

## **Report of the Chair's visit to Central African Republic (CAR)**

**9 – 12 June 2010**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) Country-specific configuration on Central African Republic (CAR) undertook a mission to Bangui from 9 to 12 June 2010. Discussions focused mainly on the 2010 electoral process, Security Sector Reform (SSR) including Disarmament, Demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), the follow-up to the recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue, Justice Sector Reform, and the way forward on the reviews of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic.

2. The Chair held meetings with the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Planning, Economy and International Cooperation, the Minister in charge of Defence, the Minister of Justice, members of the Independent Electoral Commission, members of the opposition, members of the Follow-up Committee of the Inclusive Political Dialogue, the international community, the UN leadership and UN Country Team, representatives of women's organisations, and the humanitarian and development partners team (HDPT).

3. Daily meetings were held with the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), and Head of BINUCA, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde. The priority areas in which the Peacebuilding Commission is engaged in CAR all constitute part of the mandate of the United Nations mission in the Central African Republic, requiring a concerted and coordinated approach to ensure the work of the PBC comes in direct support of the mandate of the UN presence.

### **II. Elections**

4. The date for the Presidential and parliamentary elections has twice been postponed in CAR. The latest postponement was a consensual agreement among all stakeholders in the electoral process, including Government and political parties of the majority and of the opposition, following a progress report from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which recommended the postponement of the elections beyond the constitutional timeframes for technical reasons; i.e. preparations for the elections were not sufficiently advanced to allow for the proper holding of an electoral ballot. The international community in Bangui has supported the recommendation of the IEC for the postponement and reiterated its commitment to support national authorities in that respect. BINUCA chairs an Electoral Steering Committee, in the person of the SRSG, and as such plays a significant role in coordinating the actions of all relevant stakeholders in this context.

5. During his meeting with the IEC, the Chairperson was apprised of the latest developments in the preparations for the elections. The President of the IEC informed the Chair that a new electoral calendar had been agreed upon by the electoral commission, as well as an updated electoral budget. The President of the IEC was going to informally engage the leaders of the

political parties to seek their support for the proposed calendar<sup>1</sup>. The IEC would then present the new timetable to President Bozizé for the issuance of a presidential decree. In the new timetable it is envisaged that a full national census be conducted (as opposed to the revision of the 2005 electoral lists).

6. The President of the IEC stressed that the IEC had worked tirelessly to finalize the new calendar before the departure from Bangui of the Chair of the PBC. The President stressed that while the political inclusiveness of the IEC was a strength and a benefit, it was also its main handicap, resulting in a body lacking the technical expertise needed to prepare for and organise proper elections. The contribution of expertise by international experts had a considerable impact on the preparation of the elections.

7. During his visit the Chair heard repeatedly that the support by the international community of the demands of the opposition had led to the postponement of the elections. This had resulted at the highest level of the State in a sense that the international community had taken sides with the opposition parties. The Chair forcefully stressed that the holding of national elections, including the setting of dates, was a matter of national sovereignty, and that the international community could only play a supporting role in the provision of technical and financial assistance. The repeated postponements of the elections date in CAR were based on reports from the IEC that preparations were not sufficiently advanced, a claim echoed by other national stakeholders. It was the role of the international community to support the national electoral process.

8. During his meeting with the Prime Minister, the Chair was informed that President Bozizé would condition the issuance of a presidential decree sanctioning the new electoral calendar on the funding of the elections by the international community. The government had already spent over and above the FCFA 2.5 billion provisions in the 2009 and 2010 budgets. According to the Government of CAR, a total of FCFA 3.5 billion have been spent on preparations for the elections.<sup>2</sup>. The European Union, potentially the largest contributor to the elections with a pledge of 6.5 million Euro, has for its part conditioned its disbursement on the signing of the presidential decree validating the new electoral calendar, as developed by the IEC. An audit of the Government of CAR contribution is being prepared. The total budget for the elections now stands at US\$ 19.3 million. The budget gap remains around US\$ 6 to 7 million.

9. BINUCA advocated strongly for the urgent support from the international community to fill the budgetary gap for the elections as soon as possible, with a view to ensuring that preparations for the elections can start without further delays. The SRSG, seconded by a large number of other interlocutors, stressed repeatedly the need to ensure that elections can be held in a free, fair and transparent manner, which would constitute a further milestone on the country's peacebuilding path.

### **III. Security Sector Reform and Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration**

10. The country's SSR process has all but stalled due to a series of factors:

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent to the departure of the mission, the following dates were put forward for the elections, envisaging a first round on 24 October, followed by a second round on 19 December. The final results are to be announced on 4 January 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Total Government contribution to date: FCFA 3.5 billion = US\$ 7 million

- a. decreased attention and political will of national authorities to the implementation of the recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue of December 2008;
- b. the disappointing outcome of the SSR Round Table of October 2009;
- c. the departure of the UNDP/EU multi-disciplinary team (last elements departed in the spring of 2010), which provided technical assistance to various government entities over the last year;
- d. the disproportionate focus by all stakeholders on elections and DDR;
- e. the lack of coherence between DDR and SSR.

11. The Chairperson reiterated to national authorities his willingness, and that of the international community, to organise an event after the successful holding of the elections and the conclusion of the country's DDR process to mobilise resources for other peacebuilding priorities in the country, including for SSR. Some Government representatives claimed to be under the impression that this event had been scheduled to take place in the second half of 2010 regardless of a successful DDR and elections. The Chair clarified that that was not the case. The idea set forward in December 2009 was to take advantage of the positive momentum which would be created by the successful holding of elections and DDR to organise an event to mobilise resources for peacebuilding in CAR. The Chair nonetheless indicated his willingness to approach some donors for a limited set of specific interventions related to SSR, and suggested that the Government of CAR could identify the most urgent actions needed in SSR. The representative of the Government was not in a position to indicate what those projects could be.

12. The Chair also discussed the possibility of reinserting a certain number of ex-combatants into the national security forces, notably in associated paramilitary functions such as rangers to combat trafficking and poaching, or the gendarmerie. The Minister in charge of Defence was not opposed to this concept, but indicated that it would have to be done according to applicable selection criteria and quota and within the available budget of Defence.

13. The European Union has deployed an SSR expert to support the work of the SSR Permanent Technical Secretariat (*Secrétariat Permanent Technique RSS*). It was agreed that if required and upon request of the secretariat the European Union expert on SSR could provide assistance to the SSR Technical Secretariat to reformulate and fine tune the SSR projects with a view to seek funding from international partners for their implementation.

14. DDR remains at a standstill, except for the sensitization campaign that has been carried out in several parts of the territory. Military observers have been deployed several months ago, but have not been able to start their activities, notably the verification of the lists of rebels. The link between the start of DDR activities and the holding of elections is becoming increasingly problematic, as some rebel leaders may have hoped to be able to join a transitional government with elections postponed beyond the constitutional timeframe. It is these calculations combined with the Government inability to negotiate with the remaining rebel groups which have not adhered to the peace process that sets the background to the continuously delayed start of DDR. A further stumbling block has been the delay in the payment of the second tranche of the *prime alimentaire générale* (food allowance) to the ex-combatants, which the President has just now agreed to disburse.

15. The imminent start of the rainy season is likely to further delay DDR activities in large parts of the country. The Chair advocated for a start of a DDR in those zones where security and weather conditions allow, notably APRD controlled areas in the North-West of the country. This suggestion was received positively by Government and the United Nations alike. It would have to be discussed in the DDR Steering Committee, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary General in CAR, who supported this suggestion.

16. Still on DDR questions remain with respect to the reintegration component of the programme. The funding provided by the international community through the UNDP Trust Fund covers the costs of disarmament and demobilisation (DD). The Government has firmly committed itself to fund the reintegration element of the programme including by using the financial support received from CEMAC regional organisation. The government has however not yet articulated or developed a vision/plan for its reintegration activities, which constitutes a serious impediment to the start of DDR. Socio-economic studies conducted by UNDP in the context of the DD could serve as the basis for identifying the needs of communities affected by conflict and rebels alike. The government has said that the outcome of these studies would allow them to start thinking about R.

17. As a contribution to solving this problem, reinsertion and reintegration should be considered more broadly under a development perspective and be one component of a larger range of activities aimed at supporting communities affected by conflict. Such a "DDDr approach" (Disarmament, Demobilisation, Development, reintegration) should include relevant elements of the development hubs concept of the CAR authorities, supported by the EU. A concept note mapping the respective activities of EU and WB in this field is currently being drafted by the EU Delegation in Bangui. It was proposed to share this document in order to reinforce coordination with other on-going and planned activities by national and international partners to reinvigorate host communities and communities affected by conflict, thus going beyond the benefits for ex-rebels. This document could serve as a further basis for the government to contribute its own planned and ongoing activities, including those to be funded by CEMAC moneys.

#### **IV. Rule of law and good governance**

18. Similarly to the mapping document on ongoing and planned activities in development of communities affected by conflict, it was agreed with the Minister of Justice that the same would be done for ongoing and planned activities in the area of rule of law and justice. In this context, the Government of CAR has already elaborated a 10-year plan for the reform of the justice sector (programme décennal de réforme de la justice), UNDP runs a multi-year rule of law project (Projet de Renforcement de l'Etat de Droit – PRED), and other activities by the EU, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), France and BINUCA. The purpose of the mapping document is to ensure coordination and coherence of actions in the area of justice and rule of law. It would also allow for the identification of gaps and ensuring that potential new actors in the field insert their actions in a manner to avoid duplication and overlap.

19. It should be highlighted that strengthening the rule of law and justice sectors in the Central African Republic is instrumental in contributing to the stabilisation of the country and in moving forward in its peacebuilding process. In this regard close and systematic coordination among all partners in CAR is crucial, including for the activities funded by the Peacebuilding Fund. Attaining that coherence and coordination should also not be depending on the finalisation of the mapping document referred to earlier.

20. The Chair also met representatives of women’s organizations and stressed in all his contacts the importance of integrating a gender dimension in their activities. He specifically pleaded for more female representation in the political institutions of the country and for representatives of women’s organizations to be allowed to participate as observers in the deliberations of the IEC.

## **Annex II: Programme of Visit**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Wednesday, 9 June 2010</b>	
19:30	<i>Meeting with SRSG Sahle-Work Zewde</i>
<b>Thursday, 10 June 2010</b>	
8:30 – 9:15	<i>Meeting with representatives of women’s organizations</i>
9:30 – 10:30	<i>Meeting with the UN Country Team</i>
11:00 – 12:00	<i>Meeting with the international partners group (COPESPOD)</i>
12:30	<i>Working lunch with representatives of the international community</i>
14:30 – 15:30	<i>Meeting with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)</i>
15:45 – 16:25	<i>Meeting with the World Bank representative</i>
16:35 – 17:30	<i>Meeting with the European Union representative</i>
17:45 – 18:20	<i>Meeting with the Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team (HDPT)</i>
18:30 – 19:15	<i>Meeting with the Follow-up Committee of the Inclusive Political Dialogue</i>
<b>Friday, 11 June 2010</b>	
10:30 – 11:30	<i>Meeting with the Minister of Justice</i>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Meeting with Minister for Planning, Economy and International Cooperation</i>
14:55 – 16:45	<i>Meeting with the Prime Minister</i>
17:00 – 18:00	<i>Meeting with the Minister delegate in charge of Defence</i>
18:15 – 19:15	<i>Meeting with the DDR team (and incoming UNDP-BCPR NY mission)</i>
<b>Saturday, 12 June 2010</b>	
8:30	<i>Meeting with Mr. Martin Ziguélé, President of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC)</i>