

Speech

BY COMMISSIONER NEVEN MIMICA

**to the
International Conference
in support of Guinea-Bissau**

**Albert Borschette Conference Centre,
Brussels,
25 March 2015**

Dear President(s),

Prime Minister,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to welcome you all to this international conference in support of Guinea-Bissau.

I particularly welcome [President José Mario Vaz], Prime Minister Simões Pereira and the members of the Bissau-Guinean Government who are here with us today.

I thank the UN Development Programme who is co-chairing this conference.

I also welcome the representatives of so many countries and organisations.

Today is an important step on the road to stability, security and prosperity for the people of Guinea Bissau.

Today is an opportunity to demonstrate that Guinea-Bissau is back on the international scene after the successful elections in 2014 and the restoration of constitutional order.

Today is also an opportunity to demonstrate that Guinea Bissau is ready to move forward, with the full support of the international community.

When Prime Minister Simões Pereira visited Brussels in July last year, the then President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, made it clear that Guinea-Bissau could count on the support of the European Union.

At that time, the Commission announced an aid package of 70 M€, including a state building contract of 20 M€. The first payment of 10 M€ was made three months ago to help the authorities deal with the most urgent needs and to provide basic services to the population. We have also been able to commit resources to projects in areas such as rural development, health, civil society,

human rights and resilience to climate change.

That commitment is strongly reaffirmed today under the new European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. We wish to strengthen our cooperation so that the necessary reconstruction, stabilization and reform can take place.

Yesterday, the measures under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement have been lifted, allowing us to fully resume our cooperation.

I am therefore particularly pleased to announce that the European Commission commits to providing 160 M€ to Guinea-Bissau between now and 2020.

This significant pledge combines the use of various instruments – be them national, regional and thematic.

This significant pledge will allow us to support the priorities that YOU have identified in YOUR national development strategy in areas such as governance,

security, justice, public administration, fisheries, support for democracy and human rights, health and rural development.

This pledge needs to be backed up by sound implementation. Transparency and accountability will be key in that respect.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenges that lie ahead cannot be underestimated.

Much needs to be done to ensure the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions and the establishment of an effective public administration.

Much needs to be done to fight corruption, impunity and trans-organized crime.

Much needs to be done to ensure that the country is more open to investment, in order to promote economic growth and create jobs.

Much needs to be done to reverse the damage done to the country's natural resources and biodiversity.

And all this should be done with one single objective in mind: improving the living conditions of the people of Guinea Bissau. And doing this quickly.

Before concluding, I would like to stress that the motto 'Terra Ranka' made me curious about creole language. I found a nice proverb according to which "a canoe without a paddle cannot cross the sea". This proverb is particularly appropriate for today, considering that Guinea-Bissau is made up of more than 80 islands.

You will be in the driving seat to get the canoe out into the sea and keep it navigating on its way to prosperity. It is your responsibility to determine the course you want to pursue. But you must know that we will be your paddle to help you and we will continue to accompany you on that journey.

I wish you all a successful meeting.

(638 words)