

Peacebuilding Commission
Informal Country-Specific Meeting on Central African Republic

8 November 2010

Chair's Summary Note

1. The purpose of this informal meeting was to hear an update on the latest political and security developments in the country, by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of BINUCA, Mrs. Sahle-Work Zewde. The meeting was also an opportunity to brief members of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on the Central African Republic (CAR) on the follow-up to the High-level side event to address peacebuilding and reconstruction challenges in the CAR, which was held in New York on 20 September. Finally, the Chair informed member states about the next steps in the country's engagement with the PBC, in particular the review of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding and the annual field visit by the PBC to the country.
2. In her intervention, SRSZ Zewde focused on the ongoing preparations for the presidential and legislative elections, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme, and the consequences of the imminent departure of MINURCAT from Birao in the North-East.
3. The electoral process continues to be slowed down by logistical and financial challenges, as well as political wrangling. The national electoral census was completed on 21 October, and the collected data is scheduled to be published on 11 November. A presidential decree of March 2010 aiming at redefining the electoral constituencies has been ruled unconstitutional by the constitutional court in September, resulting in a new Presidential decree on 27 October reverting to the 2005 constituencies. Opposition parties have nevertheless seized the Council of State on the matter in early November. In order to keep with the electoral calendar, and maintaining the 23 January date for the first round of ballot, the period of registration of candidatures was shortened considerably, and officially ended on 8 November. The opposition parties have requested the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to consider extending the deadline by an additional week. The IEC has not reverted on the issue. The IEC has also decided to revert to the original decision to distribute manual voter cards, considering the budgetary implications and the need for additional time needed to produce electronic cards.
4. SRSZ Zewde confirmed the completion of the verification process in the North-West of CAR, which included former combatants from the APRD and UFR. 6,000 former combatants have been verified, and the report of the verification exercise is scheduled to be discussed at the next meeting of the DDR Steering Committee. Concerns have been raised with the very low percentage (2 percent) of military grade weapons found during the verification – a figure at odds with the actual known existence of higher

numbers of weaponry. In the North-East however, little progress has been achieved. Upon meeting with SRSG Zewde, UFDR leaders have confirmed their willingness to receive a verifications team. A decision will have to be made taking into account the departure of MINURCAT. As regards the reintegration component of the DDR programme, a document has been presented, which BINUCA and UNDP Bangui are currently looking at before considering the next steps in this regard.

5. Finally, on the issue of the withdrawal of MINURCAT from Birao, SRSG Zewde informed the PBC of the official handover ceremony, scheduled to take place on Monday, 15 November, during which the two bases will be handed over to national authorities, as well as some equipment.
6. Interventions were made by the representatives of Gabon, the European Union (EU), and France. Gabon focused on the post-MINURCAT security situation in the North-East, and the level of preparedness of the national security forces (FACA). Stressing that elections were not an end in itself, the EU clarified that its contribution (€9.5 million) to the electoral budget, channelled through UNDP's basket fund, could not be used for expenses incurred, including by the IEC, prior to the signing of the EU agreement. As regards its development hubs project, the EU informed that studies were being conducted, and that implementation of the project could start as early as the first trimester of 2011 in three of the 8 regions. The EU has made available the sum of € 50 million to that effect. France for its part stressed the importance of maintaining the 23 January date for the first round of elections, and that a further postponement of the date would be a negative signal towards the international community. In total, France had contributed €500,000 in various contributions to the UNDP basket fund, to the IEC directly and to the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, in support of its electoral observation mission. With regard to the post-MINURCAT scenario, France asked whether the Government of CAR had made official demarches to ECCAS requesting a strengthening of the current MICOPAX force, and the broadening of its mandate to cover Birao as well.
7. SRSG Zewde clarified that it was the responsibility of the Government of CAR to fund the operations of its electoral commission. The IEC however had used some of the funds received by the Government (estimated at US\$ 7 million) to purchase electoral material, which it is now seeking reimbursement for. A solution will need to be worked out outside of UNDP's basket fund. Mrs. Zewde reiterated that the Security Council had expressed a preference for a strengthening of the CAR armed forces (FACA) in the post-MINURCAT environment. However, she stressed that the needs of FACA were enormous and that it would not be in a position to fully replace MINURCAT in such a short time. The government's request for support to MICOPAX focused on training. Additional bilateral contacts were made by the government, but no concrete results have been made public yet. In closing, SRSG Zewde emphasised the need to quickly start disarmament and demobilisation, with a particular attention to more stringent verification of existing military grade weapons.

8. The representative of the Central African Republic informed the Commission that his government had received assurances from a number of bilateral partners regarding support for the post-MINURCAT phase, but that these pledges had not yet materialised. He clarified that the main challenge for his country security forces was in particular transportation and communication equipment, and that training had already been completed.
9. The Chair addressed the follow-up to the high-level side event held on 20 September and gave the floor to the representative of the World Bank, who noted that the Bank was very pleased about the strengthened partnership with the PBC. She also confirmed the Bank's readiness to organize a donor's round table, in close collaboration with major stakeholders, tentatively in Brussels. During the World Bank's Annual Meetings, it was agreed with the representative of the Government of CAR to finalise a first draft of the new PRSP in time to the round table. The World Bank announced the interest of its Vice-President for the Africa region to attend the round table.
10. The Chair indicated a donors' round table would be organised during the first half of 2011, taking advantage of the positive momentum created by the successful holding of the elections and the completion of the DDR programme. Consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including national authorities, would be initiated with a view to defining the parameters, including timing and location, of such a round table. In deciding the timing, consideration would have to be given to other ongoing processes such as the finalisation of the country's new poverty reduction strategy, as well as the review of the PBC's strategic framework for peacebuilding.
11. Finally, the Chair announced the upcoming annual field visit by the Peacebuilding Commission to the Central African Republic. In this context, consultations will be held with national authorities and BINUCA to identify possible dates in the first trimester of 2011. The Chair would also soon write to the regional groups to invite them to nominate candidates for the upcoming field visit.
