

**Statement by Ambassador Masood Khalid, Deputy Permanent Representative of
Pakistan to the United Nations - Open Briefing of the Security Council on the
Situation in Guinea Bissau. (29 September 2003)**

Thank you Mr. President,

I would like to thank Mr. Kalomoh for the update he has given on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and we are also thankful for the briefing provided by His Excellency Mr. Ramos Horta on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. We commend the work being done by you, Sir.

We agree with Mr. Kalomoh that the situation has been pulled back from the brink and we welcome that the major stake-holders seem to have reached a consensus on transitional arrangements. We must heed his note of caution that serious political and social problems persist that require careful management. The need for continued international engagement and generous assistance can not be overstated.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has put a lot of time and effort into trying to assist Guinea-Bissau in overcoming the various challenges that it faces. Guinea-Bissau can be termed a test case for the United Nations system, the regional organizations, the donor countries and in fact the entire international community. The success or failure of this venture in Guinea-Bissau is going to be crucial, not only for the people of that country, but for the credibility of the United Nations and its effectiveness to deliver, keeping in mind that Guinea-Bissau is the focus of the attention of two principal organs of the United Nations simultaneously, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

The coordinated efforts of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the case of Guinea-Bissau were being seen as a window to further strengthening and institutionalizing of the United Nations response, at the intergovernmental level, to the complex crises and situations characterized by inter-linkages among security, political, cultural, social, economic and developmental issues. It is important that we should not fail in Guinea-Bissau. It is a small country with a population of only about 1.3 million and its economy, though debilitated, is also small in size. This entails a correspondingly smaller international assistance requirement to fix Guinea-Bissau's problems and to make it self-sustainable.

Extreme poverty and under-development are the main problems; 88 per cent of the population lives on less than one dollar a day. The Security Council mission to Guinea-Bissau reported that wider-spread unemployment, especially among young people, posed a potential long-term threat to peace and stability. Fortunately, and rather surprisingly, the situation has remained calm despite depressing socio-economic conditions and political tensions.

The response of the international community to the peace-building and developmental needs of Guinea-Bissau, spearheaded by the United Nations, should constitute a determined effort based on principles but displaying operational flexibility, as our delegation has said on earlier occasions. The democratic transition has to be supported whole-heartedly with all available resources.

It is surprising to know that a country such as Guinea-Bissau, which is not even able to pay salaries to its functionaries, has been making regular repayments, along with interest, to the International Monetary Fund. We agree with the observation of Mr. Ramos Horta that there is a need to show special consideration and pragmatism by the Bretton Woods institutions to the ability of Guinea-Bissau to make these repayments.

During the public briefing on Liberia on 27 August, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, while drawing the attention of the Council to the situation in Guinea-Bissau, had informed it that the commitments by the international community to provide assistance to Guinea-Bissau were too slow in materializing. And earlier in June, in a preparatory meeting prior to the Council's West African mission, the then-permanent representative of Guinea-Bissau had pleaded her country's case for international assistance in these words: "Yesterday it was President Nino, today it is Kumba Yalá, tomorrow it will be someone else, but the problems of Guinea-Bissau remain the same". I think we need to reflect seriously on those words and devise practical approaches that could bring real benefit to the people of Guinea-Bissau.

I thank you.