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Statement

By

Deputy Permanent Representative

H.E. Dr. Halimah Deshong

**Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on
Guinea- Bissau**

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New York

Please check against delivery

Thank you Ambassador Costa Fihlo for the floor and for your commitment as Chair of the PBC Guinea-Bissau Configuration,

We also join in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Suzi Barbosa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Communities of Guinea-Bissau for joining us and thank you for a very comprehensive presentation.

Excellencies, I want to begin my remarks by paying tribute to Bissau-Guineans who have had to endure conditions of serious socio-economic vulnerability and deprivation for an extended period. We welcome the very comprehensive commitment to social, economic and political transformation outlined by you Minister Barbosa, as well as the Cooperation framework outline here today, supported by the multi-stakeholder team. We cannot ignore what it means for a society to embark on transformation when well over half of the population exists below the poverty line, with extremely high rates of unemployment and underemployment, particularly among women and youth.

It is imperative that we continue to see enhanced cooperation between regional organisations like ECOWAS, the AU and the UN in support of the national priority to implement the Strategy for Development, Employment and Industrial Promotion and the National Development Plan, in line with the African Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. For these Plans to succeed, the meaningful participation and leadership of diverse women and youth will be critical.

Given the high percentage of women and youth excluded from the formal economy, and the disproportionate effects of economic crisis stemming from the pandemic and pre-pandemic conditions, the commitment of technical support and funding to be directed toward an expanded plan focusing on the livelihoods of women and youth is very well placed. The informal economy is also dominated by women, who've been hardest hit by pandemic conditions. We call for even greater financing to augment the contributions to efforts provided by the African Development Bank, the PBF and the IFIs. We welcome investments made by the ADB toward women and youth in the cashew, fruit and vegetable sectors and look forward to expansion and diversification of funding to support economic justice that is gender- and youth- responsive, and that targets rural communities.

We also welcome news that the government removed the farmers' tax - and lowered two other taxes on intermediaries and exporters of cashew nuts. While this is crucial to rural farmers and to the economy, we must think about the export market as the main buyer India is dealing with the devastating effects of the pandemic. *What is the situation with the export of the crop in light of the situation in India, and especially in light of the challenges in transporting the crop during the rainy season? And how can regional and international partners assist?*

As we prepare to meet to reflect on the work by IFIs in support of Guinea-Bissau's socio-economic development, we wish to advocate for patient, sustained and expanded economic contribution to support the necessary economic and social transformation and institutional reforms, that Bissau-Guineans deserve. That Bissau-Guineans continue to be creative and innovative, owing to a rich and diverse history, should cause us to do all in our power, within the international community, to support the country.

I thank you.