

4. EU financial engagement: The EU has financial engagements in each of the areas of EU action (see above).

5. Multilateral context: Ghana's priorities at the multilateral level tend to align with the EU, particularly in the field of democratic governance, peace and security. Ghana has ratified 13 of the 18 key international human rights treaties. In 2022 and 2023, as non-permanent member of the UNSC, Ghana has been long advocating for UNSC reforms and played a leading role for the adoption, on 22 December, of the UN resolution on assessed contributions for African led peace support operations. In 2024, Ghana will trade its role as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for a seat at the UN Human Rights Council where it has been elected for three years.

The UN Universal Periodic Review for Ghana took place on 24 January 2023, with the report issued on 24 March 2023. The primary recommendations by the participating states focused, i.a., on:

- Ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- The abolishment of the death penalty through the signature and ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
- Strengthening measures to eradicate gender-based violence, including by fully implementing the 2007 Domestic Violence Act.

Republic of Guinea

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: After more than two years in power, the transitional authorities maintained control over civic space, in particular by restricting access to the internet and social networks in mid-November 2023, as well as to the country's main private radio stations. This tightening of control came after the four main protagonists in the 28 September trial escaped from Conakry central prison on 4 November 2023. Despite these events, the 28 September trial continued and its holding in 2023 was hailed by observers as a significant step forward in the fight against impunity in the country. The lack of dialogue between the main political formations within the *Forces Vives de Guinée* and the transitional authorities continues to cause recurrent tensions. In 2023, incidents with the security forces, mainly in Conakry, resulted in the loss of around thirty lives. The ban on protests decreed in May 2022 is still in force. As regards the fight against corruption, results remain insufficient given the endemic nature of the phenomenon.

The implementation of the timetable agreed with ECOWAS has not seen any significant progress in 2023. The President of the Transition is committed to holding a constitutional referendum in 2024, and publication of the preliminary draft constitution is expected in the first half of the year. The consequences of the explosion of the country's main fuel depot in December 2023 are likely to weigh heavily on the country's social and economic situation.

2. EU action - key focus areas: Guinea remains a country marked by several Human rights violations, ranging from violations of political rights to children's rights. Women's position in

Guinean society remains a cause of concern. The level of representation and inclusion of women in the transitional institutions is very low. None of the 33 prefects and 304 sub-prefect appointed since the beginning of the transition is a woman. Regarding gender-based violence, rapes, which have mainly under-aged girls as victims, and female genital mutilation remain a terrible wound, and the efforts to combat these crimes are largely insufficient despite some legislative progress. Children are exposed to the risk of trafficking, especially girls due to the “*confiage*” practise. Women and children trafficking is often linked to exploitation and sexual violence. In general, and despite a relative protective legislation, its implementation is unsatisfactory and Guinea still does not have a strategy to promote Human rights despite political commitments to this end.

With regard to the main indicators for 2023:

- Guinea is ranked 118th out of 142 states analysed by the Rule of Law Index. It ranks 88th out of 142 countries surveyed in terms of fundamental rights, and 128th and 125th respectively for civil and criminal justice;
- Guinea is ranked 85th out of 180 countries in the world press freedom index published by RSF in 2023, and remains a country in which journalists are subject to recurrent threats. The country has fallen 26 places since 2021.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: The EU maintains a continuous dialogue with the Guineans authorities and all the socio-political players, in particular civil society.

4. EU financial engagement : Trial of the 28 September 2009 massacre – This trial is a major achievement for human rights in Guinea. After 13 years of waiting, the trial aimed at bringing justice to the hundreds of people killed and/or disappeared, as well as the 150 women and girls raped, began in September 2022. Throughout 2023, the EU provided legal, psychological and security support for the survivors and families of the victims. As has been the case for the last ten years, the EU's support for the victims will continue throughout the duration of the trial through various ongoing and future projects.

A structured dialogue framework (Cadre de dialogue structuré) for civil society has been taken place since 30 September 2022. The initial phase of EU's support to this dialogue ended in February 2023. 25 members and 25 alternates, in equal numbers of men and women, with a good representation of young people and people living with disabilities, attended the training courses and dialogue sessions held every week. In total, 18 topics and themes linked to the transition and electoral process were debated, resulting in 50 recommendations elaborated by the members of the structured dialogue framework. On 5 April 2023, these recommendations were presented to the representatives of the transition authorities (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, National Transition Council, Supreme Court, High Authority for Communications) and the Facilitators of the Inter-Guinean Dialogue Framework, invited by the EU Delegation to a feedback workshop.

Tackling gender-based violence (GBV) – The EU has implemented actions aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls, in particular awareness-raising activities in favour of women's and girls' rights. Five women's centres in the main regions of Guinea provided training for social and criminal justice actors on how to deal with victims of GBV as part of a

project funded by the EU and implemented by a local NGO, which came to an end in 2023. A call for proposals was launched in 2023, with the specific aim of combating impunity for the perpetrators of GBV in order to promote victims' access to justice and the conviction of the perpetrators of such violence, but also to encourage a change in behaviour on the part of the authorities and the general public.

Justice and accountability initiatives – To address the challenges caused by the lack of access to justice, essentially due to the insufficient financial funds and the lack of trust in the institutions, the EU funded two projects to build the capacity of local justice stakeholders and provide free legal aid services. As part of these projects, a team of 10 legal experts and 2 pools of lawyers handled more than 3,000 criminal and correctional cases. 6,547 people benefited from legal support through these “Legal Clinics”. More than 240 local justice professionals, human rights advocates, civil society organisations and journalists were also trained in different topics related to human rights. The budget for these projects is around EUR 2 million.

Republic of Guinea-Bissau

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Guinea-Bissau is a fragile West African country where most people live with less than two euros per day and face many challenges impeding the improvement of their living conditions as well as the full enjoyment of their human rights. The country is marred by longstanding political instability, with governance and security issues. However, legislative elections on 4 June 2023 were remarkably peaceful and reasonably fair, to the point that the victory went to the coalition opposed to the PR, which was then able to form a Government in August. Yet, some frictions emerged soon in the ‘cohabitation’ between a PR and a PM of two opposed political sides, which on 1 December 2023 precipitated on open clashes (involving several casualties) between a paramilitary group linked to the coalition and the regular armed forces loyal to the PR. The latter denounced then an ‘attempted coup’ and dissolved the Parliament, without fixing yet a date for the new legislative elections. A new Government was sworn in on 21 December. In the last two years, several opponents to the President have been arrested, or have left the country and face legal prosecution should they return. Freedom of the media remains an issue. Radio stations and other media that are critical of the regime may be closed or aggressed. Other significant human rights issues include cases of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; significant acts of corruption; lack of investigation of and accountability for crimes of violence against women and girls; trafficking in persons; and the worst forms of child labour. Members of the security forces are reported to have committed some abuses – the Government has mechanisms to investigate and punish them, but impunity remains a serious problem.

2. EU action - key focus areas:

- **Protecting and empowering individuals.** Civil Society is very active in Guinea-Bissau but suffers from a lack of resources and capacity, in spite of the support of the International Community, including the European Union. The empowerment of women remains a key challenge. The human rights of persons with disabilities and children should also be enhanced, alongside those of LGBTI people. The EU continues