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P.O. Box: 3243, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Tel.: (251-11) 551 38 22 Fax: (251-11) 551 93 21
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted within the framework of the regular consideration by Council of the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR). It highlights the major developments that have taken place in that country since the last general elections of January and March 2011 as well as the efforts made by the AU, particularly through the Liaison Office in Bangui, together with the other partners of the CAR, with a view to contributing to peace building and the socio-economic recovery of that country. The report concludes with recommendations on the way forward.

II. MAJOR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

2. The presidential and legislative elections of January and March 2011 were won by the outgoing President, Francois Bozize, who obtained more than 60% of the votes cast during the first round, while the majority of the seats in the National Assembly were won by the ruling party and its allies. Denouncing the conditions of the organization of the elections and their results, several opposition leaders then grouped within a platform called “Front pour l’Annulation et la Reprise des Elections 2011” – FARE 2011. (Front for the Cancellation and Reorganization of the 2011 Elections).

3. The Commission closely followed both, the presidential and legislative elections, dispatching election observers on the ground. Within that context, the Commission called upon the Central African parties to show restraint, to respect the results of the ballot and to make use of legal channels in case of claims. 88 appeals were submitted to the Constitutional Court, which annulled the vote in 13 legislative constituencies. Thus, by-elections had to be organized on 4 September 2011. The opposition political parties boycotted the second round of the legislature elections and the by-elections calling instead, for the reorganization of the whole election.

4. On their part, and in order to bring together all the Central African citizens, as well as to defuse the political tension in the wake of the elections, the Central African authorities established a government open to the opposition and the civil society. Furthermore, they initiated discussions with the political parties and civil society around the reform of the Electoral Code and the National Mechanism in charge of organizing elections. The consultations, which took place in November 2011 as well as in January and September 2012, made it possible to reach a broad consensus on the issues that were under discussion. The United Nations Integrated Office in the CAR (BINUCA), the European

Union (EU), the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), the AU and other bilateral partners, including France and the United States, supported the process. The Commission dispatched an expert to facilitate the deliberations.

5. The National Authority in charge of elections, which is composed of seven members, will be independent and will have financial autonomy. The related draft bill will be submitted by the government to the next session of the National assembly for consideration and adoption.

6. It was in that context that Jean-Jacques Demafouth, Herbert Gontran Djono Ahaba and Mahamat Abrass, leaders of political and military groups, were arrested on 6 January 2012 on charges of having conspired against the national security. The People's Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) and the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR), to which they belong, refuted the accusations that were leveled against them. On 11 April 2012, Mr. Demafouth and his co-accused were released on bail. Moreover, Sylvain Ndoutingai (Minister of Finance) and Firmin Findiro (Minister of Justice) were dismissed on 30 May and 16 July 2012, respectively.

7. On the other hand, a number of political parties, through a communiqué issued on 12 November 2012, demanded a political dialogue. On 26 November 2012, the Association of Central Africans of the Diaspora, "*Touche pas à ma Constitution*", published, in the national press, an open letter to the President of the Republic, warning against any attempt to amend Article 24 of the Constitution, which limits the presidential mandate to two terms. Reacting to the open letter, the President of the Republic reaffirmed, in Bouar, on 1 December 2012, on the occasion of the celebration of the 54th anniversary of the independence of the CAR, his firm commitment to maintain dialogue on the major issues related to the life of the nation. He also reaffirmed his commitment to reach out to all Central Africans.

III. SECURITY SITUATION, DDR PROGRAMME AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

8. The Commission has continued to follow very closely the evolution of the security situation in the CAR. The period under consideration witnessed some progress, marked by the ceasefire agreements that were concluded between the government and some political and military groups, particularly the UFDR and the CPJP, in October 2011; the dissolution of the APRD on 17 May 2012; the accession, by the CPJP, on 25 August 2012, to the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement; the surrender of the Chief Chadian rebel, Baba Ladé, of the People's Front for Recovery (FPR) and the repatriation of his combatants to Chad in September and October 2012; and the Peace Caravan organized in October 2011 by the Mediator of the CAR with the support of BINUCA.

9. However, many incidents were also recorded during the period under consideration. These include: the apparent calling into question the ceasefire concluded

between the UFDR and the government, after his return to the CAR, in October 2012, by the founder of this movement, Michel Droko Djaotodia; the attacks on the Damara and Sibut areas, some sixty kilometers North-East of the capital, Bangui, on 15 September 2012, by unidentified armed men; as well as the activities of new armed groups, composed of the remaining elements of the Democratic Front of Central African People (FDPC) of Abdoulaye Miskine and of the FPR of Baba Ladé, in the north of the country, in the Markounda and Bocaranga areas. This state of affairs was compounded by the persistence of banditry, conflicts related to the seasonal migration of pastoralists and the multiplication of illegal control posts set up by the armed elements. This is complicated by the human and logistical constraints facing the Central African Defense and Security Forces and the slow pace in the implementation of the DDR (particularly in the north east of the country) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) programmes.

10. It is in that context that the Peace Building Mission of the Economic Community of the Central African States in the CAR (MICOPAX) has initiated, since January 2012, a disengagement process in the CAR. This process, which should end on 31 December 2013, is taking place in parallel with the training of Central African Armed Forces (FACA) contingents by the MICOPAX units, in order to strengthen the capacity of FACA so that they can take over the areas that are currently under the control of MICOPAX. The success of this process depends on the mobilization of the necessary resources to enable FACA shoulder its share of responsibility, as well as on the preparation of a comprehensive, coherent and harmonized plan for the training of the FACA units.

11. Within the framework of the efforts to address the security challenges, it is important to mention the ongoing operations at the border triangle between the CAR, Chad and Sudan, in the north-east of the CAR, led by the Tripartite Force set up by the three countries. Similarly, efforts are currently underway to combat the Lord's Resistance Army, within the framework of the military operations of the Regional Cooperation Initiative, launched by the AU for the Elimination of this terrorist group (RCI-LRA). Thus, the Government of the CAR transferred 350 soldiers, to be under the command of the Regional Task Force (RTF), which constitutes the operational arm of the RCI-LRA. The latter operates in the south-east of the country, in the prefecture of Haut-Mbomou.

12. The DDR programme, including the reinsertion in the centre-north and the north-west, of combatants of the APRD, UFR and FDPC, carried out with the support of the EU, the World Bank (WB) and World Food Programme (WFP), made it possible to disarm several hundreds of combatants and to launch income generating activities for the demobilized combatants. A joint AU-WB mission visited the CAR in June 2012 to prepare a DDR support programme which will be implemented soon.

IV. SOCIO-ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

13. The Central African Government has pursued its efforts to re-launch the economy. In this regard, and following the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), including the adjustment of the price of oil products on the basis of prices on the international market, the IMF granted, in June 2012, a financial assistance package of 63.2 million Dollars for three years within the framework of the Expanded Credit Facility. The government intends to present to the international partners, before the end of the year, the final version of the Strategy for Poverty Reduction (DSRP2) and its Plan of Action. The social situation, however, remains precarious, marked by high level poverty affecting about 62% of the population. There is also growing social tension, marked by repeated strikes, especially in the public sector.

14. The humanitarian situation in the CAR is characterized by the persistence of forced displacement of civilians because of the insecurity created by the activities of armed groups operating in some areas of the territory, as well as the presence of many refugees from neighbouring countries. The numerous attacks of the LRA in the prefectures of Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou resulted in several cases of abduction of children and women. In March 2012, it was estimated that there were more than 20,000 displaced persons in the prefectures of Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou, and 53,511 refugees. The efforts aimed at facing this situation were made difficult by the deplorable state of the road network, lack of resources and latent insecurity.

15. The Commission has also continued to follow closely the human rights situation and supported the efforts of the Central African authorities to promote and respect human rights. In this regard, satisfaction should be expressed at the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the Rights of Women in Africa by the CAR. Within the framework of its promotional activities, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights sent a delegation to Bangui, from 13 to 19 May 2012. During this mission, the delegation met with the local authorities and made a number of recommendations on the promotion and protection of human rights.

V. EFFORTS OF THE AU

16. The AU, through its Liaison Office in Bangui, contributes actively to the peace building efforts in the CAR. Within that framework, the Commission continued, together with the members of the international community, especially BINUCA, to impress upon the political and military groups the need to put an end to the hostilities and to accept a ceasefire. Similarly, the AU encouraged negotiations between the Government and the CPJP and supported other related activities.

17. As indicated above, the AU supports the efforts of the Central African Government to combat the armed groups. The activities carried out within the framework of the RCI-LRA form part of those efforts. It should be underscored that the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM), which is the monitoring ministerial structure, chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, to oversee the efforts to combat the LRA, has established a Secretariat in Bangui. The Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the Commission on the issue of the LRA, Francisco Madeira, undertook several visits to the CAR during which he met the President of the Republic and other relevant Central African officials.

18. The AU, in close partnership with the EU, provides sustained support to MICOPAX, including joint AU-EU evaluation missions of the activities of the Mission, the latest of which took place in September 2012, as well as the mobilization of the necessary financial resources from the African Peace Facility (APF). At the time of finalizing this report, the Commission was about to submit to the EU the funding request for an amount of 10.7 million Euros presented by the Secretary-General of ECCAS for the activities of the Mission for 2013.

19. The AU, through its Liaison Office, participates regularly in the meetings of the DDR Steering Committee, together with the other members of the international community. Furthermore, the Commission, in cooperation with the World Bank, is preparing to launch a support programme for the DDR in the CAR.

20. Similarly, the AU supported the implementation of quick impact projects to rehabilitate schools in the south-east region (Rafai and Zemio), which is severely affected by the LRA activities. Other AU activities focused on training of young girl-mothers in Bangui, the facilitation of the participation of Central African women in a workshop on mediation techniques, the organization of an Information and sensitization meeting on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance for the parliamentarians and the support for the celebration of the International Peace Day.

21. In a more general manner, the CAR is one of the beneficiary countries of the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI), launched by the AU in July 2012, in order to mobilize, from within the continent, increased support for post-conflict reconstruction and development processes in African countries emerging from crisis and conflict situations. Within that framework, the Commission organized, in Johannesburg, in October 2012, a planning meeting for the implementation of the ASI. The CAR, as well as other pilot countries, participated in that meeting.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

22. The overall situation in the CAR should continue to engage the sustained attention of Africa and the international community, to assist this country in overcoming the numerous challenges it faces and to embark in a sustainable manner on the path of stability, security and development. From that view point, the Commission will continue to intensify its efforts in Bangui, through the AU Liaison Office, whose mandate should be adapted to the present situation, as well as to carry forward its advocacy efforts towards the Member States and the international partners.

23. I welcome the clearly stated commitment of President Francois Bozize, to maintain dialogue with all the Central African political and social actors. I note with satisfaction the encouraging results in this regard, particularly the measures taken to draw lessons from the 2011 legislative and presidential elections. The establishment of a new organ to manage future elections is a positive step in the right direction which deserves to be supported and encouraged. I urge all Central African stakeholders to prioritise the supreme interests of their country and to make sacrifices in the face of the difficulties confronted by the CAR.

24. The security situation continues to be a source of concern. It is important to ensure the implementation of the agreements signed between the government and the political and military groups, with particular emphasis on the issue of DDR and the mobilization to this end of the necessary resources from the international community. It is also important to support the efforts at strengthening the operational capacity of FACA and the security forces through training programmes and the supply of equipment. I appeal to all the Member States and the international partners to contribute to these efforts, as well as to the necessary security sector reform, more especially as MICOPAX is preparing to withdraw from the CAR. On its part, the AU will endeavor to ensure the effective implementation of the RCI-LRA and other activities envisaged in the security field. I intend to hold consultations with ECCAS, the EU, the UN and other bilateral partners on international support modalities after the withdrawal of MICOPAX.

25. I note with satisfaction the efforts that the Central African government continues to make on the economic front. Understandably, the situation is difficult. As such, it requires the continuation and deepening of the reforms initiated and a stronger mobilization of the international community. I am concerned about the humanitarian situation. I strongly condemn the abuses against civilian population. I appeal for the provision of humanitarian assistance commensurate with the needs on the ground.

26. I reiterate the gratitude of the AU to ECCAS and the countries of the region for their continued commitment to the CAR and urge them to persevere in their efforts. I welcome the close and action-oriented partnership which exists between the AU and the EU on the CAR, particularly as regards the MICOPAX operations for which the EU, through the APF,

has provided invaluable assistance. I would like also to note, with satisfaction, the close working relationship and coordination which exist between the AU representation in Bangui and BINUCA. More than ever before, the concerned members of the international community should pool their efforts to support the CAR and its government.

2012-12-06

Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in the Central African Republic

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