

Briefing to the Security Council
on the Situation in the Central African Republic (CAR)
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Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

1. I wish to commend the Council for its dedicated attention to the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) since the beginning of the conflict in December 2012 and especially following the coup d'état against

the government of Francois Bozize on 24 March 2013 and the attendant degradation of security in the whole country. The deliberations of the Council have been followed with much interest within the country and in the region. Expectations are high among the people of the CAR regarding the outcome of this particular meeting of the Security Council as there is a growing sense of despair among the population that see no immediate reprieve to the ordeal that presently confronts them. There is an expectation the international community would show solidarity with their plight and decide on some clear steps to bring an end to the impunity with which armed groups have unleashed a reign of terror on the entire population.

2. The report before you provides an analysis of the situation in the CAR since the launch of the Seleka offensive in December 2012. It underlines the impact of this rebellion on the people, the state capacity and infrastructure, security, human rights, the humanitarian situation, especially in the medical areas, access to food, basic needs and services and the high risk of famine, if the current situation persists. It also analyses the regional implication of the Seleka rebellion.

3. The Secretary General underlines that even at the best of times, the state capacity and infrastructure in the CAR was already at a rudimentary state, while health services were at an emergency level similar to situation seen in countries that have been in conflict for a long time. Now even these facilities have all but disappeared. An already challenging human rights environment, marked by systemic violation of rights even by law

enforcement officers, has collapsed into a state of anarchy and total disregard for international law, as elements of Seleka turned their vengeance against the population. Indiscriminate and often targeted killings, rampant rapes and assault on the innocent population, flagrant recruitment of children as soldiers, looting of homes, not just of the rich but even of already struggling citizens - even the SOS village was not spared, neither were Churches and convents- these continue, almost two months since Seleka took over the reins of power. The leadership is unable or unwilling neither to control the ranks of the militia groups nor to rein in local commanders.

4. The leaders of the region have strongly mobilised to quickly fill a security vacuum that the rebellion created and try to contain the situation in the CAR, as the country appears to have become a safe -haven to different foreign rebel forces, seeking to exploit natural resource for which the CAR is known. Public evidence shows that strip mining of the Diamond and Gold resources of the CAR have exponentially expanded in areas controlled by Seleka. Further complicating the picture is the growing insecurity in the neighbourhood as the conflict now poses direct threat to the security of its neighbours, especially the DRC, Chad and Cameroun.

5. These serious threat to peace and security of the people of the CAR and the Central Africa Region renders the re-establish of security and the rule of law in the CAR the highest priority issue.

6. The various Summits held in Libreville, N'djamena and finally in Brazzaville have laid out solid political ground rules for the new regime in Bangui to follow, as well as a clear roadmap of tasks that must be accomplished to enable the restoration of a democratic dispensation in the CAR. First, the cessation of all hostilities and the restoration of security throughout the territory of the CAR; secondly, a return to constitutional order that is pegged on the January Libreville Peace agreement, with the Prime Minister assuming Executive powers, while the self proclaimed President Michel Djotodia Heads the Transitional Council and is the Head of State of the Transition.

7. The scenarios, as implemented by the de-facto authorities suggest a different setting. The Transitional Council was supposed to be representative of all political persuasions in the country and to assume the legislative role of the National Assembly. However, the NTC felt short of this expectation as controversy surrounded the procedure through which its members were nominated, hence the decision by the Heads of State at the 18 March Summit at N'djamena to expand it to a body of 135. The Transitional arrangement is to last for a period of not more than 24 months, ending with elections to which the leaders of the transition would not be eligible to present themselves.

8. While Mr. Djotodia openly declared his acceptance of the decisions of the Heads of State of ECCAS, he has proceeded in doing the contrary. He insists on his role as President, constantly referring to the Decrees naming

himself President and his appointment of the Prime Minister, whom he has the power to remove, contrary to Libreville. He continues to run the country by Presidential Decrees. The international community, especially the African Union, Organisations de La Francophonie and this Council as well as many Member states, have firmly declared their support to the ECCAS political framework for the CAR. However, for this to work, a number of important measures would have to be taken. The distinctive roles and responsibilities of the Executive Prime Minister and the Head of the Transitional Government would have to be defined, in the framework of a Transitional Charter that would lay the ground rules for engagement during the period of the transition.

Mr. President,

9. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues to be a threat to security and the rule of law in the CAR. Progress made in the fight against the LRA, most notably the neutralisation of Binansio Okumu, one of the LRA's most prominent commanders, in January by the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) suffered a setback when Uganda announced the suspension of its operations against the LRA as a result of Séléka's call for the withdrawal of non sub-regional foreign troops from the Central African Republic. In this regard, I am happy to note the agreement by the CAR authorities that the Ugandan forces could provide support in the protection of the civilian population in this region from assault by all armed elements.

A. Human Rights and Justice

Mr. President,

10. The Séléka offensive destroyed much of CAR's justice system. In the 10 jurisdictions of the CAR, Séléka elements have destroyed most of the infrastructure that supported the justice system, including courthouses, appeal courts, court dossiers, prisons, prison registries and prosecutor files. The justice system, including prisons, will need to be rebuilt entirely. The destruction of administrative files related to birth and citizenship will undoubtedly create a problem during the registration of voters for the upcoming elections.

11. The Séléka offensive dismantled the policing architecture. National security and defence forces (gendarmerie, police and national army) have disintegrated and despite repeated calls to resume their duties, to date, only a small number of the police and national armed forces (FACA) officers have resumed their functions.

12. The current crisis underscores the urgency of security sector reform (SSR), and the urgent need to create an effective and inclusive security sector capable of providing security throughout the country. Broader security sector reform should be based on political consensus. It should include the restoration of State authority, collection of small arms and light weapons, and community recovery programmes, as well as the reintegration of ex-combatants into formal security and defence forces.

Mr. President,

13. The abuses and violations committed by Seleka combatants and other armed elements, including cases of rape, maiming, recruitment of children and forced marriages, are a source of grave concern for the protection of civilians. They constitute serious violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict as well as the Secretary General have expressed their concerns about the deteriorating security situation in the Central African Republic, it is critical that the Council unequivocally pronounces itself on the need for these abuses to be stopped now and for perpetrators to be individually held accountable for their actions. We believe that the time is ripe for the council to consider the imposition of individual sanctions against the architects and perpetrators of these gross violations. We do not want a desperate people to be left with no choice but to take the law into their own hands. The International Criminal Court is also closely monitoring the developments in the CAR and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issues a statement warning that the crimes committed against civilians were under close scrutiny by her office.

B. Humanitarian Situation

14. The latest crisis has exacerbated an already difficult situation for the population of the CAR. Human rights violations against civilians and population movements continue. Over 49,000 refugees have now been

registered in neighbouring countries since December, primarily in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo. Substantial numbers of refugees continue to arrive in these countries. In addition to the estimated 173,000 displaced since December, another 33,000 persons were already displaced, bringing the total number of IDPs to over two hundred thousand.

The number of violent attacks has dramatically increased in the first quarter of 2013 as a result of persisting insecurity in the country. Over 60% of these attacks are attributed to armed groups. At least one person is attacked daily since the beginning of 2013.

15. According to the FAO, 60% of rural inhabitants, who depend on agriculture for their livelihood are affected by the current crisis. More than 80,000 people (including 57,000 children under five) are estimated to be at risk of severe food insecurity during the upcoming lean season from now on to September. These figures are likely to increase with the rise in food prices triggered by the crisis. If seeds are not distributed during the present planting season, coupled with the increase in prices revealed by recent assessments in Bangui, there could be a risk of basic food shortages. This could eventually lead to acute food and nutritional insecurity in both rural and urban areas. With schools closed or occupied and teachers absent, at least 656,000 children currently have no access to education.

16. Difficult humanitarian access due to insecurity and limited road networks is the number one constraint for reaching those in need of assistance. Access has become severely curtailed since December amid the breakdown of law and order, with many humanitarian offices and

warehouses looted around the country, While all parties have in principle agreed to facilitate humanitarian access, insecurity is limiting humanitarian actors' ability to reach those in need of assistance, including internally displaced persons, host communities and victims of human rights violations.

17. Despite of access constraints, United Nations Agencies are organizing joint assessment missions to the field to identify needs and the humanitarian impact of the crisis. Missions in some provinces revealed that the humanitarian situation is worsening in the areas of health, water and sanitation, nutrition and protection, food security and education. The most urgent needs are in the food security sector where households have altered their diet by changes to their food sources, and the need of garbage disposal. Further assessments are planned in the coming weeks.

18. Additional funding is urgently required to support the humanitarian response capacity. The annual humanitarian appeal for the CAR, totalling \$129 million, is 29 per cent funded as of 10 May. It was estimated in March that an additional \$42 million was required to respond to the new needs triggered by the crisis, and this amount is now likely to increase further.

Mr. President,

Distinguished members of the Council,

19. There is an urgent need to help restore security stability in the CAR. This should be done by deploying a neutral security force that would contain the current state of anarchy and would force the rebel elements to conform to the security framework laid down in Libreville - that all security forces be

cantonned/regrouped, disarmed, demobilised, screened for absorption into a reformed security force. The Security Council and the entire international community must act quickly to protect the people of the CAR from the assault they are under by these armed groups; the situation in Bangui is particularly pressing as the city has the largest population concentration - about 1.5 million out of a population of 4.5 in the entire country. But this effort should not be limited to Bangui.

20. The presence of such neutral stabilisation force together with the close political accompaniment of the Follow-up committee established by the region and the just established International contact Group to accompany the transition is critical in providing a security and political blanket that would enable the authorities implement the Libreville Agreement and would allow the Prime Minister to play his role as Executive Head of Government. The international effort would also help to ensure that international assistance would not be abused in feeding impunity and authoritarianism. We welcome the current initiative by ECCAS to expand its force to 2000 and this requires the urgent support of the international community. It would also be critical for the regional force, FOMAC to review its strategic objectives and concept of operation to give the force some teeth. This short-term initiative needs to be quickly followed by an expanded regional force, possibly coordinated by the African Union with the support of the international community. For the very immediate, a bridging arrangement is required to stop current carnage.

21. The United Nations, through BINUCA, has worked closely with the region in defining these parameters for the transition that is based on solid democratic principles and legality. Experience has taught us that these principles are critical foundations for sustainable peace and security. To establish a credible and enduring political framework post transition, the foundations must be laid down now. The crucial transitional tasks, such as the establishment of the election management bodies, the definition of the electoral constituency, DDR and SSR, regionalisation, development of the rule of law and justice mechanisms, social and economic development, etc, require a representative body that reflects the interest of the entire society, otherwise, the transition may result in another round of conflict. For the United Nations, the role of the Prime Minister as the juridical face of the transition is critical as this position was a product of an agreement to which everyone had subscribed. We strongly believe that we should not encourage a system of impunity in a situation through which a democratic order is overturned by force of arms, even when confronted with serious governance challenges. The Libreville agreement was designed to address some of the grievances tabled by the rebels while respecting the democratic framework, the coup d'état overturned this transitional process towards and forcefully imposed a new order. It is critical that we support the regional actors in re-establishing the principle basis of Libreville.

Thank you.