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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P8\_TA(2017)0003**

#### **Central African Republic**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2017 on the situation in the Central African Republic (2017/2507(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Central African Republic (CAR), particularly that of 7 June 2016 on Peace Support Operations – EU engagement with the UN and the African Union<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to UN Security Council resolution 2301 (2016) renewing the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2017, adopted by the Security Council at its 7747th meeting on 26 July 2016,
- having regard to the UN human rights report of 14 December 2016 and to the statement by the spokesperson of the European External Action Service of 6 January 2017 on the attacks on MINUSCA,
- having regard to the co-chairing of the Brussels Conference for the Central African Republic on 17 November 2016 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Federica Mogherini, and the President of the CAR, Faustin-Archange Touadéra,
- having regard to the EU briefing on the CAR of 21 October 2016 by H.E. Ms Joanne Adamson, Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to the United Nations, at the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations,
- having regard to the report of 22 July 2016 by the UN independent expert designated by the Human Rights Council to monitor, report and advise on the situation of human rights in the CAR, and her statement of 16 November 2016 prior to the donor meeting in Brussels,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the CAR of 9 February 2015, 20 July 2015 and 14 March 2016 and of 19 April 2016 on the peaceful holding of the elections in the CAR,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0249.

- having regard to the statement of 8 July 2016 by the Chair of the PBC CAR Configuration at the UN Security Council briefing on the CAR,
  - having regard to the revised Cotonou Agreement,
  - having regard to the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), ratified by the CAR in 2001,
  - having regard to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict attached to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been signed by the CAR,
  - having regard to the Amnesty International report of 11 January 2017 entitled ‘The long wait for justice: accountability in Central African Republic’,
  - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, emerging from violent conflict between the Séléka rebel coalition and the anti-Balaka militia, the Central African Republic has made impressive progress since 2013, with the support of the international community, in achieving a restored constitutional order with the peaceful and successful organisation of elections and completing the political transition;
  - B. whereas despite the political progress, the CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest, intensified by violent clashes in a number of locations which have led to multiple population displacements in the west, north and east of the country; whereas the lack of civil liberties, gender inequality, restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and intercommunal tensions also remain serious human rights concerns in the CAR;
  - C. whereas the UN mission has up to 10 750 peacekeepers on the ground in the CAR, but some civilians complain that it does not do enough to protect them against dozens of armed groups; whereas the UN human rights report of 14 December 2016 on arbitrary killings cited sexual violence in the CAR;
  - D. whereas in December 2016 the MINUSCA mission supported a new dialogue between 11 of the 14 armed groups and the government, as part of an ongoing effort to disarm the factions in the CAR; whereas on 4 January 2017, according to MINUSCA, its peacekeepers on patrol were returning from the town of Kouï when they were attacked by about 50 assailants about 60 km (37 miles) west of Obo, and two peacekeepers were killed by unknown insurgents, while a similar attack also took place on 7 January 2017 in the north-west of Bokayi, in which a peacekeeper was killed;
  - E. whereas reconstruction of the justice sector is still in its infancy and police capacity continues to be extremely limited, and this, along with the absence of a functioning judicial system, means that little action has been taken to halt or address human rights abuses and bring the perpetrators to justice;
  - F. whereas according to Amnesty International, the lack of justice in the CAR is so acute that some victims are forced to live their daily lives alongside their aggressors, since hundreds have escaped in large-scale prison breaks and many accused of the worst crimes have never been arrested; whereas only 8 out of 35 prisons function, and few courts operate outside the capital, Bangui;

- G. whereas since August 2016 an alarming increase in the number of cases of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by the different factions of the ex-Séléka, the anti-Balaka and their affiliates has been recorded in the CAR, the results being at least 100 killings, forced civilian displacement and the destruction of property; whereas rights organisations reported serious fighting in the CAR in late November 2016 between two Séléka groups, which left at least 14 civilians dead and 76 wounded;
- H. whereas according to Vladimir Monteiro, MINUSCA's spokesperson in Bangui, such attacks are not only carried out on UN peacekeepers, but also target humanitarian actors and the civilian population;
- I. whereas between 28 and 30 November 2016, at least 115 people died as a result of skirmishes erupting between two groups (both Séléka factions – the Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic (Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique, FPRC), and the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (l'Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique, UPC)) over control of roads leading to diamond mines around Kalaga, a town 45 km from Bria, where both factions collect 'road taxes', especially in mining areas and on migration routes for Peuhl herders;
- J. whereas in May 2016 the UN's Fifth Committee adopted a cross-cutting resolution on peacekeeping which welcomed the Secretary-General's determination to fully implement the zero tolerance policy, reaffirmed the need for enhanced coordination for victim support, and expanded the UN's policy of transparency for allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA);
- K. whereas on 17 November 2016 the VP/HR, Federica Mogherini, and the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, mobilised the international community in order to generate political support and concrete commitments to support the CAR authorities' ambitious agenda to achieve peace, security and reconciliation across the country, as well as to promote development and economic recovery;
- L. whereas, according to the UN, nearly half the population of the CAR is facing food insecurity and needs humanitarian assistance; whereas 40% of children under three are chronically malnourished and one in five children will not live to see their fifth birthday;
- M. whereas it is estimated that this year 2,2 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1,1 million children; whereas at the end of 2016, an estimated 420 000 people were internally displaced and an additional 453 000 had sought refuge in neighbouring countries;
- N. whereas in the last three years the European Union has been the largest donor of assistance to the CAR, having committed over EUR 500 million to the country; whereas with regard to humanitarian aid, the Commission alone has provided EUR 124 million (in addition to EUR 30 million for Central African refugees in neighbouring countries) since December 2013; whereas at the Brussels donor conference on 17 November 2016, the EU announced an additional EUR 409 million in funding to address reconstruction, peacebuilding and humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic;
- O. whereas the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has increased its activities across the eastern CAR, spreading beyond the mining areas, with attacks which have involved looting,

arbitrary deprivation of liberty, destruction and confiscation of property affecting civilians, and abductions; whereas according to the LRA crisis tracker, since January 2016, 344 people, including more than 60 children, have reportedly been abducted by the LRA, with thousands of civilians also displaced in the areas where it is operating;

- P. whereas on 15 July 2014 the EU established the first multi-donor EU Trust Fund, called Bêkou and dedicated to the CAR, which contributes to the stabilisation and reconstruction of the country;
  - Q. whereas the overall security situation has improved since 2013, in particular in Bangui, but remains fragile, with outbreaks of violence increasing again during recent months; whereas crimes such as murder, torture, sexual violence, theft, abduction, destruction of property and illegal trade and possession of weapons continue throughout the country;
  - R. whereas owing to funding constraints, the World Food Programme announced that it would need to make additional cuts to the food it can provide and that by February 2017 distribution could be suspended altogether;
  - S. whereas illicit trade and extraction of diamonds and timber fuel the conflict by contributing to the financing of armed groups;
  - T. whereas the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) has worked continuously since 2003 to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and peace in the CAR, and continues working in the current post-crisis reconstruction context; whereas the work of the OIF is crucial in strengthening the capacities of the Central African institutions, providing technical support for the implementation of the Special Criminal Court, supporting the establishment of a National Commission on Human Rights, supporting the strengthening of the administrative and legal framework for elections, providing technical support for the implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform (DDR-SSR) programmes, and providing technical support for the Special Criminal Court through the mobilisation of French-speaking magistrates;
1. Welcomes the efforts undertaken by President Touadéra and his government to foster peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic, against the background of decades of underdevelopment and fragility and several years of armed conflict; calls on the government of the CAR to further intensify these efforts, in particular concerning dialogue with the armed groups, SSR and DDR, and the restoration of the judicial and penal chains in order to fight against impunity;
  2. Strongly condemns the loss of livelihood and property and the violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law, which include arbitrary killings, sexual violence, inhuman treatment and all forms of attack, as well as aggressions and provocations against the civilian population and peacekeepers; recalls that such targeted attacks may constitute a war crime under international humanitarian law; expresses its sincere condolences to the governments of Morocco and Bangladesh, the families of the victims and MINUSCA; underlines that attacks targeting peacekeepers are unacceptable and against all international norms;
  3. Considers the peaceful holding of the combined elections on 14 February 2016 in the CAR, with a significant voter turnout, as a real success for the political transition process; commends the authorities for their efforts, which have enhanced the credibility and

transparency of the elections; welcomes the commitment of MINUSCA and the support provided by Operation Sangaris, which contributed substantially to ensuring that the electoral process passed off peacefully;

4. Firmly supports the authority of the UN Secretary-General to implement the UN's policy of transparency (zero tolerance) for allegations of SEA, and welcomes the initiatives he has undertaken thus far in the CAR; calls on the UN member states to ensure that MINUSCA's Conduct and Discipline and Internal Oversight teams receive the necessary resources to effectively respond to SEA cases and other crimes;
5. Underlines the paramount importance of security; stresses in this respect the necessity of reforms to transform the CAR's armed forces into a professional, democratically controlled and ethnically representative army; welcomes the decision of the European Council of 19 April 2016 to establish a military training mission in the CAR (EUTM RCA) to contribute to the country's defence sector reform; expects that it will help modernise, and improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) through strategic advice to the CAR's Ministry of Defence and the general staff, as well as education and training;
6. Calls on the Government of the CAR to launch prompt and impartial investigations into all alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law, appropriately prosecute those responsible – criminals and killers must be brought to justice no matter what group they belong to – and provide adequate redress for victims of violations; firmly supports the swift establishment of a Special Criminal Court (expected to be completed by mid-2017), which needs to be sustainably funded in order to ensure accountability and put an end to the current widespread impunity; welcomes the launch by the UN in December 2016 of the process of recruiting eight international judges;
7. Deplores the fact that the CAR's justice system, which was already weak before the civil war, has been badly undermined by continued fighting, which has resulted in many court records being destroyed and legal personnel being forced into exile; calls on the Government of the CAR, with the support of the international community, to invest significantly in its justice system, including rebuilding its courts, police force and prisons; recalls at the same time that only adherence to principles of good democratic and economic governance, following a constructive approach to dialogue in the spirit of the Bangui Forum, guarantees success;
8. Emphasises in particular the importance of close coordination with the partners involved, in particular the CAR authorities, the European Union, the World Bank and the UN, to ensure good cooperation and complementarity in the efforts under way to restore stability in the CAR; urges that immediate action be taken to counter impunity for war and other crimes and to help rebuild the justice system, since a lack of justice has contributed to an increase in violent clashes in recent months;
9. Deplores the fact that, owing to a lack of funding, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) runs the risk of soon needing to halt its aid to 150 000 people in the crisis-torn CAR who have been displaced by violence; notes that the food distributed by WFP represents a lifeline for these displaced people, who have lost everything, and that suspending assistance would have a dramatic impact on their lives; urges donors, in this context, to respect their commitments made to the WFP, and to prevent any further deterioration of delivery of humanitarian aid;

10. Welcomes the scaling-up of the EU's and Member States' humanitarian engagement with the CAR in light of the evolving needs; calls on all international donors to support EU humanitarian funding, including the WFP, and to help those affected by the crisis in the CAR, both those inside the country and the refugees in neighbouring countries;
11. Calls on the CAR to develop national policies and legislative frameworks that adequately protect the human rights of displaced persons, including freedom of movement; also calls on it to adopt lasting solutions for displaced persons and refugees, including voluntary, durable, safe and dignified return to their homes, and local integration or resettlement;
12. Believes that dialogue remains the only way to ensure lasting peace in the conflict-affected regions of the CAR, and urges the government to respond concretely to the concerns of the international community in resolving the crises by adoption of a proactive approach to providing security for the local population;
13. Calls on the Government of the CAR, supported by its international partners, to urgently implement its National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding, in particular by reinforcing the capacities of the national security forces, by the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups, and by combating impunity;
14. Invites the Central African authorities to develop a nationally owned strategy to tackle the phenomena of illicit exploitation and trafficking networks affecting natural resources;
15. Suggests that the UN create a cell within MINUSCA to fight trafficking in diamonds, timber, gold and ivory and militarised poaching;
16. Calls on the international diamond companies to stop fuelling the conflict and human rights abuses by purchasing illicitly extracted and traded diamonds from the Central African Republic;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Government and the authorities of the CAR, 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, the Economic Community of Central African States, the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly and the EU Member States.