

Speech of the CO during the briefing of the STO
Wednesday 20th July

Welcome to Bissau, especially welcome to the newcomers, the STO's who are visiting Guinea-Bissau for the first time.

I am sure you will not regret your choice for Guinea-Bissau as a holiday destination instead of travelling to the Maldives, Turkey or Portugal. I can guarantee you that your stay will never be boring.

I am not going to repeat what I said during the STO briefing during the first round. But I would like to highlight the changes compared to the first round.

- the climate. The rainy season has started. This could create difficulties on election day for some regions.
- The political climate is changing. The tension is rising. There is strong campaigning going on, porta porta, how they call it here, going from door to door. The candidates are not afraid of insulting each other. There is deliberate provocation from both sides. The discussion focuses more on the past than on the future, more on charismatic leadership than on the contents. The two candidates and their environment are now settling a dispute over the control of the party and over the civil war of 98-99.
- Last Saturday, the Ministry of Interior was attacked by a group of armed and uniformed persons, allegedly paramilitary commanders, leaving two policemen dead and several others injured. The attack, which followed the deaths of three youngsters during an unauthorised march on 24th June added tension to the final week of campaign.
- Several institutions and special envoys issued statements expressing concerns about rising tensions and calling for all stakeholders to help in maintaining the peaceful and orderly atmosphere that characterized the electoral process during the first round.
- Our Electoral Observation Mission issued a statement appealing to all to refrain from acts of violence and to bear in mind the message in favour of democracy, peace and stability that the Guinean people clearly gave when voting in the first round.

Last week, trying to address the potential dangers of the increasing political tension, the plenary of the CNE issued a statement stressing that the current political campaign is showing "strong signs of concern". The CNE called on the candidates for showing maturity, responsibility and moderation.

I would like to make a strong call on both candidates, as well as their environment, to calm down their supporters and to ensure that the peace is prevailed during the remaining days of the electoral process.

It is not by coincidence that the president of the CNE, Mr Malam Mané, is attending this briefing. He did a great job. From a technical point of view, everything is ready for election day. All the recommendations made both by the CRS and the EU EOM were taken into account by the CNE.

We also appreciate the presence of Ambassador Antonio Moreira Martins, the Head of the EU Delegation, who has been extremely helpful for our Mission.

Our duty is to assess whether the election is conducted in a transparent and genuinely democratic manner, in line with international standards for democratic elections. But even more important, through the long-term presence across the country, our mission will help to strengthen public confidence in this vital process. In observing these elections, we can contribute in a very substantial way to conflict prevention and keeping stability and peace for the country. That is why the EU invested a lot of money in this EOM.

I would like to thank you all for your commitment.

I am looking forward to a close cooperation and a successful mission.

Good luck !