

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

**21 – 23 May 2009**

### **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 21 to 23 May 2009. The main purpose of the mission was to present the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the CAR to all stakeholders in the country's peacebuilding process. The Chair also held meetings with the President, the President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Planning, Economy and International Cooperation, the DDR Steering Committee, the PBF Steering Committee, the international community, the UN Country Team and the press.

2. Besides the presentation of the country's Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding, the Chair focused his bilateral exchanges with key interlocutors on the country's urgent DDR process, including a starting date and funding, and the organisation of the 2010 elections. In line with the Strategic Framework, the Chair also stressed the importance of adopting a human rights based approach to peacebuilding activities, with a particular emphasis on women and children, including the situation of children in armed conflicts.

### **II. Presentation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic**

3. At the request of the Chair of the PBC's country-specific configuration on CAR, the Government of CAR organised a high-level forum in Bangui to present to the wider audience the work of the PBC over the last few months, in particular the strategic framework for peacebuilding. The event was chaired by the Prime Minister, and attended by several Government Ministers, members of Parliament, the political opposition and members of the Presidential majority, the diplomatic community, the press, civil society, the United Nations country team and BONUCA. Presentations were made by the Ambassador Jan Grauls, in his capacity as Chair of the PBC CAR configuration, Mr. Steven Ursino, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in his capacity as chairperson a.i. of the DDR Steering Committee, Mr. Francis Bozizé, Minister in Charge of Defence, Mr. Elie Ouefio, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation. A questions and answer session followed the official presentations.

4. The key objective of the forum was to explain in a clear and transparent manner the strategic framework for peacebuilding, thus bringing it closer to the people of CAR, with the aim of strengthening national ownership of the strategy and ensuring the participation of all actors of the CAR society. The event was well covered by the media, and complemented at the end of the mission with a dedicated press conference.

### **III. Other issues**

5. During the course of the visit the Chair of the CAR CSM held a number of meetings with national and international interlocutors. The key issues raised pertained to the country's DDR process, its linkage to the broader SSR programme, the organisation of the 2010 general and

presidential elections, and the issue of human rights, in particular women's rights and the rights of the child.

a) DDR

6. The perceived lack of progress in the country's DDR is taking a toll on the overall security situation in the country, as was explained in a briefing by Micopax. Isolated reports of insecurity have increased over the past weeks and months, resulting in a large number of additional internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, fleeing mainly to Chad. While some progress is being made in the DDR Steering Committee, the frequency of its meetings should be increased in order to deal with a set of outstanding questions, which have delayed the start of the DDR proper. The recent split of the MLCJ movement into two smaller groupings is likely to cause additional delays.

7. The capacity of UNDP, as the lead agency for DDR in the country, needs to be considerably beefed up. A UNDP expert has yet to be designated for the DDR technical working group, as well as the agency's permanent DDR expert at country level.

8. Funding for DDR remains critically low. The UN Peacebuilding Fund is the sole contributor to DDR to date, with US\$ 4 million. The Chair raised the question of the US\$ 16 million CEMAC funds with his interlocutors. President Bozizé explicitly agreed to make available the full amount for DDR. To date however, only US\$ 10 million is available (through BEAC and two out of the five CEMAC countries). The Chair welcomed this sign of ownership of the DDR process by the Central African authorities. In keeping with the agreed approach between UNDP and the country, these funds would have to be made available through the UNDP Trust Fund for DDR in the Central African Republic.

9. Concerns remain with the overall estimated budget for the DDR programme, which currently stands at US\$ 29 million, and is envisaged for a three year period. Both the length of the DDR process and the estimated number of beneficiaries, hovering around 8,000 could be revised downwards, resulting in a more modest budget estimate.

b) General and presidential elections (2010)

10. Preparations for the 2010 Presidential and Parliamentary elections are slowly starting. As per the recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue, an ad hoc committee was established to revise the country's electoral code. Work started in mid-May and is due to be presented to the National Assembly for approval and adoption before the end of the month of May. It is only then that the country will be in a position to form a National Electoral Commission, and designate its members.

11. It appears little remains from the country's previous elections, in terms of electoral lists and electoral material. A request has been made by the national authorities to the United Nations for electoral assistance. The United Nations Secretary-General has replied positively to the country's request for electoral assistance and now awaits the creation of the country's electoral commission, which will act as the key interlocutor between the UN and the country. This interaction will allow for the identification of areas of cooperation and this distribution of responsibilities. The establishment of the electoral commission is a necessary procedural step for an exploratory mission of the Department of Political Affairs that will trigger the UN involvement in the electoral process.

UNDP played a lead role in the technical preparations of the 2005 elections and the coordination of donor contributions through a basket fund and is therefore likely to be solicited to play a major role again in the upcoming electoral process

12. The Chair has stressed the importance of making quick progress in updating the country's electoral code, establishing the country's electoral commission and producing a budget for the elections. In this context, the Chair has stressed the importance for the national authorities to make budgetary provisions in the 2010 national budget to cover the sovereign costs of the elections.

c) Human Rights

13. In connection with the recent debate in Geneva of the CAR's periodic report and in line with the commitments contained in the strategic framework, the Chair raised the issue of the situation of Human Rights in the CAR with relevant counterparts. The Chair highlighted in particular the situation of women's rights and the rights of the child, notably the situation of children and armed conflicts as set out in the report of the Secretary General on children and armed conflict in the CAR, which was distributed to participants in the forum and journalists. The Chair intends to follow up on this issue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, Ms. Coomaraswamy.

**Annex II: Programme of Visit**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Thursday, 21 May 2009</b>	
<i>10:00 – 11:00</i>	<i>Meeting with Minister of State for Planning, Economy and International Cooperation</i>
<i>11:30 – 12:30</i>	<i>Meeting with Committee of External Partners (COPESPD)</i>
<i>15:00 – 16:00</i>	<i>Meeting with United Nations Country Team (UNCT)</i>
<i>16:00 – 18:00</i>	<i>Meeting with DDR Steering Committee</i>
<b>Friday, 22 May 2009</b>	
<i>9:30 – 10:30</i>	<i>Meeting with Prime Minister</i>
<i>11:00</i>	<i>Courtesy call on the President of the National Assembly</i>
<i>11:30 – 15:00</i>	<i>High-level Forum for the Presentation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic</i>
<i>16:00</i>	<i>Meeting with the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) National Steering Committee</i>
<i>17:00</i>	<i>Press Conference</i>
<b>Saturday, 23 May 2009</b>	
<i>09:30</i>	<i>Meeting with the Head of State, President of the Republic</i>