

Report of the Central African Republic Partners' Round Table

16-17 June 2011, Brussels, Belgium

Introduction

1. A partners' round table organised by the Government of the Central African Republic (CAR), with the support of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank (WB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) was held at Palais d'Egmont in Brussels on 16 and 17 June 2011. The event was hosted by the Government of Belgium.
2. The round table was the follow-up a high-level event co-organised by the PBC and the WB on 20 September 2010, in the margins of the MDG Summit, to discuss the peacebuilding and reconstruction challenges of the CAR. A commitment by the PBC, the WB and other partners was made at that time to support the country in organising a partners' round table after the holding of elections in CAR.
3. Around 160 participants attended the event, representing 29 member states, 35 international and regional organisations and financial institutions, as well as observers representing civil society, national and international Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs), and the private sector.
4. The CAR delegation was led by President François Bozizé, and included the country's Prime Minister, Minister of State for Planning and the Economy, in addition to several other key Ministers. Additional high-level representation included H.E. Mr. Jean Ping, President of the AU Commission, H.E. José Luís Guterres, Vice-Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, H.E. François-Xavier de Donnée, Minister of State of the Kingdom of Belgium, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Ouzzine, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Secretary General of the ACP Group, Mrs. Margaret Vogt, Special Representative of the Secretary General in CAR, Mr. Michel Wormser, World Bank, Director, Strategy and Operations, Africa region, Mr. Antoine Ntsimi, President of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and Mr. Elkheshen Kamal, African Development Bank, Vice-President in charge of Fragile States.

Observations

5. The main documentation submitted for consideration by participants to the round table was the country's second generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II), entitled Reducing Extreme Poverty through Peacebuilding and Economic Revitalisation. The proposed strategy elaborates priority actions under three strategic directions for a five-year period covering 2011-2015. The funding requirements for the programme are of US\$ 9.8 billion when including regional infrastructure projects (US\$ 5.5 billion excluding regional projects).

6. The PRSP II develops the vision by the Government of CAR for the coming 5 years under three pillars: (1) Peacebuilding, Peace and Security, Governance and the legally constituted State; (2) Economic Revitalisation and Regional Integration; and (3) Human Capital and Basic Social Services. The event provided the opportunity to the Government to demonstrate its commitment to the country's peacebuilding process, including through the recently elaborated Government programme, presented to and approved by the National Assembly on 18 May 2011.
7. As a direct result of the considerable and concerted advocacy efforts made by a number of key partners of CAR, including the PBC and its Chair, the level and number of participants to the event far exceeded initial expectations, for a country still in the process of recovering from lack of attention as a result of its difficult past. The diversity of participants, including a number of non-traditional donors, emerging donors, the private sector and NGOs, was recognized as a clear sign that the image of CAR might be changing.
8. Expectations in terms of funding commitments were obviously modest. For one, it should be noted that multi-year cooperation agreements govern the engagement of a number of key development partners in CAR, including the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Union, France, and the United Nations system. With most of these agreements having been only recently finalised, in consultation with the Government of CAR, it was not expected that the country's traditional partners would be announcing additional contributions. Nevertheless, the WB announced that as a result of achieving compliance status in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), CAR would be eligible for an increased IDA allocation. As a result of CAR attaining the HIPC Initiative completion point, after which the country already benefited from considerable debt relief, additional debt relief could also be expected.
9. There was a unanimous recognition of the dire challenges of the Central African Republic and the importance for the country to seize the opportunity afforded by the recently completed electoral process and the subsequent nomination of a new Government to tackle head-on the many peacebuilding and development challenges faced by the population.
10. In light of the vastness of these needs, some speakers encouraged national authorities to prioritise their actions in the new PRSP II, and to focus on peacebuilding measures aimed at enhancing stability and targeting first and foremost the populations in need. Progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as dealing with the adverse impact of the global financial and energy crises on the living conditions of the populations also needed to be prioritized.
11. Recognition was also given to a number of critical developments in the weeks and days leading to the round table, such as the conclusion of ceasefire agreements with the last remaining rebel group (CPJP) and the agreement with FPR (Front Populaire pour le Redressement) to be repatriated to Chad to integrate the DDR process in that

country. The clear commitments made by the Government to conclude DDR before the end of 2011, the creation of a permanent independent secretariat in charge of organising elections, and the commitment to review the 2009 electoral code were equally welcomed by CAR's partners, who stressed the need to translate these clear commitments into action.

12. Many speakers stressed the need for the Government of CAR to take measures to improve the business environment, and create the conditions conducive for increased private investment interest in the country, recognizing the untapped potential for economic opportunities.
13. It was agreed that a final communiqué of the partners' round table would be finalised in the coming weeks and circulated to all participants. It was also agreed that the event was but the beginning of a longer term effort to strengthen existing and forge new partnerships with a wide range of current and future partners of the Central African Republic. The contacts established during the two-day event would need to be follow-up to lead to more concrete commitments, in particular for new partners.