

## **P7\_TA-PROV(2013)0033**

### **Situation in the Central African Republic**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2013 on the situation in the Central African Republic (2013/2514(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the statements of 21 December 2012 and 1 and 11 January 2013 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the situation in the Central African Republic,
- having regard to the statement of 21 December 2012 by the EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection on the latest outbreak of fighting in the Central African Republic,
- having regard to the revised Cotonou Agreement signed in June 2000,
- having regard to the United Nations Security Council press statements of 27 and 29 December 2012 and 4 and 11 January 2013 on the Central African Republic,
- having regard to the Final Communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), held in N'Djamena on 21 December 2012,
- having regard to the statement by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of 26 December 2012 condemning the rebel attacks and urging all parties to abide by the decisions taken by ECCAS on 21 December 2012 in N'Djamena,
- having regard to the declarations by the African Union (AU) of 12, 28 and 31 December 2012 and of 3 and 12 January 2013 on the Central African Republic,
- having regard to the political agreement of Libreville (Gabon) signed on 11 January 2013 between the Central African Republic Government, the Seleka rebel group and the democratic opposition on the resolution of the crisis,
- having regard to the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 28 June 2008 and the earlier peace accords signed since 2007 on which it builds,
- having regard to Security Council Resolution S/RES/2031 of 21 December 2011, which extends the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) until 31 January 2013, and the UN Secretary-General's report of 29 May 2012 on the activities of the BINUCA,
- having regard to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981, ratified by the Central African Republic in 1986, and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, which prohibits the involvement of children in armed conflict and which the Central African Republic has ratified,

- having regard to the report of 6 July 2011 by the Security Council working group, and to its conclusions on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic,
  - having regard to Rules 122(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Central African Republic (CAR) has faced decades of instability and political unrest since it gained independence in 1960; whereas, despite the fact that it is a country rich in natural resources (timber, gold, diamonds, uranium, etc), the CAR ranks only 179th out of 187 in terms of its Human Development Index and, with around 70 % of its population living below the poverty line, remains one of the poorest countries in the world;
  - B. whereas on 10 December 2012, ‘Seleka’ (meaning ‘coalition’ in Sango), an alliance of various rebel armed movements originating predominantly in the north-east of the country, has launched an armed offensive advancing southwards from near the frontier with Chad; whereas the recent offensive was motivated by the rebels’ claims that President François Bozizé had failed to honour the commitments set out in the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which provided for the disarming of former rebels and funding for their reintegration into society;
  - C. whereas the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) held an extraordinary summit in N’Djamena on 21 December 2012 and agreed on a roadmap for resolving the crisis, including a ceasefire and immediate negotiations in Libreville under the aegis of ECCAS; whereas the ECCAS summit also decided to send additional troops to reinforce the FOMAC/ MICOPAX mission;
  - D. whereas South Africa has begun sending some 400 troops to help stabilise the CAR; and whereas Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad and Cameroon have had troops there since 2008 as part of the Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC/MICOPAX) deployed by ECCAS;
  - E. whereas, after holding talks with the President of the African Union, Thomas Boni Yayi, President Bozizé pledged not to stand for office when his current mandate expires in 2016, and offered to form a government of national unity;
  - F. whereas at the beginning of January, Seleka announced a halt to its military operations, stopping before the town of Damara (75 kilometres north of Bangui), and agreed to participate in peace talks under the auspices of ECCAS;
  - G. whereas on 11 January 2013 the three-way peace talks between the Central African Republic Government, the Seleka rebel coalition and the political opposition that took place in Libreville, Gabon led to the signing of three agreements: a declaration of principle on resolving the political and security crisis; a ceasefire agreement; and an agreement on the political-security situation defining the power-sharing arrangements and the period of political transition in the CAR;
  - H. whereas on 12 January 2013 President Bozizé dismissed Prime Minister Faustin Archange Touadera and dissolved the cabinet, clearing the way for the appointment of a national unity government in line with the peace accords signed in Libreville; whereas under the peace agreement legislative elections are to be held within 12 months;

- I. whereas President Bozizé, after taking power in a coup d'état in 2003, was elected for the first time in 2005 and re-elected in 2011, but whereas the irregularities during the latter election noted by international observers – including those from the EU which funded the holding of the election – led the parliamentary opposition to boycott the general elections;
  - J. whereas respect for human rights is a fundamental value of the European Union and represents an essential element of the Cotonou Agreement;
  - K. whereas the United States, like the EU, is in favour of a peaceful settlement to the crisis through dialogue;
  - L. whereas, according to local NGOs, serious human rights violations have been committed, including an increase in sexual violence against women and young girls, both by Seleka in the areas under its control and in Bangui by government forces against people close to the rebellion;
  - M. whereas the humanitarian situation remains dire, with the crisis having affected tens of thousands of people, according to Médecins sans frontières; whereas hundreds of tons of food aid from the World Food Programme have been plundered in areas in the north under rebel control; and whereas many humanitarian services have been suspended or reduced;
  - N. whereas the EU is engaged in a regular political dialogue with the CAR under the Cotonou Agreement and is the country's main donor, with the European Commission contributing EUR 8 million in 2012 to assist 445 000 people affected by conflict and displacement in the CAR, and whereas the CAR receives EUR 137 million in aid under the 10th EDF;
  - O. whereas Cameroon has stepped up measures to accommodate refugees from the CAR;
  - P. whereas, even before the recent outbreak of violence, 2 500 children were already part of the armed groups active in the CAR; whereas the UNICEF office in Bangui has received credible information concerning increasing recruitment and use of child soldiers by both rebel groups and pro-government militias;
  - Q. whereas the failure to bring the perpetrators of human rights violations and war crimes to justice fosters a climate of impunity and encourages further crimes;
  - R. whereas the rebel forces have captured diamond-rich areas such as Bria, Sam Ouandja and Bamingui; whereas the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has issued a warning to all its member countries regarding the possible leakage of rough diamonds from rebel-controlled areas in the CAR;
  - S. whereas the growth of unemployment, the deterioration of social conditions and the impoverishment of the population are factors in the instability from which the region suffers; whereas these problems require a strategy and a development plan;
1. Expresses its concern over the situation prevailing in the CAR since the launch of the Seleka offensive on 10 December 2012; deplores the fact that the recent offensive has put civilian lives at risk and threatened the security and stability of the CAR;
  2. Welcomes the peace agreements signed on 11 January 2013 in Libreville after negotiations under the aegis of ECCAS; emphasises the need for swift implementation of these

agreements; calls on all parties to implement them in good faith and to commit to achieving lasting peace in the CAR;

3. Condemns all attempts to seize power by force;
4. Is convinced that in order to secure a peaceful resolution to the conflict and ensure lasting stability, the composition of the government of national unity must represent all the country's political forces; welcomes, in this respect, the signing by President Bozizé of a decree removing the country's prime minister, as one of the steps called for in a peace deal, in order to form a national unity government, which will be led by a prime minister chosen by the political opposition;
5. Welcomes the decision to hold elections for a new National Assembly and hopes that they will take place under international supervision, including in the areas that are currently occupied by the rebel forces, in order to avoid the result being contested;
6. Condemns all violations of human rights and is deeply concerned by the serious human rights violations that occurred in the CAR during the offensive by Seleka; strongly condemns the attacks against civilian populations in areas occupied by the rebels, including cases of physical and sexual violence, looting and the systematic disruption of means of communication; expresses its deep concern at reports of targeting of ethnic and religious minorities and intimidation and arbitrary arrests of political opponents in Bangui;
7. Stresses that the CAR authorities should strive to ensure the safety and security of the civilian population; calls for the reform of the army and arrangements to be made for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration into society of former combatants, the repatriation of refugees, the resettlement of displaced persons within their own country and the implementation of viable development programmes;
8. Is particularly worried by reports indicating an increase in the recruitment and use of child soldiers; reiterates its strong opposition to these practices and calls on all parties to the conflict to end them;
9. Calls on all parties to respect the ceasefire, refrain from acts of violence against civilians and respect human rights; emphasises that the failure of the previous peace agreements to ensure lasting stability in the CAR was also caused by an insufficient focus on human rights;
10. Pays its respect to all victims and considers it paramount to investigate impartially and thoroughly all past and ongoing cases of human rights abuse in order to identify the perpetrators; earnestly hopes that the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity will not be granted impunity, notes, in this respect, that the International Criminal Court is still investigating the situation in the CAR;
11. Welcomes the mediation efforts of regional organisations, such as the African Union and ECCAS, and especially the negotiations between the parties that took place in Libreville; stresses the importance of the new follow-up mechanism to be established in order to ensure full implementation of the agreements reached; calls, in this context, on the EU to support ECCAS in overseeing the implementation of the recent accords; calls on the international community to engage more actively with the CAR in order to address the country's long-standing problems and to achieve a sustainable political solution;

12. Calls on the Commission to offer technical support to the CAR authorities with a view to the adoption of the relevant legislation for organising the upcoming elections; takes the view that in order to contribute to credible, free and fair elections, the EU should consider sending an electoral observation mission to the CAR;
13. Calls on the HR/VP Catherine Ashton to capitalise on the EU's extended relationship with the CAR to actively promote the implementation of a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy that would promote the country's normalisation and sustainable development;
14. Is concerned by the effects of the recent crisis on the humanitarian situation in the country; calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and to allow safe and unhindered access by humanitarian agencies to affected populations; calls on the Commission to step up its humanitarian aid efforts in the CAR;
15. Considers that the pervasive insecurity in various countries sharing borders with the CAR, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda, requires concerted action by the international community to address the recurrent problems of state fragmentation, ethnic conflicts and repeated violations of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in a holistic and regionally focused manner;
16. Considers that transparent access to and control over the natural resources and equitable redistribution through the state budget of revenue from the exploitation of those resources are indispensable for the sustainable development of the country;
17. Considers that transparency and public scrutiny in the mining sector is crucial to efficient mining management, sustainable development and tackling corruption; emphasises that the possible trafficking of rough diamonds from rebel-controlled areas in the CAR could reignite the conflict and further destabilise the country; calls on the Government of the CAR to take more measures to combat the exploitation and illegal trading of natural resources and calls for appropriate monitoring of the situation through the Kimberley Process;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, the institutions of the African Union, ECCAS, the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly and the Member States of the European Union.