

Consideration of the situation in CAR

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Tomorrow (11 July), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1221st session to discuss developments in the Central African Republic (CAR).

Following opening remarks by Miguel César Domingos Bembe, Permanent Representative of Angola to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of July 2024, Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), is expected to make a statement. A representative of CAR, as the concerned country, and representatives of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the United Nations (UN) may also deliver statements.

The last time the PSC considered the situation in CAR was on 13 June 2023, at its [1157th](#) session. The session welcomed the declaration made by several armed groups that are signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (PAPR) to disband their movements in line with Article 5(d) of the Agreement. It also urged other armed groups in CAR, including those that do not fall within the framework of the PAPR, to follow suit and participate in conflict resolution processes and in the implementation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes. The focus of tomorrow's session is to review developments in CAR since the last session including in the implementation of the goals of the PAPR and the Luanda Roadmap.

There have been various engagements to take the peace process in the CAR forward. On 6 February, President Touadéra chaired a special session of the Executive Monitoring Committee of the

PAPR during which all relevant stakeholders were urged to remain committed to efforts aimed at fostering the consolidation of peace, security and national unity in CAR. The start of the second phase of the government's communication plan for the peace process took place on 12 March. Another notable development is the move towards decentralising the implementation of the peace process, including the identification of activities to be undertaken at the local level for the implementation of the PAPR and the Luanda Roadmap. A high-level national conference on peaceful and prosperous transhumance opened on 13 May. In addition to these, the government also continued the implementation of its DDR programme, targeting not only groups but also individuals within armed groups that showed readiness to join the programme.

Despite these encouraging steps, challenges persist in CAR's peace process. One of the key factors hindering progress is the intransigence of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) to rejoin the peace and reconciliation process. The CPC not only continues carrying out attacks in various parts of the country, including a most recent attack in a mining town located a few miles from the capital city, but it also remains to be implicated in reports of human rights abuses and conflict-related sexual violence. Considering that the actions of CPC are causing havoc to the security of civilians and impeding progress in the peace process, a key issue warranting PSC's reflection during tomorrow's session is exploring ways of inducing members of the CPC into giving up the use of force and embrace the path of dialogue to resolve the conflict involving the group.

Although the overall security situation has significantly improved in most parts of CAR, some of its remote regions remain unstable. One of the sources of insecurity is the rebel attacks perpetrated mainly by the CPC. The other sources of violence in the CAR involve transhumance-related tensions and

criminal activities, particularly the abduction of people for ransom and looting.

There are legislative and institutional efforts for enhancing law and order and the protection of civilians in the CAR. These include the adoption of a national human rights strategy, a sectoral policy on justice, and a national strategy to combat sexual and gender-based violence in the course of the past year. While these are important developments, their significance lies in the political commitment of the government and the mobilisation of wider societal support for their implementation.

Apart from developments in the peace process and the security situation in the CAR, another key issue expected to receive attention during tomorrow's meeting is the preparations underway for conducting the long-awaited local elections which were postponed from July 2023. The local elections, if conducted according to plan, will be taking place in the country for the first time in over three decades. While this underscores the importance that these local elections have including in extending legitimate structures of governance at local levels, consensus on the holding of the elections is still lacking.

On the one hand, the government and CAR's partners are forging forward with preparations to conduct the elections in October this year. On the other hand, members of civil society and opposition groups are expressing concerns and calling for further postponement until structural reforms are successfully carried out to pave the way for the formation of an independent elections management body. In addition to voicing concern over the continued fragility of the security situation in parts of the country which may disrupt the elections, opposition groups are also of the opinion that the 30 July 2023 constitutional referendum which led to the adoption of a new constitution scraping the two-term limit and extending presidential mandate from 5 to 7 years is indicative of

President Touadéra's intention to consolidate power and his readiness to rig the local elections in favour of his party. The government does not agree with the position of the opposition and civil society organisations. Apart from viewing the elections as key vehicle for restoring security by fostering local governance, it considers the call for postponement as a manifestation of a lack of the necessary support for the opposition to democratically win the local elections.

It is clear from the existing discourse that there is a lack of trust between the CAR government and opposition groups as well as stakeholders in the civil society space. Despite the importance of conducting the local elections for consolidating democratic dividends and for further institutionalising legitimate structures of governance at the local level, the value of the election in bringing about legitimate local structures depends on wider public trust and buy-in. It may thus be critical to ensure that all processes leading to the elections are inclusive and based on sufficient consultations between the government and all the relevant stakeholders. In this regard, it may also be of relevance to consider the role that can be played by the AU and the sub-regional actors, ECCAS and ICGLR, as well as Angola as the AU champion of peace and reconciliation, to facilitate dialogue among CAR's stakeholders on measures to be adopted for enhancing confidence and optimal conditions for the holding of the elections as planned.

The humanitarian situation in CAR is another area of concern that deserves the attention of the PSC. According to OCHA's [latest report](#) of 2 July 2024, CAR is currently host to 31,649 forcibly displaced people from Sudan, including 25,491 Sudanese refugees and 6,158 returnees originally from CAR. Furthermore, the food insecurity crisis in CAR remains a major concern, with 2.8 million people in the country, which constitutes 46% of the total population, regarded to be

extremely vulnerable that humanitarian assistance alone is feared not to suffice for their well-being. In a global context characterised by dwindling humanitarian funding and given CAR's years long humanitarian crisis now further compounded due to the ongoing war in Sudan, the humanitarian community in CAR is faced with considerable capacity challenges. On its part, the CAR government adopted a humanitarian response plan in January 2024 with the aim to address the concerns of refugees and IDPs. However, this plan also continues to face the challenge of low financial mobilisation.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. The PSC is expected to welcome the progress made in some areas in the implementation of the PAPR and the Luanda Roadmap and the support provided, including from Angola in this respect. The PSC may encourage the CAR stakeholders to sustain and elevate their efforts to implement the PAPR and the Luanda Roadmap to advance peace and reconciliation in the country. The PSC may condemn attacks perpetrated predominantly by the CPC. It may in this respect task the AU Commission working with ECCAS to develop and submit options for addressing the challenge that the intransigence of CPC poses to the peace process in CAR. It may also note and welcome the appointment of the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission to CAR, António Egídio de Sousa Santos, in line with PSC's request at its 1157th meeting. Highlighting the important role to be played by the AU Mission in CAR (MISAC) in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the PAPR, the PSC may further emphasise the need for strengthened support for the mission. The PSC may also encourage all CAR stakeholders to engage in inclusive dialogue for enhancing further popular consensus and support, particularly regarding the conduct of the local elections. In this regard, the PSC may also request the AU together with ECCAS and Angola as AU champion of peace and reconciliation, to facilitate engagement with stakeholders having concerns about the preparation for elections for

enhancing the conditions that create wider trust and support for the holding of the election. Taking into account the spike in the number of displaced populations hosted in CAR due to the war in Sudan, the PSC may request the AU Commission and AU member states working in concert with ECCAS to mobilise support for the humanitarian efforts of CAR state and non-state actors including through the relevant PRC sub-committee.