

Briefing Paper

---

**Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic:  
The Case for Increased Donor Engagement**

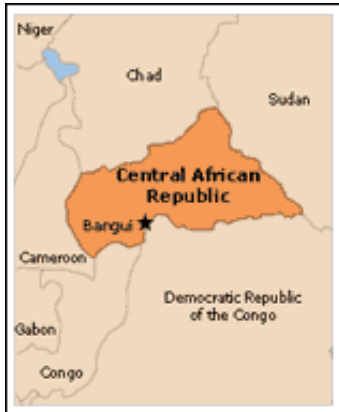
Spring 2009



Belgian Chair of the  
Peacebuilding Commission's  
Country-Specific Meeting on CAR



## CAR: A Country Emerging from Conflict



**For the first time in decades, the people of the Central African Republic (CAR) have reasons to be hopeful again.** Over the past two years, the government and the main rebel groups have signed peace deals, culminating in the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement in May 2008. This agreement was followed by the holding of an Inclusive Political Dialogue in December 2008, qualified by the UN Secretary-General as “perhaps the most genuinely inclusive attempt to foster national reconciliation in CAR to date”. The resolutions of this broad reconciliation forum contain provisions conducive to durable peace, stability and development. These include the establishment of a national union government, the disarmament of former rebels, and the preparations for presidential and legislative elections scheduled in 2010.

### **Nevertheless, the challenges remain numerous.**

Like many countries emerging from conflict, the CAR faces a daunting mix of economic, social and security challenges. It is a least developed country (LDC) and is ranked 178 out of 179 countries in the 2008 UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). The country lacks even rudimentary services, hospitals and most basic equipment and medicine.

### **The country’s insecurity is also compounded by**

**external and regional factors.** Bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan/Darfur and Chad, the CAR is plagued by national and foreign rebel movements and road bandits. Although 2008 has seen a relative improvement of the security situation in the north, due to a combination of the peace process, the presence of UN peacekeepers, and separate operations against the bandits by the Central African army and other groups, thousands of civilians have recently been displaced, due to the resurgence of violence in the north. OCHA estimates that at present, approximately 108,000 men, women and children are displaced within the country. The majority have fled to nearby towns, the countryside or the bush, living without food, water or even the most basic social services. Just over 100,000 refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Sudan remain too frightened to return to their homes.

### **Box 1: Socio economic indicators for CAR**

- Life expectancy at birth: 40 y (m), 45.7 (f)
- Adult literacy rate: 54% (m), 32% (f)
- People living on < USD 1.25 per day: 62.4%
- Popn without access to drinking water: 73.9%
- Mortality rate for children < 5: 17.6 %
- Chronic malnutrition for children < 5: 38%

(Source: Fact sheet 2009, Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team CAR)

***Without support from the International Community, CAR faces a genuine threat of relapsing into conflict. It needs assistance to disarm former combatants from rebel movements, build capacity and reform its institutions, protect its civilians and offer them relief. These are some of the main corollaries for delivering the expected peace dividends. International partners should seize the current opportunity to break the cycle of violent conflict and sow the seeds for a steady recovery in the country.***

# International Response and the PBC

In search of more sustained international support in this watershed period, the Government of the CAR has requested that its country be added to the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). This request coincided with growing awareness within the International Community of the need for increased attention to and support for this “donor orphan”. Subsequently, on 12 June 2008, the CAR followed Burundi, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau as a country on the agenda of the PBC. In consultation with the government of the CAR, the PBC selected Belgium as Chair of the country-specific meeting (CSM) devoted to the country.

## Box 2: The Peacebuilding Commission

Established in 2005, the PBC is an intergovernmental advisory body of the United Nations that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict, and is a key addition to the capacity of the International Community in the broad peace agenda.

The Peacebuilding Commission plays a unique role in (1) bringing together all of the relevant actors, including international donors, the international financial institutions, national governments, troop contributing countries; (2) marshalling resources and (3) advising on and proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery and where appropriate, highlighting any gaps that threaten to undermine peace.

In consultation with the CAR authorities, the PBC started its country-specific activities by identifying the country’s key peacebuilding priorities:

1. **Security-Sector Reform** concerns the in-depth reform of institutions crucial for the stability of a democratic State, such as a paid, well disciplined and properly trained army and police, appropriately sized to the needs and means of the nation. It also includes the process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of former rebels. Within SSR, the latter *issue of DDR represents an absolute urgency* in the wake of the Inclusive Political Dialogue.
2. **Good Governance and the Rule of Law** remain important challenges in this country still suffering from serious human rights violations, insufficient democratic structures, a deficient administrative culture and public services that must do more to reach the population beyond the capital.
3. **Development Hubs** represent a key concept in the poverty reduction strategy of the Government of CAR. They serve the three-fold objective of restoring Government authority throughout the entire territory through a decentralized structure, revitalizing economic areas and improving access to public services in densely populated areas.

In March 2009, the PBC adopted a three-year **Strategic Framework for peacebuilding Document (SFD)**. This living document, subject to biannual reviews, represents a contract between the Central Africans and their national, regional and international partners, and serves as a tool for mutual engagement and accountability. It will list priority actions, results, and commitments of these stakeholders in favor of peacebuilding.

*The approval of the SFD also marks the beginning of a resource mobilization campaign of the PBC on behalf of peacebuilding in CAR. This campaign is aimed at both traditional and non-traditional actors within the International Community.*

# Paths to Engagement for International Partners

**Institutional actors who would be interested in contributing to peacebuilding efforts in CAR have several instruments at their disposal to elaborate their actions or plan of engagement:**

**1. Mapping Document of Resources and Gaps for Peacebuilding in CAR.** This document has been developed by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to facilitate the identification of concrete actions and projects requiring support. It provides an overview of the situation of the country, as well as a detailed list of peacebuilding actions and projects by all stakeholders in CAR. Combined with the priority actions and commitments of the Strategic Framework Document, it also serves as a tool for identifying concrete tracks for engagement. The Mapping Document can be accessed under “Other Information” in the CAR rubric of the PBC’s country-specific meetings webpage: <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/pbc-countrymtgs.shtml>

**2. Consultations with the Chair of the Country-Specific Meeting (CSM) on CAR.** Supported the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and his own staff at the Belgian Mission, the CSM Chair stands ready to facilitate the identification of peacebuilding projects and actions in CAR that match the specific priorities and competencies of potential providers of resources or assistance.

**Alternatively, donor countries may also choose to contribute to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).** As part of the UN peacebuilding architecture, this fund aims to address countries’ immediate needs as they emerge from conflicts. The Peacebuilding Fund supports countries before the PBC, but is also available to countries in similar circumstances as designated by the Secretary-General, as well as for individual peacebuilding emergency projects. At the present time, it is not possible to earmark contributions to the PBF for a specific country.

## Box 3: Contact Information and Relevant Resources and Links

### Chair of the PBC’s Country-Specific Meeting on CAR:

Ambassador Grauls  
Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN  
One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza  
885 Second Avenue, 41<sup>st</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
United States of America  
Tel: +1 (212) 378.6300  
Fax: +1 (212) 681.7618

### United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office:

Philip Helminger  
Officer in charge of CSM CAR  
UN Headquarters, Office S-645A  
New York, NY 10017  
United States of America  
Tel: +1 (917) 367-9716  
Fax: +1 (917) 367-9356

### Documents to be found under the CAR rubric of the PBC’s country-specific meetings webpage

(<http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/pbc-countrymtgs.shtml>):

- **Background Papers** on the Central African Republic (04.09.2008), on each of the three peacebuilding priority areas for CAR (22.10 – 10.12.2008), and on the Inclusive Political Dialogue (08.10.2008);
- **Mission Reports** of the Chair’s visit (10 – 11.07.2008) and the CSM CAR delegation (30.10 – 06.11.2008);
- **Statements by the Chair and other documents**
- Mapping of resources and gaps document

### Other Relevant Links:

- Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team CAR (HDPT CAR): <http://hdptcar.net>
- United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA): <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/car.html>
- United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF): <http://www.unpbf.org>