

**Ambassadorial-Level Meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission
Central African Republic Configuration**

**7 May 2020
Chair's Summary**

1. On 7 May, the Central African Republic (CAR) configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened an Ambassadorial-level virtual meeting on the situation in CAR, convened by H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Chair of the PBC CAR Configuration. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding the status of preparations for the legislative and presidential elections planned for 2020-2021.
2. In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled that the PBC, soon after the outbreak of the COVID-19 outbreak, had considered the particular vulnerabilities the pandemic can create for countries under its consideration. Against this background, the Chair emphasized the importance of maintaining international attention on CAR and exploring how the Commission could best support the implementation of the peace agreement and the preparations for the elections in a timely and peaceful manner. The Chair took the opportunity to renew the commitment of the Commission towards supporting a successful electoral process, including in mobilizing sufficient financial resources. In this regard, he welcomed the 5 million USD committed by the Government and stressed the need for further contributions to the UNDP basket fund, announcing his own government's intention to contribute financially to support electoral preparations. In addition, he underscored the importance of ensuring the inclusive participation in the elections by all Central Africans, including refugees, which had been discussed during his recent visit to Bangui in February 2020. The Chair also recalled his fruitful visit to Washington, D.C. in February to discuss the ongoing support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to CAR, including to the electoral process.
3. H.E. Mr. Augustin Yangana-Yahote, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization of CAR, presented the Government's plans regarding electoral preparations. Based on the indicative timetable of electoral operations that had been drawn up in September 2018, the National Electoral Authority (ANE) had nearly completed mapping exercises of registration centers and future polling and counting sites, established 117 of 127 ANE branches and had started deployments and was completing the recruitments of the trainers of the trainers of the electoral officials. The Minister emphasized that the challenges of implementing the electoral activities spanned across issues of security, financing and health. He recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic could have a negative impact on voter registration and voting operations, and informed the Commission that the ANE would carry out its activities in compliance with measures to prevent further spread of the virus. He further highlighted resource limitations at the local level as a barrier against inclusive and orderly elections and

reiterated the Government's engagement to ensure the participation of Central African refugees in the presidential election, specifying however that it will require additional financing that was currently being sought. The Minister also underscored that the security threat in CAR was almost permanent and informed about the plan to enable the population to vote safely that was currently being developed by the Government and MINUSCA.

4. Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Chief of MINUSCA, underscored that delays in holding the 2020-2021 elections within constitutional timelines could lead to a breach of the constitutional order, lead to a loss of legitimacy of institutions and expose CAR to serious political risks. To prevent such a scenario, the G5 (France, United States, World Bank, European Union, African Union and the ECCAS) was conducting broad consultations with the stakeholders and the Central African institutions, to promote dialogue and consensual management of all concerns relating to the electoral process. He welcomed the ANE's submission of a new electoral calendar for the upcoming elections during the Strategic Committee meeting of 29 April under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The calendar confirmed the holding of the elections within the constitutional timeline, with the first round of polls on 27 December 2020 and a possible second round in February 2021, and provided clarity on the process at a critical time. The completion of the mapping of registration centers, the establishment of ANE branches, the preparation of Integrated Security Plans were welcome achievements. MINUSCA remained committed to supporting peaceful, timely and inclusive elections, through its good offices, technical support through MINUSCA and the Country Team; and the Mission's logistical and operational support. He highlighted the Government's contribution of 5 million USD and noted that the expected needs through the UNDP basket fund were estimated at 41.8 million USD, of which the EU had pledged 15 million EUR and disbursed 12 million while UNDP had provided 2 million USD. He noted that 10 million USD was yet to be mobilized for the presidential and legislative elections, with an additional 11 million USD for the regional and local elections to be held in 2021. The DSRSG provided details on the approximately 100 positive cases of COVID-19 in the country and noted the need for increased testing. She underlined that the pandemic added another layer to the ongoing challenges, especially in some border areas, and stressed that the peacebuilding gains made could not be allowed to be reversed, while recognizing the lack of capacity and resources.
5. Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, recognized that the country's multifaceted challenges were now even more complex due to the pandemic and required a redoubling of collective efforts. She welcomed the robust measures taken by the Government to mitigate the spread of the virus and welcomed that several Central African armed groups had echoed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. She underscored the importance of the Government's continued efforts to engage with armed groups and mediate between alienated communities as well as to increase state presence and services to spur development

in marginalized regions. She commended the authorities for their efforts to ensure that inclusive, free and credible elections were held within constitutional deadlines. In this regard, she urged for further support from in the international community in safeguarding the hard-won democratic gains and stressed the need for additional financial contributions to the basket fund. The ASG acknowledged that the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) had provided significant resources for peacebuilding activities in CAR since 2007 with a total budget of \$100 million. She concluded by underscoring the importance of further strengthening partnerships between the UN, the World Bank, the European Union, the African Development Bank and the Government for the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, and recognized that the success of collective efforts would be measured against tangible peace dividends for the most vulnerable citizens and communities.

6. Mr. Han Fraeters, World Bank Country Manager, updated on the socioeconomic outlook in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the previously expected growth rate of 4.4% of GDP during 2020 had decreased to between 0.8% and -1.2% of GDP. He informed that the World Bank and the IMF had recently agreed to cover the expected budget shortfall of 70 million USD of the total annual budget of approximately 400 million USD. The World Bank had approved an emergency grant of 25 million USD, while the IMF had approved emergency assistance of 38 million USD under the Extended Credit Facility. CAR would also benefit from debt service relief under the IMF Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust as well as bilateral debt relief through the G20. Furthermore, the World Bank and the IMF ,in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, had set up a mechanism to monitor all expenditures related to COVID-19. The Country Manager underlined the importance of comprehensive socioeconomic response to the COVID-19 pandemic under the leadership of the Government, in addition to the health response. He updated on the preparations of a World Bank emergency social protection program to provide cash transfers for the most vulnerable, which was expected to be active in the summer, and on World Bank support to the Government on facilitating a public-private dialogue to engage the private sector in the COVID-19 response. In conclusion, the Country Manager underlined that the crisis had created opportunities for further strengthening local partnerships, especially highlighting the cooperation between the Government, the World Bank, MINUSCA, the UN Country Team and humanitarian actors.

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

- They recognized the particular vulnerability of CAR to the COVID-19 threat, in light of the severe political, security and humanitarian challenges that continued to persist and announced various forms of financial support to the government. They welcomed the measures taken by the authorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They stressed the need to prioritize health and humanitarian response, while ensuring that the COVID outbreak did not distract attention from compliance with and the

implementation of the peace agreement, which was the most important priority for CAR. They welcomed the joint efforts of the UN system, the World Bank Group and the IMF to seek for innovative and joint-up responses to the multi-dimensional challenges the country faced as a good model for promoting peace-development-humanitarian links. They agreed on the need for coordinated efforts to strengthen capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better, with some Member States particularly noting the need to strengthen the rule of law.

- They reiterated the need for all actors to adhere to the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire and the provisions of the peace agreement. They stressed the importance of remaining vigilant of destabilization attempts and disinformation. In addition, they highlighted the flexible and important role of the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting peacebuilding activities in CAR. Some Member States also stressed the need to engage the private sector in COVID-19 response and sustaining peace.
 - They strongly underscored the need to hold, inclusive, secure and credible elections within constitutional timelines and commended the efforts made by the authorities towards staying on track with the electoral calendar in this challenging context. They recognized the resource challenges for the elections that had been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and voiced concern over the lack of funding – a number of PBC Members announced they were considering further financial contributions to the electoral process. They welcomed the commitment of the government to ensure inclusive and participatory elections, including the participation of refugees and vulnerable groups, and urged the need to ensure an inclusive dialogue among stakeholders in the lead up to the elections. They underscored the need to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women and youth in the electoral process and in COVID-19 response, as well as to address the specific needs of women in light of the pandemic.
 - They called for solidarity at all levels and reiterated the support of the Peacebuilding Commission for the implementation of the peace agreement, especially highlighting its advisory role to the Security Council, as well as for MINUSCA to continue delivering on its mandate.
8. In his closing remarks, H.E. Mr. Augustin Yangana Yahote thanked the participants for their demonstrated engagement in CAR and their support in carrying out the elections in accordance with the electoral calendar. In conclusion, the Chair reiterated that the Commission would accompany the country in the electoral process and noted that the discussion had reaffirmed the strong support of the Commission for the Government’s peacebuilding priorities.