



**Statement by the Chair of the PBC CAR Configuration
at the Security Council briefing on MINUSCA**

22.02.18

Mr. President,

Distinguished members of the Council,

At the outset, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation to brief the Council on opportunities and challenges to build and sustain peace in the Central African Republic, in my capacity as Chair of the CAR Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

I welcome SRSO Onanga-Anyanga's insightful briefing, and on behalf of the Configuration, express my gratitude to him and his team for their tireless efforts. I would also like to thank the other briefers for their comprehensive interventions.

Mr. President,

The fragility of the situation in the Central African Republic remains a concern, with renewed fighting and the emergence of new humanitarian hotspots. At the same time, the combined commitment from the Government, the UN system and all other stakeholders to long-term solutions are starting to pay off. Despite delays, the implementation of the National Plan for Peacebuilding and Recovery (RCPCA), and the restoration of state authority are progressing. Efforts are underway to coordinate the deployment of internal security forces, justice actors and providers of basic social services to reinforce the social contract between the population and the State. As we move forward, it will be important to ensure the sequencing and complementarity between reconciliation efforts, restoration of state authority and delivering peace dividends to the population.

Mr. President,

The CAR Configuration works to bring a long-term focus to stabilization, reconciliation and development efforts in the country, guided by national priorities. Towards that end, we provide political accompaniment to the country, promote an

integrated and coherent approach to international and regional peacebuilding efforts, and bring attention to glaring resource and capacity gaps in CAR.

In 2017, the configuration centered its attention on the Brussels commitments towards the implementation of the RCPCA. The focus was predominantly on Pillar I, which encompasses SSR, DDR, rule of law and reconciliation. In line with our commitment to assess RCPCA implementation with multiple stakeholders, I met with World Bank officials last week in Washington D.C. During our discussions, we addressed resource and capacity gaps that are hampering the implementation of the RCPCA and focused on the World Bank's role in the implementation of the RCPCA. A detailed report on the visit reflecting all the meetings I had in Washington will be distributed shortly.

Mr. President,

I would like to present to the Council some key observations:

First, Central African Republic is at a critical juncture; and the Government needs to be supported to drive the reforms necessary for the implementation of the RCPCA. In Bangui, New York and Washington, and together with the SRSG, I have continued to urge the Government and donors that a robust commitment from both sides is critical for the RCPCA to succeed. We understand that while 2.23 billion USD was pledged at the Brussels conference, the delivery rate of ongoing projects for which financing has already been obtained was only 16% in 2017. From my contacts with the UN, World Bank and other stakeholders, I understand that the absorption capacity of the CAR Government, the lack of coordination across the line ministries, and the absence of Government and presence of armed groups across the territory are also perceived to hamper the effective and speedy use of these resources. As such, there is need to prioritize the provision of technical assistance to the government to address capacity gaps. The international community and regional actors need to coordinate closely and not duplicate efforts to ensure optimal results. The delays in establishing the RCPCA Secretariat that would contribute to coordinating Brussels conference donors and the Government has also been delayed the process.

Second, we need to encourage the positive developments regarding the restoration of state authority. There has been progress with the deployment of “Prefets” and “sous Prefets” in the provinces, and coordination among national institutions have improved at the national and provincial levels. The Government is also engaged in redeploying the National Army, the FACA, within the broader context of the extension of state authority. We encourage the Government to deploy also civil servants and try to provide basic services. This is the only path to lasting stability. To succeed in the redeployment of civil servants throughout the country, we

will also need to be creative. For instance, to allow the disbursement of salaries in all pacified areas, as opposed to only in Bangui, solutions like mobile banking can make a significant difference.

Third, long-term security depends on the prioritization of justice and the fight against impunity. The hybrid Special Criminal Court (SCC) is an innovative structure that will allow to address impunity. However, the SCC faces multiple challenges, including resource deficits. In this regard, the reference group chaired by the Permanent Mission of Morocco, regularly informs interested member states on the implementation of the SCC and the challenges in restoring the rule of law. At its 10th meeting, the group will look at a detailed report on its activities, which will be discussed at an Ambassadorial-level meeting of the PBC in the coming weeks.

While a strategy on witness and victim protection both for the SCC, and for the national system more broadly has been developed, serious gaps remain on witness and victim protection. The draft Rules of Procedure and Evidence, which will provide guidance for witness protection mechanisms, should be adopted soon. This, among other challenges, has led to delays in the launch of investigations. The status of the commitments to fund the Court in the long run remains unclear. Despite these challenges, the court is sorely needed to address violence resulting in international crimes, including attacks on MINUSCA peacekeepers. Indeed, the peacekeeping mission in CAR faced a tragic year in this regard. All efforts should be pursued to reverse this trend, which affects the credibility and the ability of the Mission to fulfill its mandate. We welcome recent positive results in this regard and hope that a first judgement can be finalized soon to set the example.

At the same time, we must balance the focus on the SCC with supporting CAR's national justice system. The lack of justice mechanisms outside of Bangui are mainly due to insufficient security, difficulties to pay the salaries and lack of equipment. The implementation of the national legal aid strategy, which will be essential to ensure fair trials and expand access to justice both in the context of the SCC and other courts, requires additional resources. Prisons are overcrowded and the overall poor state of correction facilities remain a major issue.

Fourth, as a Configuration committed to foster coherence among stakeholders, we support the African Initiative, which brings together all peace efforts under the Libreville roadmap, based on their comparative advantages. We are pleased to see the conclusion of the first round of consultations with armed groups, and hope that deeper and more practical discussions will take place during the second round. We welcome the support of the Peacebuilding Fund for more than 250.000 US Dollars as well as the recent approval for a contribution of 200.000 by the AU Commission, in addition to the 180.000 disbursed by ECCAS.

While maintaining security outside of Bangui remains a challenge, dialogue initiatives at local level with armed groups have proceeded with support from MINUSCA, towards violence reduction and reconciliation. We look forward to seeing these initiatives contribute to the implementation and success of the DDRR process.

The development and implementation of a realistic and clear reconciliation strategy remains a top priority for 2018. The creation of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation commission announced during the 2015 Bangui Forum has been slow to become activated. It is important that this structure is operationalized to reassure victims waiting for justice pending the start of trials by the SCC.

Fifth, economic recovery will be key to maintaining faith in state institutions and overcoming the humanitarian crisis. It is encouraging that President Touadéra has prioritized development efforts in the north, where perceptions of marginalization have fueled conflict. Addressing such horizontal inequalities will be critically important for sustaining peace.

Mr. President,

In the coming weeks we will follow closely the implementation of the RCPCA, addressing each element of Pillar I separately. I also plan to meet with major stakeholders and the Central African authorities in Bangui as part of the 2018 work plan.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Central African authorities for their commitment towards the implementation of the activities of the Configuration. I would also like to thank the members of the Configuration, SRSG Onanga-Anyanga and his team as well as the Peacebuilding Support Office for their tireless efforts in support of the people of the Central African Republic.