

The international cocaine trade in Guinea-Bissau: current trends and risks

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February 2011

Executive Summary

This paper analyses the international, West African and national conditions that fuel the spread of the international drugs trade in West Africa, particularly in Guinea-Bissau, and examines the impact of the international cocaine trade at a social, economic and governance level in this small West African country.

Although drug trafficking has a long history in West Africa, over the past five years the region has increasingly attracted international attention as a new hub for the illicit cocaine trade between Latin America and Europe. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, that attention has been all the greater for a number of reasons: a) the visibility of the authorities' involvement in trafficking, causing international agencies and the media to dub it the "world's first narco-state"; b) the amount of drugs seized on its territory and the increasing presence of South Americans, to whom this type of activity is attributed; and lastly c) because the country is totally dependent on aid and uses the media attention given to drug trafficking as an argument for keeping aid flowing into the country.

Following significant seizures of cocaine in 2006 and 2007, the trade appeared to go into decline in 2008 and 2009, for which the authors outline four possible scenarios, the most likely being that it is continuing but through the employment of other less visible methods, with the traffickers having made only a temporary tactical retreat.

Favourable conditions for trafficking

Both the global operation of the cocaine market and a number of specific national conditions favour the development of drug trafficking in West Africa and especially Guinea-Bissau. At the systemic level, the enforcement of the global drug-control system tends to push traffickers to select transit routes through states that are already weakened by internal conflict, poverty or both.

In recent years, the Latin American drug cartels appear to have shifted their attention to supplying the lucrative European market by developing networks in West Africa, focused around Ghana in the south and Guinea-Bissau in the north. From there the drugs are smuggled into Europe on commercial flights by mules. At the same time, by paying local collaborators in both cash and cocaine, the traffickers are creating a local consumer market for the drug.

The geography of Guinea-Bissau, with its myriad of coastal islands, makes it the perfect destination for unloading drugs that have been transported by sea, often from Brazil or Venezuela. The virtual collapse of the country's administration, the inadequacies of the police and justice sector, impunity, endemic corruption and widespread poverty create fertile conditions for the flourishing of the cocaine trade which, in turn, has further adverse consequences at the social, economic and governance levels.

The presence of resourceful and potentially violent South American cartels in Guinea-Bissau has aggravated a situation that was already unsustainable, and drug-related incidents are on the rise. After reporting the involvement of the military and their civilian allies in drug trafficking, several journalists and activists have had to flee the country or go into hiding. Drugs have been discovered at military bases, and seizures made by the police have disappeared after being confiscated by the military. Senior government officials have also reportedly received death threats when seeking to investigate cocaine seizures.

Social and economic impact

The influence that cocaine-trafficking is having on the country's economy is not yet clear but, as it gains in importance, it is likely to soon generate more wealth than traditional legal activities and thus be more attractive to the local population. The extent of the impact will depend on whether Guinea-Bissau's role in the trafficking chain is predominantly active or passive.

At the social level, domestic drug use is growing, with the resultant addiction and violent crime; addiction to cocaine, and especially crack, is reportedly rampant. Guinea-Bissau lacks the material resources, expertise and experience to

address these problems. From a long-term perspective, the attraction of the drugs trade for disenfranchised youth may also undermine social control mechanisms that prevent crime and violence. So far, however, Bissau's youth, though faced with unemployment and few opportunities, have shown little desire to go down that route. Nevertheless, the consequences of globalisation, the food crisis and the inability of external aid to respond to such problems could quickly change the situation.

Policy options

The authors argue that, in the long term, in order to tackle the enormous challenges that the drug trade poses in route countries, a less securitizing agenda needs to be put in place globally, and the prohibition-based international consensus should be debated and reconsidered. In the meantime, a number of shorter-term measures need to be taken urgently to halt the negative effects of this activity at international and national level. These include improving the coordination of efforts at national, sub-regional, regional and international level, reforming the country's institutions, supporting civil society, rehabilitation initiatives and conducting further research to gain an accurate understanding of the scale of the problem.

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Contents	Page
Executive Summary	1
Methodological note	3
The rise of the cocaine trade in Guinea-Bissau	4
Conditions favouring the cocaine trade in Guinea-Bissau	6
The international drugs economy	6
National conditions	9
The main risks for Guinea-Bissau	11
Governance	11
Economic impact	12
Social impact	13
Conclusions and policy options	16
Further reading	18
List of interviewees	18

Methodological note

The international drugs trade in West Africa, and specifically in Guinea-Bissau, has had a lot of exposure in the media but has been little studied. Since it is an illegal trade, accurate data on it is hard to come by, especially for countries where it is a relatively new phenomenon and where statistical research and analytical skills and tools are limited, as in the case of Guinea-Bissau.

This paper is based on secondary data that has appeared in the media, and reports by international organisations (academic research on this specific issue and country is virtually non-existent); interviews with national and international stakeholders who have privileged information on the issue; the authors' extensive fieldwork experience in the country over the past nine years in the context of development cooperation and research projects in the fields of human security, youth and gender violence; and the international peacebuilding intervention in Guinea-Bissau, where the issue of drug trafficking has repeatedly been highlighted and analysed by international organisations, national officials and the population.

The rise of the cocaine trade in Guinea Bissau

A history of trading

In Guinea-Bissau the drugs trade only emerged as an acute problem in 2005. This does not mean that the trafficking, smuggling or even consumption of drugs is completely new to the country. As in other parts of the world, trafficking is an ancient economic activity in West Africa (including Guinea-Bissau).¹ The transporting of people and goods across frontiers is a specialised activity that has been going on for centuries and is characteristic of populations living in border regions. Guinea-Bissau is well-known in the region for the illegal trafficking of small arms. High-ranking government and military officials have been directly involved. Over the past five or six years, the illegal arms trade seems to have diminished only to be replaced by the trafficking of cocaine, involving, in particular, military actors.²

In the context of drug trafficking, West African involvement in the intercontinental trading of cannabis, for example, can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century. The effect of such criminal activities on local communities was, however, minor compared to that produced by the region's relatively recent involvement in cocaine trafficking. Both the nature of the products and the scale of the trade have changed: from cannabis and arms to cocaine and from national and regional activities and actors to international ones.

The emergence of the cocaine trade

Guinea-Bissau, more than other countries equally affected by these trends, has incurred close international attention for a number of reasons: a) the visibility of the authorities' involvement in trafficking, causing international agencies

and the media to dub it the "world's first narco-state";³ b) the amount of drugs seized on its territory and the increasing presence of South Americans, to whom this type of activity is attributed; and lastly c) because the country is totally dependent on aid and uses the media attention given to drug trafficking as an argument for keeping aid flowing into the country.

Accurate figures on the cocaine trade in Guinea-Bissau are hard to ascertain. Official data is based solely on seizures made by the country's police. In 2006, 674 kg of cocaine were seized in Guinea-Bissau (the second largest seizure in West Africa). In 2007, 635 kg were seized (the third largest in West Africa).⁴ In 2007, a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) spoke of "the scaling up of Latin American drug traffickers' activities and the use of Guinea-Bissau as a cocaine stockpiling centre, with illicit drug trafficking taking place both by sea and air". Reports also stated that Nigerian organized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking have increasingly used Guinea-Bissau as a source country and departure point for individuals used as "drug mules."

Reasons for apparent decline in 2008-09

According to UNODC, in 2008 cocaine trafficking in West Africa suffered a sudden and unexpected change. In 2008 and 2009, there was apparently a substantial decline in the amount of drugs smuggled into Europe through the region. There may have been several different reasons for this. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, according to local contacts, local and regional media sources and our own observations from the field in recent years, there are four possible scenarios that may explain the apparent decline:

1 Stephen Ellis, "West Africa's International Drug Trade", *African Affairs*, 108/431, 2009, <http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/content/108/431/171.full>, accessed 17 January 2011.

2 Martin Evans, "Senegal: Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC)", Briefing Paper, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2004, pp 2 and ff, http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/3208_bpmedec04.pdf, accessed 17 January 2011.

3 Marco Veraschi, "Guinea-Bissau: World's First Narco-State", October 2009 <http://www.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1933291,00.html>, accessed 17 January 2011.

4 UNODC, "Cocaine trafficking in West Africa: The threat to stability and development (with special reference to Guinea-Bissau)", December 2007, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/west_africa_cocaine_report_2007-12_en.pdf, accessed 17 January 2011.

Scenario 1

The first, and the most appealing to those who had taken action against the illegal cocaine trade in West Africa, is that the international mobilisation against this business made the operation more difficult and thus led to its decline. The international exposure of Guinea-Bissau as a “narco-state” – regardless of whether or not this label was correct – proved not to be good for the cocaine business. It is worth noting that Guinea-Bissau is so far the only country to have developed a national strategy within the context of the West Africa Coast Initiative, specifically designed to support the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) plan of action on drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse.

As part of the African Union (AU) Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention 2007-2012, the AU Commission had strengthened its cooperation with Interpol, the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, UNODC and the European Commission within the framework of the Africa-European Union Strategic Partnership. The Ministers of Justice and Interior of Ecowas adopted a sub-regional plan on drug trafficking, organised crime and drug abuse at the 2008 Praia meeting, and an operational plan was endorsed at the Ecowas Heads of State and Government meeting in Abuja the following year⁵.

UNODC, the Department of Peace Keeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat and the UN Office for West Africa, together with Interpol, launched a joint program to build national and regional law enforcement capacity, including the areas of drug interdiction, forensics, intelligence, border management, money laundering and criminal justice. This programme has been endorsed and is to be implemented in Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This initiative, known as WACI (West Africa Coast Initiative), has been specifically

designed to support the Ecowas plan of action and is dependent on the introduction of the latter for its own implementation.⁶

Scenario 2

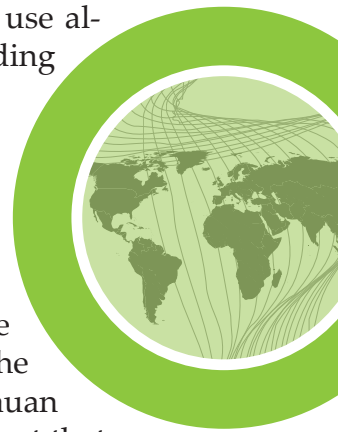
The second possible explanation concerns local partners from South America. A series of apparently unconnected incidents, including the flight from Guinea-Bissau of Navy Head Bubo Na Tchuto (August 2008), the death of the country’s President, followed by the detention of two of his sons and several state officials for their involvement in drug trafficking (December 2008) and the assassination – in separate but nonetheless related incidents – of the armed forces’ chief of Staff and the president of Guinea-Bissau (March 2009), may have forced the traffickers to temporarily use alternative routes while rebuilding their local alliances.

Scenario 3

The third scenario proposed relates to possible business disputes and retaliation. The disappearance of very large seizures of cocaine while in the custody of the Guinea-Bissauan police was a betrayal of the trust that South American traffickers had in their Guinea-Bissauan partners and led the Colombian associates to suspend their criminal activity and, therefore, their local drug trade arrangements.

Scenario 4

The fourth possibility is simpler and more likely, namely that the cocaine trade through West Africa is still continuing but using other less visible methods.⁷ In 2008-2009, we noticed that the large expensive cars that had become the very symbol of drug trafficking had disappeared from Bissau. This development was seen by some as a sign that the cocaine trade was in decline in Guinea-Bissau. In reality,



5 Melissa Chea-Annan, “West Africa: Ecowas Adopts Strategies Against Illicit Drugs”, *AllAfrica*, 4 November 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200811040699.html>, accessed 20 January 2011

6 International Narcotics Control Board (2009), “Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2009”, Vienna, pp 53-54, http://www.incb.org/pdf/annual-report/2009/en/AR_09_E_Chapter_III_Africa.pdf, accessed 17 January 2011.

7 Associated Press “Drug trafficking returns to Guinea-Bissau after a lull, threatening the fragile government”, 5 June 2010, <http://telegraphjournal.canadaeast.com/article/1082326>, accessed 17 January 2011.

however, it seems to have been due to a tactical retreat on the part of the traffickers, which ended following the events of 1 April 2010, at the same time as the protection of trafficking networks returned.⁸

The events of 1 April 2010 refer to a coup attempt by former Navy Head Bubo Na Tchuto and Deputy Chief of Staff António Indjai. The former had fled to Gambia after being accused of planning a coup against Vieira and Tagme Na Waie but later returned to the country seeking the protection of the UN and stayed there for four months before deciding to leave again to carry out a coup, without the UN making any attempt to stop him. He is also seen by the US authorities as one of the main leaders of drug trafficking in the country.⁹

Following the intervention of President Bacai Sanha, order was partially restored. Indjai was appointed chief of staff and Na Tchuto head of the navy. This decision was strongly opposed by, among others, the European Union, which withdrew its Security Sector Reform (SSR) Mission. These two men, who are believed to be involved in drug trafficking and also tried to organise a coup, now hold the most important military positions in the country and, according to interviewees, act with total impunity, surrounded by private armies.

Conditions favouring the cocaine trade in Guinea-Bissau

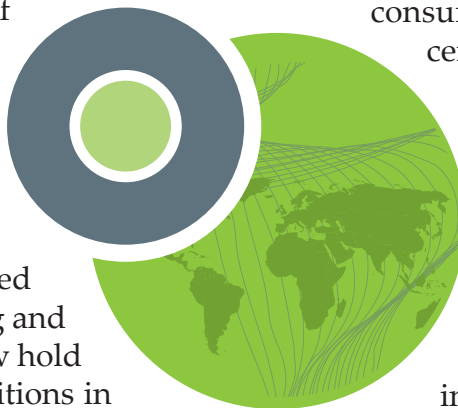
We shall analyse these conditions at two different levels: the global operation of the cocaine market and also the national conditions that favour the development of drug trafficking in West Africa and specifically in Guinea-Bissau.

The international drugs economy

The prohibitionist paradigm and the inefficiency of drug control systems

Over the past century, the universal ban on illicit drugs has been a global policy established by international treaties in 1912, 1925, 1931, 1936, 1946, 1948, 1953 and, within the framework of the UN, in the conventions of 1961, 1971 and 1988.¹⁰ However, despite this consensus on policy, three key factors play into an underground transnational relationship which may produce a number of unintended consequences both at national and international level. The cocaine trade illustrates these factors: 1) the concentration of world production in just three countries (Peru, Bolivia and Colombia); 2) the relative efficiency of the national drug control systems in the largest cocaine markets of North America and Western Europe (with around 7 and 4 million consumers respectively); and 3) the incentive to break the law given the enormous economic worth of the illegal drug trade.

The illegal narcotics trade produces transnational actors, processes and outputs that put unbearable stress on certain geographic regions and individual states which, at some point, become central in the trafficking strategies of criminal organisations even though they have no history of producing or consuming the illicit drug being traded. Thus, at the systemic level, the enforcement of the global drug control system tends to produce costs which are not necessarily evenly distributed among all members of international society. States already weakened by internal conflict, poverty or both, when chosen by traffickers as transit routes, often bear a much heavier burden than others.



8 Interview with the Deputy Director of the Judiciary Police, Bissau, 25 May 2010.

9 US Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Designates Two Narcotics Traffickers in Guinea-Bissau", 8 April 2010, <http://205.168.45.71/press/releases/tg633.htm>, accessed 17 January 2011.

10 UNODC (2009), A Century of International Drug Control, Vienna, p 101, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/100_Years_of_Drug_Control.pdf, accessed 17 January 2011.

Market and route changes

Large-scale cocaine trafficking through West Africa was first detected in 2004. This development reflected a shift in the global cocaine market's centre of gravity from the United States to Europe. According to the latest information, since 2000, cocaine prices have been falling in Europe (taking inflation into account), while demand has increased – due to a boost in the cocaine supply to Europe, which is probably the result of a search for alternatives to the US market by South American traffickers.¹¹

Over the past decade, US and Mexican cocaine seizures have declined dramatically, indicating a reduction in the cocaine supply to the US market. This is probably the result of a deliberate policy by the Latin American drug cartels, for which there may be two reasons. On the one hand, the North American market seems to be less accessible to the traffickers than the European one. In 2007, for example, North America (the US and Mexico) reported 28% of global cocaine seizures compared to only 11% in Europe. On the other hand, cocaine prices in the European market are far more attractive to traffickers than those in the US. In Europe, the retail price rose on average from €39 a gram in 2006 to €41 a gram in 2007, while in the US the average price was \$27 and \$31 a gram respectively. Bearing in mind that the exchange rate favours the euro against the US dollar, the sale of cocaine in Europe is much more profitable than in the US.¹²

Europe has approximately 4 million cocaine consumers and average annual use amounts to 36 grams per individual. It may have imported around 144 tons of cocaine from South America in 2006 alone. Considering that around 27% of European cocaine seizures passed through West Africa, it can be estimated that 40 tons of the cocaine consumed transited through that region. In 2006 the average wholesale price per kilogram was \$46,700, therefore the value of

those 40 tons amounts to approximately \$1.8 billion. Police sources estimate the traffickers' profit rate to be around 25%, which in this case represents a yearly profit of approximately \$500 million.¹³

Market accessibility, business profitability and supply side economics could justify the preference for Europe shown by the cocaine traffickers. However, as for all export products, any geographical change in the chain of distribution means that fresh partnerships are built and new logistics implemented. This is the transnational background against which West Africa, over the past six or seven years, has been increasingly pulled into the transatlantic cocaine trade.

The creation and development of West African networks

Africa is not a producer of cocaine and was traditionally only a very marginal trafficking route for it. Between 1998 and 2003, annual African cocaine seizures averaged at something like 0.6 metric tons – an insignificant proportion of global cocaine seizures. Since 2004, however, when Latin American traffickers decided to stockpile cocaine in West Africa, the situation has changed dramatically.

The countries most affected by cocaine trafficking are Cape Verde, Guinea, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Ghana, Benin, Togo, Gambia and Nigeria. According to European law enforcement agencies, cocaine trafficking in West Africa is focused around two hubs. The Southern Platform has Ghana as its entering point from where the drug is taken to Togo, Benin and Nigeria. The Northern Platform has Guinea-Bissau as its entering point and, eventually, Sierra Leone and Mauritania, with the cocaine then being distributed by air to Senegal, Guinea and Gambia. Mali is served by land from Guinea-Bissau as well as from Guinea.

11 European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2010), "Cocaine: A European Union Perspective in the Global Context", Luxembourg, EMCDDA and Europol, p. 20 and ff, <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/joint-publications/cocaine>, accessed 17 January 2011.

12 UNODC, World Drug Report 2009, Vienna, UNODC, 2009, p. 72, http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2009/WDR2009_eng_web.pdf, accessed 17 January 2010.

13 UNODC, "Guinea-Bissau: a New Hub for Cocaine Trafficking", Perspectives, 5, May 2008, p 5, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/Perspectives-May08-WEB.pdf>, accessed 18 January 2011, and UNODC (2007), "Trafficking in West Africa, The Threat to Stability and Development (with Special Reference to Guinea-Bissau)", Vienna, pp. 27 and ff, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/west_africa_cocaine_report_2007-12_en.pdf, accessed 18 January 2011.

The use of mules

In 2007, the seizure by the authorities in this sub-region of 7000kg of cocaine and in Europe of 5000kg, believed to have come through Africa, reflects the importance that this trafficking route has acquired. Considering only commercial flights from West Africa to Europe, in the period 2004-2008 over 1360 mules – ie, people who smuggle capsules of cocaine into another country by secreting them in their stomach – were detected by European customs officials. The majority of these seizures were less than 2kg each, with the overall amount totalling 2.7 tons. The use of mules on commercial flights is thus clearly the preferred method of the West African drug trade networks.

Far less structured and with a looser hierarchy than their Latin American counterparts, the West African networks are relatively open to the participation of any individual who is willing to get involved and is capable of transporting and distributing illegal drugs. These connections are easily established within the migrant communities that are settled in Europe. Sometimes mules are people interested in establishing formal or informal businesses who want to acquire initial capital by means of drug trading. In other cases, traffickers are trying to accumulate the necessary financial resources to set up their own private drug trade network through the hiring of mules. This hiring out brings significant financial gain without running the personal risk that a mule necessarily has to undertake.



One of the most sophisticated cocaine trafficking strategies is the so-called “indiscriminate approach”, in which networks with greater economic capacity have a considerable number of mules aboard the same flight in an attempt to take advantage of the inability of European customs to seize large numbers of people on the same flight. In December 2006, the Dutch customs authorities arrested 32 mules on just one flight. The mules had started out from Guinea-Bissau on a flight to Schiphol with a stopover in Casablanca; of the 32 mules, 28

were Nigerians. Such a situation is not unusual, other similar cases having been detected by other European authorities.¹⁴

The Latin American connection

Nevertheless, the trafficking carried out by mules is a mere by-product of the vast Latin American operation within the region. Since the South American traffickers pay for the services rendered by their local collaborators in both cash and cocaine, the drug is having devastating effects on societies within the region, fueling the West African mule networks and helping to create a local consumer market for the drug.

International experts believe that the West African mule phenomenon might be the result of an elaborate strategy conceived by Latin American drug traffickers. By paying for services rendered locally in cocaine, these traffickers could be deliberately fostering the creation of small drug exporting schemes, mainly operated through the use of mules. Mule-based trafficking is a dangerous activity which has a tremendous impact in the European media; and its suppression requires the mobilisation of significant human and material resources by the European border control services and police. It is speculated that Latin American traffickers may be using these mule-based networks, without their knowledge, as a smokescreen for their larger cocaine trafficking schemes.¹⁵

In West Africa, the major cocaine trafficking operations to Europe are managed exclusively by Latin Americans. Trafficking by air is carried out by means of light aeroplanes, modified by the inclusion of additional fuel deposits in order to allow them to be refilled while flying, which depart from Venezuela or Brazil on non-scheduled flights to Africa. Given its spectacular nature, the transporting of cocaine by

14 An interesting case study: Emmanuel Akyeampong, “Diaspora and Drug Trafficking in West Africa: a Case Study of Ghana”, *African Affairs*, 104, 2005, pp. 429-447, <http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/schatzberg/ps362/Akyeampong2005.pdf>, accessed 17 January 2011.

15 Interview with reliable informants who asked to remain anonymous, 1 June 2010.

air has received a great deal of attention (the refilling of light aeroplanes during flight, huge planes landing on improvised tracks).

Nevertheless, the bulk of cocaine trafficking is carried out by sea. Not far away from the West African coast, high tonnage ships, originating from Latin America, deliver cocaine to local fishing boats, small freighters and even private yachts. The cocaine is then stockpiled in small coastal villages and, when needed, moved to other destinations by land. Countries along the Gulf of Guinea are being used by traffickers as storage places. The volume of cocaine unloaded by each of these small boats is higher than that carried aboard small light aeroplanes, normally amounting to over a ton per trip.¹⁶

National conditions

Geography

From a geographical point of view, Guinea-Bissau is the perfect destination for unloading illegal Latin American freight. Considering that the cocaine destined for Europe that passes through Guinea-Bissau is frequently shipped from Brazil and Venezuela, the vessels tend to travel along the 10th parallel north, which is the shortest distance between the American and African continents. The British and Spanish navies have made so many cocaine seizures along this Atlantic band that European law enforcement agencies have nicknamed it “highway 10”. If the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean has been successful, the shores of Guinea-Bissau provide magnificent conditions for the unloading of illegal cargo. The country is composed of the mainland, the Bissagos Islands (88 islands, of which only 20 are inhabited) and various coastal islands.¹⁷

Administrative collapse and impunity

Guinea-Bissau is one of the most dependent countries in the world. Since gaining independence from Portugal, the country has pursued an extroverted governance strategy based on the demands of donors, which has ended up creating a growing dependent urban population, and an economy based on the production and exportation of the cashew nut.¹⁸ Political legitimacy is a façade and neopatrimonialism has been the rule throughout the past decades.¹⁹ The local political and military elites – the generation that won independence from the Portuguese in the 1970s – behave as if the country was their own personal property. A developmental state was therefore never consolidated. This situation deteriorated further with the imposition of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, leading to the virtual collapse of the state administration.²⁰

Public services,²¹ especially those related to justice and the police, have been systematically underfinanced. As regards the police force, an indispensable tool in the repression of drug-related criminal activities, officers earn low salaries that are only sporadically paid and the police stations lack telephones, computers and often even electricity. The force has virtually no boats for patrolling the coast line and little fuel for the few police cars they have. Many officers are unable to fire a gun or swim. When someone is arrested, the prisoner has to be taken to the police station by taxi because no police cars are available.

16 UNODC (2007), “Cocaine Trafficking in Western Africa. Situation Report”, Vienna, p. 8, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Cocaine-trafficking-Africa-en.pdf>, accessed 17 January 2011.

17 Ashley-Luise Bybee, “The Narco-Curse in West Africa”, *New Voices in Public Policy*, Volume III, Spring 2009, p. 8 and ff, <http://journals.gmu.edu/index.php/newvoices/article/viewFile/59/62>, accessed 17 January 2010.

18 Christian Sigrist, “La destruction des sociétés agraires en Afrique : esquisse théorique”, *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 1, 2001, pp. 69- 83, <http://www.orientaliapartenopea.org/CADERNOS%20DE%20ESTUDOS%20AFRICANOS%20-%20Lisboa.pdf>, accessed on 18 January 2011.

19 Patrick Chabal, “Lusophone Africa in Historical and Comparative Perspective”, in Chabal et al., *A History of Postcolonial Lusophone Africa*, London: Hurts & Company, 2002, p 74.

20 José Manuel Pureza et al, “Do States Fail or Are They Pushed? Lessons Learned From Three Former Portuguese Colonies”, *Oficina do CES 273*, Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2007, p.16, <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/bitstream/10316/11095/1/Lessons%20Learned%20From%20Three%20Former%20Portuguese%20Colonies.pdf>, accessed 18 January 2011.

21 UNDP (2009), *Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, New York, pp. 167 and ff, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Indicators.pdf, accessed 18 January 2011.

Corruption is widespread. There is no political control whatsoever of the military and certain groups within the police force, as evidenced by the 2008 invasion of the Investigative Police (PJ) headquarters by the Rapid Intervention Police (PIR), resulting in the death of an inmate and the pursuit of the PJ Director, without there being any political or legal consequences. The normalisation of violence at state level also creates a climate of impunity. Violent conflict and murders are exacerbated by the non-functioning of the formal justice system and the failure to inflict any kind of punishment on the perpetrators who, though often not formally identified, are almost always publicly known. This situation is further compounded by the 2007 Amnesty Law, which covers what is probably the longest time period for any amnesty law in the world, namely political crimes committed between 1974 and 2004.²²

Even though it may have acquired large proportions, drugs smuggling still remains in the hands of specific groups, such as certain military leaders. It was stressed that traffickers have the capacity to accurately map the political situation of the country (alliances, antagonisms, and personal rivalries) in order to know who, when, and where to press or bribe to obtain support and co-operation.²³ According to police and judicial sources, the local Latin American traffickers act under the protection of the Guinea-Bissauan military which forces judges to sign release orders whenever a cocaine trafficker is arrested.²⁴ It is worth mentioning, therefore, that the distinction between

military and political actors is not always easy to establish in Guinea-Bissau, as “each politician has his own military and each military has his own politician”.²⁵

Poverty, unemployment and a lack of opportunities

Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 173 out of 182 countries in the Human Development Report of 2009. Its state budget is equivalent to the European wholesale market price paid for two and a half of the 40 tons of cocaine that supposedly transit through West Africa annually. Corruption and crime may present itself as a socially acceptable solution and a means of survival in a society where around 66% of the population live below the national poverty line, 80% of the poor are between 18 and 35 years old,²⁶ unemployment is pervasive and civil servants are only sporadically paid a meagre salary with which to provide for their families. This phenomenon will be examined further below.

Aid resources

Some informants, however, believe that the extent of the cocaine trafficking problem in Guinea-Bissau may be exaggerated because of, on the one hand, the local authorities’ need to maintain the flow of international financial and material aid and, on the other, the tendency for international specialised agencies to legitimise and strengthen their role and status.

General Verastegui, former Head of the EU Mission for the Security Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau, strongly defends this hypothesis and argues that the drug issue in Guinea-Bissau has been used by some EU member states partly to justify the implementation of a proper Security Sector Reform.²⁷ This hypothesis is also supported by the fact that there is competition

22 Sílvia Roque, “Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau: a critical approach”, Noref Report, 2009, <http://www.peacebuilding.no/eng/Publications/Noref-Reports2/Noref-Report-7-Peacebuilding-In-Guinea-Bissau-A-Critical-Approach>, accessed 18 January 2011.

23 Interview with Joseph Mutaboba, Head of the UN Integrated Peace-Building Office (UNIOGBIS) in Guinea-Bissau, 20 May 2010.

24 Vivienne Walt, “Cocaine Country”, Time, 27 June 2007, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1637719-1,00.html>, accessed 18 January 2011.

25 Interview with Joseph Mutaboba, Head of the UN Integrated Peace-Building Office (UNIOGBIS) in Guinea-Bissau, 20 May 2010.

26 UNDP (2006), Rapport National sur le développement humain en Guinée Bissau: réformer les politiques pour atteindre les objectifs du millénaire pour le développement en Guinée-Bissau, Bissau, p. 11, <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Guinea%20Bissau/Guinea%20Bissau%20HDR.pdf>, accessed 18 January 2011.

27 Interview with General Esteban Verastégui, 26 May 2010.

and a lack of effective coordination between donors, often resulting in redundancy or overlapping, which leads to the waste of valuable resources and the sending of mixed messages to local institutions.

The main risks for Guinea-Bissau

In Guinea-Bissau, drug trafficking in itself is not the main cause of destabilisation – it is a consequence of the pre-existing lack of stability that allows smugglers to establish their networks in the region and operate to and from there. Ignoring the structural causes of the problem (endemic poverty, corruption, impunity) will have an even deeper impact on the local population than the illegal drug trade, and will leave unaddressed the very conditions that continue to foster trafficking opportunities in the future.

Governance

Given the vast sums of money involved in drug smuggling, the Latin American drug cartels and their local partners do not lack the means to undermine and fight the established local forces of order. Drug money in the hands of political or military leaders could jeopardise the unstable security balance of the region still further. Whether it be the civil wars that devastated Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, the disputes over the Casamance region which have intermittently engaged Senegal, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, or disagreements over the Bakassi Peninsula, which has been a source of discord between Cameroon and Nigeria, corruption has worsened and prolonged the conflicts in question in that it acted as a catalyst for violent political change and generated popular distrust of political leaders.

According to General Verastegui, one of the worst collateral effects of drug trafficking is its use by politicians or military officials to defame their adversaries, resulting in reciprocal accusations of involvement in the trade. This leads to a further exacerbation of socio-political tensions and the discrediting of leaders. Together with the traditional sources for funding local political violence (illegal arms sales and the illicit extraction of valuable natural resources), the traffick-

ing of cocaine at the national, West African and international levels is a new criminal activity which could well, in the future, play a major role in undermining state stability in the region.

Corruption

The perception of corruption in Guinea-Bissau is already, together with Angola, the worst of all the Lusophone countries.²⁸ Trust in state institutions is very low and tends to be transferred to traditional institutions in rural areas and to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in urban areas.²⁹ The governance problems of Guinea-Bissau are not new, as we have already seen, with or without the cocaine trade. In this context, however, the presence of South American cartels in Guinea-Bissau has aggravated a situation which was already unsustainable. This new criminal actor is organised, experienced, determined, resourceful and potentially violent. With this new source of intimidation and corruption at state level, there is little prospect that the rule of law will prosper in Guinea-Bissau in the near future.

Rise in drug-related incidents

In fact, the country has experienced a rapid rise in the number of drug-related incidents. After reporting on the involvement of the military and their civilian allies in drug trafficking, several journalists have had to flee the country or go into hiding. Drugs have been discovered arriving at military air bases; military officers have been arrested in possession of hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and there have been several standoffs between police and the military over drug shipments.

Drugs which had been seized by the police were confiscated by the military but later disappeared. Soldiers and foreign nationals ac-

28 Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index, 2010", http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results, accessed 18 January 2011.

29 World Bank (2006), Guinea-Bissau: Integrated Poverty and Social Assessment. Transition from Post Conflict to Long-Term Development: Policy Considerations for Reducing Poverty, Vol. I, Main Report, p 13, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,,contentMDK:21139294~isCURL:Y~menuPK:443279~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:430367,00.html>, accessed 18 January 2011.

cused of drug trafficking have been released from custody. In separate incidents, the interior minister and the head of the judicial police, first of all, and later the attorney-general and the minister of justice claimed they had received death threats in connection with their investigations into cocaine seizures. In recent years in Guinea-Bissau, even the coup plots and high-profile political assassinations have had cocaine-related undertones.

Military power

The military has tremendous power in Guinea-Bissau. If the country's position in the international drugs trade depends on the nature of the relations that the drug traffickers are capable of establishing with politicians and high-ranking officers of the armed forces, then the future of the country will also depend on the capacity of Guinea-Bissauan society itself, as well as on the international community, to respond by forcing the military to withdraw from the political and judicial spheres of government. The separation of powers, the primacy of the rule of law and the participation of citizens in the political decision-making process must be ensured if Guinea-Bissau is to successfully overcome its present challenges.

Economic impact

Cocaine trafficking is also a threat to local economies. Except for Nigeria, the West African economies are dependent on the exportation of a limited number of agricultural products or minerals. As a source of currency, the drugs trade is gaining in economic importance in the region with the risk that illegal activities related to cocaine trafficking may soon generate more wealth and labour than legal economic activities. Hence, drug trafficking may be perceived as a business opportunity that is less arduous and more profitable than agriculture or mining.

Increased purchasing power

The monies flowing into local economies, together with the increased purchasing power derived from drug money, are a source of

inflationist tension which may put certain products out of the reach of the poorer sections of the local population. On the other hand, the new income obtained from the illegal narcotics trade tends to increase internal demand for expensive imported consumer goods leading to a deterioration in the balance of payments. The chain of negative consequences resulting from the trade deficit could bring insurmountable difficulties for the economies infected by the illicit cocaine trade.

Money laundering

Moreover, all the money earned from criminal activities has to be laundered. The money-laundering process drags down financial sector professionals who have to be bribed and by necessity get caught up in the criminals' sphere of influence. Once these channels are created, it is inevitable that they will be used to conceal the gains obtained from all kinds of criminal activities in the future. These economic and financial consequences of the drug trade make any possible economic benefits for the community, other than those the narcotic trade itself may bring, harder to see.

Sudden influx of money

The influence that cocaine trafficking is having on Guinea-Bissau's economy is not yet completely clear. After all, the overall impact of the drug money depends on the nature of Guinea-Bissau's involvement in the transatlantic cocaine trade. If the Latin American traffickers retain ownership of the drugs until they reach the European market, all they need in Guinea-Bissau is to hire a workforce for tasks such as loading, repackaging or driving and, obviously, they would need to bribe some officials.

On the other hand, if Guinea-Bissau is to turn into a wholesale market for cocaine, local criminal groups will gain economic influence as the profits obtained from the European market return to the region in order to buy more drugs and split the profits. In either case, trafficking will produce a sudden influx

of money. The size of this financial influx will, however, be completely different depending on whether Guinea-Bissau's role in the trafficking chain is predominantly active or passive.

Macro-economic indicators

The macro-economic indicators in Guinea-Bissau already reflect the fact that a high value commodity has entered the country. The impact of the cocaine trade is potentially significant when compared to other sources of foreign exchange. The main export product, the cashew nut, represents an annual income to the Guinea-Bissau economy of around \$300 million, an unimpressive sum when compared to the estimated turnover of the West African wholesale cocaine trade in Europe (\$1.8 billion) or the probable size of the profits earned from it (\$500 million).

The foreign currency reserves of Guinea-Bissau have boomed in recent years (increasing from \$33 million in 2003 to \$113 million in 2007), a rise that cannot be explained solely by international funding of the development of the bauxite industry. This development has also had an impact on the reserves held by the banking system of Guinea-Bissau. In the same period, the foreign assets held by commercial banks increased almost fivefold (from CFA 2,077 million in 2003 to CFA 9,756 million in 2007) and those held by savings banks quadrupled in only two years (rising from CFA 2,270 million in 2005 to CFA 10,116 million in 2007). Finally, in the same time frame, the deposits labelled as foreign currency increased fivefold (from CFA 1,138 million in 2005 to CFA 5,367 million in 2007).³⁰

This evolution may have been the result of regular economic growth. However, figures show that, in the period 2005-2007, legal exports from Guinea-Bissau fell from CFA 47,200 million to CFA 33,500 million. This year, the country's exports covered only 64% of imports. If co-

caine money is at work here, this degradation of the balance of payments is surely a negative macroeconomic consequence of the sudden arrival of drug revenue which favours expensive foreign products over those produced in the local economy. In the medium and long run, the consumption patterns of those prospering from the drug trade could have a more long-lasting effect on the Guinea-Bissauan economy than the foreign assets and reserves held by the banks, which will remain in the country only as long as the cocaine traffickers do.

Social impact

In addition to the country being a staging post, general concern about the increase in drug use is growing and several local reports of crack use, which was not usual until recently, need to be further investigated. Drug trafficking is increasingly associated with a potential rise in violence. There is the risk that these routes may become a desirable source of income for unemployed youth in Bissau, in a context in which alternative resources, such as international aid, are decreasing. The widespread feeling of impunity and low life expectancy make it even more acceptable to grasp any opportunity for quick money-making: 'Drugs are going to bring development!' said one of the people we interviewed for previous studies in Bissau.

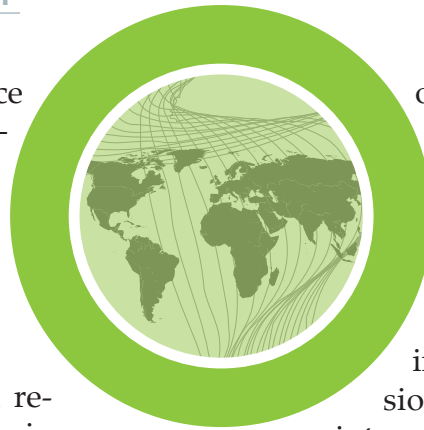
The immediate social impact of cocaine trafficking in Guinea-Bissau is that local drug consumption has increased. Unfortunately, there are no official data available to substantiate this claim. However, all respondents agreed that addiction to cocaine, and in particular crack cocaine, is rampant.

Rise in drug addiction, gangs and crime

The emergence of a cocaine market is frequently connected with a rise in drug addiction, gang activity and petty and violent crime. In the case of Latin America, for example, Briceño-Léon and Zubillhaga believe that the process of globalised violence can be analysed on the basis of five specific inter-related processes: " 1) the changes in the drug economy; 2) the massive proliferation of firearms; 3) the similarity of

³⁰ UNODC (2008), *Drug Trafficking as a Security Threat in West Africa*, Vienna, pp. 41 and ff, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Drug-Trafficking-WestAfrica-English.pdf>, accessed 18 January 2011.

the cultural patterns of violence and the emergence of an actor – the young man from a marginal neighbourhood; 4) generalised fear among the population; and 5) citizen support for extralegal action by the police”.³¹



Guinea-Bissau lacks the material resources – and expertise and experience – required to address these problems. As far as cocaine addiction is concerned, for example, in the whole country there is only one drug-addiction treatment centre. The *Desafio Jovem* centre for drug rehabilitation and mental illness was set up in 2002 by Father Domingos Té and since then has sought to rehabilitate drug addicts through a faith-based residential rehabilitation programme. However, the institution has nothing – there are no psychologists, doctors or medicines; all it can offer is guidance, a mattress and basic meals.³²

Attraction for young people

The second major social risk of cocaine trafficking is the attraction that drug money may have for young people. In a society where 1) formal jobs are scarce and education is too expensive for the vast majority of people, 2) the dominant ways for men to earn respect are based on their ability to acquire money and girlfriends, and 3) girls are increasingly having to turn to prostitution and transactional sex as a means of survival,³³ the promise of acquiring personal and family wealth through drug trafficking presents itself as the only way to avoid poverty in the short run. This newly obtained money helps to buy “social respect” and results in a form of “social becoming”. The same process was observed in the case

of youth mobilisation for war in Guinea-Bissau.³⁴ Belonging to armed groups creates the illusion of equality and the erosion of hierarchies, as pointed out by Richards.³⁵ In this way, gangs emerge as new models of social integration and community cohesion. In these contexts, violence turns into an organised survival strategy or into an affirmation strategy for youth groups and individuals.

Despite the high risk of imprisonment and the life-threatening nature of the activity, in Guinea-Bissau and across the whole of West Africa it is not difficult to recruit mules. In 2007, 12% of all the body couriers arrested in Portugal were Guinea-Bissauan nationals, a substantial percentage bearing in mind the limited air travel connections. In fact, almost half the body couriers arrested in Europe are Africans and – at a considerable risk to their health – on average each African mule ingests over a kilogram of cocaine, 25% more than non-Africans.³⁶ The authors do not wish to portray Guinea-Bissau’s society and youth as highly criminalised but they believe that these risks need to be addressed, even if social resilience to violence and economic degradation has already proven to be solid.³⁷

In fact, although they are faced with unemployment, dependence and a lack of education and opportunities, Bissau’s youth do not, for the most part, have the desire or capacity to organise themselves through systems of violence. Neither do they generally regard it as a legiti-

31 Roberto Briceño-León and Verónica Zubillaga, “Violence and globalization in Latin America”, in *Current Sociology* 50(1), 2002, p. 23, <http://csi.sagepub.com/content/50/1/19.short>, accessed 18 January 2011.
 32 Fid Thomson, “Drug Trafficking Leads to Addiction Problems in Guinea-Bissau”, *VOAnews.com*, 30 May 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/africa/Drug-Trafficking-Leads-to-Addiction-Problems-in-Guinea-Bissau-70640367.html>, accessed 18 January 2011.
 33 Sílvia Roque, *Violências contra mulheres na Guiné-Bissau: uma análise de percepções e de regras sociais de sexo e seu papel na legitimação da violência*, UNDP/UNFPA Report, Bissau, 2010.

34 Henrik Vigh, *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006.
 35 Paul Richards, *Fighting for the rain forest: war, youth and resources in Sierra Leone*, Oxford: International African Institute; James Currey; Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996.
 36 Alang Benhahara and Lee Shi-Ian, “Drug Cartels Balloon with Mules”, *AsiaOneNews*, 5 October 2009, <http://www.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Crime/Story/A1Story20091005-171798.html>, accessed 18 January 2011.
 37 Marina Temudo and Ulrich Schiefer, “Disintegration and Resilience of Agrarian Societies in Africa – the Importance of Social and Genetic Resources: A Case Study on the Reception of Urban War Refugees in the South of Guinea-Bissau”, *Current Sociology*, 51(3/4), 2003, pp. 393–416, <http://csi.sagepub.com/content/51/3-4/393.abstract>, accessed 18 January 2011.

mate means of acquiring resources or status because, notwithstanding the growing urbanisation, in Bissau it is still difficult to evade family and community control.³⁸ However, according to the 2009 Human Development Report, the country has a higher inequality index than other countries of the region³⁹ which is likely to be more conducive to violent strategies since the gulf between young people's aspirations and their fulfilment is greater.

Aftermath of conflict

It is, however, necessary to question the extent to which this situation remains as secure as it is claimed to be, considering the following conditions: 1) the aftermath of an armed conflict that had worse economic consequences than the Rwanda genocide, 2) the dismantlement of the productive sectors, 3) the failure of development projects and programmes dating back to the country's independence and 4) the progressive criminalisation of the state.

According to the World Bank, Guinea-Bissau's GDP would have been 42% higher, were it not for the conflict, whereas in Rwanda it would only have been 25-30% higher, had it not been for the 1994 genocide. Nevertheless, it is not possible to determine what the specific contribution of the conflict was, over and beyond the conditions that existed in the country prior to the war (the liberalisation and privatisation of the 1980s and 1990s).

The consequences of globalisation, the food crisis and the inability of external aid to respond to the current situation could quickly lead to an increasing inability to prevent widespread frustration among the people, and would also severely limit their opportunities to find alternative means of survival.

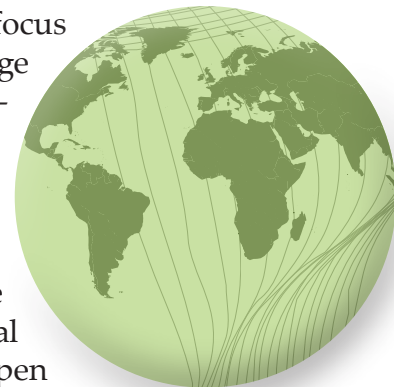
38 Sílvia Roque and Kátia Cardoso, "Por que razões os jovens se mobilizam... ou não? Jovens e violência em Bissau e na Praia", paper presented at 12th CODESRIA General Assembly Yaoundé, 7 to 11 December, 2008, http://www.ces.uc.pt/myces/UserFiles/encontros/259_codesria.pdf, accessed 28 January 2011.

39 According to the Human Development Report 2009, the Gini Index in Guinea-Bissau is 35.5 while it is higher in other countries of the region, such as Cape Verde (50.5), Gambia (47.3), Republic of Guinea (43.3) and Senegal (39.2).

Security considerations

Also, while Guinea-Bissau's ruling elite is perceived by the international community as a threat to the security of both its own citizens and the international system, international intervention is focused mainly on securing only the latter. The crucial issues for the international agencies and donors, and *sine qua non* conditions for the maintenance of aid, have been the security sector reform and the fight against drug trafficking with the purpose of "protecting" the central countries against the penetration of illegal products.⁴⁰ The security in question is not that of the population of the country; given the state's shortcomings, that remains society's responsibility.

This has meant in practice the repeated postponement of long-term programmes for bringing about the socio-economic development of the country, since the primary objectives are focused on seeking to establish a penal state in a context in which the state has been being continuously dismantled for decades. This skewed focus does nothing to change the structures and exercise of political and economic power or the social hierarchies. On the one hand, impunity and distrust remain. On the other, a path of societal responsibility is left open for the maintenance of security in local neighbourhoods, particularly affecting young people, and this could become a breeding ground for the spreading of militias.



40 See a news report based on an interview with the Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, in which he says that "the international community needs a stable Guinea-Bissau in order to be able to deal with drug-trafficking", assuming indirectly that only European countries' own desire to protect themselves from cocaine trafficking may guarantee their interest in Guinea-Bissau, in Notícias Lusófonas, "Houve um retrocesso grave na consolidação do país, diz Gomes Cravinho", 13 July 2010, http://www.gaznot.com/?link=details_actu&id=469&titre=Mundo, accessed 18 January 2011.

Conclusions and policy options

Given that criminal activity is the primary and most brutal consequence of the current ban on the production, trade and consumption of narcotics, it is important to give deep and wide-ranging consideration to the advantages and disadvantages of the current narcotics prohibition regime, as well as to measures for resolving the present situation. We believe that in order to tackle the enormous challenges that this trade poses in route countries, a less securitizing agenda needs to be put in place globally, and that the prohibition-based international consensus should be debated and reconsidered. Nevertheless, recognising that such a significant change in approach would probably take some time, some specific shorter-term measures should urgently be taken to halt the negative effects of this activity at international and national level.

The need for sub-regional coordination

As drug trafficking is a sub-regional issue, all coordination of efforts at that level – by security forces, media, civil society organisations and especially those initiated by Ecowas – should receive full support from the international community. In the specific framework of Ecowas, it is important to underline the quality and effectiveness of the process that led to the adoption of the political declaration and its rapid transformation into operational documents. However, the Ecowas strategy is currently at a standstill because of a lack of funding and there are a number of administrative obstacles delaying its implementation. The same applies to international initiatives that are intended to support the Ecowas strategy, such as the WACI.

Although the transit countries used in cocaine trafficking have received significant international attention, particular attention also needs to be paid to countries that specialise in money laundering (which are less visible and stigmatised because they usually have better govern-

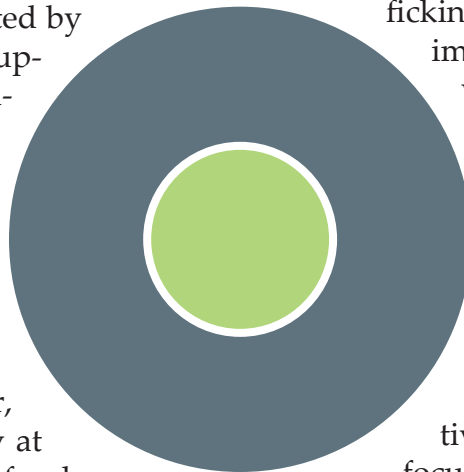
ance and economic indicators) and to mechanisms that focus on financial flows rather than focusing solely on product (drug) flows. International donors should also advocate for greater transparency and control of investments and resource exploitation.

Although specific measures against drug smuggling should be implemented and sustained in order to prevent them from exacerbating regional instability, they should be enforced within the framework of a long-term involvement that is designed to resolve the underlying structural problems.

Focus on human security

The justice and police sectors are critical not only to any attempts to eradicate drug trafficking, but most of all to efforts to ensure human security. Guinea-Bissau needs assistance to finance, staff, train and equip its justice and police departments. Such efforts should, however, not only be focused on securitizing measures. The authors believe that if the national police and justice systems only receive training and resources because of the impact of drug trafficking on western countries, the local impact of criminal activities – as well as the daily lack of security experienced by the population – will remain secondary and will not be tackled. This could also perpetuate the “narco-state” stigma that enables the country to access financial resources that are not, however, applied to productive and development activities. The priority should clearly focus on the needs and lack of security of Guinea-Bissauans.

The involvement of the armed forces in destabilizing activities impedes long-term political reform and development. Therefore, drug trafficking cannot be tackled without reforming the armed forces and reducing their role in political activity. To achieve this, assessments and strategies must be improved, and an independent evaluation of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission process and strategy should be undertaken.



Support for civil society and the media

In any policies against drug trafficking and abuse, special assistance should be given to their actual and potential victims. The illegal drug trade jeopardises their prospects for development, threatens public health and undermines human rights. In this context, it is suggested that international cooperation assist in the implementation of freedom of speech in Guinea-Bissau and protect those who make use of it. Independent journalists and political activists who dare to speak out against corruption and denounce the crimes carried out in the country risk their personal safety and their lives and should benefit from effective international support mechanisms.

The rehabilitation of cocaine consumers is also fundamental. The provision of international assistance and training to local partners in the prevention and treatment of drug addiction is a first step to creating local capabilities. In Guinea-Bissau the lack of information available about cocaine and its devastating effects is astounding. International actors as well as local health authorities should promote public health campaigns so that all possible methods of preventing both addiction, and diseases related to its consumption, are available.

A related problem is the plight of mules when detained on European territory; first-time offenders should not be prosecuted in order to prevent further criminalization.

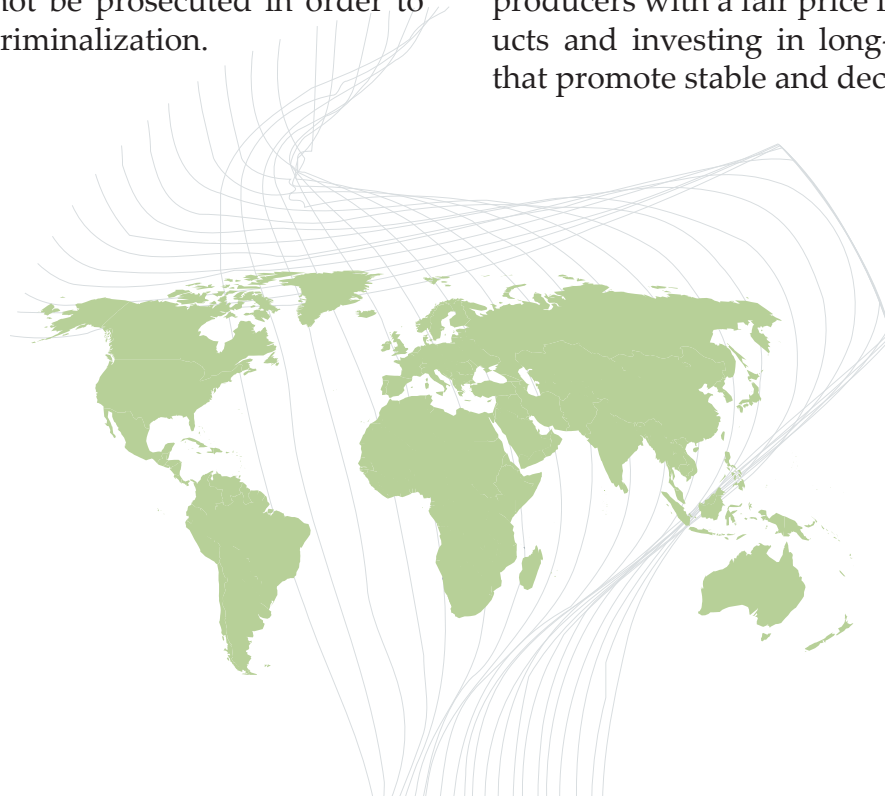
Research

Given the absence of data on which to base any objective study of the problem of illegal drugs and related social problems, it is suggested that the Guinea-Bissauan authorities be assisted in collecting data to gain an accurate understanding of the scale of the problem. Such studies should also be carried out and coordinated at the sub-regional level in order to provide an overview of the level of drug consumption and its social impact in West Africa as a whole.

Coordination of efforts at all levels

Finally, coordination of international, regional and national efforts to address the West African drug trafficking problem is a key issue and an indispensable prerequisite for any successful response. It is clear that illicit drug trading is a secondary phenomenon stemming from deeper problems that recurrently affect the region, and that coordination is essential for tackling these questions.

Coordination initiatives aimed at mitigating issues related to drug trafficking, or resolving the structural problems that generate it, should be launched or, when already in existence, supported. Long-term development aims must be pursued in order to prevent legitimate productive activities and markets from being replaced by illicit economic activities as a means of survival. This includes, for example, providing producers with a fair price for their legal products and investing in long-term programmes that promote stable and decent jobs.



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Edmundo Mendes, Deputy Director of the Judiciary Police, Bissau, 25 May 2010

General Esteban Verastegui, Head of Security Sector Reform (EU), Bissau, 26 May 2010

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