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**PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 979<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**16 FEBRUARY 2021**

**PSC/PR/COMM. (CMLXXIX)**

## COMMUNIQUE

**Adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 979<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 16 February 2021, on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR):**

The Peace and Security Council,

**Noting** the opening remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ghana to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for February 2021, H.E Ambassador Amma Admaa Twum-Amoah, and the statement by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui, delivered by the Acting Director for Peace and Security Department, Ms. Fiona Lortan, as well as the presentation made by the Special Representative of the AU Chairperson (SRCC) for CAR, H.E Ambassador Bertino Matias Matondo; **also noting** the statements delivered by the representative of CAR, H.E Ambassador Fernad Poukre-Kono, Chairperson of the Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS) Commission, H.E Ambassador Gilberto da Piedada Verissimo, and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Office to the AU, H.E Hanna Tetteh;

**Recalling** its previous Communiques and Press Statements on the CAR, including Communique [PSC/PR/1(CMLXXII)] adopted at its 972<sup>nd</sup> meeting held on 24 December 2020, Communique [PSC/PR/1(CMXXXVI)] adopted at its 936<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 10 July 2020, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.2(DCCCXLVIII)] adopted at its 868<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 14 August 2019, Communique [PSC/PR/COMM.I (DCCCXLVI11)] adopted at its 848<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 9 May 2019, and the Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.I (DCCCLXXXIV)] adopted at its 884<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 10 October 2019;

**Also recalling** the Joint Communique of the AU, United Nations, ECCAS and EU issued on 4 December 2020; the Communique of the UN Secretary-General of 18 December 2020, and the Communique of the G5 + issued on 20 December 2020, as well as of the press release of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission of 21 December 2020 on the situation in the CAR;

**Affirming** the letter and spirit of the Conclusions of the 18<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit of ECCAS, held in Libreville, Gabon, on **TI** November 2020 and the Final Communique of the Virtual Extraordinary Summit of Heads of ECCAS of 26 December 2020 on the Situation in the CAR;

**Commemorating** the second anniversary of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR (APPR-CAR) signed on 6 February 2019 under the auspices of the AU and ECCAS;

**Reaffirming** the solidarity of the AU with the Government and people of the CAR and the commitment of the AU to respect the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the CAR;

Acting under Article 7 of its Protocol, the Peace and Security Council:

1. **Acknowledges** the efforts deployed by the CAR Government, in collaboration with its partners, in the implementation of the APPR-CAR while being cognizant of the serious challenges, including those posed by the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and scarcity of resources;

**stresses** that the APPR-CAR remains the recognized and only political framework for the comprehensive settlement of the CAR crisis, and in this regard **calls on** all the signatories - the government and the armed groups - to abide faithfully by the commitments made in the APPR- CAR and ensure its full implementation to

contribute to lasting peace and stability in the country;

2. **Applauds** the people of the CAR on the successful conduct of the presidential and legislative elections held on 27 December 2020 under challenging circumstances and despite violent disturbances in some polling districts, and **welcomes** the final results as proclaimed by the Constitutional Court of the CAR; and in this regard, **congratulates** H.E President Faustin- Archange Touadera for his re-election;

3. **Commends** the substantial efforts deployed by the National Elections Authority (ANE), in collaboration with all the political and social actors in the CAR, as well as other partners, in the organizing and successful conduct of elections; **also commends** all the parties who accompanied the Government and the people of CAR in their quest to deepen and strengthen democracy;

4. **Underlines** the importance of adherence to constitutionalism and the rule of law in order to consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and ensure good governance as enshrined in the Preamble of the AU Constitutive Act and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; and to this end, **calls upon** all parties to respect the decisions of the CAR Constitutional Court on the final results of the presidential and the first round of legislative elections in the localities where they were held;

5. **Expresses grave concerns** at the escalation of post-election violence in the country which has led to displacement of large numbers of people, thereby exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the CAR; **also expresses deep concern** at the continued insecurity which hinders the provision of humanitarian assistance and impeding access to the internally displaced populations; in this regard, **appeals** to the international community to continue providing humanitarian assistance to the population in need;

6. **Strongly condemns** the attempted coup by the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) on 13 January 2021, in complete violation of commitments made by some armed groups who were signatories to the APPR-CAR; in this regard **urges** all armed groups and political actors within this Coalition, specifically former president Francois Bozize, to refrain from any subversive action aimed at overthrowing the government, or even sowing instability and thus hindering the successful organization of the second round of the Legislative election, and **warns** that appropriate punitive measures, including criminal prosecution and targeted sanctions, would be applied to peace spoilers and anyone found to be violating the APPR-CAR, as well as national and international humanitarian and human rights law; in this regard, **requests** the Commission to present a proposal regarding the criteria for applying the said punitive measures and the targets of those measures, for consideration by the PSC;

7. **Also strongly condemns** the blocking of the Garoua-Boulay-BoulaT and Bangui-Douala corridors by the CPC fighters, as they constitute strategic transport and trade routes, and these blockades are seriously impeding economic activities and the provision of critical humanitarian assistance, to the detriment of the country and its citizens; and in this regard, **calls** for the immediate and unconditional lifting of these blockades, and for the CPC to desist from violating human rights and to respect the laws of the country;

8. **Further strongly condemns** the CPC's targeted attacks against the Government and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Force in the CAR (MINUSCA), which amount to flagrant violations of human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and **underscores** that these acts are liable to prosecution; **deplores** the collusion between some armed groups and political leaders whose rebellion has caused countless deaths, displacement of the people, and destruction of infrastructure; in this regard, **encourages** the judicial authorities of the CAR to investigate these abuses and ensure that impunity is ended and justice is served;

9. **Calls on** all the political actors and armed groups in the CAR to commit unconditionally to and respect the ceasefire, and to desist from propagating hate speech, and **urges** them to respond favourably to the call made by H.E. President Faustin-Archange Toudera on 6 February 2021 for a National Dialogue, which should include the opposition parties and all national stakeholders in order to create conducive conditions for the successful conduct of the legislative elections in March 2021 in order to reaffirm the national democratic transition and ending the vicious cycle of conflict in CAR;
10. **Underscores** the need for all political and social actors as well as all armed groups to uphold the supreme interest of the country above all other considerations and **calls on** them to work steadfastly to create an enabling environment for constructive dialogue among all stakeholders, to achieve lasting peace, stability and socio-economic development in the CAR; in this regard, **urges** the armed groups that have violated their commitment to the APPR-CAR to honour the initial undertaking and, collectively with other signatories, to pursue viable and peaceful means for durable solutions to the current crisis;
11. **Strongly condemns** the continuous illicit exploitation, trading and trafficking of the CAR's natural resources, and **calls** for increased and better coordination between the neighbouring states to tackle this practice which is detrimental to the CAR's economic recovery and post-conflict reconstruction prospects;
12. **Underlines** the urgency of the implementation of effective programs for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) aimed at curbing the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, to ensure a stable environment for other development and recovery activities; **urges** the CAR Government, in collaboration with its neighbours and ECCAS, to exercise greater vigilance regarding trafficking of weapons and contraband from their territories and across their shared borders, as well as the recruitment of mercenaries to be used in the fighting in the CAR;
13. **Underscores** the imperative and urgency for the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development policy (PCRD), in close collaboration with the CAR Government, to identify urgently the needs and priorities, and to initiate and promote post-conflict stabilization, development and reconstruction projects geared towards tackling the root causes of the conflict to consolidate peace and avoid relapses;
14. **Pays tribute** to MINUSCA for its steadfast efforts and its multifaceted support to the CAR and its main institutions; **also pays tribute** to the MINUSCA Troop and Police Contribution Countries as well as those from other African countries and international partners, especially those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the CAR, and expresses support for MINUSCA's request for capacity building, including the need for additional human and material resources to fulfil its mandate better;
15. **Commends** the international community for its invaluable multifaceted support to the CAR, especially to the electoral process, as well as their continued commitment to the economic and social development of the country; **appeals** for continued financial and material support to assist the CAR and its people in their efforts to rebuild the country, and **also appeals** for a unity of purpose amongst all actors to avoid duplication and to streamline efforts to accompany the CAR Government and its people in their quest for lasting peace; in this regard **stresses** the importance for the AU, ECCAS, United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU) to coordinate their efforts in supporting CAR in finding durable peace;
16. **Welcomes** the support of ECCAS and neighbouring countries in support of peace making and stabilization efforts in the country and **calls for a** reinforcement of this role, including in the promotion of joint economic development projects and post-conflict reconstruction and development; and **emphasizes** the need to work closely with the AU to ensure synergy, coordination and cooperation;

17. **Commends** the SRCC for CAR, Amb. Matondo, and the AU Mission team in Bangui for their continued support to the CAR peace process, and **requests** the AU Commission to take all measures to ensure that the AU Liaison Office in Bangui is fully capacitated and resourced; in this regard, **requests** the AU Commission, working with relevant AU Policy Organs, to look at the modalities for utilizing the AU Peace Fund to enable it to function effectively, taking into consideration that the AU is a guarantor to the APPR-CAR;

18. **Also requests** the AU Commission to provide regular updates on the situation in the CAR, including receiving reports on the progress achieved by the AU Military Observers Mission to CAR (MOUACA) authorized during its 936<sup>th</sup> meeting; **further requests** the AU Commission to consider deploying an Election Observer Mission to the CAR of sufficient duration for the March 2021 legislative elections;

19. Aware of the importance of showing solidarity with the people and Government of CAR, **agrees** to undertake a field mission in CAR in the near future;

20. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.