

AFRICAN UNION

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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
174th MEETING
3 MARCH 2009
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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COMMUNIQUE

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE 174TH MEETING OF
THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL**

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 174th meeting held in Addis Ababa, on 3 March 2009, adopted the following decision on the situation in the Republic of Guinea Bissau:

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the briefing by the Commission on the situation in the Republic of Guinea Bissau following the assassination of the President of this country, H.E Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira;
2. **Expresses its dismay** at the assassination of the President of the Republic of Guinea Bissau, H.E João Bernardo Nino Vieira, and **Condemns in the strongest terms** this heinous act, which has come at a time of renewed efforts by the International Community to support peace-building action in Guinea Bissau and consolidate progress in the political process in that country in the wake of the legislative elections of November 2008. Council **calls on** the Bissau Guinean authorities to guarantee protection and safety for the family of the late President and for all citizens of the country. Council **conveys** its heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Guinea Bissau and to the family of the deceased Head of State;
3. **Also strongly condemns** the assassination of the Army Chief of Staff of Guinea Bissau, General Batista Tagme Na Wai, which took place hours before that of the President, and conveys its condolences to the bereaved family.
4. **Reaffirms** the principles enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in particular the respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity, political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities.
5. **Also reaffirms** its total rejection of unconstitutional changes of Government as spelt out in the Algiers Decision of July 1999, the Lomé Declaration of July 2000, the Constitutive Act of the AU and the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council ;
6. **Takes note** of the statements by the Armed Forces of Guinea Bissau of their intention to uphold the provisions of the Constitution of the Country relating to the succession to the Presidency. Council **demand**s that the Bissau Guinean Armed Forces respect fully the provisions of the Constitution, and **urges** them to work within the framework of legality, in the interest of peace and stability in their country;
7. **Calls on** all peace loving citizens of Guinea Bissau to exercise a high sense of responsibility and moderation in their actions and utterances at this critical and testing period of their national life in order to avoid exacerbating the political situation in the country and to ensure effective cooperation with the Bissau Guinean leadership for a smooth transition in line with the country's Constitution.

8. **Calls on** the National authorities of Guinea Bissau, in cooperation with the AU, ECOWAS and other African Institutions, to launch a full investigation into the assassination of the President and the Army Chief of Staff of Guinea Bissau, in order to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice;
9. **Welcomes** the efforts that ECOWAS has been making over the past few years to engage the Bissau Guinean authorities and other stakeholders in addressing the serious problems facing their country. **Also welcomes** the immediate action of the ECOWAS leadership in unequivocally condemning the assassinations and calling for the respect of the Constitution, including its provisions pertaining to succession to the Head of State. Council **encourages** ECOWAS in its resolve to engage all stakeholders in the effort to restore confidence among the political actors, civil society and security services and to intensify its efforts including the early dispatch of a delegation of the region to Bissau to facilitate a speedy and peaceful transition to constitutional governance;
10. **Welcomes** the statement issued on 2nd March 2009 by the Chairperson of the Union;
11. **Further welcomes** the initiatives already taken by the Chairperson of the Commission and **requests** him, in close consultation with the Chairperson of the Union, ECOWAS and Member States of the region, to take all necessary steps to address the crisis, including through the despatch of an envoy to the region;
12. **Recalls** its communiqué adopted at its 163rd meeting held at Ministerial level on 22 December 2008 and, in this regard, **reiterates its appeal** to Member States, as well as to the international community, to assist Guinea Bissau in the reform of its defense and security sectors and public service;
13. **Requests** the Commission to submit to the Council, within thirty days, a report on the situation in Guinea Bissau, with recommendations for concrete action to be taken;
14. **Decides** to remain seized of the matter.

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