

PBC Ambassadorial-level meeting on the Central African Republic

Wednesday, 11 July 2018

Chairperson's summary of the Discussion

Background:

On 11 July 2018, the Central African Republic (CAR) configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an ambassadorial-level meeting under the chairmanship of H.E. Ambassador Mr. Omar Hilale, Chair of the Configuration. The meeting was organized to follow-up on Assistant Secretary-General Bintou Keita's recent visit to Bangui from 17 to 20 June 2018, which coincided with the visit of a group of Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) donors and partners from 17 to 23 June 2018.

Meeting Summary:

1. In his welcoming remarks, the Chair expressed his continued concern over the fragility of the security situation, the tendency toward hate speech and incitement to violence, as well as the alarming humanitarian situation exacerbated by funding gaps. He welcomed the gradual redeployment of the CAR Armed Forces, which have received support from the EU, MINUSCA and various bilateral partners including Morocco, and underscored that he was pleased with the positive feedback on the deployment of FACA-MINUSCA joint patrols. He reiterated the configuration's full support for the African Initiative for Peace and encouraged other partners to strengthen their support for this initiative. He also appealed to the Central African authorities on prioritizing better communication with the population. The Chair further praised IMF and World Bank for their funding commitments to reinforce the nexus between peace and development. The Chair underscored the funding difficulties faced by the Special Criminal Court (SCC), stressed the importance of efforts in the fight against impunity, and distributed a report on the SCC prepared by the Global Focal Point that outline the progress and challenges impeding operationalization.
2. **The ASG for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Bintou Keita**, provided an overview on her visit to CAR. She underscored that she travelled to CAR amidst a worsening security situation. Her aim was to reiterate United Nations support to the peace process under the African Initiative and call for reconciliation among the CAR population. She met with the President, the Prime Minister, members of the National Assembly, the Special Representative of the AU, representatives of ECCAS, as well as representatives of civil society organizations, religious communities, and women and youth organizations. As her visit coincided with that of partners of the PBF, she also was able to advocate for peacebuilding support to the CAR and discuss the accomplishments and challenges of peacebuilding efforts in the country.

ASG Keita stressed that the positive effect of the African Initiative has not yet translated into peace. In this context, to ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts and concrete progress in the peace process, the upcoming stages of the African Initiative would need to be supported by the international community and the region. The African Initiative needed support to acquire expertise on gender, transhumance, management of natural resources, legal issues, and decentralization; budgeting for the implementation of an eventual agreement was also in need. Meanwhile, the ownership of the Central African population to the Initiative remained core. It was also essential that under the leadership of the CAR authorities, the international community continue to provide political and financial support to ensure the adequate and sustained establishment, strengthening and deployment of accountable, trained and equipped defense and internal security forces for long-term peace sustainment.

ASG Keita recalled her stay in Bambari, noting that armed groups were inciting hatred between communities. At the same time, space for reconciliation exists. She urged national authorities to send strong public messages denouncing acts of incitement to violence and to promote a “tolerance campaign” among the population, including by expanding the coverage of the Central African National Radio and using traditional chiefs at the local level. She commended the contributions of peacebuilding activities to the promotion of inclusivity, particularly in Bangui and Bambari. The ASG reiterated the imperative to support and further accelerate the RCPCA and called upon PBC members to continue to support the extension of state authority, the redeployment of national defence and security forces, and the fight against impunity. Finally, she emphasized that there is no military solution to the CAR crisis.

- 3. Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support,** noted that the CAR configuration was a good platform to bring attention to the opportunities and challenges facing peacebuilding in a very complex context. Recent conversations on improving the relationship between the Security Council and the PBC, particularly the informal interactive dialogue between the PBC and the Council last week, had discussed the PBC’s valuable role in providing advice to the Council throughout mission mandates on peacebuilding-related issues, bringing national and local perspectives to the consideration of the Council in mission settings, and the importance of PBC as a platform convening multiple stakeholders in relevant country contexts, including regional and sub-regional voices, to gain valuable information on the root causes of conflict and to generate consensus among the multitude of actors. He noted that the configuration has been focused on the implementation of the peacebuilding components of the MINUSCA mandate and the RCPCA, and stressed that the role of the Peacebuilding Fund in CAR is also becoming increasingly visible. The ASG briefed on the PBF group’s recent visit to CAR together with ASG Keita, where delegation members met with a diverse range of key stakeholders to better understand how the peace, development and humanitarian nexus can be operationalized in CAR. During these conversations, the role of the PBF as a critical catalyzer was highlighted, particularly in the context of the Fund’s support to security sector reform, the restoration of state authority, the RCPCA, the African Initiative for

Peace, and in efforts to increase the participation of women in political processes. PBF's support to the quick launch of a coordinated plan for the stabilization of Bambari was also discussed. The findings from the mission would feed into PBF's future programming priorities. The peacebuilding architecture would continue to ensure adequate attention and resources in a coherent and coordinated manner that combines programmatic and political support for CAR under a strategic vision that fully takes into consideration the country's severe security and humanitarian challenges.

4. The Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to the UN thanked the international community and regional actors for their support to CAR, and recognized particularly the important role the Chair of the Configuration had played over the years to bring sustained attention to peacebuilding priorities in the country. She informed the meeting of the government's efforts to end violence, and underscored that the restoration of state authority throughout the country was key for success.
5. In their interventions, Members of the PBC raised the following points:
 - The deteriorating security situation, especially the resurgence of armed groups and the trend of increasing attacks on MINUSCA, is a grave concern. The situation in CAR has no military solution, the disarmament of the armed groups should proceed and capacity building for the CAR security forces should be enhanced. The security situation is a major challenge that MINUSCA cannot tackle alone. In this regard, the acceleration of the training, recruitment and redeployment of the FACA and Internal Security Forces is critical. The operationalization of the Special Criminal Court (SCC), to include a fully-resourced witness protection program, is equally crucial.
 - CAR is considered an example of the importance of the security-peace-development nexus and requires coordinated and holistic response approaches by the UN and the international community. Given the linkage between security challenges and the absence of the state in many parts of the country, development partners should adopt long term perspectives to build government capacity and its ability to project effectively and provide services throughout the country.
 - Predictable funding for prevention and peacebuilding support is key. CAR is at an important juncture in its journey from conflict to peace, and the rapid and catalytic support of PBF to the country in this important time is crucial. The PBF donor group visit was an important opportunity to clarify how the Fund delivers on the ground. PBF manages to make key impacts and can contribute to the need for quick results by working in collaboration with the EU Stability Fund and the World Bank State and Peacebuilding Fund (SPF) on quick win peace dividends.
 - Including the international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank and the IMF, in peacebuilding-related discussions in New York and Bangui is key.

- Communication remains a major challenge with an increased prevalence in the spread of hate speech that negatively affects conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.
 - There is a need for sustained and continued support for the RCPCA, especially in the areas of restoration of state authority and building government capacity at the national and local level. It is also imperative for RCPCA to show tangible progress as a means to build public confidence. Donor pledges to the RCPCA stand at about \$2.3 billion, but implementation has been difficult due to security and capacity challenges.
 - It is important to ensure continued support to the African Initiative. Considering the direct talks between the Government and armed groups are expected to begin this summer. The African Initiative will require first and foremost the political support of the international community.
 - The coordination of partners and the role of local actors (CSOs, religious leaders, women, youth, etc) in peacebuilding was highlighted. South-South cooperation to support CAR peace process should be enhanced.
6. In terms of next steps, the Commission will remain closely engaged in discussions leading up to the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate in November 2018, to ensure that there is sufficient space to discuss peacebuilding related aspects of the mandate and advise the Security Council accordingly. The Chair's planned visit to CAR from 5-10 September 2018 will provide a good opportunity in this regard, and could be followed up by meetings of the PBC CAR configuration to ensure the provision of concise and dedicated advice to the Council ahead of the mandate renewal discussions. In the meantime, the configuration will continue focusing on the implementation of the RCPCA and improving relations with international financial institutions, as per the work plan of the configuration for 2018.