

**PBC Ambassadorial meeting on the Central African Republic
20 February 2019
Chairperson's summary of the Discussion**

1. On 20 February 2019, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held an Ambassadorial-level meeting on Central African Republic (CAR). The meeting was chaired by **H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Chair of the CAR Configuration of the PBC and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco** to the United Nations. The purpose of this meeting was for the Chair to provide a briefing on his recent visit to Bangui on 13-15 February 2019, which took place in the immediate aftermath of the signature of a peace deal between the Government of CAR and 14 armed groups.
2. In his introductory remarks, **the Chair** noted his fourth visit to Bangui on 13-15 February 2019 was substantially different from his previous missions. The joint high-level mission with Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Ms. Bintou Keita and Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, joined by representatives of China, France, Italy, Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation, had sent a strong signal to the Government on the commitment of the international community to support the peace agreement and the broader peace and reconciliation process in CAR. The peace agreement signed on 6 February 2019 between the President and fourteen armed groups, after two weeks of negotiation, was the first step towards return to lasting peace and stability with an opportunity to end conflict and create a foundation for inclusive reconstruction. The Chair noted that the agreement was possible due to the strong will of President Faustin Archange Touadera and the political commitment of international and regional actors, particularly the UN, AU and CAR's neighbors. He explained the provisions of the peace agreement to the PBC and emphasized that the success of the agreement would depend on the compliance of the armed groups with the agreement, strong political and financial support from the international community, and ensuring inclusivity during the implementation process.
3. The Chair then addressed the specific issues the PBC had identified in the Terms of Reference of the trip: the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA), strengthening the rule of law and support to electoral process. Concerning the implementation of the RCPCA, various meetings had helped showcase a positive trajectory: while \$ 2.6 billion had been pledged at the Brussels Conference, the implementation rate of projects in progress for which funding had already been secured was only 16% in 2017. This rate had been significantly increased to 54% in 2018, proof that the acceleration of the implementation of the RCPCA was well underway. **The Chair was considering visiting Washington DC in the next month, to follow up with key partners of CAR, such as the World Bank, on their contributions to support the implementation of the deal.** He highlighted equally positive developments on the rule of law front, with the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court (SCC) in October 2018 and ongoing justice sector reforms, including the penitentiary system. Furthermore, a Sectoral Policy on Justice was under preparation and would help guiding the priorities for action. However, funding was still a major challenge. The Chair called for the international community's technical and financial support, especially to the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission (TJRRC), and its Trust Fund envisioned for reparations for victims. **He declared his intention to organize a meeting of the PBC shortly,**

devoted to strengthening various aspects of the rule of law in CAR. With regard to support for the upcoming elections, the Chair emphasized the need to mobilize international support to ensure a free, transparent and inclusive election, able to take CAR out of the cycle of instability and violence and to start recovery on a democratic basis. **The PBC would also serve as a platform to follow up on developments regarding the 2020-2021 electoral process.**

4. The Chair also called for MINUSCA's greater participation in the implementation of the peace agreement, especially regarding support to the joint mixed brigades, and noted President Touadéra's request to review the MINUSCA mandate and allow for the mission's more proactive support. National ownership of the peace agreement was also critical, and the Chair stressed that ownership begins with awareness raising and discussions among the population, especially women and youth. To protect the foundation of the peace agreement, effective communication through accurate and comprehensible explanation of the peace agreement to counter rumors and fake news was essential. In this respect, the Chair appealed to the international community for improved coordination, strategic facilitation of financing, broader partnerships and stronger political support for successful implementation of the peace agreement. **The PBC would continue to play its part as needed.**
5. **Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support,** noted that the joint visit to Bangui was deemed as a historic opportunity by both national and international stakeholders and a concrete example of the Secretary-General's reforms of the peace and security pillar in practice. Adhering to the tight and ambitious timelines for implementation of the peace agreement would be a key challenge going forward, which would require sustained, coordinated and rapid international attention. For effective implementation of the peace agreement, it was also important to (1) enhance national ownership and manage expectations through a strong communications strategy; (2) guarantee inclusiveness and national ownership of the peace agreement across the country to maintain positive momentum; and (3) enable the population to feel the impact of the peace agreement through concrete peace dividends. In this regard, the ASG highlighted the critical role of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in providing strategic, timely and catalytic support in implementation of the agreement by combining programmatic funding, political support and supporting partnerships with regional and sub regional organizations and IFIs.
6. Elaborating on the role of the PBF in CAR, ASG Fernandez-Taranco explained that since 2008, the PBF had provided catalytic support of \$75 million USD, with a current portfolio fully disbursed of \$20 million USD, mostly aligned with national peacebuilding priorities of the Central African Republic with a focus on support to the RCPCA, elections, gender and youth issues and mediation. He highlighted the impact of two PBF projects the delegation had visited in Bangui. One project led by UNDP and UN Women on promoting women's political participation and engagement in national dialogue processes was now exploring ways to ensure women's equal participation in the implementation of the peace agreement and at upcoming elections, looking at the electoral code in particular, while another project which provides joint UNDP and MINUSCA support to the police has allowed the establishment of training facilities and curriculum for future recruits and existing police officers and gendarmerie in clear demonstration of national unity. The ASG encouraged the PBC members to actively engage with and plan the PBC discussions around upcoming elections and the implementation of the

peace agreement and RCPCA as well as to continue the good practice of providing recommendations and observations to the Security Council in the context of mandate discussions.

7. **Ms. Gloria Ntegeye, Senior Political Affairs Officer of the Central Africa Integrated Operational Team (IOT)** noted that the leadership of President Touadera in ensuring the inclusion of a broad spectrum of CAR actors as observers during the peace talks, the positive and constructive attitude from relevant stakeholders, AU's sustained leadership role supported by the UN, and the commitment of neighboring countries in the region and the Government's constructive and inclusive leadership had been critical factors for the success of the peace agreement. The recent joint visit had sent an important message of support to CAR. Moving towards the more difficult implementation phase, it would be essential to maintain the positive momentum with rapid steps. Short, medium and long-term solutions were important and would need to be based upon existing foundations such as the Constitution, the recommendations of the Bangui Forum and the RCPCA. She called for building on existing processes and mechanisms, such as the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) and security sector reform (SSR) programs while delivering on the peace agreement's provision on establishing mixed units from the government and armed groups for a period of 24 months. The fight against impunity and the reform of the national justice sector including through the development of a national justice sector policy, the demilitarization of prisons, continuing the work of the Special Criminal Court, developing a transitional justice process in line with the peace agreement would be critical and would enjoy MINUSCA's support. Ensuring that the population benefits from concrete peace dividends, ensuring inclusiveness during the implementation phase of the agreement, communicating the peace agreement and its provisions to the population through a good strategy, and ensuring continuous support from regional actors and the international community would be equally important for success. The convening role of the PBC would be significant, to ensure the continuation of international attention and support to CAR.
8. Member States welcomed the briefing(s) and raised the following points:
 - Commended the joint PBC mission as timely, relevant and important. The briefings had provided clarity on the dynamics on the ground and how international and regional partners could best support the implementation of the peace agreement. Several delegations noted the joint mission was good practice which should be followed by other countries and region engaged with the PBC.
 - Welcomed the peace agreement and recognized the efforts of regional organisations, particularly the AU and ECCAS, and neighbouring countries of the Central African Republic for their positive attitude and sustained commitment. Delegations also acknowledged the Government for its outstanding leadership and ensuring inclusivity in the peace agreement process and the UN's crucial support role.
 - PBC members acknowledged that the time frame for the implementation of the agreement was very short; coordinated international and regional support would be needed to rapidly move forward with implementation and deliver tangible results. In this context, PBC

members called for the international community to respond quickly with sustained and heightened political, technical and financial support.

- The role of MINUSCA would continue to be critical in the future phases in the peace process. Several members called for the Security Council to consider reviewing MINUSCA's mandate, in line with President Touadera's request, to allow a greater role of the mission in implementation of the peace agreement, especially linked to joint mixed patrols.
- Some members underscored the importance of national ownership of the peace agreement, by both the Government and population, and called on the signature to the peace agreement to ensure that the population across the country are well informed about the agreement and implementation and that everyone is united around the same peace goal. The role of the regional countries such as Sudan, the sub-region, and particularly of neighbouring countries such as Chad had also been key.
- Sustainable outcomes would require a combination of top-bottom and bottom-up approaches; engaging with local communities and ensuring buy-in from all segments of society was critical. A strong communication strategy, combined with efforts to ensure the inclusiveness of the implementation phase, would be necessary. Ensuring the inclusion of women and youth would be of importance, including in local peacebuilding efforts. Combatting impunity and moving forward on transitional justice were also key steps for reconciliation, which would require international support.
- In the medium and long run, the focus would need to be on building institutions and governance capacity, the extension of state authority and the government's ability to deliver services. The RCPCA would need to continue to serve as the core framework for peacebuilding and recovery, to which partners' efforts would need to be aligned. It would be useful for the PBC to continue monitoring the implementation of the RCPCA, particularly if it would need to be fine-tuned in connection to the peace agreement. The upcoming elections were a significant opportunity, but high expectations coupled with persistent capacity and resource gaps required significant international and regional attention, particularly in light of the peace deal. Several members supported the Chair's plan to organize meetings on the electoral process and developments regarding the rule of law, as well as his visit to Washington DC to meet with key partners.
- PBC members also touched upon the alarming humanitarian situation and resourcing gaps, while noting that long-term flexible financing would be needed to help close humanitarian funding gaps.
- Members expressed concern over the 'short window of opportunity' created by the agreement and highlighted the risk of the loss of sustained international attention and commitment to the agreement. In this context, PBC members voiced their interest in continuing to use the Commission to convene relevant stakeholders to sustain the positive momentum and retain attention on CAR, bring coherence to international and regional

efforts, and share lessons learned from other countries that benefited from the support of the PBC in pivotal moments.

- Several members highlighted the rapid and catalytic role of the PBF in support of the peace process in CAR, and called for the continuation of the Fund's role, based on its comparative advantages in support of the peace deal given the need for swift and symbolic responses to showcase the value of the peace deal to the population.

9. The Chair concluded the meeting and made the following recommendations:

- The current situation in Central African Republic calls for a sense of urgency to intervene, raise awareness, apply pressure and provide incentives as necessary for the Government to successfully implement the peace agreement. Political support is crucial, and it is important for the international community to ensure the Government and the people that they are not alone and the crisis in their country is being managed with a new approach.
- Although it is the country's eighth peace agreement, it was negotiated under the auspices of the AU, EU and neighbouring countries. The presence of co-sponsors and their intervention to ensure the finalization of the agreement is in itself a commitment of the international community to support the President and the people. In this context, the Chair highlighted the importance of continuing the good practice of national ownership and regional support, especially by neighbouring countries.
- The tripartite delegation visit is a good practice that other countries and region engaged with the PBC should also adopt. It is important for members to visit and see for themselves the dividends of projects and sense the urgency, needs, and expectation of the people.
- The PBC should continue to play an advisory role to the Security Council by putting forth recommendations in the context of mandate settings, including the recommendation to adjust the MINUSCA mandate to support the implementation of the peace agreement.