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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC DESCENDS INTO 'STATE OF ANARCHY', SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

TELLS SECURITY COUNCIL, URGING SANCTIONS AGAINST 'ARCHITECTS' OF VIOLATIONS

Prime Minister Asks France to Intervene 'With Force', Council to Push Country's 'Long-forgotten' Crisis to Top of Agenda

An already challenging situation in the Central African Republic had descended into a “state of anarchy and total disregard for international law”, as elements of the Séléka rebel group — which had seized power in a 24 March coup d'état — had turned their vengeance against an innocent population, the Secretary-General's Special Representative told the Security Council today.

Reinforcing the urgency of the situation, Nicolas Tiangaye, Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, requested France to intervene “with force” to disarm Séléka elements and the European Union and African Union to provide financial support for such a mission. He called for a Special Rapporteur to investigate human rights violations and prosecute perpetrators before national and international jurisdictions, and requested urgent aid for the 1.5 million victims.

Presenting the Secretary-General's latest report (document [S/2013/261](#)), which calls the situation “horrific and intolerable”, Special Representative Margaret Vogt said “the leadership is unable or unwilling to control the ranks of the militia groups or rein in local commanders”. Ahmad Allam-Mi (Chad), speaking on behalf of the Presidency of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), also briefed the Council.

“We believe that the time is ripe for the Council to consider the position of individual sanctions against the architects and perpetrators of these gross violations”, said Ms. Vogt, who also heads the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA). She did not want a desperate people to be left with no choice but to take the law into their own hands. In the meantime, regional leaders had mobilized to quickly fill the security vacuum, she added.

At summits in Libreville, Gabon; N'djamena, Chad; and Brazzaville, Republic of Congo they had laid out “political ground rules” for the new regime in Bangui, she said. They had outlined a road map for restoring a “democratic dispensation”, which called for ceasing hostilities and returning security. The road map also called for a return to constitutional order, based on the January Libreville Peace Agreement, with the Prime Minister assuming executive powers and the self-proclaimed President — Michel Djotodia — heading the National Transitional Council as the “Head of State of the Transition”.

[The so-called “Libreville Agreements” were signed on 11 January, following peace talks mediated by the Economic Community of Central African States. The accords comprise three documents: a declaration of principles to resolve the political and security crisis in the Central African Republic and ceasefire and political agreements.]

However, she continued, the National Transitional Council had fallen short of its goal of

representing all political persuasions and assuming the legislative role of the National Assembly, as controversy surrounded the process for nominating its members. As such, ECCAS Heads of State — on 18 March — had decided to expand that body to 135 members. The transitional arrangement was to last not more than 24 months, culminating with elections in which transitional leaders would not take part.

She said that, while Mr. Djotodia initially had accepted those decisions, he now insisted on retaining his role as President. The African Union, Organisation de la Francophonie and the Security Council itself all had firmly declared their support for the ECCAS political framework. The Séléka offensive had destroyed much of the justice system, including courthouses and prisons. The national security and defence forces had disintegrated and, despite repeated calls, only a small number had resumed their duties.

With that in mind, she advocated for a neutral security force to be deployed to contain the anarchy and compel the rebels to conform to the security framework laid down in Libreville. That framework called for all security forces to be regrouped, disarmed, demobilized and screened for integration into a reformed security force. Its presence — along with a follow-up committee to guarantee implementation of the Libreville Agreements and an International Contact Group to mobilize support — would provide a security and political “blanket” that would allow authorities to implement the accords.

For its part, the Peacebuilding Office had worked closely with the region to define those parameters, based on solid democratic principles and legality, she said, stressing that to establish a credible political post-transition framework, the foundations must be laid down now. Work to set up election management bodies, define the electoral constituency, disarm, demobilize and reintegrate combatants, reform the security sector and develop rule-of-law and justice mechanisms required a body that reflected the interest of the entire society.

For the United Nations, the role of the Prime Minister — as the “juridical face” of the transition — was critical, she said, as the position had resulted from an agreement to which everyone had subscribed. It was crucial to support regional actors in re-establishing the basis of the Libreville Agreements, which had been overturned during the coup.

In additional remarks, Mr. Tiangaye urged the Council to push his country’s “long-forgotten” crisis to the forefront of its agenda, as the unseen tragedy unfolding before its 4.6 million inhabitants involved summary executions, rape and recruitment of child soldiers. Lawless Séléka combatants had caused massive displacements of people in Bangui, while a lack of security on the roads had made the movement of persons and goods all but impossible. Such violence threatened the integrity of the Libreville Agreements and arrangements set out in N’Djamena.

To change that course, the Central African Republic had held broad consultations to establish a Government of national unity, he said, in line with recommendations made at the 18 April ECCAS Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State. The current Transitional Council should be abolished to adapt to current circumstances. Indeed, the transition had been outlined in N’Djamena, on 3 and 18 April, and in Brazzaville, on 3 May — meetings that also had recognized the legitimacy of the Prime Minister.

On the security front, the State’s collapse and disappearance of security and defence forces had led to a security vacuum, which, in turn, had sparked total anarchy. The situation in Bangui was particularly alarming, where unbridled pillaging had forced schools and businesses to close. Outside the capital, looting by Séléka elements targeted non-Muslims, which fuelled resentment among Christians.

The Lords Resistance Army (LRA) was also a threat. ECCAS had deployed the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX), agreeing to increase the number of peacekeepers from 700 to 2,000 to accommodate a situation that called for the use of force.

The Central African Republic could start preparing for elections once security was established, he said. “We must continue to believe in the Central African Republic and work to support it,” he said. Helping his country meant stabilizing the subregion. It meant shoring up peace in Africa and acting in solidarity with a nation that was clinging to life.

Offering a regional perspective, Mr. Allam-Mi, on behalf of the ECCAS Presidency, compared the situation in the Central African Republic to an “open wound” that would not heal. It was time to

prevent it from becoming gangrenous and infecting the subregion. The grave situation had disintegrated further, with thousands of armed men pillaging the country, while distressed civilians waited in vain for the international community to protect them.

He said the international community, as well as ECCAS, had condemned the unconstitutional regime change in the Central African Republic. As a next step, ECCAS had adopted a crisis-management plan and a road map for the transitional Government to restore political normalcy. An agreement, signed last January in Libreville, was considered the core of that commitment. Following the coup, ECCAS had held a special session in N'Djamena in April, with the participation of various African leaders, the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization de la Francophonie. That special session had condemned the forceful takeover in the Central African Republic and called on Michel Djotodia, the self-proclaimed president, to adhere to the Libreville Agreement.

In that context, all Central African stakeholders — including Mr. Djotodia — had accepted the road map proposed by the summit. A National Transitional Council, which would act as a constituent assembly, had been created, with the basic mission of drafting a constitution for elections to take place in 18 months time. The head of Séléka had been elected as its President for the transition period.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Tiangaye — who had been elected by the Libreville Agreement — held broader powers, he said. The Transitional President, the Prime Minister and other members of the transitional Government were not eligible to run for office, he noted, adding that elections would take place according to a timeline agreed by consensus.

However, none of that would be possible without the safety of individuals and property, or financial means, he said. As such, ECCAS had agreed on the creation of an International Contact Group, which had met for the first time on 3 May. There was an urgent need to neutralize armed groups, and “canton” them by confining them to their barracks. MICOPAX troops should also be strengthened.

With that, he said the Security Council had a duty to express solidarity with and to support the Central African Republic, which remained “in agony”. ECCAS was doing everything it could to assist the transitional authorities to reduce insecurities. International support for that mission was needed.

The meeting began at 11:40 a.m. and adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

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