

Peacebuilding Commission
Country-specific Configuration on the
Central African Republic

29 March 2010

Context

The last Presidential and Parliamentary elections in CAR were held in 2005, and saw H.E. Mr. François Bozizé was elected as President of the Central African Republic, with a 5-year mandate. According to the national constitution, the next elections are to be held in 2010. The Independent Electoral Commission announced on 24 March that for technical reasons, the elections initially scheduled for end of April will have to be postponed. A new date for the first round has not been announced.

Preparations for the elections

The preparations for the 2010 elections have been marked by delays. After initial delays due to difficult discussions between the Government and the opposition parties, the country's electoral code was finally revised, adopted by Parliament and subsequently signed by the President.

Further delays were experienced in the process of establishing the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) by Presidential Decree. Its members were nominated by the President shortly after, and met to elect their President, Pastor Joseph Binguimalé. Soon after its establishment the IEC started working, against the backdrop of accusations of misuse of its limited resources.

The opposition withdrew its participation in the IEC, which they later re-instated, resulting in additional delays. To date, the IEC has yet to present a consolidation electoral budget and an electoral calendar. A Presidential decree set the date for the first round of the elections on 25 April. Most recently, on 24 March 2010, the IEC announced the postponement of the elections for technical reasons.

The UN Department of Political Affairs – Electoral Assistance Division – deployed an electoral needs assessment mission to the country in November 2009. The assessment mission, together with the UNCT and in consultations with national authorities, estimated the electoral budget to be around US\$ 16.6 million.

Budget

The initial estimated budget for the elections was US\$ 16.6 million. In 2009 the Government made budgetary provisions amounting to FCFA 1 billion (approximately US\$ 2.2 million), and the 2010 budget includes provisions amounting to FCFA 2.5 billion, bringing the total government contribution to FCFA 3.5 billion, or approximately US\$ 7.5 million. With the contribution of the European Union of US\$ 6.5 million, PBF US\$ 1.5 million, and other contributions from France and UNDP, the electoral budget appeared to be fully covered.

However, the budget was recently revised up, to approximately US\$ 21 million. No detailed budget proposal, reflecting new cost items, has been submitted to the international community yet.

Constraints

The December 2008 Inclusive Political Dialogue set the stage for the elections in Central African Republic. In its recommendations, the dialogue concluded that the electoral code needed to be revised and that the IEC composition should reflect the participation at the Inclusive Political Dialogue. This resulted in a fairly large IEC, composed of 31 members, including its President.

The electoral lists are not ready. Initially declared lost and destroyed by the Government of CAR, the 2005 voters' lists have subsequently been rediscovered and while they do not provide the most updated information and data for elections to be conducted they are the only available lists. A complete voter's census including new registration would have been the more desirable solution.

Another conclusion of the IPD was that the country would proceed with another DDR exercise. Stakeholders agreed early on that a crucial condition for the holding of free, fair and transparent elections was the completion of the country's DDR process.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The national Government of CAR and the international community have repeatedly called for the holding of elections within the constitutional timeframes. In light of the recent decision by the IEC to postpone the elections for technical reasons, the PBC should continue to stress the importance of holding the elections at the earliest, and that whatever arrangement is found, it should be based on a consensus agreement among all stakeholders in the country's electoral process. The PBC should also stress again the importance of agreeing on a revised electoral timetable, and use its political weight to ensure adherence to that revised calendar, once available.

Funding does not seem to constitute an issue in the holding of the elections, thanks to the large support from the international community (EU, PBF, France, UNDP...); in addition to a solid contribution to the electoral budget by the Government of CAR itself. The PBC discussions would greatly benefit from receiving an updated budget proposal for the elections in CAR. Should there be a shortfall in the funding, the PBC and its Chair could mobilise the necessary resources to fill that gap.

It would have been ideal for elections to be held after the conclusion of the country's DDR. The PBC should continue to engage with the national stakeholders in finding ways to create the necessary conditions for the holding of the elections. The PBC should also encourage all parties to ensure an environment conducive to holding free and fair elections is created, including respect of human rights, freedom of speech and movement, and refrain from inflammatory actions.