victimized by natural calamities causing irreparable losses of human lives, destruction of property, and great suffering among the survivors.

To the **Republic of Cuba**, which has been solidary toward the Bissau-Guinean people at our most challenging moments, I express the unfailing solidarity of the Bissau-Guinean people. Today, as in the past, we call for the lifting of the **economic embargo** that has, for more than sixty years, prevented our friendly nation from developing normally.

We also support the hopes of the **Palestinian People** for the establishment of their own State coexisting side by side with the State of Israel, based on Trust, Peace, and Security.

**Mr. President,**

I will close my remarks with a reference to the **Women** of Guinea-Bissau. I would like to say that women in Guinea-Bissau are still far from taking the place that they deserve in our society and in our institutions in general.

The policy of **Gender Equality**, more specifically of equal opportunity for girls and women in Guinea-Bissau is undoubtedly a test for democracy in my country.

It is a great challenge for our political parties and all government officials in Guinea-Bissau. I hope that all the political, economic, and social actors in my country will continue to converge on the legitimate advocacy for Women's Rights and, in general, for the promotion of Human Rights in Guinea-Bissau.

**Thank you very much for your attention**