

**Peacebuilding Commission
Informal Country-Specific Meeting on Central African Republic**

21 March 2012

Chair's Summary Note

1. The Peacebuilding Commission met on 21 March 2012 to discuss the situation in the Central African Republic. Attending the meeting via video link from Bangui were the Ministers of Defense, DDR and Justice of the Central African Republic, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in CAR, Ms. Margaret Vogt, and in New York, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins.
2. The Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to the United Nations, **Ambassador Charles-Armel Doubane** provided a brief update on the latest developments in his country since the last meeting of the Security Council in December 2011. Regarding the security situation, Ambassador Doubane explained that while much remained to be done, the Government had been able to address two ongoing security threats, namely the LRA and the Chadian rebel group led by Baba Ladde, with the help of US forces and the Chadian army respectively. In addition talks were ongoing with the *Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix* (CPJP) to make them signatories of the 2008 Libreville accords. Ambassador Doubane further explained that the DDR process had been launched in June 2011 and was only interrupted when funding needs could no longer be met. He called on the international community to support Government's efforts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate the remaining ex-combatants, and to provide an accompaniment to the process.
3. **SRSG Vogt** briefed the Commission on political developments since her last briefing. The process of revising the electoral code had hit a stumbling block with the decision by the Government to go forward with its proposal for a national elections agency (*Agence Nationale des Elections*) managed by the Ministry of Territorial Administration; a proposal which had been rejected by political parties and civil society organizations. The counterproposal, put forward by political parties and the civil society, aimed at establishing a permanent and fully independent electoral commission. The Government's move also put a hold on the revision of 278 articles of the electoral code.
4. She further explained that with the recent ceasefire agreements between the Government and the UFDR and CPJP groups, the demand for disarmament by all military groups had grown, and had been further reinforced by the positive impact which had been observed from the disarmament and demobilization of the APRD in the North-west. Anxiety however was also growing with the approach of the rainy season. Overall the security situation was stable albeit delicate. The deployment of the tripartite (Chad, Sudan, CAR) force had resulted in the opening of Birao (N), which was now witnessing the return and settlement of populations previously displaced. Voluntary incidents of disarmament in Birao,

Bria, were also witnessed. SRSG concluded that there was a positive window of opportunity, but a window that was very fragile.

5. With respect to the arrests of four leaders of two of the main politico-military groups (APRD, UFDR), accused of undermining the security of the state, SRSG Vogt stated that it was the Government's role to assume its responsibilities as a government, but within the law. Therefore, with the four suspects having been brought before the examining magistrate on 15 February the case was now being dealt within the legal framework.

6. As regards Security Sector Reform (SSR) SRSG Vogt recalled progress made between 2008 and 2009, and the ensuing pause in the process. Beginning of this year, under chairmanship of the Minister of Defense the discussion was reenergized and a roadmap was elaborated which calls for the development of a three-year SSR strategy 2012-2015 subdivided into six sub-sectoral strategies. However, additional funding was required for the preparation of the three remaining strategies: water, forests and decentralization, public finance, and borders.

7. **The Ministers for DDR and Defense** addressed the Commission pleading for the participation of member states to the "Friends of CAR" meeting in April, further stating that the security conditions were ripe for the conclusion of DDR. They were joined by SRSG Vogt and Ambassador Doubane in introducing the rationale for and purpose of the April meeting, essentially aimed at mobilizing the necessary funds for the finalization of the country's DDR programme. Ambassador Doubane outlined the four themes underlying the holding of the meeting: 1) the return to peace and security and the move to development; 2) identify and create conditions for resource mobilization, and for further development; 3) create conditions for support to SSR to be shared with everyone and agreed to by everyone; 4) create follow-up mechanism with group of friends meeting.

8. **Several delegations** expressed their support to the DDR programme and SSR in CAR, and welcomed the initiative of the 'Friends of CAR' meeting and the intention to raise awareness and mobilize funds for DDR, but stressed that in order for the meeting to be a success a number of conditions needed to be fulfilled. These included a solid preparation of the event, and a favourable political context, respect for the rule of law, the opening of the political space and dialogue with the opposition including on the revision of the electoral code. Some delegations believed these requirements were not met, and that the meeting would benefit from being delayed by a few weeks in order to allow the Government to provide convincing answers to the concerns raised by some partners.

9. One delegation inquired about the 6 sub-sectoral SSR strategies, arguing that with more information the PBC could have a better sense of what the capacity and expertise needs are in the country. Another delegation stressed the importance of regional approaches to some of the country's security challenges, and offered that the arrest of opposition leaders was a sign of the lack of national ownership as it demonstrated the absence of willingness to avoid relapse into conflict. The same delegation suggested that the PBC could look into the possibility of establishing some sort of peace and reconciliation committee to foster broader dialogue in the country.

10. **The Ministers of DDR, Defense and Justice** provided answers to the questions raised. The Government of CAR has drawn a positive appraisal of the work of the PBC in the country and that to date, much progress had been achieved, although the visible impact thereof may take more time before it can be seen. Security and provision of justice had been improved over the years as had the country's track record on the respect for the rule of law. On the issue of the revision of the electoral code, the draft bill was currently with the National Assembly, the only national institution authorized to make law, and under the guidance and supervision of the Constitutional Court. Finally, with regard to the need for greater dialogue, the country had organized a number of them successfully, in the past.

11. **The ASG for Peacebuilding support**, Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins welcomed the political will to finalize the DDR programme, after years of slow progress and encouraged stronger linkages between DDR and SSR. She also stressed the importance of ensuring the necessary conditions are in place for a successful donors' meeting on DDR, while advising against creating new friends of CAR groups when the PBC was well placed to play that role. ASG Cheng-Hopkins gave a short overview of the PBF's contribution to DDR in CAR to date, amounting to a total of USD 6 million, to support the demobilization and reintegration of 500 children associated with armed groups, social/economic reintegration of 1,537 demobilized children; the establishment of the DDR steering committee, and the disarmament and demobilisation of initial 4,800 ex-combatants in June 2011. An additional USD 2.4 million was approved in February this year for adult DDR to support the reinsertion of the initial 4,800 ex-combatants, community recovery activities for 20,000 beneficiaries in host communities, and support to the national coordination mechanism.

12. In his conclusion, **the Chair** stressed that DDR needs to remain the priority among priorities. One of the roles of PBC is resource mobilization, and the PBC and PBF have done much, including funding for elections a year ago. On the 'Friends of CAR' meeting, the PBC was ready to support, but having heard some of the concerns expressed, some technical and political conditions needed to be gathered. The Chair therefore suggested that the meeting of the 'Friends of CAR' be slightly delayed. If that were to be the case, the Chair expressed his willingness to travel to Bangui to elaborate a resource mobilization strategy, which would allow CAR to make progress on other fronts. The Chair agreed to follow up with the Minister of Justice on this issue bilaterally.

13. The meeting was adjourned.
