

AFRICAN UNION

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**BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN THE
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)**

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I. Introduction

1. The coup d'Etat of 15 March 2003, perpetrated by General François Bozizé, and which toppled the legitimate Government of President Ange Félix Patassé, was strongly condemned by the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution during its 19th Ordinary Session held at the Ambassadorial level, in Addis Ababa, on 17 March 2003. The Central Organ called upon the perpetrators of the coup to take measures for the reinstatement of the democratically elected Government and recommended the suspension of the CAR from the activities of the AU decision-making organs until such time as the constitutional order is restored. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the relevant policy organs of the AU.

2. In the framework of the implementation of this decision and the follow-up of the situation in CAR, the Special Envoy of the Interim Chairperson of the Commission for CAR, traveled to the CAR and other countries of the region, in April and September 2003, with the view to examining, together with the Leaders of the region, the ways and means for the restoration of the constitutional order.

II. Recapitulation of major political developments during the transition

3. The political transition, which began on 15 March 2003, was marked by the following:

- the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity, on 28 March 2003, composed of the main political parties of the country;
- the establishment of a National Transition Council, which served as a transitional legislative organ;
- the engagement in a national dialogue in September – October 2003;
- the adoption of the instruments relating to the electoral process, notably, the Law on the Joint Independent Electoral Committee (JIEM), the Electoral Code and the Law on political parties;
- the holding of a constitutional referendum on 5 December 2004.

4. In spite of the deadlocks which occurred during the transition, especially during the discussions on the draft Constitution, the Electoral Code and the Law on the JIEM, and the delays regarding the Electoral Calendar, the Transitional Government was able to hold presidential and legislative elections in May 2005, with the support of the United Nations, through its office in Bangui, as well as several external partners.

5. Furthermore, given the precarious economic and financial situation of the country, the Government received assistance from France, the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) and several friendly countries. As far as the military and security situation was concerned, there was some improvement, albeit slow, thanks to the deterrent presence of troops from the Multi-national Force of the CEMAC (FOMUC), deployed in the country since November 2002, with the support of France and the European Union. In this regard, it may be noted that the AU Commission supported the request for assistance submitted by the CEMAC to the European Union within the framework of the Peace Facility. A contribution amounting to Euros 3,38 million was made to the FOMUC for the period 1st November 2004 – 30 June 2005. France has participated in the restructuring of the Central African Armed Forces by providing training and equipment.

III. Recent Developments

6. The major events that took place in recent months were the simultaneous organization of legislative and presidential elections, of which the first round took place on 13 March, and the second round on 8 May 2005. It should be recalled that a deadlock occurred following the publication by the Constitutional Court on 30 December 2004, of the list of candidates who qualified to run for the presidential election. The candidates who were not listed registered their strong protest and called for the dissolution of the Court. However, thanks to the mediation of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, an agreement was signed in Libreville on 22 January 2005, paving the way for 11 candidates to take part in the first round of the presidential election.

7. General François Bozizé came first with 42.97% of the votes, followed by Martin Ziguélé, with 23.53% and André Kolingba, who scored 16.36%. At the second round contested by Martin Ziguélé and General François Bozizé, the latter was elected with 64.6%, as against 35.4% obtained by Martin Ziguélé, who conceded defeat and congratulated his opponent. With regard to the legislative elections, the *Convergence Kwa Na Kwa (KNK)*, a coalition of the parties supporting General Bozizé, obtained a relative majority with nearly 40 seats. A last minute shift of support in favour of the coalition made it possible for it to obtain an absolute majority of 77 deputies.

8. In general terms, the incidents reported during the voting did not affect the credibility of the elections. On the overall, the results were accepted by all the candidates and the political parties. It should, however, be noted that some suits were filed with the Constitutional Court.

IV. Mission of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission to Bangui and N'djamena

9. It was within the newly emerging context that the Chairperson of the Commission dispatched Minister Sadok Fayala, his Special Envoy to the CAR, to Bangui and N'djamena, to evaluate the overall situation and to examine, together with the Central African authorities and the leaders of the region, the modalities of possible AU support towards the consolidation of peace and stability, and contribution to the socio-economic recovery of the CAR. The Special Envoy visited Bangui from 18 to 21 June, and traveled to N'djamena from 21 to 22 June 2005. While in Bangui, he held talks with President François Bozizé, the Prime Minister Elie Doté, the representative of the

United Nations Secretary-General, the Head of the United Nations Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), General Lamine Cissé, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Paul Ngoupandé, the senior Commander of FOMUC, representatives of the Executive Secretary of the CEMAC, the opposition political parties members of the Union of the Active Forces of the Nation and the representatives of the *Convergence KNK*. While in N'djamena, the Special Envoy held discussions with the Prime Minister, Pascal Yoadimndji and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nagoum Yamassoum.

10. In Bangui, the Special Envoy noted the manifest will on the part of all the political actors to emerge from the political instability prevailing in the country for many years. This was evidenced by the acceptance of the results of the elections in the national interest, as stated by the political parties members of the UFVN and by the affirmation of their readiness to work with General Bozizé. In this respect, it should be noted that the new government formed on 19 June 2005, included almost all the political persuasions in the country, unlike the previous national union transition government.

11. President François Bozizé and the other political leaders expressed the desire to see the CAR re-occupy its place in the African Union, moreso ahead of the next AU Summit due to take place in Sirte. The Chadian authorities, with whom the Special Envoy held talks, the FOMUC Commander, and the representatives of the CEMAC Secretariat invited the AU to provide the necessary support for the CAR in its relations with donors and other external partners, and to support the ongoing initiative to obtain the necessary funding for the extension of the mandate of FOMUC.

12. Regarding the security and military situation, positive developments have taken place. However, the residual insecurity arising from the activities of armed gangs known as "road cutters" or "zaraguinas" continues in the north and north-west, along the border with Chad and Cameroon, as well as in some of the provinces of the country. The areas bordering The Sudan have also been the theatre of clashes between the CAR armed forces and unidentified armed men. The Chadian Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that a tripartite meeting of Chad, The Sudan and CAR on security matters was in the planning. France and the EU have indicated their readiness to provide support. The still ill-equipped Central African Armed Forces are not yet in a position to ensure security on the national territory; hence the need for the continuation of FOMUC, whose deterrent presence has been appreciated by the entire population.

13. On the economic and financial front, the Special Envoy noted the urgent need for the CAR government to receive budgetary support. China, France and EU could provide support in the coming months, but the possibility of fresh delays in the payment of salaries has given rise to some concern. Since the seizure of power by President Bozizé on 15 March 2003, salary arrears owed to civil servants have accumulated for 5 to 6 months. The CAR administration is in a difficult situation, making the realization of the financial objectives, such as the effective collection of public revenue, elusive. Indeed, poverty is widespread. General Bozizé advised the AU delegation not to be misled by the "haven of Bangui", as abject poverty has become widespread in the rural areas.

IV. Observations

14. The political situation in the Central African Republic has witnessed encouraging developments following the elections and the formation of a new Government. However, financial constraints and the weak state of the economy constitute a handicap that the Central African Republic alone will not be able to overcome. In addition, insecurity along some roads and some provinces in the countryside and the deteriorated communication network, constitute obstacles to the efforts geared towards the rural population.

15. In view of the above, the AU should intensify its efforts to support the process of stabilization in CAR. In this regard, and in view of the elections held in March and May 2005, which formalized the return of the constitutional order, the suspension of the CAR, which followed the coup d'Etat of 15 March 2003, should now be lifted. In addition, the AU should support the efforts being deployed to mobilize the international community for it to provide to the CAR the much needed assistance for its socio-economic recovery. Assistance should also be provided in the security sector.

16. It is within this framework that the Commission intends to submit to the Council, shortly, concrete proposals on the modalities for the provision of multi-sectoral support to the CAR.

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