

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

### **Update on the Electoral, Political and Rule of Law situation in CAR**

**28 October 2021**

1. On 28 October, H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations and Chair of the Central African Republic (CAR) Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), convened an Ambassadorial-level meeting with a focus on the electoral, political and rule of law situation, to inform the written advice of the Configuration to the Security Council, ahead of MINUSCA mandate renewal.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair stressed the importance of reinforcing security in CAR where the situation, although improving, remains fragile. Noting that efforts at this level must be complemented by an effective engagement in the political process. The Chair welcomed the efforts by the Government, MINUSCA, international and regional partners to provide positive momentum to the implementation of the Political Agreement. He acknowledged the conclusion of the most recent presidential and legislative elections, the ongoing Republican Dialogue, the Joint Road Map adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the unilateral ceasefire announced by President Touadéra, and preparations for local elections in 2022. The local elections, which require the mobilization of US\$10 million, are critical for successful decentralization, governance and local development processes. The Chair also alerted to the acute humanitarian crisis that continues to affect the country and called for the urgent mobilization of the international community to meet pressing humanitarian needs. He welcomed the advances in terms of transitional justice and strengthening the rule of law and noted, in this regard, the establishment of the Truth and Justice Reconciliation and Reparation Commission, the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court and the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry. Finally, he reiterated the call to the Central African authorities to strengthen efforts to fight against hate speech and disinformation campaigns, particularly those targeting MINUSCA.
3. The Prime Minister, H.E. Henri-Marie Dondra, commended the PBC and its CAR Configuration as an important forum for partnership, common analysis and understanding of the peacebuilding challenges in the country. He appreciated MINUSCA's contribution to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, indicating the support of the President to the renewal of the mandate. He emphasized the Government's full commitment to the Political Agreement, demonstrated by the organization of timely elections as well as efforts made to advance the political transition, to reestablish state authority, to ensure inclusivity of the Republican Dialogue, and to institute the ceasefire. In regard to the written advice, the Prime Minister recommended the inclusion of the following aspects, namely, support to the efforts to implement the Political Agreement; the promotion of national ownership; the

fostering of national unity; support to the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding (RCPCA); the strengthening of the rule of law and security sector reform (especially the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation process); combatting impunity and human rights violations (especially the need for accountability); the continuation of strategic and operational partnerships; as well as the organization of local elections.

4. Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA, noted that the ICGLR Joint Road map added positive impetus to the Political Agreement. He highlighted the efforts made to ensure the Road Map is complementary to the compliance of the ceasefire and its contribution to the Republican Dialogue. On the electoral process, he pointed out the political, security, technical, operational, and financial constraints facing the holding of local elections and requested for MINUSCA's mandate continuation to have an enhanced electoral support role. Furthermore, it is necessary to strengthen MINUSCA's good offices' capacity and support for the political process to enable it to effectively support the Government in the implementation of the Political Agreement, enhance the judicial and penitentiary system, and support the fight against impunity and the transitional justice processes. On the aspect on impunity, he informed that the Government had published the report of the special commission of inquiry (which had been established by the Government on 4 May 2021) to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law documented by MINUSCA. He noted that the Special Criminal Court (SCC) has been operationalized, with 12 cases under investigation and four others in the preliminary investigation phase, while the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission is not yet fully functional due to human, financial, material, logistical and financial constraints.
5. Ms. Lina Ekomo, representing Women in Africa Initiative, appreciated the opportunity the PBC provides for civil society to have a voice. She underlined that it was necessary to recognize the impact of political decisions on the ordinary lives of the population. She highlighted the need to include civil society in the decision making and mediation processes of the Political Agreement. She stressed the importance for inclusive and candid dialogue, which effectively involves women and youth, and creates space for civil society, to facilitate national reconciliation. Notwithstanding, the dialogue provides an opportunity to initiate real transformational change in the socio-political and security dynamics of the country. In respect to local elections, she said they provide an avenue to strengthen democracy and local governance, and that therefore it was crucial to empower to civil society to advocate for social mobilization, citizen participation and peaceful elections. On the rule of law, the partnerships with society should be reinforced in order to increase community dialogue to reduce intercommunal violence, build the resilience of the population and restore confidence and the social contract with state authorities.

6. Member States welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:

- They commended President Touadéra's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, which represents an important milestone towards finding a political solution for the conflict and supporting the implementation of the Political Agreement. It is critical to ensure that there is adequate compliance and monitoring of the ceasefire and respect for the Political Agreement, which remains the only common and viable framework for the implementation of the ceasefire as well as for the consolidation of peacebuilding and sustaining peace dividends.
- They encouraged the continued engagement and collaboration of the CAR authorities with the PBC, which benefitted from the cross-pillar mandate of the PBC and its advisory and bridging roles to advance peacebuilding and sustaining peace as well as its coordination with the Security Council.
- They noted the key role played by the region and regional and sub-regional organizations in providing momentum to the Political Agreement, including with the adoption of the ICLGR Joint Road Map, which provides impetus to political dialogue, the renewal of the peace process and the path to national reconciliation and recovery. However, they stressed that the principles of national ownership and leadership should continue to underpin the Political Agreement.
- They emphasized the importance of the upcoming local elections and the basis they provide for decentralization, good governance and local development processes. They underscored that local elections need to be inclusive, credible, and transparent, and include internally displaced persons, returnees and other new voters in the voter database.
- They acknowledged the overall efforts of MINUSCA in addressing peacebuilding challenges and opportunities, its support to the Political Agreement, and role in facilitating the completion of the presidential and legislative elections, as well as strengthening the rule of law, particularly the judicial, penal and accountability mechanisms.
- They recognized the important contribution of civil society to the implementation of the Political Agreement and to ensuring inclusivity, gender equality and diversity of the Republican Dialogue. They called for the creation of sufficient space for all stakeholders, particularly the meaningful participation of women, youth, and minorities to allow for the sustainability of the political transition process and stability.
- They welcomed the progress made in strengthening the rule of law, especially the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court with the commencement of trial hearings, the report of the Commission of Inquiry, and the deployment of judicial officers beyond Bangui. However, they urged for concrete steps to be taken to ensure accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations, including conflict related sexual violence, as well as combatting impunity to ensure justice for victims. In addition, they underlined that further

efforts were needed to enhance the transitional justice system and ensure the functionality of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission.

- They expressed grave concern with the worsening security situation and the negative repercussions on the population, stressing the importance of prioritizing the capacity of MINUSCA to protect civilians. Furthermore, they stressed that the continuing hostilities against MINUSCA operations, especially the disinformation campaign, hate speech and incitement to violence, the recurrent SOFA violations and direct threats to the safety and security of peacekeepers are a source of alarm. It is critical to avail MINUSCA with the necessary resources to provide a safe and enabling environment for peacekeepers.
- They appreciated the financial investments made by the Peacebuilding Fund and bilateral donors to peacebuilding projects and initiatives, and the increased focus and assistance on socio-economic issues and reinforcing the linkages of the RCPCA with national development priorities to leverage comparative synergies of all partners to generate peace dividends.