

Statement on Guinea's military coup

West African civil society groups call for an inclusive dialogue and process for the restoration of democratic governance in Guinea

Tuesday, September 14, 2021

We the underlisted West African civil society organizations, mindful of the Region's past, which was characterized by coups d'état and autocratic rule, and the cycle of instability, abuses, and conflict that resulted from that experience, are deeply concerned about recent political developments in Guinea. While we acknowledge with dismay and disappointment the erosion of democracy in Guinea during the last few years leading to the September 5th, 2021 coup d'état, we remain resolute in our disapproval of unconstitutional and undemocratic changes of government. The history of the Region demonstrates that an unconstitutional termination of democracy is not the path to social or economic progress; instead, such events turn back the clock of progress and sow the seeds of further instability, conflict, and underdevelopment.

We are aware that, since the National Rally and Development Committee (CNRD) took over the reins of government, there have been expressions of support for the September 5th coup d'état from sections of Guinean society. We hasten to emphasize, however, that the popular sentiments that have greeted the coup d'état do not represent a rejection of democracy or an approval of military rule by the Guinean people; they merely reflect the widespread disappointment and betrayal that Guineans felt about the ousted government of President Alpha Conde. Afrobarometer findings show consistently that large majorities of Guineans prefer democracy (77%) to any other kind of government and reject authoritarian alternatives, including military rule. Significantly, roughly eight in 10 Guineans (82%) endorse free, fair, and honest elections as the best way to choose leaders.

- We, therefore, call upon CNRD to embrace and initiate dialogue with diverse sections of Guinean society and chart an inclusive process – with a clear transition timetable – to restore Guinea to the democratic path.
- We further implore CNRD to put in place appropriate safeguards and processes to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law, protection of the rights of media, journalists, and civil society, and an absence of attacks or excesses by the military against citizens and politicians.
- We also urge our fellow sisters and brothers in Guinean civil society to redouble their commitment to the ideals of democracy and constitutionalism and stand and work in unity to ensure an orderly and a peaceful return to democratic government.
- We call on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), United Nations (UN), and the international community to work with CNRD and the Guinean people to help the nation navigate its way back to a democratic and constitutional status. While ECOWAS has already acted swiftly to condemn the coup and called for the restoration of democracy, we request that the regional body further ensure that all relevant national actors, including civil society groups, women associations, youth networks, and the opposition are given every opportunity to participate fully in any ensuing dialogue and transition process.

While immediate attention is rightfully focused on the crisis at hand, we believe it is also important that regional leaders and stakeholders be reminded of and acknowledge the democratic breaches and ensuing crisis of legitimacy in Guinea that led to the current unfortunate political crisis. We urge ECOWAS and other regional mediators to adopt an approach in their engagement with CNRD and other Guinean stakeholders that takes full cognizance of the preceding abuses of power and other authoritarian actions, including the unpopular incumbent prolongation of tenure and related human rights violations. In this regard, we implore ECOWAS to take a firm stance against leaders who abuse their incumbency to manipulate constitutions or engineer constitutional changes to remove or modify presidential term limits in order to cling to power. Incumbents must not be allowed to change their national constitutions for their own personal benefit. We believe that a resolute stance by ECOWAS against such self-serving constitutional changes by incumbents will not only prevent some of the unwarranted, unconstitutional, and unjustified changes of government in the Region, but help strengthen democratic development and advance the interest and aspirations of Community citizens.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Guinea who want to see a democratic, safe, and prosperous future for their nation and are ready to assist good faith efforts towards the realization of that goal.

Signed:

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3. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Accra, Ghana
4. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Accra, Ghana
5. Afrobarometer, Accra, Ghana
6. Stat View International, Conakry, Guinea
7. Center for Democracy and Development, West Africa (CDD West Africa), Nigeria
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