

(As delivered)

Statement by Ambassador Yukio Takasu
Permanent Representative of Japan
Formal Meeting of the Country-Specific Configuration
of the Peacebuilding Commission on Guinea-Bissau
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Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Let me begin by thanking you for organizing this important meeting on Guinea-Bissau this morning. Since the establishment of the country-specific configuration on Guinea-Bissau last December, you have been working very diligently and actively to fulfill your duties. We very much appreciate your leadership and dynamism. Particularly this morning we are gratified with the presence of a high-level delegation of Guinea-Bissau, led by Prime Minister Cabi, Minister of Defence Barbeiro, Minister of Finance Sanha and Secretary of State of International Cooperation Cacheu, as well as Representative of the Secretary-General Omoregie and UN Resident Coordinator Mazza. That there is such a high level of attendance testifies to the strong commitment of the people and the Government for peace. The Prime Minister clarified in a very comprehensive manner the top priorities for the challenges of peacebuilding in his country. I am also greatly encouraged by his presentation on his strong determination to carry out peacebuilding efforts, because the primary responsibility rests with the Government and people of Guinea-Bissau. The rest of us are here to support those efforts.

The challenge before us is to identify priorities for this Commission, on the basis of the presentation we have received, and also taking into the account the actual situation in the country, and to facilitate concrete actions to meet these priorities by peoples and leaders of the country and also the international community.

Among the challenges that the Prime Minister presented, national reconciliation, political stabilization and capacity-building have the highest degree of urgency, and the immediate need for voter registration for successful, fair and transparent elections toward the end of the year is a top priority. We support and agree with this. At the same time, in the background of the enormous threats to society posed by narcotics trafficking and organized crime, is the lack of political stability, which allows criminal organizations to take advantage of this situation. Therefore, reform of the whole administrative machinery, public sector and security sector, as well as the financial and tax monitoring authorities, is key to deterring organized crime.

It is important, Madam Chair, while preparing for the medium-term, integrated peacebuilding approach to meet such high priority concerns of Guinea-Bissau, to identify quick impact projects which will yield visible differences on the ground, so that people may have tangible signs of the arrival of peace and stability and also actual engagement of the PBC.

In this context, energy, supply and power were emphasized by the Prime Minister. This is an example we have learned also in other cases with which we have been dealing, because energy supply affects not only livelihoods and security, but also economic activities and many other things, as the Prime Minister elaborated. I think that this is the area in which we should focus our attention, not only by ourselves but also by expediting our support of other partners.

Another area is water and health, and labor-intensive public works. The Prime Minister

mentioned housing conditions; for instance, if the construction of new housing utilizes former combatants and others in a labor-intensive manner, it will generate the opportunity for youth and also economic benefits.

We also support the declaration of the eligibility of Guinea-Bissau for the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). It is expected to be utilized, in the short term, to fill immediate financial gaps in the peacebuilding efforts. I very much hope that the peacebuilding activities of the PBSO and UNDP, as field representatives, can be streamlined and delivery of assistance can be expedited.

Together with a sense of urgency, we need also a sense of realism. The PBC cannot solve all difficult challenges. The PBC is able to raise international attention to Guinea-Bissau and to assist in bringing traditional and also non-traditional, new actors together and marshalling resources. Nothing is more important than completion of the needs assessment – and the basis of today's presentation by the Prime Minister was extremely useful in this regard – and the development of the peacebuilding framework for us. We look forward to the maximum cooperation of the UN Country Team under the strong leadership of the Representative and also the Resident Coordinator.

For my part, as Chairman of the PBC, I have been engaged in establishing stronger cooperation and relationships with major multilateral and bilateral partners, starting from the World Bank and others. So far, I have been very much pleased with the positive reactions I have been receiving, including from the President of the World Bank and also the Administrator of USAID, in my last visit last week. They both showed strong interest in working in close coordination with the PBC and expressed readiness to support our activities. My intention is to establish such similar strong cooperative relationships with other multilateral and bilateral partners. It is my hope that, Madam Chair, you could take full advantage of such momentum in the activities of this configuration.

Lastly, Japan is not a traditional donor to Guinea-Bissau. However, now that the country is on the PBC agenda, we intend to study what we can do to assist it, particularly in those areas in which Japan has a comparative advantage, taking into consideration the priority areas that Prime Minister Cabi elaborated this morning.

I wish to conclude by repeating the support of my country and myself for the success of the peacebuilding efforts of Guinea-Bissau.

Thank you.
