



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

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**Malabo, May 21st – An article from Universal News to be published
with Foreign Policy**

***Note:** This is a transcription of the interview transcribed in accordance with the recording. It is NOT a final article, nor has been edited for the publication of the final article. It is the text from which quotes are to be chosen for the final article to be published within Foreign Policy.*

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UNIVERSAL NEWS (UN): *Since 1979 and under Obiang's presidency, when it comes to implementing and promoting the transparency and the good governance the country has progressed. It does play a decisive role in the Monetary and Economic Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and will play host to big events such as the summit conference of African Nations and the African Nations Cup (ANC). How does the global reputation of this country contrast with the developments it is undergoing?*

MRS. NURIA BEHOLI (NB): First of all, I would like to invite those who have never been to Equatorial Guinea and feel like knowing the country to come and visit us so they can see in situ the changes we are undergoing. Sometimes from abroad, images broadcasted on TV or published in the papers do not match the reality of the country, they are usually influenced by prejudices and misinformation.

Guinea has advanced in many areas during the last years, several key sectors have developed incredibly; a good example is the progress made within the building sector. Nowadays, foundations for a new and modern infrastructure are being laid, besides roads and bridges, we are constructing several significant buildings such as social housing, official residences, governmental palaces, hotels, etc to create the infrastructure and to house the people coming to the aforementioned events like ANC or the African Nations Summit Conference.

The building sector is making progress by leaps and bounds, laying the foundations to be an emerging nation. The hotels that are being built will boost the tourist sector and the already built housing will be sold encouraging the economy.

UN: *The aim of the development plan Horizon 2020 is to promote and to develop key sectors so that in 2020 Equatorial Guinea will be an emergent country. How does this plan benefit the building sector?*

NB: Naturally it benefits our sector with the awarding of several new projects. As I said, the foundations of the country must be laid so that it can grow, we are building and improving roads, harbours, airports, housings, etc... From a social and commercial standpoint all this development in infrastructure will help the country. Every step forward in infrastructure promotes social and economic development and Horizon 2020 Plan boosts investment in infrastructure among other sectors.

UN: *Which have been your most emblematic projects?*

NB: Fortunately we have been involved in big national projects. Our first construction was the Palace of Africa. We also have other emblematic projects such as the Malabo's International Airport Terminal or the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

At present we are working in the construction of the Mausoleum in Bata, where the history of our country could be found. We are also immersed in the construction of the Maternity Center in Malabo and various palaces in the continental area of the country as well as the Town Hall of Malabo along with the Psychiatric Center and the Public Library in Bata among others.

UN: *The company was established in Equatorial Guinea in 2001, since then its activities have grown steadily. It is essential the role you play in the national development. How were the first steps of PAC International in Guinea?*

NB: They were not easy, being a new company in the country we had to make ourselves known and consolidate our quality standards and our position among our competitors. It's true that PAC International was invited by the Republic's President, but logically we have had to demonstrate our worth and to live up to the trust placed in us, trust that we deeply appreciate. Definitely, by means of hard work and our efforts, accomplishing our projects in record time but with the same quality, this trust is bearing fruit.

UN: *PAC International is involved actively in the education and training of its employees. Could you talk about the training programs you have?*

NB: I believe that my Guinean brothers could reach a higher quality in their labour force than they have now. Sometimes the training companies are foreign as they are more experienced, even though we are learning fast. People entrusted to train our work force are usually foreign PAC employees, in some cases they are Guinean though. Many of the workers who are learning at present will be the teachers and instructors in the near future, though to get there we have to listen and pay attention.

Our training programmes are usually held in situ, at the building site. We help our workers with apprenticeship; they develop their skills so they can gain more experience than they had when they joined our company. This training is given on oneself own initiative. We are also trying to recruit young people finishing their studies with quarterly practicals at the company. This way when they finish their studies they will have not only a theoretical grounding but also practical which is essential. They are not paid a full wage but they are given economic incentives. This way they are trained and earn some money.

UN: *What is the percentage of employees from Equatorial Guinea?*

NB: 65% out of the total workers are nationals.

UN: *The majority of PAC International's projects are governmental. Which projects does PAC have to work and to associate themselves with private sector companies?*

NB: There are lots of business opportunities and projects but normally they are infrequent. Any interesting project we are offered is liable to be carried out. If for any reason we are not able to undertake the task by ourselves we turn to another company established in the country or we ask them to come if it's a foreign enterprise. I must say that most of our projects are carried out by us thanks to our technical team.

UN: *I would like to talk about the crisis that has affected the majority of sectors worldwide. The building business has suffered amazing losses, but PAC is still involved in big projects. How did the crisis affect PAC in Equatorial Guinea?*

NB: We barely noticed the international crisis in Equatorial Guinea. As I said, most of the existing projects in the country are governmental, it is the government who keeps them going and implements them by means of the established enterprises and the policy set by the Republic's President and his government as a whole. As long as the government wants to keep on building to make our nation look like a developing country, there will always be work for building companies. Perhaps they might have been forced to postpone some projects, but the big ones keep on going.

UN: *I would like to talk about the international net PAC has. You are located in several countries around the world. Do you have any plan to open more offices on a regional basis?*

NB: With regard to the international expansion, we would like to reopen our Congo branch as we were previously established there. We will reopen it thanks to the projects we are being invited to carry out there, partly due to the good image we show and also to the projects we are developing in Guinea. We are also considering the possibility of opening an office in Central African Republic and other countries throughout Africa to help our continent to develop.

UN: *What business opportunities does the country offer to those foreign companies who want to establish here and form a partnership?*

NB: There are several opportunities with a lot of potential. The Government wants to carry out many projects but the companies currently established in the country are not enough to undertake the whole task, that's why the chance of working and forming a partnership with entrepreneurs or new companies is always there.

UN: Which are the benefits offered by PAC when it comes to becoming partners with a foreign company?

NB: Our main benefit is our experience both in the building sector and in the country itself. Our project's quality and our ability to meet the deadlines make PAC International the ideal company to make partnership with.

UN: Our article is made up for the views and the ideas of the most important figures in the country. Could you tell us how your professional background has helped you to manage this company?

NB: When I started working in PAC, I was Office Director Assistant, Secretary and Administrator. Thanks to the experience I gained over time, the upper management assessed and valued my efforts and my job and offered me the Managerial position. I've been working since 2001 for PAC International in Equatorial Guinea and I have gone through the diverse posts of the scale, for this reason I know how it works at any level.

UN: Success cannot exist without a good leadership; obviously PAC is a leader within its sector. What would you say is your philosophy to push the company forward?

NB: Keep on fighting, nothing is easy here. You have to struggle and fight if you want things done and done properly, to be in control of the business and work steadily. I believe we are in parallel with the country's development and we share the Republic President's viewpoint: work and fight to get it.

UN: I would like to finish this interview with a message to the businessmen and politicians of North American community. What message would you like to convey to the readers of the Foreign Policy magazine?

NB: As I said at the beginning, I would like to invite them to visit Equatorial Guinea so they can see the improvements and the positive changes this country is undergoing. Also bring to light the efforts PAC International is doing to promote the national development. This is a country with an amazing potential and unlimited opportunities. It is better if they can see it once rather than been told a million times.

END OF THE INTERVIEW

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