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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE SITUATION
IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 67th Meeting on 7 December 2006, Council examined the situation in Central African Republic (CAR) in light of the report of the multi-disciplinary experts' mission tasked to evaluate the needs of CAR in terms of post-conflict reconstruction and to put forward recommendations on how best the African Union and its Member States could contribute to the reconstruction endeavour (PSC/PR/3(LXVII)). The mission, which was led by Mr. Mamadou Lamine Loum, former Senegalese Prime Minister and comprising representatives of the African Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), visited Bangui in April 2006. At the aforementioned Meeting, Council also discussed the Briefing Note on the outcomes of the evaluation mission to CAR, submitted by the Commission (PSC/PR/2(LXVII)). This mission, which was led by the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission for CAR, Mr. Sadok Fayala, was in Central African Republic in November 2006. Also, Council received a presentation by Mr. Elie Doté, then Prime Minister of CAR.

2. At the end of its deliberation, Council adopted Decision PSC/PR/Comm(LXVII) by which it, among other things:

- demands that the Central African Republic rebel movements renounce the use of force and engage in dialogue to find solutions to the current problems within the framework of the state institutions. Council requests the Chairperson of the Commission to support all initiatives taken in this direction;
- encourages the countries of the region to consider ways and means of strengthening the Multi-National Force of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (FOMUC) to enable it contribute more effectively to the consolidation of peace and security in the CAR;
- underscores the need for AU Member States, in the name of African solidarity, and within the framework of the Policy for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development adopted by the Executive Council at its Ninth Ordinary Session held in Banjul, The Gambia, from 25 to 29 June 2006 (EX.CL/Dec.302(IX)), to provide support towards the socio-economic recovery of CAR and the consolidation of peace and stability in that country; and
- requests the Chairperson of the Commission to take measures for sensitizing the international community on the situation in the Central African Republic and for mobilizing the necessary support, including the organization, in collaboration with

the ECA and ADB, of a Donors' Round Table to mobilize the requisite resources for the CAR.

3. This report provides an update on the situation in Central African Republic as well as the activities undertaken by the Commission in pursuance of Council Decision of 7 December 2006. It concludes with recommendations on how best the African Union could lend further support towards the ongoing process.

II. MAJOR EVENTS SINCE DECEMBER 2006

a) Security, Humanitarian and Political Aspects

4. The period under review was characterized by intensified efforts geared to promoting inclusive political dialogue and bringing to an end the activities of the armed groups active on the ground. On this score, it is noteworthy that in 2006, with the repeated clashes between the armed forces of the Central African Republic (*FACA*) and several armed groups, three political-military movements emerged in the political arena. These were: the Democratic Front for the People of the Central African Republic (*FDPC*) led by Mr. Abdoulaye Miskine; the People's Army for Restoration of Democracy (*APRD*) headed by Laurent Djim Woei and the *Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR)* led by Zakaria Damane

5. In an attempt to find a negotiated solution, CAR authorities initiated overtures vis-à-vis the armed groups. The resultant contacts paved the way for the Government to conclude two agreements; the first with *FDPC* in Sirte on 2 February 2007, and the second with *UFDR* in Birao on 13 April 2007. The implementation of these agreements, however, faced numerous difficulties. Zakaria Damane and Abdoulaye Miskine who were appointed advisers in the Office of the President of the Republic, to enable them get directly involved in the crisis resolution process, did not take office in the end. Besides, the Government was unable to mobilize the financial and logistical resources required for encampment, reception and re-integration of the fighters of the armed groups. The *APRD*, which was yet to conclude an agreement with the Government continued and, indeed, intensified its military activities against the defense and security forces particularly in the North of the country, precisely in the prefectures of Ouham-Pendé, Ouham and Nana-Gribizi.

6. In addition to these clashes, the country had to contend with the phenomenon of big-time banditry perpetrated by the *Zaraguinas* commonly known as high way robbers. The activities of this group are pervasive and difficult to contain, but they tend to concentrate on livestock production or mining areas. Faced with serious human and material resource constraints, the Government is having problems to tackle this situation.

7. Near chronic insecurity is, indeed, the order of the day in most provinces in the hinterland and along the major road networks in the country. In the circumstances, the

people have continued to flee to neighbouring countries such as Chad and Cameroon, hide in the fields or organize themselves in self-defense groups.

8. The humanitarian situation took a turn for the worse, especially in the North-West and North-Central provinces in which there were frequent clashes between *FACA* and *APRD*, with the exception of the Vakaga prefecture where the return of the people to their villages has been noticeable since the signing of the Birao agreement. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (*HCR*) noted, for example, that between August and October 2007, the number of CAR refugees in Cameroon rose from 26,000 to 45,192. The total number of displaced CAR nationals was estimated at 197,000, and the number of refugees in Chad, Cameroon and The Sudan, at 98, 000.

9. It was against this backdrop that voices were raised at both national and international levels, calling on the country's authorities to re-establish dialogue with all the political and social stakeholders in the country. Accepting the principle of dialogue, President François Bozizé requested the Group of the Wise to embark on consultations with the various components of the CAR society with a view to finding solutions to the crisis gripping the country. In its final report presented in March 2007, the Group of the Wise proposed that a dialogue should be held without exclusion and involving all the armed groups as a way of resolving the political and military crisis facing the country.

10. After a series of consultations with the country's institutions, political parties, representatives of the social and professional segments of the society, as well as the diplomatic missions and international organizations accredited to CAR, President Bozizé, in November 2007, promulgated two decrees; the first one set up a preparatory committee for the inclusive political dialogue (*CPDPI*), and the second relating to the appointment of 25 members of the Committee, selected as follows: five from the democratic opposition; five from the presidential majority; two from other parties; five from the civil society; five from public authorities and three from the political-military movements.

11. The *APRD*, which at first refused to participate in the dialogue for reasons of the security of its representatives in Bangui, recently joined in the *CPDPI*. *APRD*'s participation in the dialogue was the outcome of lengthy negotiations with the principal leaders of this political-military group, notably Laurent Djim Woei, with the support of Mr. François Lonsény Fall, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and chief of the United Nations Bureau in Central Africa (*BONUCA*). The renewed contacts finally led to the signing in Libreville, on 9 May 2008, of a Ceasefire and Peace Agreement between the CAR Government and the *APRD* under the auspices of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba. The Commission welcomed this Agreement which paved the way for subsequent political dialogue in a peaceful climate, on a consensual and inclusive basis.

12. The Chair of this Committee was entrusted to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (CDH), a Geneva based NGO which actively participated in the contacts with the rebel groups and in the discussions with CAR political players. The United Nations,

through BONUCA and the International Organization of the Francophonie (IOF), were designated as Facilitators. The *CPDPI* was officially inaugurated on 18 December 2007 and immediately swung into action.

13. According to the terms of the Decree establishing it, the *CPDPI* had the mandate to:

- develop and assemble the working documents on the themes retained for the dialogue (political and governance issues, security situation and the armed groups, socio-economic development...);
- define the agenda and timelines, set the number of participants and allocate to the concerned entities, quotas for their participation; and
- pursue the contacts with the armed groups operating on ground as well as the political leaders residing abroad with a view to convincing them and all others to get involved in the ongoing peace process in the spirit of reconciliation.

14. The *CPDPI* concluded its work on 31 March 2008 and submitted its final report to President Bozizé on 25 April 2008. It put forward several suggestions on all aspects of its mission; the major stumbling block being the venue of the dialogue, especially as this was perceived as one factor that could determine the effective participation of some of the political leaders and the exiled political-military groups. *CPDPI* members recommended that the dialogue should be held in Bangui on the understanding that the CAR authorities would put in place all appropriate legal and security measures in that direction. The African Union was proposed as International Facilitator, like the UN and IOF.

15. The security situation remained reasonably calm throughout *CPDPI*'s work. However, sporadic clashes between *FACA* and *APRD* elements, as well as attacks by the *Zaraguinas* were reported, as always, in the Ouham-Pendé and Ouham prefectures. It is noteworthy that the *APRD* embarked upon some re-ordering of its political department and appointed as its president, Jean-Jacques Demafouth, Defense Minister under former President Ange-Félix Patassé. Disagreements erupted within the *UFDR* in the aftermath of the inauguration of the *CPDPI* and the release in February 2008, of two leaders of this movement, Abakar Sabone and Michel Djotodja up till then incarcerated in Benin. Along the Tringoulou-Gordil trunk road (Vakaga prefecture) a group of dissidents clashed with other elements loyal to Zakaria Damanie.

16. The resignation on 18 January 2008 of the Prime Minister, Elie Doté (appointed in June 2005) was one of the significant events that occurred during the period under review. It came in the aftermath of social tension resulting from strike actions by public servants and students demanding payment of several months' salary arrears, pensions and scholarship as well as the upgrading of the salaries frozen for several years. The social tension worsened by late 2007 and, in early 2008, public servants embarked on industrial action with a call on the entire population to also mobilize. Consequent upon

these events, deputies of the presidential majority, the *Convergence KNK*, moved a motion of censure against the Government. While being expected at the National Assembly on 19 January 2008, the Prime Minister Elie Doté on 18 January tendered his Government's resignation to President Bozizé who accepted it. On 22 January, Mr. Faustin Touadera, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bangui, was appointed Prime Minister; and on 28 January a new Government was formed.

b) Activities of FOMUC and Deployment of EUFOR Chad/CAR

17. During the period under review, FOMUC pressed ahead with its stabilization mission in Central African Republic. With respect to assistance to CAR defense and security forces, FOMUC participated in the provision of security in its areas of deployment and gave assistance towards the reconstruction and upgrading of FACA. Furthermore, in an attempt to strengthen its presence in CAR, FOMUC opened a fourth site at Paoua which was inaugurated on 1 April 2008, after the sites at Bria, Bozoum and Kaga-Bandoro.

18. In the bid to enhance the Force's capacity, the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) decided, at their Summit held in Brazzaville on 30 December 2007, to transfer the supervisory authority over FOMUC from CEMAC to ECCAS; and in this connection, asked the Committee of ECCAS Ambassadors to study how best the transfer could be effected. At the same time, the Cameroonian authorities decided to beef up FOMUC with 119 strong contingent, thus bringing the strength of the Force to nearly 500 troops. In a letter addressed to the outgoing Commissioner for Peace and Security on 27 December 2008, the Secretary General of ECCAS, after recalling the decision taken in Libreville, intimated that planning activities for the transfer would commence in January 2008 and be concluded in June of the same year.

19. In its Resolution 1776 (2007) of 25 September 2007, the United Nations Security Council approved establishment in Chad and CAR of a multi-dimensional presence with the objective of creating propitious conditions for the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. The Security Council decided that the presence would include, for a period of one year, a United Nations Mission in CAR and Chad (MINURCAT), comprising a maximum of 300 police officers, 50 military liaison officers, as well as an appropriate level of civilian staff complement. The Security Council authorized the European Union (EU) to deploy, for a period of one year, an operation christened EUFOR Chad/CAR to support MINURCAT and contribute, among other things, to the protection of civilians in danger especially refugees and displaced persons, facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance and free movement of humanitarian personnel and the protection of United Nations staff, premises, installations and equipment.

20. MINURCAT was expected to get installed in Bangui within the shortest possible timeframe. The United Nations was also to undertake a mission to Birao in the Vakaga prefecture to assess the situation and devise a strategy that would enable MINURCAT

to tackle the security problems in that area. There were delays in kicking off the EUFOR operation for reasons arising from the security situation and the constitution of the Force. EUFOR indicated that, as at mid-March 2008, it had attained its initial operational capacity, a stage which marked the commencement of its twelve months mandate. In CAR, EUFOR's operation consisted of transferring to its command the French troops based in Birao, the strength of which stood at 200 men. This Force was expected to reach its full operational capacity with the deployment of its full strength of 3,700 by July 2008. This would enable MINURCAT to embark on deployment at several police stations, including one in Birao.

c) Seminar on Reform of the Security Sector (RSS)

21. The period under review was similarly characterized by the organization of a seminar on reform of the security sector in Bangui from 14 to 17 April 2008. The objective of the seminar, which was staged with the support of UNDP and the development partners, was to enable the CAR Government to define, in an inclusive manner, the broad framework of a new national security strategy, the implementation modalities for this strategy, co-ordination mechanisms that take into account the place and role of sub-regional, regional and international partners, and identify intervention programmes and priority projects.

22. The seminar reviewed the various structures and forces on the ground, such as the *FACA*, the gendarmerie, the police, customs, water and forestry/hunting/fishing/environmental services, intelligence services, private security outfits and militias, as well as the judicial and prisons administration and went on to analyze the threats to and the concerns and expectations of the populations. The seminar also discussed democratic control of the security sector during consideration of the role of the legislature and the civil society, security sector governance, combating small arms and light weapons proliferation and the presence of foreign fighters on CAR's territory. It adopted a strategy whereby it identified a series of short-term activities to be undertaken by the Government, while medium-term activities will be carried out with the support of international partners.

d) Socio-Economic and Financial Aspects

23. The general strike of public servants which took place early in 2008 came to an end in late February 2008, after two months in salary arrears were paid to those concerned. However, it can hardly be overstated that this state of affairs was a pointer to the fragility of the economic and financial situation in the CAR. Admittedly, the Government is now able to pay monthly salaries, but the question of arrears which stand at 36 months for some staff categories, remains unresolved.

24. The macro-economic progress achieved in 2006 and consolidated in 2007 led the country to look forward to 4.4% growth. Furthermore, the continued implementation of the reform programmes agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World

Bank and ADB should enable the Government to improve the state of public finances, particularly with regard to tax collection.

25. Following the adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) in September 2007, CAR attained the point of decision for debt relief under the Reinforced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC Initiative) which should enable the country to benefit from provisional debt relief. However, for CAR to be accorded irrevocable debt relief at the point of completion of the HIPC Initiative, the authorities need to pursue and sustain the reforms instituted under the IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), press ahead with the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and conclude some of the key reforms that would pave the way to upgrade public finance management, governance and transparency, especially in the mining and forestry sectors.

26. The PRSP was presented at a Donors' Round Table held in Brussels on 26 October 2007. Organized in pursuance of the consultation meeting of CAR partners held under the auspices of UNDP and the World Bank, also in Brussels in June 2007, the Round Table made it possible for CAR to mobilize pledges of support for the 2008-2010 period estimated at US\$ 600 million. In the aftermath of the Round Table, the chief of the EU delegation in Bangui announced on 8 May 2008 that CAR would receive 137 million Euros financing for the next five years and the very imminent implementation of a 10 million Euros project designed to strengthen the justice system and restructure the police.

III. FOLLOW-UP ON THE COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE 67TH MEETING OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL (PSC)

27. During the reporting period, the Commission devoted attention to the follow-up on the Communiqué of the 67th Meeting of Council. On this score, it carried out several activities designed to backstop the peace consolidation and post-conflict reconstruction process in Central African Republic.

a) African Solidarity Conference

28. Pursuant to the Communiqué adopted by the 67th Meeting of Council, the Commission, in conjunction with the ADB and ECA, organized in Addis Ababa on 19 October 2007, an African Conference for Solidarity with the Central African Republic. AU and ECCAS Member States attended this Conference which prepared a coordination meeting at the level of the Commission in August 2007, which was followed by a visit to Bangui by the Special Envoy for CAR and the leader of the multi-disciplinary experts' mission, a visit during which talks were held with CAR authorities, including President Bozizé. The objective was to demonstrate Africa's solidarity with the CAR and facilitate mobilization of the international community for assistance commensurate with the country's enormous needs and, more importantly, for assistance more suited to the peculiar situation of the CAR. It is noteworthy that the

Conference took place one week before the Donors' Round Table convened in Brussels on 26 October.

29. The Conference provided the opportunity to assess the evolving situation in CAR and to present the country's needs in light of the multi-disciplinary experts' mission fielded to the country in April 2006 and of the additional information furnished by the CAR delegation. It welcomed the contacts initiated by the Government with the political-military groups active in certain parts of the country to find a negotiated response to their demands, and the measures taken with a view to convening an inclusive political dialogue. The Conference further expressed satisfaction at the reforms initiated by the CAR Government, including in the field of governance, and engaged it to pursue and deepen the reforms. Lastly, it voiced its delight at CAR's accession to the point of decision under the HIPC Initiative, and underscored the fact that the challenges facing the country were such that it needed not only substantial assistance, but also assistance more appropriate than that so far provided by the country's development partners. While pointing to the support provided by CAR's bilateral and multilateral partners, the Conference made an urgent appeal for purposeful and holistic action on the part of the international community to enable the country to definitively get out of the crisis that has lasted for too long, and improve the living conditions of the people.

30. Some Member States updated the Conference on the assistance they were already extending to the CAR. Others pledged to contribute to efforts aimed at reconstruction and peace consolidation in the country, financially or through technical and material assistance in the fields of education, health, agriculture, civil aviation, as well as defense and security. For its part, the Commission is committed to continued support for FOMUC, to backing the inclusive political dialogue and to unrelenting sensitization of the international community so as to further mobilize in favor of Central African Republic. The conclusions of the Conference were presented to the development partners' Round Table held a week later in Brussels, at which the AU was represented by the Special Envoy for CAR, the head of the multi-disciplinary experts' mission, the Executive Secretary of the AU Permanent Mission in Brussels and other officials of the Commission.

b) Support to FOMUC

31. In conformity with Council Decision, the Commission maintained its support to FOMUC to enable it to forge ahead with its activities in CAR, especially in terms of mobilization of needed resources, within the framework of the African Peace Facility (APF). The Commission, in November 2006, undertook a mission jointly with the EU to assess FOMUC's activities for the period July-31 December 2007. The mission came to the conclusion that it was not possible to devise a strategy for disengagement of the Force, given the observed security conditions and the important events in the pipeline (2010 elections). It recommended the provision of financial contribution covering the period 1 January-31 December 2008, in consideration of the integration of a fresh contingent from Cameroon and the transfer of the supervisory authority over the Force from CEMAC to ECCAS.

32. In the wake of that mission, President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, in his capacity as the Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on CAR issues in the CEMAC region and the President of the CEMAC Commission, Antoine Ntsimi, addressed correspondence to AU Commission to solicit its support for renewal of the financing of FOMUC activities. The Commission, in turn, brought the matter to the attention of the European Commission Development and Humanitarian Assistance Commissioner, Louis Michel, who, in a letter dated 24 April 2008 addressed to the then outgoing Commissioner for Peace and Security, affirmed EU agreement to extend the financing within the framework of the APF. The financial contribution accorded for 2008 amounted to 10.2 million Euros. Another joint AU-EU mission has been slated for the coming September to appraise the 2008 activities and examine the conditions for possible renewal of FOMUC financing through the APF.

c) Support to Inclusive Political Dialogue

33. In its Decision of 7 December 2006, Council requested the Chairperson of the Commission to explore how best to continue to engage CAR authorities and all the political and social stakeholders for the promotion of national harmony, as well as for respect for the institutions and human rights. In response to the invitation addressed to the Commission, the Special Envoy for CAR proceeded to the country, early March, to study with the authorities, BONUCA, IOF and the HRC the general conditions for preparation of the inclusive political dialogue, for observation of the trends emerging from the preparatory work and the role that the AU could play in the course of the dialogue *per se*.

34. The Commission also made a contribution of US\$ 50,000 towards organization of the dialogue. This input was the subject of an Agreement between the African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the use of the AUC financial contribution for the inclusive political dialogue in Central African Republic, initialed and signed in Bangui on 5 March 2008 by the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission and the UNDP Resident Representative.

35. In its final report handed to President Bozizé on 25 April 2008, the *CPDPI* proposed that the AU be co-opted as one of the International Facilitators in the same vein as the United Nations and the IOF. This role requires that the AU should be more deeply involved in the upcoming organization of the dialogue slated for June 2006, as well as in following up on the resolutions that will emanate from the dialogue.

d) Participation in the Seminar on Security Sector Reform

36. To conclude, the Commission participated in the seminar on security sector reform staged in Bangui from 14 to 17 April 2008. The Chair of the organizing committee cited the presence of a representative of the AU as another proof of the commitment of international partners.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

37. Since the last Council Meeting, significant progress has been achieved in the efforts invested to consolidate peace in Central African Republic and facilitate the socio-economic recovery of the country. I take this opportunity to express my delight at the various agreements concluded with the armed movements, and to urge all the concerned parties to scrupulously abide by the commitments made. Also vital are the inroads made with regard to the issue of the inclusive political dialogue. I welcome the conclusions of the deliberations of the preparatory committee, and encourage all the parties to demonstrate the political will required to ensure successful conduct of the dialogue. This is crucial for the success of the election due in 2010 and for the consolidation of the gains so far achieved.

38. Promotion of lasting stability in the CAR remains predicated on the international community mobilizing adequate assistance to enable the country to tackle the numerous socio-economic challenges facing it. While conveying to the international community AU's appreciation for its invaluable assistance, I urge all CAR's partners to extend to it all the needed assistance. At the same time, the Government should pursue and deepen the reforms initiated in the area of governance as underscored by the Solidarity Conference, since it can hardly be overemphasized that greater transparency, sound economic management and scrupulous respect for human rights contribute in a large measure in creating the conditions for sustainable development and more purposeful mobilization of the partners of Central African Republic.

39. For its part, the Commission will intensify its efforts in support of CAR. This, for the AU, entails giving its full backing, in any way possible, to the inclusive political dialogue and effectively following up on the conclusions of the African Solidarity Conference. It is in this context that the Commission, subject to mobilization of the requisite resources, particularly from AU partners, plans to open a Liaison Office in Bangui. For now, and in pursuance of the conclusions of the Conference for Solidarity with the CAR, the AU Commission will, in the coming weeks, field a mission to which will be invited to participate the representatives of the countries that pledged assistance at the Solidarity Conference, so as to work with the authorities to explore how best to ensure speedy actualization of their pledges. The Commission will continue to work closely with the European Commission to provide support to FOMUC and towards all efforts aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Force.

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