



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

As delivered

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**Security Council Briefing on Central African Republic
Wednesday, 14 August 2013**

Madam President,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic [CAR] following my recent visit to the country with Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response.

The political and security situation in CAR, as SRSO [Special Representative of the Secretary-General] [Babacar] Gaye has already said, remains volatile and unstable. The new government of national unity is fragile and faces considerable challenges including divisions within Séléka, the proliferation of weapons in Bangui and beyond, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts and the absence of state administration outside of Bangui.

Over the past months the humanitarian situation has deteriorated dramatically and has shifted from being a long-term crisis of poverty and chronic vulnerability to a complex emergency characterised by violence, acute needs and grave protection issues. If inadequately addressed, this crisis threatens to spread beyond the Central African Republic's borders and to further destabilize a region already facing significant challenges.

As SRSO Gaye has already said, all 4.6 million Central Africans have been affected by this crisis. Half of them are children and 1.6 million people are in dire need of assistance, including food, protection, health care, water, sanitation and shelter. Humanitarian needs are increasing by the day. More than 206,000 people have been internally displaced and nearly 60,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries; two thirds in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many people continue to hide in the bush and remote areas in poor sanitary conditions and without access to basic services or clean water. More than 650,000 children are not able to go to school due to the closure and occupation of schools by armed groups. Some 484,000 people are now severely food insecure and thousands of boys and girls are acutely malnourished.

During our visit, we heard reports of armed attacks against civilians, illegal detention, torture, and abductions, and according to UNICEF, 3,500 children have been recruited into the armed forces and groups during the conflict. I am also extremely concerned

about reports of widespread sexual violence with women and children again paying a heavy price.

Madam President,

The already fragile healthcare system is overwhelmed. Many public service officials have left their posts and healthcare is now being provided almost entirely by NGOs [Non-Governmental Organizations]. Basic drugs and hygiene products cannot be purchased locally due to the breakdown of the supply chain. The risk of disease outbreaks is very high and INGOs [International Non-Governmental Organizations] already report a spike in malaria. The replacement of goods in hospitals, such as generators, and supporting for example the supply of fuel will be challenging and the risk of further looting remains high. During a field visit to a hospital in Kaga Bandoro, I saw the daily struggle doctors and nurses face to provide for the most basic health needs of people. The hospital, with just 60 beds, serves as many as 130,000 people throughout the province. Most of the mattresses had been looted and there is no electricity.

Madam President,

The deterioration in the security situation since December 2012 is of great concern, and needs to be addressed. I visited UN premises that had been looted and some UN premises remain occupied by Séléka elements. Persistent insecurity and the degradation of infrastructure have posed serious challenges to the humanitarian response. Despite this, we have reached nearly 160,000 people with food assistance and nutrition programmes; 590,000 have benefited from water and sanitation programmes; and 200,000 have received health support. But this is tiny in comparison with widespread needs throughout the country.

NGOs have played and continue to play a significant role, many remained present in the areas worst affected by fighting. I thank them for their ongoing work.

Staff from the UN are in the process of deploying beyond the capital. Redeployment to Paoua, Bouar, Kaga Bandoro and Bambari began on 10 August. Human rights and protection monitoring will also be increased. The establishment of a UN presence in new areas will provide assistance and much needed protection.

Madam President,

The authorities in the Central African Republic have shown a genuine willingness to cooperate with humanitarian actors to address the challenges we face. During our visit, the authorities reiterated their commitment to facilitating the humanitarian response, including guaranteeing the security of humanitarian workers. Encouragingly, officials identified the restoration of security and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as their main priorities. However, as already stated by SRSB Gaye, they face a considerable challenge given the numbers of the Séléka forces, the lack of command and control over them and the presence of fighters from other countries.

Humanitarian assistance cannot be the long-term solution to the complex challenges facing the Central African Republic. A comprehensive response, prioritizing the

restoration of security and addressing humanitarian, recovery and development needs, is urgently needed. The authorities must do more to protect civilians and respect human rights. This includes releasing and reintegrating children associated with armed groups. These children will be the next generation of Central Africans and we must ensure they have the opportunity to contribute to a peaceful future.

Madam President,

I have a number of requests to make to the Council.

First, to support the restoration of security and stability in CAR, I ask the Council to treat the request for support by the African Union for its newly established peacekeeping mission (AFISM-CAR) [African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic] with urgency. It is critical for the continued safety of humanitarian operations that the AU mission has the funds and logistical support to operate effectively.

Secondly, I also 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.

Third, I ask Council members to use the influence they may have on the authorities to facilitate dialogue towards political reconciliation.

Fourth, we also need to increase funding. Only 32 per cent of the US \$195 million required has been raised to date. While the EU announced an additional contribution during our visit, bringing their emergency relief to \$20 million Euros this year - and they are the biggest donor - much more international support is required to meet growing needs. Critical sectors, such as water, sanitation and hygiene, have received less than 10 per cent of the funding required.

And finally, I ask the Council to support the authorities in expediting the swift return of public service officials to areas outside Bangui to facilitate the restoration of much needed basic services. We need to make the longer-term investments required to put the country on the path back to recovery and self-reliance.

Madam President,

The Central African Republic is not yet a failed state but has the potential to become one if swift action is not taken. Despite the significant challenges there is an opportunity for the international community, working with the authorities to make a significant contribution to the political, economic and social development of Central African Republic. The failure to act now could not only prolong and exacerbate the appalling conditions the people of the Central African Republic have had to endure, but could also see the crisis spread beyond its borders and throughout a region already facing enormous challenges.

Thank you.