

Briefing to the Security Council on the Central African Republic
Delivered by
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Mr. President,

Members of the Council,

The situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) has greatly deteriorated since the last United Nations briefing to the Council. The attacks by the anti-Balaka against Bangui, on 5 December, triggered a period of heavy unrest in the capital and in the interior of the country. In Bangui alone, over 750 casualties have been confirmed, and the death toll outside Bangui is likely to be substantial.

According to the latest information, approximately 2.2 million people in the CAR need humanitarian assistance: close to half of the population of the country. One in every two inhabitants of Bangui has sought refuge outside their homes. Their number is estimated at approximately 513,000, of whom 100,000 are at a makeshift camp at the airport.

Killings in Bangui and in the rest of the country continue every day, and the population remains divided along religious affiliation. Access to residential neighborhoods in Bangui is controlled either by “anti-Christian” or “anti-Muslim” checkpoints, manned by armed civilians. Similarly, localities outside Bangui like Bossangoa, Bouar, Bozoum and Paoua, amongst others, witness atrocities on a daily basis, including direct clashes between the Christian and Muslim

communities. The danger of escalation into sustained violence along religious lines remains real, with the potential for long-term danger to the country.

Several countries, including Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal repatriated tens of thousands of their citizens, the vast majority of whom are Muslims. This is the first time in the history of the CAR that people on account of their religion have felt obliged to leave the country for fear for their lives.

The quick deployment by the African Union and France of MISCA and SANGARIS, respectively, prevented the situation from degenerating to higher levels of conflict and atrocities. The speed at which both forces attained operational level and their subsequent deployment have changed the security dynamics in Bangui, with visible patrols being undertaken by both forces. As MISCA continues to work towards reaching its authorized strength of 6,000, its presence will be increased outside of Bangui, thus contributing to the improvement of the security situation in the country side.

We greatly appreciate the role of the African States and France in the committing troops to the CAR. I would like, at this stage, to pay tribute to the African and French soldiers that have fallen while performing their duties in the name of Peace. The role played by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and by its individual member states to bring stability to the CAR should also be commended.

Currently, we are working with the African Union on the organization of the donors' conference this Council requested to support MISCA. This will be held on February 1st in Addis Ababa, on the margins of the AU Summit. We count on the generous support of Council members and other states and organizations.

Mr. President,

The events of 5 December dealt a serious blow to the Transitional authorities and to the Head of State of the Transition in particular. The inability of the Transitional authorities to curb widespread Séléka human rights abuses and violations against Christian populations over the past year, contributed to the gradual transformation of local self-defense groups, the anti-Balaka, into a full-blown rebellion. As a result of its predominantly Muslim composition, Séléka abuses against the Christian populations in the CAR were quickly interpreted as a religious conflict pitting Muslims against Christians. The International Commission of Inquiry, to be established in accordance with Security Council resolution 2127, is a most welcome development that will certainly look into these and other abuses and human rights violations.

On the other hand, the frustration of Muslim communities in the CAR, is the result of years of marginalization by the successive Governments since the country's independence over fifty years ago. For instance, while the Muslim community represents an estimated 20% of the total population of the CAR, no Muslim holidays are observed officially by the country.

I would like to commend the Forum of Religious Leaders for their laudable efforts and sacrifices, and for their pro-active approach in trying to appease tensions among communities. The Forum brings together the Archbishop, the Imam and a Pastor of Bangui. They need support as a matter of urgency to be able to carry on with their efforts.

Mr. President,

ECCAS Heads of State have proposed an inclusive national conference. This conference should serve as a forum for all the national actors to share their

frustrations, identify the country's challenges, and, hopefully, agree on the way forward, including preparing for elections, and determining a common set of priorities for the post-transition period.

Concerning the elections, some progress was made with the adoption of a new Electoral Code, and the swearing in of the seven-member National Electoral Authority (NEA), which brings together representatives of civil society, the political parties and the Government. The United Nations mission on the ground, BINUCA, is providing technical and logistics support to the NEA. We will soon deploy an Electoral Needs Assessment Mission. Conditions conducive to holding elections, however, remain elusive. The systematic looting of all local administrations and destruction, by the ex-Séléka, of all types of civil national registries, means that reconstituting the voters' lists would require a massive effort.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of all armed groups should constitute one of the top priorities. We must learn from our past experiences in the CAR, and the several DDR programmes carried out. We must ensure that the conditions conducive to such an exercise are present, including the requisite amount of funding. A DDR process implemented in accordance with internationally accepted standards is critical. It will pave the way for holistic security sector reforms, and contribute to laying the foundations for a lasting peace.

Mr. President,

Allow me to say a few words about the humanitarian situation, which has deteriorated at an alarming rate. All Central Africans have been affected by the crisis. As I mentioned from the outset, nearly half the population needs humanitarian assistance. Persistent violence has forced one fifth of the population

to flee their homes; that number has more than doubled since 5 December. Over 935,000 people are now sleeping outside or in temporary spaces. In Bangui, half of the population has sought refuge at one of 55 IDP sites; over 100,000 people are seeking security at the airport alone. Those displaced urgently need protection and shelter as well as access to water, healthcare, food, basic supplies, and sanitation and hygiene services.

NGO partners and staff of UN humanitarian agencies, funds and programmes have remained in CAR to deliver assistance, in what is a very dangerous and unpredictable environment. The increase in violence last month has exacerbated the needs. Working closely with the civil society and religious leaders from all communities, NGOs and UN staff are tirelessly providing medical care and delivering supplies to hospitals, health centres and dispensaries at IDP sites.

On 11 December, the UN activated a System-Wide Level 3 Emergency Response. This allows us to send our most experienced and skilled staff, release emergency funds and mobilize relief supplies and pipelines. Since then, a Senior Humanitarian Coordinator at the level of Assistant Secretary-General has been deployed to strengthen the humanitarian response in the country. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos allocated US\$10 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support relief efforts in the CAR. UN agencies have also ramped up their response.

Despite the tremendous efforts of humanitarians on the ground, needs continue to outpace the response. Violence and insecurity has forced many to flee into the forests and out of reach of aid. Lack of funding has also constrained the response and threatens to further inhibit humanitarian operations unless funding is

urgently received. For example, without additional contributions, WFP food pipeline for the CAR will be 90 percent depleted in February.

The Humanitarian Country Team has developed a 100-Day Plan for Priority Humanitarian Action, which is part of the wider 2014 response strategy. The Plan requires US\$152 million to rapidly scale up life-saving assistance and protection. Last year's humanitarian appeal for CAR was one of the most underfunded appeals globally, and the competing needs worldwide are by no means less burdensome this year.

Mr. President,

I cannot conclude my remarks without making reference to protection issues, notably those affecting women and children who always bear the brunt in conflict situations. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and a representative of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict conducted a joint assessment mission to the CAR from 17 to 21 December. The joint mission called for urgent action to protect civilians, particularly women and children, and prevent the country from plunging into full-scale sectarian conflict. The United Nations has also undertaken missions to places like Bria, Bouar, Paoua, Bossangoa, Bambari, for now, and through a concerted UN effort in the CAR, we are finalizing support packages for the communities out there. The same is being done for children in Armed Conflict.

Women and children constitute the most vulnerable group in the society and are therefore disproportionately affected by the dire humanitarian situation. Women, Peace and Security questions as outlined in the seminal Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent related resolutions have always guided our actions in the search for solutions in the CAR. I am pleased to see that the donor community is paying increased attention to the CAR, which, we hope will result in desperately needed additional resources.

Mr. President,

The violence and the atrocities in the CAR must stop. Those in positions of authority or influence must do more to end violence and halt grave violations against civilians, including children. Attacks against humanitarian personnel, and the use of civilian spaces such as schools and hospitals for military purposes must also end. I ask the Council to again remind all parties to the conflict of their responsibilities under International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and to ensure that all those responsible for violations are held to account.

There is a very real risk that the crisis could spread beyond the country's borders and further destabilize the region. The United Nations, under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the CAR, will continue to do its best to: prevent the situation in the CAR from unravelling further and human rights abuses and violations to reach unthinkable levels; ensure humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable; and return the country to constitutional order. Here at Headquarters, the Deputy Secretary-General regularly chairs a Senior Action Group to consider how best to respond to the multifaceted crisis in the CAR. This is the first case for the Secretary-General's new Rights Upfront

agenda. In conclusion, let me note that it is our collective responsibility to act now, before it's too late.

I thank you for your attention.