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SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE ON THE SITUATION
IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

NEW YORK, 6 MARCH 2014

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TETE ANTONIO, AFRICAN UNION
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**President of the Security Council,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic,
Members of the Security Council
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me from the outset to thank the President of the Security Council for inviting the AU to address this meeting on the important matter of the situation in the Central African Republic. Calendar constraints have prevented the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, who would have wished to attend, to be here with you.

This meeting is a further testimony of the commitment of the Security Council and its members to effectively contribute to international efforts aimed at addressing the serious crisis affecting the Central African Republic. We are confident that, through our combined efforts, the Central African Republic authorities and other stakeholders will be able to overcome the many and daunting challenges facing their country.

**President and distinguished members of the Security Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Today's meeting is devoted to the consideration of the report of the United Nations Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 48 of resolution 2127 (2013). The report builds on the assessment mission undertaken by the United Nations to the Central African Republic in the course of February 2014. The African Union participated in that assessment mission and subsequently had a number of exchanges with the United Nations Secretariat to convey its views and facilitate a coordinated and effective way forward. We commend the Secretary-General for his continued commitment and efforts. We reiterate our determination to continue working with the United Nations Secretariat in furtherance of our common objective of assisting the Central African Republic restore lasting peace, security and stability.

I would like to seize this opportunity to inform the Security Council that, since your meeting of 20 February 2014, MISCA, with the support of the Sangaris operation, has continued to make sustained efforts towards the implementation of its mandate. Further progress has been made in the stabilization of the situation. There is no doubt that things have improved for the better. The number of security incidents has significantly reduced, and many human lives have been saved. Internally displaced persons are increasingly returning to their original homes. In Bangui, life is gradually returning to normalcy. Furthermore, MISCA has been able to secure the corridor linking Bangui to the border with Cameroon, which is vital both for the provision of humanitarian assistance and trade flow. It is providing protection to the transitional authorities, securing key infrastructure and assisting humanitarian organizations in a variety of ways. Steps have also been taken to disarm armed elements from the ex-Seleka, the anti-Balaka and other groups, as well as support national efforts towards DDR and Security Sector Reform.

In the report the Commission submitted to the Security Council pursuant to paragraph 32 of resolution 2127 (2013), more detailed information is provided on the implementation of MISCA's mandate, the progress made to date with the support of Sangaris and the challenges ahead.

As stressed by Commissioner Chergui when he addressed your august body, a few weeks ago, many challenges continue to lie ahead. The level of violence remains unacceptable and sustained action is required to ensure a more effective protection for the civilian population. The AU, through MISCA, will not relent in its efforts and is determined to take all measures required within the context of its mandate to facilitate the attainment of the set objectives.

As we meet here today, and while fully cognizant of the many problems we need to address on the ground, it is critical that we acknowledge the progress achieved and the significant difference made on the ground by MISCA, with the support of Sangaris. These results demonstrate the clear value added and distinct contribution of African-led peace support operations, as they are deployed in unstable areas to create conditions conducive for the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We note with satisfaction the acknowledgement in the United Nations Secretary-General report of the work accomplished by MISCA and the sacrifices made.

I would like, at this juncture, to reiterate AU's appreciation to the troop and police contributing countries for their commitment and to pay tribute to the soldiers who fall on the line of duty as well as to the dozens of others who were wounded.

It is only fitting for the AU to use this forum to express, once again, utmost gratitude to all partners who are providing support to MISCA, including the European Union, whose financial support has been so critical, and its Member States, the United States and other bilateral partners, as well as to the UN Secretariat for availing expertise to the Mission.

**President and distinguished members of the Security Council
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we address the issue of the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, I would like to indicate that the AU has always been in favor of the deployment of a United Nations operation, once the required conditions are created. This was emphasized in the letter that the Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, addressed, on 17 February 2014, to the United Nations Secretary-General. Accordingly, the Commission welcomes the recommendation for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, with a possible transfer of authority by 15 September 2014, with the understanding that this date has to be confirmed following a further joint AU-UN assessment.

The complexity of the situation in the Central African Republic and the daunting nature of the challenges to be overcome are acknowledged by all. Hence, the need to ensure that the transformation of MISCA into a United Nations operation is informed by sound principles. Let me briefly articulate them, building on in Chairperson Dlamini-Zuma letter of 17 February 2014:

First, while the international community, including through a UN peacekeeping operation, will continue to play an important role in the long-term stabilization of the CAR, it is clear that without national ownership, no amount of international support can bring about lasting solutions to the challenges facing the country. In this regard, we note the emphasis placed by the UN report on the need for political commitment from national stakeholders. The role of the international community should not be to substitute the CAR stakeholders and people, but rather to complement and accompany their efforts, in full respect of the country's sovereignty.

Second, there is need to acknowledge and strongly support the role of the region, and the AU in the post-MISCA phase, so that the envisaged UN peacekeeping operation and other related efforts can be anchored on a strong regional and continental involvement. The region, working closely with the AU, has demonstrated strong leadership in addressing the crisis in the CAR. Its continued involvement with the support of the AU will be crucial to the success of the envisaged UN peacekeeping operation. Therefore, it is important that the Security Council continues to support the leading role of the region, through the efforts of the Chair of ECCAS and the Chair of the ECCAS Follow up Committee on the CAR, and the role of the AU, including through the ICG-CAR. In this respect, the Commission notes the relevant paragraph of the UN Secretary-General report. The AU, in collaboration with ECCAS, will consult further with the UN on the implementation modalities of such support and how best to ensure close coordination between the UN and the AU efforts.

Third, any UN peace keeping operation should be part of a broader and more sustainable international engagement in favor of the CAR. As rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General report, the challenges facing the CAR are complex and multifaceted. Addressing them effectively requires a holistic approach and the involvement of a variety of international actors on the basis of their respective comparative advantages.

Fourth, the successful implementation of MISCA mandate is critical for the success of the envisaged UN operation. In this respect, every effort should be made to avail MISCA with the much-needed logistical and financial support to enable it complete the initial stabilization phase of the situation within the envisaged timeframe. While noting the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, and in light of earlier experiences, the Commission calls for a full-fledged UN support package funded through assessed contributions and availed to all MISCA contingents, as they all contribute to the successful conduct of the Mission's operations.

Fifth, we need to learn from the experience of the transition from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to the UN Integrated Multidimensional Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as rightly acknowledged in the report. This requires close consultation between the AU Commission and the UN Secretariat, in a spirit of transparency and partnership, including jointly defining the terms of reference of the planned transition team, generating forces and agreeing on the modalities for the re-hating of the contingents currently serving under MISCA. It also requires that the AU be adequately consulted from the outset on the draft resolution that would mandate the deployment of the envisaged UN peacekeeping operation. Without compromising the timelines envisaged for the deployment of the UN peacekeeping operation, it is important that adequate time is given for the consultation process to be carried out to the satisfaction of all concerned

stakeholders. The AU would welcome the co-authoring of the draft resolution with one of the African members of the UN Security Council. Such a step will be in line with the pronouncements made by the AU Peace and Security Council at its meeting held in New York, on 21 September 2013, which called for the active involvement of the African members of the Security Council in the drafting of the Council's documents, including through the designation of African states as penholders/co-penholders of draft resolution that concern the continent.

Learning from the Mali experience, and without prejudice to the relevant UN rules, it would be important to ensure that the African stakeholders, including the region, are adequately consulted on the appointment of the leadership of the envisaged UN peacekeeping operation. In this respect, the Commission recommends the appointment of Africans to lead the envisaged Mission and its military and police components.

**President and distinguished members of the Security Council
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The deployment of a UN operation in the CAR should mark a new step towards a broader and more sustained international engagement in the CAR, anchored on the principle of national ownership and strong regional and continental involvement.

Since the deployment of MISCA, less than three months ago, the region and the AU, building on earlier efforts by ECCAS, have relentlessly endeavored to assist the CAR in overcoming the many challenges confronting it. In so doing, Africa acted on the basis of the principle of solidarity. Africa will not relent in its commitment to assist the CAR and its people in their hour of need. No stone will be left unturned to ensure that the mandate of MISCA is effectively implemented.

In concluding, I would like to echo earlier AU's calls on the need for the international community to mobilize adequate support to meet the humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic. A timely and increased humanitarian support will go a long way in alleviating the plight of the affected populations and in enhancing the credibility of our collective efforts.

I thank you.

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