



## Security Council

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### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. This report is submitted in compliance with the request of the Security Council contained in the Presidential Statement dated 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25), whereby the Council members requested me to keep them regularly informed about the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). This report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2005.

#### **II. Political situation**

2. The period under review continued to be marked by the establishment of republican institutions. On 8 August 2005, the Prime Minister submitted to the National Assembly his Government's general political programme, laying out his priorities for action in the areas of security and peacebuilding, macroeconomic and financial stabilization, structural reform and the rebuilding of basic infrastructure. The Prime Minister was of the view that in order to achieve those objectives, his cabinet must do everything in its power to undertake certain preparatory actions, including increasing the collection rate, enhancing collection of State revenues, signing a three-year cooperation agreement with international financial institutions, reforming the business sector, combating corruption and achieving transparency in the management of public funds.

3. President François Bozizé, by decree of 26 August 2005, appointed former Vice-President of the Republic Professor Abel Goumba to the post of National Ombudsman in accordance with constitutional provisions. Mr. Goumba resigned the leadership of his party, the Front patriotique pour le progrès, and gave up all his political responsibilities in order to devote himself his new duties. His appointment, seen as an important step towards peacebuilding and the strengthening of national political life, was favourably received by the Central African people.

4. With regard to the legislative branch, the settlement of electoral disputes by the Transitional Constitutional Court brought about a change in representation in the National Assembly. The new parliament now consists of 105 deputies, including 11 women, divided into 10 parliamentary groups and eight standing committees. The majority presidential Kwa Na Kwa party alone is made up of six parliamentary groups. During its special session held from 5 to 13 August 2005, the National Assembly adopted the Prime Minister's general political programme. During its regular session, among other things, it approved the 2005 supplementary budget and adopted the 2006 finance act.

5. The judicial branch has also undergone fundamental restructuring, especially at the level of the courts and tribunals. The permanent Constitutional Court was established on 8 September 2005, replacing the Transitional Constitutional Court.

6. Institutional changes have taken place in the media as well, inspiring those in charge of the press to show initiative and responsibility in the practice of their profession. Their greater conscientiousness contributed to a calming of the socio-political climate after the general election. In that regard, the United Nations system has provided substantial support in revitalizing press institutions and supplying them with technical equipment through the BONUCA Information Section, in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication, National Reconciliation, Democratic Culture, and Human Rights Promotion, as well as groups of journalists and the High Council for Communication.

### **III. Socio-economic and humanitarian situation**

7. Economic activity in the Central African Republic was heavily affected in 2005 by the negative consequences of the earlier politico-military crises and insufficient external assistance. The figures to date suggest a modest recovery of a little less than 2 per cent, as compared with a forecast of 2.6 per cent.

8. Slight improvements have been recorded in fiscal revenues and the wage bill, thanks to the census of State officials and civil servants conducted from 25 August through 5 September 2005, which resulted in the detection of close to 1,700 irregularities. Nevertheless, public finances are still in deep crisis, the main effect of which has been a new accumulation of salary arrears. By year's end, because of the scarcity of external budgetary assistance, the State has only been able to pay six months' worth of salaries, four of which were for 2005, thanks to the assistance of France and China. This budgetary shortfall has engendered a series of strikes, paralyzing a number of public services.

9. In this post-election phase, the anticipated external budgetary assistance is an absolute necessity if the Central African Republic is to be helped to overcome its difficulties. That means that everything possible must be done to bring about the speedy conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the Central African authorities and the international financial institutions. A second post-conflict programme with the International Monetary Fund would be advisable as a means to open the way for the Government to discuss cooperation with other development partners. However, external assistance alone will not suffice to revive the country's economy sustainably. The Government must step up the pace of reform and take other strict measures to control public expenditure, expand the tax base and improve

transparency in the management of State finances through a more effective anti-corruption drive.

10. The parts of the United Nations system responsible for operational development activities have acted within the framework of an integrated approach combining response to humanitarian emergencies, reconstruction and development activities, and improvement of the security situation. The revised United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2004-2006, which identified as strategic priorities democratic governance, reconstruction, post-conflict recovery and combating HIV/AIDS, has remained the reference point for programming.

11. In the past half year, the United Nations system has stepped up preventive action designed to stem the deterioration in humanitarian indicators, in collaboration with international non-governmental organizations and with the financial support of Ireland, Norway, Sweden, the United States of America and the World Bank. In the humanitarian sphere, the country team has provided assistance to the Central African populations affected by the floods of August 2005 by establishing a system for distributing potable water, enhancing epidemiological surveillance and mitigating the risk of epidemics.

12. With regard to food security, the country team has implemented long-term solutions, with a view to creating and preserving the means of subsistence and sustainable production. It continued to provide support for vulnerable populations, in particular children, mothers and older persons suffering from malnutrition.

#### **IV. Human rights situation**

13. The overall human rights situation is slowly improving since the return to constitutional legality in the Central African Republic. Nevertheless, human rights are often flagrantly violated. Prison conditions are becoming increasingly bad and do not meet the minimum recognized standards set by the international human rights instruments ratified by the Central African Republic.

14. Press offences and violations against media broadcasting and regulatory agencies have been committed in spite of the existence of regulations decriminalizing the press. The recent arrest of a member of parliament and of the president of the High Council for Communication and abuses by the defence forces against the civilian population have been brought to the attention of the BONUCA Human Rights Section. BONUCA has informed the Central African authorities that these violations run counter to its resolve to ensure development and guarantee fundamental freedoms, which are pillars of the Administration's five-year term of office.

15. Through its regional offices in Bouar (450 km north-west of Bangui) and Bossangoa (305 km north of Bangui) the Human Rights Section conducted a number of activities after the presidential and legislative elections designed to enhance the human rights capacities of national institutions. It also held a seminar for legislators to allow them to better understand their role in promoting the rule of law and human rights and familiarize themselves with the international legal instruments protecting those rights.

16. In addition, a number of meetings organized to mark the fifth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) gave Central African women the chance to

prepare themselves more fully on human rights issues in order to make their participation in human rights promotion activities more effective.

## **V. Military and security situation**

17. The security situation in the Central African Republic has remained precarious since the end of the electoral process, in particular in the western and north-eastern regions of the country. Armed gangs continue to interfere with agricultural and commercial activities and precipitate significant population displacements towards Chad and Cameroon. The crisis in Darfur, added to the effects of the porous frontiers, has exacerbated the proliferation and movement of light arms and psychotropic drugs, making the security situation all the more worrisome.

18. As part of the effort to secure the territory, the mandate of the multinational force (FOMUC) of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), due to expire on 30 June 2005, was extended for a six-month period, renewable once. This commendable decision by the CEMAC member countries has allowed the force to deploy, notably in Bozoum (400 km north-west of Bangui) and Bria (600 km north-east of Bangui). The aim is to help the national armed forces combat the “roadblockers” more effectively, that is, the groups of bandits and armed gangs operating in those regions and beyond Central African borders.

19. In order to check this transborder insecurity, the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Chad, with the assistance of BONUCA, held a high-level tripartite meeting at Yaoundé on 25 and 26 August 2005 involving the authorities of the three countries responsible for security. BONUCA was the facilitator of the meeting’s activities.

20. The recommendations that emerged from the meeting were as follows:

(a) At the national level: strengthening capacity of the defence and security forces at the borders;

(b) At the bilateral and trilateral levels: increased exchanges of security intelligence and information; use of aerial means for border surveillance; reactivation of mixed commissions; increased contacts between civilian and military border authorities; organization of joint operations; and evaluation of the security situation in the framework of the follow-up mechanisms.

21. The participation in the high-level meeting at Yaoundé requested BONUCA to continue in its role as facilitator. The high-level authorities of the three countries invited the international community to support efforts to put an end to the transborder insecurity threatening their stability. Following the Yaoundé meeting, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees organized a quadripartite meeting in Geneva on 6 October 2005 that included Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and BONUCA. That meeting made it possible to forge a common understanding of the situation prevailing on the borders of the three countries.

22. The process of restructuring the armed forces has continued. France has provided support for the training of three battalions, while the BONUCA Military Section has participated in organizing training courses for battalion command post observers and officers, auto mechanics and small-calibre weapons technicians.

BONUCA has maintained regular contacts with the Central African military authorities, FOMUC, and the French detachment. It has continued to cooperate with the United Nations Development Programme and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (CNDDR) to implement the project for the reintegration of former combatants and support to communities.

23. For its part, the BONUCA Civilian Police Section continued to monitor the country's security situation in both the capital and the hinterland. It has also organized several training courses for the national police and gendarmerie. A total of 158 policemen and 98 gendarmes took part in this training.

24. BONUCA continues to collaborate with subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of Central African States and CEMAC, and keeps abreast of the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. BONUCA also participates in the various stages of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. In that context, it provides basic support for the Central African Republic which, because of its geopolitical and geostrategic position, was admitted in October 2004 as a full-fledged member of the Conference.

## **VI. Observations**

25. I would like to commend the people of the Central African Republic for their patience and the political maturity they have shown during this post-election period, so critical for the stability of the country. The return to constitutional legality offers the opportunity to strengthen the rule of law by establishing new institutions and rebuilding basic infrastructure, to put the country's precarious financial situation back on a sound, sustainable footing, to improve governance and to ensure respect for human rights and territorial security.

26. The immensity of the task to be accomplished is beyond the capacity of the Central African Republic alone, which is still recovering from the effects of the politico-military crises and social tensions it has so recently undergone. The support of the international community is crucial to enable the authorities to find rapid and appropriate solutions to the many problems they now face. In that regard, I am pleased to note the discussions currently under way with international financial institutions, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions. I encourage them to show flexibility and continue to provide the Government with technical and financial support in the reconstruction and economic recovery of the Central African Republic, which is not yet in a position to exploit its natural resource potential.

27. In assisting the Government to proceed with reforms, particularly in the area of computerizing its financial systems (treasury, taxes, real property, customs, collection, revenue departments and central services), and to exploit the mineral, forestry and agricultural resources of the nation, the international community will be helping to create the conditions for lasting stability, which began with the return to constitutional legality in May 2005. It is not only the internal situation specific to the country that makes this multifaceted assistance a necessity; if the disturbing military and humanitarian developments in some neighbouring countries should escalate they might also destabilize the Central African Republic, given its geographical position in central Africa.

28. All parts of the United Nations system on the ground will continue their assistance efforts in a coordinated manner, under the impetus provided by my Special Representative. Their activities will be conducted in cooperation with the Central African authorities within the framework of the Committee of Foreign Partners responsible for monitoring the political, security, human rights situation and respect for democracy and of the consultative group responsible for monitoring economic, humanitarian and national reconstruction issues.

29. I would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to my Special Representative, General Lamine Cissé, and to the United Nations family in the Central African Republic for the dedication they continue to bring to the performance of their functions. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Heads of State of the central African region for the invaluable support they have consistently provided to the Central African authorities in their efforts to improve the security and socio-economic and financial stability of their country.

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