

**Report of the mission to Central African Republic (CAR) of the  
Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission CAR configuration**

**10-11 July 2008**

**I. Introduction**

1. At the first meeting of the Central African Republic (CAR) configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008, H.E. Mr. Jan Grauls, the Chair of the CAR configuration confirmed his intention to undertake, upon the invitation of H.E. Mr. Francois Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic, an exploratory mission as soon as possible. The visit took place from 10 to 11 July 2008. Staff from the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Permanent Mission of Belgium accompanied the Chair (see Annex I).

2. The purposes of the mission were (1) to initiate a dialogue with the Government of CAR with a view to establishing a network of contacts in the country, (2) to discuss with the Government and other stakeholders the country's main peacebuilding issues and challenges, and learn about the country's priorities for peacebuilding, and (3) to explain the processes and purpose of Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) engagement with the country.

3. During the visit, the Chair explained that the PBC was established to find ways to provide support to the peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from conflict, and that the support consisted of bringing all relevant actors together, marshalling resources for and maintaining sustained international attention on the countries on the agenda of the PBC. He stressed that in the case of CAR this would help in transforming the country's image, from a crisis-ridden country in the past to a gradually stable country. The Chair also stressed repeatedly the importance of national ownership of and commitment to the peacebuilding process by the national authorities and its peoples, without which progress would not be achieved.

4. The Chair met the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Plan and Minister of Foreign Affairs *ad interim*, the National PBF Steering Committee (which includes, among others, three other government ministers), civil society organizations, the partner's coordination group, the Registrar of the International Criminal Court, the UN Country Team, and held a press conference (see the programme in Annex II).

5. The Chair and his team wish to convey their appreciation to the Government of the Central African Republic and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Central Africa Republic (BONUCA) for their hospitality and assistance during the mission.

**II. Main findings and key issues**

6. The Government leaders, other high-level officials, diplomats and civil society, who met the Chair, expressed their appreciation for the decision of the PBC to include CAR on its agenda. They welcomed the engagement and were hopeful that it would add to the growing international confidence in the country's efforts towards political reconciliation, social

cohesion and economic recovery. There is a general expectation that PBC's engagement will help the country's efforts to deal with the problems of the fragility of the political situation, the weakness of the state institutions and slow economic growth and creating an enabling environment for development.

7. In this context, there was overwhelming agreement that some of the most important priorities for peacebuilding in the country were (1) support for the implementation of the conclusions of the inclusive political dialogue, (2) the reform of the security sector, including disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and (3) the promotion of good governance and the rule of law. Significant progress in these areas is viewed as essential to laying the foundation for political stability and creating an enabling environment for sustained economic growth and development.

8. As regards the **inclusive political dialogue**, it was recognised that although it will have been concluded by the time the PBC finalises a framework of cooperation with the country, it should remain as one of the main peacebuilding priorities, given the importance of following up on the conclusions and recommendations the dialogue would yield. Preparations for the inclusive political dialogue has been preceded by separate bilateral peace agreements between the government and the three politico-military groups as well as a comprehensive peace agreement signed in Libreville on 21 June 2008 between the government and two of the politico-military groups, Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) and Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR). The third group, Democratic Forces for the Central African People, (FDPC) has not yet signed. Meanwhile, the inclusive political dialogue has been scheduled for August/September 2008, after the signing and enactment of an amnesty law which is being considered by Parliament at present. The chair stressed that success was the only acceptable outcome for the political dialogue. The PBC could play a role in ensuring the implementation and follow-up to the recommendations of the political dialogue.

9. The **reform of the security sector**, including a strong DDR component, was highlighted by many stakeholders as an absolute necessity to achieve progress in the peacebuilding process. The virtual absence of security forces, military and police, outside of the capital Bangui was adversely affecting the safety and security of the population in the provinces, as well as their general well-being, their economic activities and the already precarious humanitarian situation. As a result, individual citizens have been subjected to repeated attacks by various rebel forces and bandits, taking advantage of absence of national security forces to loot, rape and kidnap people as well as steal food stocks. The combination of sporadic violence but endemic violence in parts of the country and conflicts in some neighbouring countries has led to massive displacement of people aggravating the humanitarian situation in the country. In response to the need to strengthen the security sector, the National SSR Committee organised a seminar on CAR's national security sector reform in April this year. That seminar identified the major challenges and offered recommendations for addressing the shortcomings in the major components of SSR, namely: army and the gendarmerie, national police, justice and penitentiaries, intelligence services, customs service and the governance of the security sector. The key challenge both for the government and the international community is to develop a programme that addresses the gaps in various components of SSR in the country.

10. Promoting **good governance and strengthening the rule of law** featured prominently in the discussions. Various stakeholders, including government leaders, underlined the need to rebuild state structures, notably in the justice sector and public administrative institutions in the provinces. The weakness of the institutions in the justice sector made the provinces a good ground for the proliferation of small rebel and banditry groups, who are virtually, operate with total impunity. Considerable emphasis was placed on improving the transparency and accountability of public financial management. This was viewed as essential both to increasing international confidence in the economic management of the country and to ensuring that the citizens benefited from basic economic activity as well as from the revenues accruing from the country's natural resources, including timber, diamonds, gold, and oil. Strengthening the rule of law is vital not only economic governance but also to consolidating the fledging democracy.

11. The regional and sub-regional dimensions were recognized as a very prominent feature in the Central African Republic's efforts towards peace consolidation, owing to the political and military crises which have rocked the region in the past. At the same time, a prosperous and stable CAR could have a stabilizing effect on the region.

12. Various stakeholders highlighted a number of other challenges which needed to be addressed. These included economic stagnation, the continued political fragility and banditry in parts of the country. These constituted major impediments to the free flow of commerce and free movement of people, which, when added to heightening sense of lack of public safety and insecurity, made attracting private sector investment in the country very difficult. These adverse trends are further compounded by the inadequate infrastructural facilities. One initiative envisages the creation of development centres, which should have a positive impact on the overall development of the country.

13. Widespread poverty was singled out as a major reason for the social and political instability that has plagued the country over the years. An estimated 67 per cent of the population live on less than a dollar a day. CAR currently ranks 171 in the Human Development Report. The country has developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme, which covers the period from 2007 to 2010. The overall financial requirements of the programme amount to US\$ 3.6 billion, out of which US\$ 1.2bn is needed for the first year. The sum of US\$ 600 million was pledged at the Donor's Round Table Conference held in Brussels in October, 2007.

14. The President, as well as other high-level Government officials highlighted the urgency of the situation, stressing that no time should be wasted to start addressing it.

15. The Chair explained that he viewed the peacebuilding process as a solemn contract between the Government and the international community, with mutual commitments, acting in a coordinated manner to prevent the country's relapse into conflict. In this context, the Chair mentioned that the intensive and sustained engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission would benefit from a strong engagement of the CAR representation in New York, as that will further enhance national ownership in the interaction between the PBC and the government of CAR.

### **III. Concluding observations**

16. The visit offered an opportunity to initiate the dialogue between the Government of the Central African Republic, other national and international stakeholders and the Chair of the country-specific configuration of the PBC. The exploratory mission achieved its goals to (1) establish a network of contacts at the national level, with all relevant stakeholders; (2) gain an initial understanding of the country's priorities for peacebuilding, and (3); lay out to national authorities and other relevant stakeholders the next steps in the process of engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission.

17. National authorities were requested to designate a national focal point at the political and technical/working level, who would serve as the national contact person for the peacebuilding process. The Chair also invited the Government to send a ministerial level representation to New York, possibly at the beginning of October, to present, in a detailed manner, the country's priorities for peacebuilding, the gaps and challenges related to them, and concrete steps, to be taken by the national authorities and the international community, to address them.

18. The authorities agreed to designate a national focal point at the political and at the working level to accompany the peacebuilding process and serve as the point of contact between the PBC and the national authorities. The Government also agreed to send a high level delegation to New York in October this year, to engage face-to-face with the Peacebuilding Commission and present to its membership the country's priorities for peacebuilding. It was also suggested that the national steering committee, which has been established for the Peacebuilding Fund, would be used also as a forum to provide support to the process in the Commission.

19. The Chair indicated that it was his intention to return to the Central African Republic later this year, accompanied by a PBC delegation consisting of members of the country-specific configuration. During that visit, the delegation would travel outside of the capital to see the situation in some of the provinces.

20. PBC's engagement with the Government of CAR will be taking place in a promising context. A successful outcome of the inclusive political dialogue will create the conditions for improved political stability. An effective implementation of the SSR and commitment to good governance and rule of law will have a salutary impact on the humanitarian situation, the economic management and consolidation of democracy in the country. The PBC is well placed to make a significant contribution to each of these areas.

### Annex I: Composition of Chairs' Delegation

H.E. Mr. Jan Grauls, Permanent Representative of Belgium, Chairperson of the country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on Central African Republic
Mr. Karl Dhaene, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations
Mr. Ejeviome Eloho Otobo, Director Strategic Planning and Deputy Head, PBSO
Mr. Philip Helminger, Political Affairs Officer, PBSO

### Annex II: Programme of Visit

Time	Meeting	Venue
<b>Thursday, 10 July 2008</b>		
08h30 – 09h30	Minister of State for the Plan and Minister of Foreign Affairs ad interim.	Ministry of Plan
10h00 – 11h00	Prime Minister	Primature
11h00 – 12h00	Meeting with the UN Country Team	UNDP
12h30 – 14h00	Lunch	
15h00 – 16h00	Meeting with the Registrar of the International Criminal Court (ICC)	ICC
16h15 – 17h15	Meeting with COPESPOD – International Partners Group (France, US, China, Russia, WB, IMF, CEMAC, FOMUC, UN RC, BONUCA)	BONUCA
17h30 – 18h00	Discussion with the Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team (HDPT)	UNDP
<b>Friday, 11 July 2008</b>		
09h00 – 09h45	Thematic Group on Protection	HCR
10h00 – 11h30	Meeting with National Steering Committee	Ministry of Plan
12h00 – 13h00	Meeting with civil society representatives and NGOs	BONUCA

12h45 – 14h45	Lunch	
16h15 – 17h15	Meeting with the President of the Republic	Presidency
17h30 – 18h30	Press conference	BONUCA
<b>Saturday, 12 July 2008</b>		
07h00	Departure	