

Remarks to the Country Specific Meeting on CAR
of the Peacebuilding Commission

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

FRANÇOIS LONSENY FALL

2 July 2008

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

1. It is a great pleasure for me to address this august body, as you start to work on the Central African Republic. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Belgium, Ambassador Jan Grauls, for his election as chair of the Country-Specific Meeting on CAR. His broad experience would greatly benefit the work of the Commission on CAR. I would also like to thank ASG Carolyn McAskie for her work to bring CAR to the Peacebuilding Commission.

2. On 12 June, I was extremely pleased to learn about your decision to include CAR on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. The Central African Republic, often described as an orphan of international aid, indeed needs your assistance today, more than ever before. Above all, this assistance is needed to address the country's multiple governance, security and development challenges. International assistance would help the Government materialize the numerous commitments it has undertaken, particularly in security and governance sectors.

3. As you know, in Bangui, my office and the UN Country Team is working hard to set in motion mechanisms to address the immediate needs in the area of security sector reform, to promote good governance and the rule of law, and to revitalize conflict-affected communities. For this, we will use the recently allocated Peacebuilding Fund's envelope of 10 million US dollars. This envelope comes following the Secretary General's announcement, on 8 January 2008, of the eligibility of CAR to benefit from the Peacebuilding Fund.

4. We are not alone in our efforts. Using this opportunity, I would like to emphasize the importance of bilateral assistance from individual member States represented here today, as well as from the European Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and others.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. In his remarks, on 12 June, President François Bozizé told you that his country was emerging from a long cycle of recurring socio-economic and political crises. In this regard, the United Nations is assisting the CAR Government in its efforts to organize an inclusive political dialogue.

6. The dialogue is viewed across the political and civil society circles in the Central African Republic as a reconciliatory process that could end the country's recurrent political instability and insecurity. By restoring peace, the Central Africans hope to finally embark on a path of sustainable development and stability, which could be assured by an inclusive political system, which respects human rights, values human life and dignity, and promotes justice and accountability in all corners of the Government.

7. The preparatory process for the inclusive political dialogue has allowed the CAR Government to conclude peace agreements with all the rebel movements operating in northern provinces of the country. The latest peace agreement, signed in Libreville on 21 June, with the facilitation of President Omar Bongo Ondimba, reaffirmed the earlier ceasefire commitments made by the rebel movements.

8. This agreement provides for demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of rebel fighters. Although the agreement calls for various measures of amnesty, it also clearly states that the amnesty would not be granted for crimes currently being investigated by the International Criminal Court. The parties to the agreement also established a follow-up committee to monitor its implementation. The committee includes representatives of the Governments of Gabon and the Central African Republic, the rebel movements and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), and me.

9. The success of the implementation of this agreement would heavily rely on the success in holding the inclusive political dialogue, in carrying out a meaningful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration exercise, as well as in implementing the Security Sector Reform agreed to by the Government in April. While the UN could offer the Central African authorities its help in crafting strategies for a successful DDR process, as it did for the SSR plan of action in April, your assistance in making it happen would be crucial.

10. Apart from the peace agreements, the Government succeeded, with UN assistance, in bringing together around one table the country's opposition parties, rebel movements and civil society within the framework of the Dialogue Preparatory Committee. From January to April, the Committee discussed political and governance issues, security situation and politico-military groups, and socio-economic development in the Central African Republic. The findings and recommendations of this Committee, as contained in the report handed to President Bozizé on 25 April, will form the basis of the inclusive political dialogue, which should be held in the coming weeks.

Excellencies, Mr. Chairman,

11. I will complete my remarks where I started, by reiterating that the CAR needs your assistance today, more than ever before. It is critical to consolidate gains achieved thus far on the ground, if we are to capitalize on the current window of opportunity for the Central African Republic to turn the page in its unstable history. We need to try, despite difficulties associated with CAR's position in a region where crises persist in Darfur, Southern Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and even in Uganda.

12. Your efforts would only strengthen the work already started and, no doubt, would add the strategic vision for the UN peacebuilding efforts in CAR. The UN system and I remain at your disposal, as you plow through the development and implementation of an integrated peacebuilding strategy. In accordance with the Security Council request, the Department of Political Affairs is launching an inter-agency working group to review the mandates given to

my office, as well as the configuration of UN presence in the country, in order to support your work effectively.

I thank you for your kind attention.