The President of the Economic and Social Council

31 October 2002

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

As you may be aware, further to your report on the establishment of the ECOSOC Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict and the adoption of a related resolution by the Council on 15 July 2002, an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau was constituted on 25 October 2002. The Group consists of Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa who will chair the Group, Ambassador Luizela do Santos jaló of Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador Gelson Fonseca Jr. of Brazil, Ambassador Dirk Jan van den Berg of the Netherlands and Ambassador Goncalo Aires de Santa Clara Gomes of Portugal. The Ambassadors of Mauritius and the Gambia were also invited to participate in the work of the Group in their capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Security Council on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and Chair of the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau respectively. I was also invited to participate in the work of the Group ex officio.

In your reports to the Security Council on Guinea-Bissau, you have said that peace-building is difficult, perhaps impossible, unless it is based on a firm economic foundation. You have also called on the international community to support a programme of renewal and rehabilitation of economic, social and cultural infrastructure, as well as a sustained programme of technical assistance to strengthen the key institutions of the State. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau intends to heed your call for action by seeking ways in which we can help the people of Guinea-Bissau to help themselves and by preparing a long-term programme of support for the country that could be the basis for coordinated effort by the entire international community. Towards that end, the Advisory Group intends to travel to Guinea-Bissau from 8-17 November 2002 to assess the situation on the ground with a view to assist us in making recommendations to the Council.

As you would recall, the proposal for the establishment of an ECOSOC Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict was a direct outcome of the discussion in the General Assembly on the follow-up to your recommendations contained in the report on Causes of Conflict in Africa and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa. The Council is of the view ECOSOC Advisory Group represents an innovative and practical example of promoting a culture of prevention and of cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the area of peacebuilding. The Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau would be delighted to pay you a brief courtesy call to brief you on its work and plans prior to departing for Guinea-Bissau on 8 November 2002. Towards that end, I would be most grateful for an indication of the feasibility of meeting with you at your earliest convenience for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Ivan Simonović
Secretary General
United Nations