

**Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Central African Republic (CAR) Configuration of the
Peacebuilding Commission on Local Elections**

Chair's Summary

Friday 9th September 2022 at 10:00 am

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1. On 9 September 2022, the Chair of the Central African Republic (CAR) Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting to assess the progress with the preparations of the local elections, in conformity with *Accord Politique pour la Paix et la Réconciliation en République Centrafricaine* (APPR-RCA). The Configuration was briefed on recent developments by H.E Mr. Bruno Yapandé, Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development, Mr. Frank Dalton, Officer-in-Charge for Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of MINUSCA, Dr. Mathias Barthelemy Morouba, President of the National Elections Authority (ANE), and Ms. Angeline Kaigama Kel, Vice President of the Electoral Code Review Committee and representative from a civil society organization (*Arc en Ciel*).

2. **The Chair of the Central African Republic (CAR) Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale**, recalled in his opening remarks, the successful outcome of 2020-2021 presidential and legislative elections and noted that the local elections, scheduled in January 2023, are the first since 1988. The Chair underscored the local electoral process is a crucial step to consolidate democratic gains and inclusivity for women and other under-represented groups. He acknowledged the efforts of the national authorities with the electoral process, political dialogue and to reach consensus amongst political stakeholders, welcoming MINUSCA and UNDP's support. Notwithstanding, the elections would require a concurrent focus on the empowerment of women and youth in national political processes, national reconciliation, social cohesion and stability. The overarching concerns were adequate and predictable funding for local elections and addressing the deteriorating security situation. He reiterated Morocco's continued commitment to support CAR, together with the international community.

3. **MINUSCA Officer-in-Charge for Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Frank Dalton**, elucidated on the Mission's support to the local elections, including the use of good offices' function to support the creation of conducive conditions for holding of local elections through the revision of the Integrated Security Plan (PISE) and financial contributions from UNDP and MINUSCA. He stressed the importance of disbursing the pending fiscal commitments and pledges from donors and partners for the electoral budget projected, which amount to over US\$14 million. He reiterated that these elections are an opportunity to broaden the political space, reinforce the State presence, allow youth participation in decision making and reduce enrollments in armed groups.

4. **The Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development, H.E. Mr. Bruno Yapandé**, expressed the Government's resolute commitment for peaceful, inclusive and credible local elections in collaboration with the ANE, and within the framework of APPR-RCA, the resumption of grassroots democracy, and strengthening of local governance. The Minister informed that the Government had allocated 80 million CFA Francs to the ANE to support pre-electoral mapping, the revision of the Legal code to ensure inclusivity, the Republican Dialogue and other inclusive initiatives under the Framework for Consultations with ANE and CSO representatives. He highlighted that the President Touadera's continued commitment to engage all Central African, including the armed groups and opposition parties.
5. **The President of the National Elections Authority (ANE), Mr. Barthelemy Mathias Morouba**, informed on the updating of the electoral map, and plans to present a list of new voter registration centers, which will also serve as polling stations for the local elections. Meanwhile, on 2 September, the ANE and MINUSCA completed the review of the PISE in coordination with national security forces and forces under UN mandate. In coordination with the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization, and Local Development, the ANE is undertaking coordinated efforts to revise provisions of the Electoral Code. Since July, consultations have been taking place between the ANE and Consultation Framework in establishment of local ANE branches at the commune and sub-prefecture levels. The President of the ANE underlined that this process is a prerequisite for registration of voters and revising the electoral list, which at the moment are non-compliant with the standards prescribed in the CAR Electoral Code. He stressed that the existing budget gap of US\$6.5 million will have a severe impact on the entire implementation of the reform plans, adding that the operational costs risk jeopardizing the holding of the local elections.
6. **Ms. Angeline Kel Kaigama, Vice President of the Electoral Code Review Committee and member of the civil society organization Reseau Arc en Ciel**, echoed that the local elections are a priority for the Government, which is demonstrated by the involvement of civil society in the process. Furthermore, she informed of civil society organizations being represented in republican institutions, such as the follow-up committee of the Republican Dialogue, and the committee for reviewing the electoral code. Arc en Ciel network has been able to monitor elections, and through a European Union funded project, implemented by the NGO Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, to also provide proposals for more equity in the review of the electoral code and the updating of the lists of candidates for the local elections. Ms. Kaigama highlighted the deterioration of security in parts of the country as the most significant challenge for holding local elections. She also stressed the importance of the revision of legislation to allow for the inclusion of women, minorities, and youth. She added that an equally major challenge is awareness and capacity-building initiatives. Ms. Kaigama cited her concerns about the repercussions of the absence of donor funding for the organization of local elections.
7. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following interventions observations in their interventions:

- They welcomed the efforts by the CAR authorities and ANE on the preparatory phases of the local electoral process, including the revision of the electoral code, and underscored the importance of these elections as a step towards the consolidation of electoral, democratic and decentralization processes, which provide viable foundations for the involvement of the populace.
 - They welcomed the efforts of the Government to advance the peace process, emphasizing the key role of regional actors including the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the African Union (AU).
 - They stressed the need for inclusivity in the local elections, with the full and meaningful participation of women, youth and underrepresented groups, which are vital to building the trust, confidence and buy-in of the population in the electoral process. In this context it is imperative to ensure public awareness and civic education, to counter misinformation/disinformation campaigns.
 - They acknowledged efforts to strengthen the role of women and youth in local elections and governance, which must focus on the people, their fundamental freedoms and rights, political support for the local elections and encouraged partnerships with international financial institutions.
 - They recalled the successful outcomes of the 2020-2021 presidential and legislative elections and urged for the lessons learned to inform the 2023 local elections, with an onus to ensure credibility, inclusivity and transparency.
 - They welcomed the PISE initiative, underlining the critical aspect of secure and conducive environment for CAR civilians to exercise their legitimate and democratic rights and voices at the polling centers.
 - They called for more synergy between the PBC and the Security Council and emphasized the importance of intensifying the work of the PBC and the Peacebuilding Fund to support this process, including through the submission of a written opinion to the Security Council for the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate
 - They expressed concern about the budgetary shortfall of US\$14 million for the elections and urged international partners and donors to ensure adequate and sustainable financing, noting the potential consequences to the entire local electoral exercise.
8. In closing the meeting, the Chair reiterated the role of local elections for democratic space consolidation in CAR. The Chair expressed the Commission's determined support for a successful implementation of the APPR. He urged the Commission to recognize the need to overcome the financing hurdles preventing the holding of local elections and encouraged PBC members to advance the work and role of the Commission.