

High-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission Central African Republic Configuration “The Situation in the Central African Republic”

Monday, 23 April 2018

Chairperson’s Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 23 April 2018, the Central African Republic (CAR) configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened a high-level meeting on “The Situation in the Central African Republic”, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale. The meeting was organized in the margins of the High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, from 24-25 April 2018.

His Excellency Faustin-Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic attended the meeting and addressed the Configuration. Under-Secretary General (USG) Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for CAR and Head of the African Union (AU) Mission for the Central African Republic and Central Africa (MISAC) Mr. Nebie Bialializoun Moussa, Deputy Special Representative for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative Ms. Najat Rochdi and Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, ASG for Peacebuilding Support also briefed the meeting, alongside H.E. Ambassador Mr. Omar Hilale, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission Central African Republic Configuration.

The main objectives of the meeting were to update members of the Configuration on recent developments in CAR, continue sustained international attention and accompaniment to peacebuilding efforts in the country, and raise awareness on the opportunities, risks and challenges, particularly in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA). The meeting also focused on the latest visit of USG Lacroix and African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui to the country and the meeting of the International Support Group to the Central African Republic (ICG – CAR) in Bangui.

Meeting Summary:

1. In his welcoming remarks, the Chair condemned the killing of a Rwandan peacekeeper and the wounding of eight others as a result of the attack on MINUSCA in Bangui on 10 April 2018 by elements of armed groups. He offered his deepest condolences to the bereaved family and the government of Rwanda, and on behalf of the Configuration, praised the courageous efforts of MINUSCA, alongside the Government, in promoting the protection of civilians. He provided an overview of the goals and workplan of the PBC Central African Republic (CAR) Configuration for 2018 and explained that the Configuration would be focusing its attention on two inter-related issues: the risks and challenges surrounding the implementation of the RCPCA, and the necessity of close partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations and international financial institutions in support of CAR. He explained that he met with World Bank officials in Washington D.C, in February, and was planning similar

engagements with the European Union later this year. These engagements would help the configuration to ensure international focus on peace and development priorities in CAR, and highlight various difficulties and opportunities facing the country in its path towards peace and recovery.

2. The Chair underscored that despite numerous challenges, the combined commitment from the Government, the UN system and all other stakeholders to long-term solutions in CAR were starting to pay off: the implementation of the RCPCA and the restoration of state authority was progressing, and efforts were underway to coordinate the deployment of internal security forces, justice actors and providers of basic social services. However, a robust commitment from both sides is critical for these efforts to succeed. While 2.23 billion USD was pledged at the Brussels conference, the delivery rate of ongoing projects was low, with the absorption capacity of the CAR Government, the lack of coordination across the line ministries, and the absence of Government and presence of armed groups across the territory hampering the effective and speedy use of these resources. As such, the provision of technical assistance to the government to address capacity gaps was necessary. The Chair also declared the full support of the Configuration to the African Initiative, which brought together all peace efforts under the Libreville roadmap, based on their comparative advantages, and welcomed the support of the Peacebuilding Fund for more than 250.000 US Dollars as well as the recent approval for a contribution of \$200.000 by the AU Commission, in addition to the \$180.000 disbursed by ECCAS. He concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of continuing to ensure the sequencing and complementarity between the protection of civilians, reconciliation efforts, restoration of state authority and delivering peace dividends to the population.
3. H.E. Mr. Faustin-Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic, expressed his gratitude to the PBC CAR Configuration and its Chair for the ongoing support and hands-on involvement in CAR, particularly in bringing international attention to the issues surrounding the implementation of the RCPCA. The international community and donors had demonstrated their solidarity with CAR through supporting the vision and the strategies of the Government presented during the the Brussels Conference in 2016, and the implementation of the RCPCA was at the heart of his vision for CAR. In 2017, the institutional architecture of the RCPCA and the Framework of Mutual Accountability with the international community was established. The annual review of the RCPCA, held on 12 December 2017, had taken stock of the resources mobilized and made available for the financing of 340 projects, through the global disbursement of \$240 million. The Operational Plan for the Stabilization of Bambari (POSIB), a good example of cooperation between the international community and national authorities, had also been launched in 2017.
4. President Touadéra underscored that peace and development gains could only materialize if security, justice and basic services were reestablished throughout the territory of CAR and the right infrastructure for economic and social development was put in place. He informed the Configuration on latest developments the reconstruction of defence and security forces, and DDRR and SSR efforts. He also talked about the efforts towards the extension of state authority in 16 prefects, and the deployment of nearly 50% of personnel with a focus on basic services. The Government was working hard to finalize sectoral plans for the redeployment of administrative services in all sectors. The Special Criminal Court was working on investigating the gravest crimes committed since 2003. He underscored that the Peacebuilding Fund had given \$15 million of support to 5 types of programs to prevent and rectify root causes of conflict: facilitating inclusive dialogue particularly through the African Initiative,

the empowerment of women, supporting economic and social revitalization, the reduction of community based violence, and support to the security and justice sectors. Finally, he reiterated his commitment in providing security, justice, basic social services and infrastructure to the people of CAR, with the support of the international community.

5. USG Lacroix commenced his remarks with an update on the security situation in Bangui and in CAR, underlining that the situation in the capital was calm but unpredictable, after the recent incidents where armed individuals manipulated by criminal groups clashed with MINUSCA peacekeepers. USG Lacroix underscored that despite recent political progress, the population did not yet benefit fully from peace dividends, and the PBC had an important role to play in this respect. He also briefed the configuration on his joint visit to CAR with the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Smaïl Chergui, which coincided with the events in Bangui, and stressed that the visit sent an important signal of unity to the government and people of CAR. The delegation had asked the Government to remain committed to the African Initiative, which was the only framework for lasting peace, and President Touadera had assured them that the grievances of armed groups submitted after the second round of the Initiative would be carefully examined. In the meantime, the events in Bangui had triggered reaction from certain armed groups in the prefectures they controlled, inconsistent with the African Initiative process. As a result, MINUSCA had strengthened its positions, and was coordinating with the Government and the African Initiative to maintain a dialogue with the armed groups in question. MINUSCA had developed a political strategy, in order to gradually reduce activity using a combination approach: support to strengthening government institutions, targeted DDR programmes and support to the Government's efforts to advance dialogue at the local level. Efforts on the restoration of state authority and the joint deployment of the FACA, the Gendarmerie and the police were ongoing.
6. The meeting of the ICG – CAR, held on 11 April, had also provided an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the Government's efforts in a difficult security environment. The USG underscored that the final communique of the meeting encouraged countries of the region to reactivate the three joint committees between CAR, Chad, Cameroon and Sudan, preferably before the next season of transhumance in September - October. He also called on the bilateral partners of CAR to consider the cancellation of the country's external debt in support of stabilization efforts. In conclusion, it was important for all efforts be joined-up to move towards long-term peace and stability in CAR.
7. Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for CAR and Head of the African Union (AU) Mission for the Central African Republic and Central Africa (MISAC) Mr. Nebie Bialializoun Moussa focused on the African Initiative, explaining that there had been two rounds of meetings between the Government and armed groups so far. The Panel of Facilitators had undertaken several visits to the field, aiming to establish contact with the armed groups, build trust, and hear their requests. The various requests of the armed groups were currently being studied, including political and socio-economic ones; these would provide input for the future meetings of the African Initiative. Despite the unfortunate events in Bangui in April, the situation was manageable and the African Initiative would remain committed. Future steps for the African Initiative included a study on how to effectively manage the dialogue and materialize community agreements.
8. Ms. Najat Rochdi, Deputy Special Representative for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative

explained that CAR provided a unique learning experience on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and on how different parts of the UN system should work together and partner in challenging environments. She reminded the Commission that while the events in Bangui were tragic, they did not lead to the further escalation and unravelling of the situation due to coordinated efforts by the Government, the PK5 community and MINUSCA – this was a reflection of how far the country had come in 2 years. She underscored that the peace in CAR could not be held hostage by armed groups. Ms. Rochdi gave an update on the implementation of the RCPCA, explaining how the plan led to better coordination of efforts and partnerships on the ground under national ownership. There were challenges with the implementation of the RCPCA, particularly the significant delays related to the absorption capacity of the government, but it was important to remain patient and simultaneously tackle root causes of the conflict and tackle developmental issues while addressing the security situation and meeting humanitarian needs. Rebuilding schools and houses, improving the justice system, implementing the reforms that had been passed, and moving towards private sector and tax reform also had to remain as priorities, in order to ensure long-term success.

9. Mr. Oscar Fernandez Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support underscored that holding a high-level PBC meeting on CAR, with the presence of the President, during the High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace sent a strong message regarding international commitment to the country. He underscored the need to ensure adequate attention and resources to recovery, reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts in CAR by combining programmatic and political support for CAR under a strategic vision. He emphasized the value of PBC as a platform to convene multiple stakeholders, ensure sustained international attention and accompaniment to peacebuilding, and discuss response efforts to the long-term opportunities, risks and challenges, and the unique value of the engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund in CAR in support of peacebuilding and recovery efforts, including RCPCA implementation.

10. Following the statements, members of the PBC CAR Configuration took the floor. They:

- Welcomed the President's attendance and commitment to peace and recovery efforts in CAR under the principle of national ownership, the Chair's leadership, and MINUSCA's contribution to improving the security situation on the ground;
- Expressed concern on deterioration of the security situation in CAR and strongly condemned the latest attacks against peacekeepers, declaring support to the CAR Government in fulfilling its responsibility for the protection of its own civilians;
- Underscored the need to focus on and facilitate the implementation of the RCPCA, in close coordination with key partners such as the AU, Economic Community of the Central African States, the EU, the World Bank and other relevant stakeholders;
- Highlighted the importance of inter-agency coordination and close operational partnerships, stressed that the PBC could be used to assist MINUSCA in its promotion of inter-agency coordination, and encouraged cooperation among the UN agencies and relevant partners under the Resident Coordinator;
- Welcomed the progress in restoration and extension of the state authority and justice sector reform, as well as the developments with regard to the African Initiative. One delegation suggested that the PBC should explore South-South cooperation

mechanisms. Several delegations also expressed overall support to the implementation of RCPCA and the African Initiative;

- Underscored that sustaining peace could be achieved only by addressing root causes of the conflict, and the importance of simultaneously addressing the security situation to ensure the concrete and visible delivery of peace and development dividends to the people and communities.
- The need to push programmes for Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration and Repatriation, particularly stressing the importance of regional cooperation in repatriation and fight against impunity;
- The complimentary role of the Community of the Sant'Egidio to support the African Initiative, and the importance of the UN's support in capacity development support for mediation.