



Conclusions of the Virtual High-Level Ministerial Meeting on the Central African Republic

Summary of the Co-chairs Held on Interprefy, 1 October 2020

1. On 1 October 2020, a virtual High-Level Ministerial Meeting on the Central African Republic was held in the margins of the 75th ordinary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The meeting was co-chaired by the President of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the President of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Commission, His Excellency Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres. The facilitators of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (Political Agreement), members of the International Support Group on Central African Republic and other partners also participated. The meeting was an opportunity for key stakeholders to express their firm commitment to supporting the holding of free, peaceful, credible, transparent, and inclusive elections, within the constitutional timelines, as well as to the timely and comprehensive implementation of the Political Agreement.

2. President Touadéra renewed his commitment to a peaceful democratic process in the Central African Republic. He informed on the progress made in the preparations of the elections so far. While expressing regret over the insurmountable obstacles to refugee participation, he reiterated the government's commitment to meeting constitutional deadlines and to holding free, fair, transparent, inclusive, and credible elections in December 2020. He also highlighted the Government's continued commitment to the implementation of the Political Agreement, including by advancing the adoption of key legislative reform efforts. The President further stressed that violations of the Political Agreement were unacceptable and that they must be adequately addressed to combat impunity. He also stressed ongoing efforts to address socio-economic concerns of the Central African population, which have been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, including through a realignment of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA). The President thanked the international community for its steadfast support to national efforts to implement the Political Agreement and to prepare for the presidential and legislative elections. He expressed his wish to work with stakeholders, supported by the international community, on a code of conduct to facilitate a climate conducive to a peaceful electoral process. He recalled that the international community's support for the country was in contrast with the messages of stigmatization and misinformation that are spreading on social networks.

3. Participants emphasized their unwavering commitment to supporting the Central African Republic in advancing peace, democracy, and sustainable development. They stressed the need for peaceful, credible, transparent and inclusive elections within the constitutional timelines. They welcomed the progress achieved so far in the preparation of the elections and the dialogue initiated by President Touadéra with opposition leaders, former heads of state, civil society actors, trade unions and religious leaders. They also welcomed the resumption of the activities of the Consultation Framework including political parties, public institutions and civil society, and which contributed to the inclusive dialogue on the electoral operations. Recalling

recent relevant decisions of the Constitutional Court, participants called on national actors to prioritize dialogue and consultation in order to preserve constitutional order and prevent political instability and violence. Participants called on national actors to combat hate speech and incitement to violence as well as disinformation campaigns that can create a climate of instability. Participants also took note of the adoption by the National Assembly of the law derogating certain provisions of the electoral code. However, some participants expressed regret at the inability of refugees to participate in the legislative and presidential elections in 2020 and 2021, and encouraged national authorities to continue their efforts to ensure the effective participation of all Central Africans in the electoral process. Participants encouraged the Government and the National Electoral Authority (ANE) to undertake greater efforts, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and with the support of international partners, to reduce the delay in finalizing the voter registration process and the publication of the voters' list. In this regard, they welcomed the establishment of a support group to the ANE, which will enable the reinforcement of its technical and operational capacities in the conduct of the electoral operations. Participants also welcomed the financial support to the electoral process provided by partners of the Central African Republic and encouraged others to follow to fill the remaining financial gap for the UNDP basket fund.

4. Turning to the implementation of the Political Agreement, participants welcomed the significant progress made, in particular by the Government. Participants voiced their conviction that the Political Agreement remains the only viable path towards sustainable peace in the Central African Republic and called on the signatory parties to redouble their commitment to lasting peace in the country, including by respecting their obligations. They regretted the serious violations of the Political Agreement, particularly by armed groups, and recalled that the perpetrators of such violations, including abuses committed against civilians, may be subject to sanctions and judicial proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement and national and international legal norms. They also reiterated that there can be no impunity for serious crimes and encouraged national judicial authorities, including the Special Criminal Court, to continue their efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators and instigators of such crimes.

5. For the success of the Political Agreement, participants emphasized the importance of the political role and the commitment of the region, including through the support of the AU and a continued enhanced support of ECCAS and CAR neighboring countries. In that regard, they encouraged the launch of regional initiatives aiming at consolidating and sustaining peace as well as the full operationalization of established bilateral mixed commissions between the Central African Republic and some of its neighbors. The participants called for similar collaboration with other countries of the sub-region.

6. Regarding the improved security situation in the country, participants expressed appreciation for MINUSCA's crucial role. They welcomed the robust MINUSCA posture, complemented by strong political engagement, which have served to reduce the threat posed by armed groups, protect civilians, extend State authority and stabilize affected areas. However, participants deplored the obstruction and threats posed by certain armed groups to electoral operations and called on them to engage in the electoral process without conditions and delays, in accordance with their commitment under the Political Agreement, including non-interference in the democratic processes. Some participants called for the lifting of the arms embargo to allow the legitimate authorities of the Central African Republic to be more effective in their efforts to rebuild the Central African armed forces. In this regard, they recalled that the Central African Republic has the primary responsibility to secure the country and protect civilians.

7. The participants stressed the importance that the Central African Republic population receive tangible peace dividends, particularly women and children, the most affected victims

of the crisis. They stressed the importance of supporting efforts to implement socio-economic and infrastructure projects to promote sustainable development and better connect marginalized areas of the Central African territory. Participants lauded the central role of humanitarian and development actors, and called for their continued engagement and close collaboration to address the root causes of conflict. Participants called for these efforts to be sustained beyond the elections through the establishment of a robust post-conflict reconstruction and development program for consolidating and sustaining peace in the country. Participants also called for increased support for humanitarian action, which remains severely underfunded this year. This situation has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, further exacerbating the vulnerability of the population.

8. Participants expressed gratitude to all troop- and police-contributing countries. They underscored their commitment to supporting efforts aimed at strengthening peacekeeping, as well as the importance of the safety and security imperative of peacekeepers. They also paid tribute to the peacekeepers and humanitarian workers who have sacrificed their lives in the service of peace, condemning all attacks against them. Finally, they called on the government to publicly condemn these attacks and to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators and instigators of these crimes.

9. In conclusion, participants commended President Touadéra's efforts of to bring peace to the Central African Republic, and reaffirmed their commitment to work closely together in support of national efforts to consolidate peace and democracy, and advance sustainable development in the Central African Republic. They particularly welcomed the commitment of the AU and ECCAS as guarantors of the Political Agreement and encouraged the strengthening of regional and sub-regional cooperation to advance the peace process in the Central African Republic for the benefit of the population. Participants also expressed their solidarity and support to the people and Government of the Central African Republic in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
