

# MEDIA TRANSCRIPT

## DRS 4 NEWS RADIO

Transcript for Heinz Krummenacher Interview, CEO of BEFORE  
June 19, 2009

**DRS:** Mister Krummenacher, how do the consequences of the drug prohibition manifest themselves in Guinea-Bissau?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** First I would like to say in advance that the drug trade with its related problem –organized crime – is definitely not the central problem of Guinea Bissau. But it does accentuate existing conflicts areas and it leads to more instability in a country that is already instable.

**DRS:** But the UN estimates that the value of the drug trade in Guinea-Bissau is greater than the entire national income. Therefore it seems to be a big problem.

**Heinz Krummenacher:** Drug trade is a big problem for the international community. Because the goal to end the drug trade, which the international community wants to achieve, are unable to be achieved due to the politics and power of drug cartels, what ends up happening instead is that fragile states are rendered even more fragile. For the local people, the drug trade is more a symptom of an already ailing society.

**DRS:** Could you explain in more detail what the adjacent problems of Guinea-Bissau are?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** The main problem of the small West African state, as well as in other countries of the region, is the lack of a strong state. There is the lack of infrastructure to resolve political conflicts. And in Guinea-Bissau the main problem is the rivalry between some politicians and military elites, who are all aspiring to come to power, but who do not have in mind the well being of the people, but their own material interests.

**DRS:** Is the drug-trafficking then a favorable means for these forces you mentioned to earn money?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** Yes, this is so. It's a financing means for the consolidation of their personal power. One has to understand that without the support of the army leaders, nothing progresses in the politics of Guinea-Bissau. And the army is not an army according to our understanding, but it is more of a conglomerate of various groups] and with different leaders. Some of these leaders are the real strong men in the politics of Guinea – Bissau.

**DRS:** So then what does the government of Guinea-Bissau do against the drug trafficking? Do the army and the police fight with the conventional means of repression against the drug gangs?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** This is a fight like David against Goliath. On the one side, politicians are heavily dependent from the support of the army leaders, without their support, politicians are not able to stay in power. On the other hand, there are practical problems: the police and governmental institutions aren't really equipped, courts do not function. A police man with full of good intentions may arrest drug dealers, but perhaps the handcuffs are missing to arrest them. And if nevertheless he does succeed, then the drug mafias are of course strong enough to bribe corrupt officials, so that these people are free again in a short lapse of time.

**DRS:** Mister Krummenacher, the swiss peace Foundation has launched an initiative for conflict prevention in Guinea-Bissau. So what does this initiative can do against the power of the drug dealers?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** It would be presumptuous to believe that BEFORE, this is a joint project of swisspeace and the US-based Alliance for Peacebuilding, is able to affront drug gangs. But what BEFORE is able to offer is an alternative. It is a peacebuilding strategy, which enables local people to identify the problems within the country and, on that basis, to develop a strategy on how these major challenges could be mastered.

**DRS:** To what extent then is BEFORE an alternative to the present drug prohibition?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** Drug trafficking is most certainly a symptom [of the problems in the country]; BEFORE does not address symptoms but the root causes of problems. The root causes lie mainly in the lack of a strong state. And that is what we want to address, not the symptoms but the central problems.

**DRS:** Is BEFORE more than a "well-meant intention" project, does BEFORE have successes?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** The successes in peacebuilding are always highly relative. On the one hand, what today seems like a success can tomorrow show up as a failure, and vice versa. Measures, which are taken today, which one cannot know where they will lead, might show up as successful in 10 or 20 years. At BEFORE, we have a longer temporal horizon of 8-10 years in a country, and it's the locals who are the main stakeholders, identifying problems and developing strategies. It's not us as "western experts" [solving the problems]. We only enable this process.

**DRS:** Mister Krummenacher, how do you estimate the prospect, that such approaches, as you pursue in Guinea-Bissau, will prevail in other countries and will become an alternative to the present drug prohibition?

**Heinz Krummenacher:** The neighboring Guinea Conakry is in a similar problem situation in the neighboring Guinea Conakry. I just came back from a workshop in Guinea Conakry, where this issue was also discussed. For the workshop, we brought together 51 representatives from the civil society and governmental representatives, there we analyzed with them the situation and developed a peacebuilding strategy for Guinea-Conakry. The results were positive and now we are going to implement it.

But once again, the drug problem in Guinea-Bissau will not be resolved single-handedly by BEFORE. To resolve the drug problem, concentrated action with all involved actors (international and national) is required. And it also requires that the drug war is reassessed: the drug war in Guinea-Bissau will not resolve the problems of the country. On the contrary, the drug war aggravates the problems of Guinea-Bissau.

**DRS:** Mister Krummenacher, I thank you for this interview.