

**Visit of the Chair of the Central African Republic (CAR) configuration
to the World Bank
13 February 2018**

Background:

1. On 13 February 2018, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) Central African Republic Country Specific Configuration Ambassador Omar Hilale visited Washington D.C. He was accompanied by Ms. Barrie Freeman, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and members of their respective teams.

2. The purpose of the visit was to review the World Bank – United Nations partnership on the Central African Republic (CAR), based on the concurrent resolutions of the General Assembly (resolution 70/262) and the Security Council (resolution 2282 (2016)) on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. It was also meant to consider options for regular exchanges and joint initiatives with key stakeholders, including international financial institutions, to promote sustainable peace in the CAR. I met with Mr. Franck Bousquet, Senior Director for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence; Mr. Robert Bou Jaoude, Country Manager for CAR (via VTC), and Aileen Marshall, Partnership Adviser for the Africa region.

3. The Chair focused on three specific issues during his exchanges with the World Bank:

- a) Addressing resource and capacity gaps hampering the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (RCPCA),
- b) Discussing the World Bank's role in the implementation of the RCPCA,
- c) Promoting policy coherence among key partners towards CAR.

The Chair is grateful to the World Bank for their interest in advancing their relationship with the PBC.

Meetings:

5. The visit was conducted at a critical time for CAR. The renewed insecurity in the northern and eastern regions of the country, coupled with limited or absent state authority in the periphery and weak national implementation capacity are recurring challenges. The first year of the RCPCA, referred to as the "planning year", was characterized by delays related to the establishment of the RCPCA permanent secretariat, insufficient communication on the disbursement and use of resources pledged during the Brussels conference, and the scarce capacity of CAR institutions to absorb aid in the current agreed frameworks for project implementation. As a result, in areas such as public administration, extension of basic services and police deployment, where donors have committed large sums, progress has been limited. The Chair discussed with World Bank officials the status of commitments from Brussels, the challenges in the management and implementation of funds, and challenges regarding national capacity to drive implementation, and to coordinate programs and partners.

6. The delegations discussed the reasons behind the delays in the implementation of the RCPCA and the disbursement of funds. The Bank explained that the international community had

pledged \$2.2 billion in aid for CAR at the Brussels Conference, which was an important increase in resources committed to the country compared to previous years. However, the absorption capacity of the CAR government, the lack of coordination across the line ministries, and the absence of government and presence of armed groups across the territory hampered the effective and speedy use of these resources. The delays in establishing the RCPCA Secretariat that would contribute to coordinating Brussels conference donors and the government had also been a contributing factor. As such, addressing resource gaps was only part of the problem; there was a strong need to prioritize the provision of technical assistance to the government to address capacity gaps. While most of the pledged \$2.2 billion was not yet disbursed, more projects were expected to be implemented in 2018.

7. Franck Bousquet, Senior Director for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence, lauded the World Bank's relationship with the UN in CAR, declaring that the Bank would not be able to operate as they do today without the support of MINUSCA. He explained that the World Bank's support to CAR focuses on stabilization to break the cycle of violence and support to recovery, economic and social development. He underscored that the United Nations and World Bank Prevention Study – "Pathways for Peace" – highlighted three areas in which the organizations should change the ways they support conflict-affected countries:

- a) Avoiding sequential responses and sharing tools and approaches across the conflict cycle, based on comparative advantages,
- b) Improving the partnership between development and security actors to ensure inclusive development gains that benefit security objectives and reconciliation processes, and,
- c) Placing the government in the driver's seat and ensuring that the national authorities were empowered.

8. These new ways of working were being put into practice in CAR already. The "LONDO" project provides temporary employment to vulnerable people in conflict prone areas. Bigger infrastructure projects such as the upgrading of water and electricity, investing in solar energy, and ensuring transportation and connectivity (the vital road connecting Bangui to Douala), where the World Bank saw its comparative advantage, are being carried out progressively across the country to improve state-citizen relations, horizontal inequalities, and establish the state's presence in the periphery. In partnership with the African Development Bank, a project to generate electricity might, in the long term, allow CAR to export electricity to northern DRC. Projects related to health, service delivery and food security are prioritized, to contribute to security by ensuring that the basic needs of people are met by the state and not by armed groups. A Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) is currently under development and will highlight the risks, challenges and capacity and resource gaps in CAR. The SCD would input into the Country Partnership Framework (CPF), developed in close consultations with the Government of CAR, which would prepare and deliver the World Bank's response to these risks and challenges, by identifying the projects where the Bank has the most comparative advantages.

9. Mr. Jaoude, World Bank Country Manager for CAR, gave further examples of the World Bank's presence on the ground, with a focus on strengthening state capacity in ways that rebuild the social contract between the government and the population. The Bank was working towards the modernization and professionalization of statistics production in the country. Projects were underway to improve health services in areas affected by conflict, including through

strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Health, with the World Bank matching a \$10 million grant from the Gates Foundation. The Bank was able to prioritize community development, and through its flexible instruments, is in a position to support communities that needed water, electricity and infrastructure through small scale interventions. Mr. Jaoude highlighted the need for better communication and coordination within government on development priorities, and for fiscal reforms to improve governance.

10. The delegations agreed that while peace and security is essential for development, justice and accountability was also key. They discussed that there have been important movement towards the creation and operationalization of the Special Criminal Court (SCC), with the appointment of national and international judges, national registrars and national secretaries, the finalization of the rules of procedure and evidence as well as sensitization and victims and witness protection strategies. The Chair highlighted that the resources required to maintain the SCC were significant, with outstanding funding needs for the coming years. At the same time, donors need to balance the focus on the SCC with supporting CAR's national justice system. The Chair also underscored that we could not focus on justice and accountability in the capital and neglect the periphery: the lack of justice systems outside of Bangui were mainly due to insufficient security, difficulties to pay salaries and the lack of equipment. These issues extended beyond the justice system and were prevalent in health and education sectors as well.

11. Mr. Bousquet agreed that justice was key for peace and stability. He explained that the World Bank focuses on Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) issues. A \$30 million project to reintegrate ex-combatants, for example, is being actively implemented by the Bank, and aims to support the social and economic reintegration of demobilized ex-combatants and improve access to socio-economic infrastructure and economic opportunities for host communities.

12. Mr. Jaoude underscored the need for the international community and regional actors to coordinate closely and not duplicate efforts. He underscored that the deployment of the government outside of the capital remained one of the most significant factors impeding RCPCA implementation and in this regard noted ongoing efforts to deploy government assets and personnel to Bambari in sustainable ways that lead to tangible outcomes for the population. The lack of services outside of the capital continues to be a significant challenge; for instance, public personnel deployed in the periphery needed to come to Bangui every month to receive their salaries, since there is no functioning Banks outside of Bangui. Innovative ways to address this problem were being explored: the use of "Orange Money" through a local mobile phone provider and Western Union to provide mobile data and payment services in cities outside of Bangui had the potential of becoming good practices. Mr. Jouade also highlighted security risks hindering the contribution of the private sector to CAR's development.

12. With his counterparts, the Chair also discussed the role of natural resources contributing to the conflict dynamics in CAR, and the World Bank's role in addressing these issues. Mr. Jouade explained that the government required support in the development of a modern mining code and cadaster, and building of the capacities of the security sector to be able to move towards better practices. The southwest of CAR was cleared by the Kimberly process, but more needed to be done to ensure the inclusion of the rest of the country.

Future Steps:

16. During the meetings, Ms. Freeman, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office, emphasized that the upcoming High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on 24-25 April on peacebuilding and sustaining peace would be an opportune moment to put the risks, challenges and response efforts in countries like CAR in the spotlight, and showcase how the UN could partner for better results.

17. World Bank officials voiced their commitment to contribute to the High-Level Meeting in April. They also pointed out that the World Bank's forthcoming Fragility Forum from 5-7 March 2018 presented another important opportunity to bring together humanitarian, development and peace actors and explore innovative ways to improve development approaches to foster peace and stability in CAR, and said that the CAR Minister of Plan has been invited to participate. They hoped for good participation from the PBC to the Forum, to explore future courses of action.

18. The World Bank also agreed to use the PBC platform to discuss the UN's partnership with the Bank; Mr. Bousquet agreed to come to New York after the Fragility Forum to explain the World Bank's role in CAR and discuss how it can cooperate with the PBC towards ensuring more inclusive, people-centered outcomes in support of national priorities. The Chair plans to organize this meeting in mid-March, after his briefing to the Security Council on 22 February and the Fragility Forum from 5-7 March.