

End of mission statement by Mr. Yao Agbetse, Independent Expert on the human rights situation in the Central African Republic

Central African Republic: Victims call for greater involvement in mechanism to combat impunity, say UN expert.

GENEVA (18 August 2023) - The human rights situation in the Central African Republic continues to give cause for concern, despite some progress, notably the recent validation of the National Human Rights Policy, which sets out the State's strategic vision and direction on human rights issues. Many challenges remain, notably:

On the political front, after the tensions and divisions arising from the constitutional referendum, the Central African authorities urgently need to engage all stakeholders in a genuine political dialogue designed to ease the situation and create a climate of trust. Only an inclusive political dialogue can provide a framework for (re)building consensus, as the military approach, which has shown its limitations, imperatively needs a coherent and predictable political offer.

This calmer political climate is essential for the prompt rescheduling of local elections, which have been postponed indefinitely. The implementation of the local governance mechanisms as called for in the law on decentralization and the APPR-RCA provides the foundation on which the process of restoring the authority of the State must be built. This is why the government must do everything in its power to reassure and create the conditions for an inclusive, transparent, fair and democratic election, with the effective participation of women and young people in line with the set quota.

The Independent Expert urges the authorities to relaunch the process of implementing the Khartoum Agreement (APPR-RCA) and the Luanda Joint Roadmap, and to commit to the 217 recommendations of the Republican Dialogue by taking concrete political measures to encourage the other actors in the conflict to respect their commitments.

Sub-regional diplomacy is imperative for the Central African authorities to address issues of border security, particularly with Sudan, and problems relating to transhumance and the safe, sustainable and dignified return of Central African refugees and those from neighboring countries who have found refuge in CAR.

On the security front, the situation remains tense. Increasing attacks by armed groups, notably the *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement* (CPC) and the rise of the "Azandé Ani Kpi Gbé" group in the south-east, are creating a climate of insecurity. Insecurity imposes unnecessary suffering on the population and prevents them from carrying out their daily activities. Direct attacks by armed groups on the population, or those perpetrated in villages, mining sites, fields and on roads, have an impact on the population's economic activity and give rise to serious human rights violations. Insecurity is a major obstacle to the restoration of state authority, and

increases the population's dependence on humanitarian aid. Prevented from carrying out their agricultural, commercial and livestock activities, populations are unable to fill their granaries to ensure their food security, stock seeds for the next agricultural season and access basic necessities.

Insecurity is also limits the process of restoring state authority. Destroyed or dilapidated administrative, commercial, educational, health and sports infrastructures cannot be rebuilt or rehabilitated, depriving the populations of these regions of basic social services and access to police and justice mechanisms.

On the humanitarian front, in the north-east, in the Vakaga region, because of the conflict in Sudan, 17,820 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly women and children, flocked to Am-Dafock, then settled in Korsi near Birao, 65 km from the border, for security reasons. Among them are 4,701 Central African returnees from Sudan. In addition, tensions in Chad have pushed 37,000 Chadian refugees and asylum-seekers to the north-west. They are welcomed in the Paoua region (Ouham-Pendé prefecture). These tensions have had social repercussions, with shortages and a sharp rise in the price of basic foodstuffs. More than 72% of refugees are hosted by host families, which requires psychological, material and financial support for these families.

I call on the international community to support humanitarian operations by funding the Humanitarian Response Plan.

The explosive ordnance situation in the north-west is also a cause for concern. The victims are mainly civilians, who are also deprived of the humanitarian assistance that they need. I call on technical and financial partners to provide the necessary resources to UNMAS and organizations with expertise in the field to clear these infected areas of mines.

The situation in CAR and its evolution require a combination of efforts on the humanitarian and development fronts. Humanitarian responses dictated by the emergency must be combined with development actions that are part of a national development plan.

On restoring State authority, in Vakaga, as elsewhere, the absence of many teachers from their posts, despite the contribution of MINUSCA for the transport of civil servants, is reducing the quality of education, 80% of which is provided by volunteer parent-teachers in Birao, where many qualified health workers are also lacking in the health centres. In addition, the shortage of internal security forces to carry-out fundamental law enforcement is undermining the re-establishment of the criminal procedure process and limiting access to justice.

With respect to education and vocational training, a workshop organized by the Independent Expert with key players in the field and the Minister of Education highlighted the importance of a paradigm shift from an agency-based approach to a concerted approach based on an alliance of actors (State, UN agencies and technical and financial partners) pooling their expertise and resources, under the aegis and leadership of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The new approach involves the decentralized creation of vocational training and literacy

centres, with a system for financing projects developed by the students trained at the end of a 2 or 3 year course.

With regard to the fight against impunity, internal tensions within the CVJRR are a cause for concern. A solution needs to be found as soon as possible to relaunch activities to set-up strategic instruments, mobilize resources, develop operational tools and expand awareness-raising into the country-side.

Victims' associations are also calling for greater synergy with mechanism to combat impunity.

Setting up a compensation fund for victims remains a challenge.
