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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE SITUATION IN COTE D'IVOIRE**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 104th Meeting on 20 December 2007, Council among other things, decided to endorse the Second and Third Supplementary Agreements to the Ouagadougou Political Agreement signed on 28 November 2007 by President Laurent Gbagbo and the Secretary General of the New Forces, Guillaume Soro, under the auspices of President Blaise Compaoré, Facilitator of the Direct Dialogue, on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and invited the United Nations Security Council to also endorse the two Agreements. Council also encouraged the Ivorian political forces and the civil society to do their utmost to consolidate the peace momentum thus generated in the country and to contribute in creating conducive conditions for organization of presidential elections. Council appealed to the United Nations to continue to accompany the efforts of the Facilitator and the Ivorian parties and to provide the needed financial, logistics and technical assistance for full implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. Lastly, Council encouraged the Commission to continue to provide support towards the process of implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and the Supplementary Agreements.

2. This Report covers the situation prevailing since December 2007. It gives an update on the political, security, humanitarian and socio-economic developments in the country as well as the status of implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and the Supplementary Agreements. It also details the activities undertaken by the African Union and the international community in support of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire.

II. DEVELOPMENTS

A. Political Aspects

3. The period under review was marked by serene political climate and remarkable collaboration between President Gbagbo and the Prime Minister Guillaume Soro. The *entente* between the two chief executives was reflected particularly in the consensual decisions of Government on implementation of the Agreements.

4. At the 27 March Session of the Council of Ministers, the President of the Republic reiterated his confidence in and support for the Prime Minister whom he commended and encouraged to pursue the mission entrusted to him under the terms of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. This expression of support was opportune especially because it came in the wake of the criticisms leveled against the Prime Minister by the National Resistance Congress for Democracy (*CNRD*), a political grouping within the presidential alliance. The *CNRD* had, at a press conference, voiced opposition to the idea of holding elections without disarmament of the Armed Forces of the New Forces (*FAFN*). The *CNRD* had also wanted the Prime Minister to

quit his position as Secretary General of the New Forces, but later retracted this statement.

5. The new climate paved the way for the key political parties to exercise their activities throughout the country, ahead of the elections that should mark the conclusion of the peace process. From 1 to 3 February, the Rally of Republicans (*RDR*) held its 2nd Congress in Abidjan, at which Mr. Alassane Ouattara was re-elected leader of the party for another five-year tenure and designed *RDR* candidate for the presidential election. He was mandated to enter into political alliance with the New Forces, open the party to other political formations and strengthen the relations between the Rally of Houphouétists for Democracy and Peace (*RHDP*). In attendance at the opening ceremony of the Congress were the President of the Ivorian Popular Front (*FPI*), Pascal Affi N'Guessan; the President of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire – the African Democratic Rally (*PDCI-RDA*), Henri Konan Bédié, and the spokesperson of the New Forces, all of whom presented messages on that occasion.

6. Following the public meetings organized at Bouna, Dabou and Abidjan in the district of Koumassi in September and November 2007, respectively, the *PDCI-RDA* President hosted other meetings in Bocanda in the N'Zi-Comoé province in December 2007, at Yopougon in Abidjan in March and at Soubré in April in the province of Fromager, the home place of the Head of State regarded as the stronghold of the *FPI*. The main focus of the messages of the *PDCI-RDA* President at these rallies was the need to mobilize the party militants and followers for massive turnout at the upcoming elections, and the criticisms leveled against the *FPI*.

7. The *FPI* President toured the far-North of the country for over a month, a tour which kicked off on 31 March from the Ferkessedougou Department, home place of the Secretary-General of the New Forces, and continued to other localities including the village of Kong, birth place of Alassane Ouattara. The tour ended with the Korhogo and Boundiali Departments without a single incident reported. The *FPI* President took the opportunity to declare that the war was finally over, and to call upon the still hesitant civil servants to return to their stations and resume duty, pursuant to the redeployment of the Administration. He also suggested that the country should invest solidarity effort in the economy of this region which was affected in no small measure by the crisis, through substantial increase in the budgets allocated to its county councils.

8. As a way of involving young people and women in the crisis exit process, the Prime Minister's Cabinet, in February, organized seminars for women's and youth organizations affiliated to the political parties and movements signatories to the Inter-Ivorian Peace Accord. At end of deliberation, the organizations set up a permanent consultation framework, adopted a code of conduct and drew up a time table for contacts with the political leaders and the Facilitator so as to contribute to implementation of the Accord.

9. The Prime Minister and his Government generally deployed efforts to explain to the political players and civil society representatives, the delays in the implementation of the Agreements and the fact that it was becoming increasingly obvious that the June 2008 timeline for organization of presidential election would

not be met. The Prime Minister sought the widest possible consensus for adoption of the Agreements' enabling texts to avoid the stalemate that could have resulted from any hasty approach.

10. It is noteworthy that, during the period under review, Ivorian leaders had regular consultations with a number of the region's leaders and other international players, consultations which availed them of the opportunity to appraise the state of implementation of the peace process. On this score, the Head of State travelled outside the country especially to Gabon on 29 January and South Africa on 18-19 March, and was in the United Nations from 16 to 17 April to attend the joint UN Security Council/AU Peace and Security Council meeting. The Prime Minister, for his part, represented the country in the 10th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, and from 13 to 14 March, at the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) session in Dakar. In all the Gulf countries he visited from 28 April to 7 May, he was able to secure financing for the country's reconstruction and emergency program. Furthermore, Côte d'Ivoire hosted several distinguished guests including President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone on 3 March; ECOWAS Commission President Mohamed Ibn-Chambas on 5-6 March, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia on 1 April and Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General on 23 April.

B. Security Aspects

11. The security situation remained stable throughout the country during the period under review, a direct reflection of the greatly improved political climate since the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement. Some incidents were however reported. For instance, the New Forces indicated that an attack had been perpetrated against its soldiers in Bouaké by followers of master sergeant Ibrahim Coulibaly, otherwise known as "IB" on 27 December 2007. That attack, which was swiftly repulsed, reportedly claimed several lives and led to the arrest of several persons, which were subsequently transferred to the civilian prison in Korhogo. On 17 January, eleven (11) persons suspected of involvement in the destabilization attempt were arrested in Abidjan. On 30 January, the Abidjan military tribunal prosecutor issued international arrest warrant against sergeant Coulibaly, accused of conspiracy against the State. It is also noteworthy that there was an upsurge of organized crime especially in the West of the country where many armed robbery cases were reported. Several other minor incidents were also recorded.

C. Humanitarian, Human Rights and Socio-Economic Aspects

12. The positive effects engendered by the Ouagadougou Political Agreement paved the way for the voluntary return of displaced persons to their places of origin, with the support of humanitarian agencies, NGOs and national authorities. However, the persistent mistrust, the struggle for control of land especially in the West of the country, insecurity and lack of resources seriously constrained the pursuit and consolidation of this home return momentum.

13. The difficulties faced in the West of the country will in due course be addressed in a workshop as a way of finding a sustainable solution. This workshop which is to be held at Bloléquin from 21 to 23 May, will involve the Ministers concerned by the matter, humanitarian organizations, local authorities and the

populations. In a recently organized seminar, the Ministry of National Reconciliation and the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims, respectively adopted a national reconciliation charter and a solidarity and cohesion observatory, to foster reconciliation and consolidate peace. In the same spirit, local peace committees were created in several areas to accompany the home return momentum.

14. The international humanitarian community is intent on mobilizing about US\$ 47 million as support to the home return operation in the affected areas, in the form of assistance to displaced persons, host communities and vulnerable persons. For its part, the African Union in May 2007, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) in Côte d'Ivoire, provided financial assistance to the country in the amount of US\$ 100,000. This contribution, which came in the aftermath of the humanitarian assessment mission undertaken to Côte d'Ivoire by the PRC Sub-Committee on Humanitarian Matters, was meant for the displaced persons in the district of Abobo in Abidjan, and in the Displaced Persons Temporary Reception Centre (CATD) in Guiglo, in the West.

15. Social movements were the order of the day throughout the past five months. Whereas the schools wrote their first common examinations across the country under the 2006-2007 academic year, the current year saw recurrent strikes initiated by primary, secondary and higher education teachers' unions in support of the various protest actions.

16. In March, the populations in some districts of Abidjan went on the streets to protest the frequent water shortage. The Minister of Economic Infrastructure recognized that there was a 30% deficit in drinking water supply across the country, and pledged to take appropriate measures to remedy the situation.

17. On 31 March and 1 April, women and the youth marched in protest against the soaring price of the most commonly used consumer goods. Many people were wounded in this action, with two youth killed by fire arms. In his address to the Nation, the President of the Republic underscored the global nature of the price hike and called on the people to remain calm. In consultation with the Government, he announced three months suspension of the tax on some essential commodities and reduction of VAT from 18% to 9%. An inter-Ministerial Committee armed with the decisions of the 25 April Extraordinary Session of the Council of Ministers, was set up to follow up on these measures. Additionally, the Head of State recently announced the importation of 600,000 tonnes of rice. In the same vein, the development partners pledged to provide requisite resources to help combat skyrocketing prices. For its part, the Economic and Monetary Union of West African States (UEMOA) in an Extraordinary Council Session in Abidjan decided to put in place a 100 billion CFA Francs emergency plan for its members, including Côte d'Ivoire.

18. Human Rights NGOs reported summary executions and arbitrary arrests in Bouaké in December 2007, in the aftermath of the destabilization attempt attributed to master sergeant Ibrahim Coulibaly. Many cases of rape were also recently reported in Bangolo in the West of the country. On the occasion of his visit to Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Secretary General was given a written report on this matter at his meeting with the Ivorian civil society. The Prime Minister took the

opportunity to reactivate the issue of the inquiry into the attempt on his life in Bouaké on 29 June 2007.

19. On the economic front, the return of banking institutions is taking hold in the Central, Northern and Western parts of the country. Furthermore, the international financial community is gradually resuming its cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire within the framework of post-conflict assistance programs.

III. STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE AGREEMENTS

20. Significant progress was made in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and the Supplementary Agreements, even though the initial timelines could not be met.

A. General Identification of the Populations

21. It should be mentioned that implementation of the decision taken in September to deploy 111 teams for the mobile court public hearings for the purpose of issuing birth certificates to the citizens over a period of three months, was faced with logistical difficulties. The hearings, however, proceeded well throughout the national territory with no incident reported. As of 15 May, of the 623,363 requests received, 592,474 were approved and 28,224 rejected. Of the 111 teams deployed, 18 have completed their assignment and returned to base. Some political parties notably the RDR, wanted the operation extended. On this score, the Evaluation and Monitoring Committee (EMC) at its meeting on 24 March, recommended that the original three months deadline should be retained. However, the Permanent Consultation Framework (PCF) at its meeting on 9 May, invited the Government to study the possibility of organizing supplementary mobile court public hearings wherever this was deemed necessary, without prejudice to the date of the presidential election. In conformity with these guidelines, the Minister of Justice and the Attorney-General issued a communiqué ending the operation on 15 May; underscoring, however, that supplementary hearings would be organized exceptionally in certain areas, list of which was to be published in due course.

22. In accordance with terms of Article 10 of the Third Supplementary Agreement, reconstitution of the civil registers lost or destroyed during the conflict was expected to commence before the end of December 2007. Going by the assessment undertaken by the National Identification Oversight Committee, 25% of the civil registers had been destroyed and therefore have to be reconstituted. The modality of this exercise submitted by the Ministry of Justice was adopted only on 12 March and its commencement which has to be preceded by awareness-building campaign, is imminent. The operation is expected to last for four months, and will cost 3 billion CFA Francs.

23. The exercise for issuance of new identity documents which is largely dependent on the activities entrusted to the technical operator – SAGEM – and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), has not started. A Government Council considered the decree authorizing issuance of national identity cards to any person whose name features on the final voters' register, and submitted same to the Council of Ministers for adoption.

B. Electoral Process

24. According to Article 12 of the Third Supplementary Agreement, “the two Parties agree that presidential election shall take place not later than the first half of 2008”. However, the difficulties faced in the adoption of many vital legislative and regulatory texts required to prepare for the election made it impossible for it to hold by the agreed deadline. All the same, Government perseverance finally made it possible to overcome these obstacles.

25. Thus, at the end of the Extraordinary Council of Ministers' Session held on 14 April 2008, President Laurent Gbagbo signed a series of texts relating to the electoral process, namely: Decree No. 2008-134 on the convening of the electoral college of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for election of the President of the Republic on 30 November 2008; Decree No. 2008-135 defining the modalities for collaboration between the INS and SAGEM under the responsibility and authority of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for preparation of the voters' register and issuance of voter's cards; Decree No. 2008-136 defining the modalities for drawing up the new voters' register; Edict 2008-133 on adjustments to the electoral code for crisis exit elections and Decision No. 2008-15/PR on special modalities for adjustments to the electoral code. Adoption of these texts and setting of election date at 30 November 2008 on the recommendation of the IEC, were welcomed by the political class and public opinion both of which expressed the hope that this timeline would be scrupulously respected.

26. On 27 March, the Government and SAGEM signed an Agreement for 66.7 billion CFA Francs, 40 billion of which will be sourced from the 2008 budget and 26.7 billion from the 2009 budget. The timeline for SAGEM to execute the contract is eight months. Similarly, on 24 April, the Code of Good Conduct was signed in the presence of the United Nations Secretary General, by the political parties, the groupings, the political forces and the election candidates. This document had been adopted by the political parties following a seminar organized in November 2007 under the auspices of the IEC in conjunction with the Elections Division of the ONUCI and the *National Democratic Institute (NDI)*. By signing the document, the parties, among other things, undertook to support the holding of democratic, free, transparent and open elections, respect the verdict of the ballot box and, in the event of dispute, to resort to the judicial process according to law.

C. Military and Security Aspects

27. With respect to the kick off of encampment of former fighters and weapons storage, the *FDSCI* met the deadline of 22 December 2007 at the latest set by the Third Supplementary Agreement. On 24 January, it announced that 12,000 soldiers from its army had gone into the encampment centers. In contrast, as far as the *FAFN* was concerned, there was no progress as of the end of April, except for the encampment of some hundred ex-combatants on the occasion of the launch of the operation on 22 December. This lack of progress was due to mainly to logistics and financial problems. The encampment process for the *FAFN* will recommence on 2 May in Bouaké and Séguéla. Over a thousand former fighters have already been encamped and six sites set aside for this operation.

28. On 28 December 2007, was signed Decree No. 2007-678 fixing the pay for the encamped former *FAFN* fighters at a bloc sum of 90,000 CFA Francs per month per person in conformity with Article 2 of the Second Supplementary Agreement. In the same vein, the Government gave its approval for restoration of the salaries of soldiers of the *FAFN* previously members of the National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (*FANCI*), the Gendarmerie, Police and the paramilitary corps.

29. Pursuant to Article 8 of the Third Supplementary Agreement which provides for adoption by Government by 15 December 2007 at the latest, of the texts defining the global framework for organization, composition and functioning of the new Defense and Security Forces, a task group for restructuring of the Defense and Security Forces was set up in conformity with Decree No. 2007-645 of 20 December 2007 signed on 20 February 2008. This task group was given the responsibility to devise a comprehensive strategy and plan for restructuring and reform of the Defense and Security Forces, and is expected to submit its conclusions on 20 June 2008; that is, four months after the signing of the Decree. Furthermore, on 5 January, the Facilitator put forward proposals on *FAFN*'s quota in the new Army and on the grades of those that had changed rank in the *FAFN*. The parties concerned are yet to give their response to the proposals.

30. The dismantling of the militia and recruitments for the national civic service slated for 22 December 2007 in accordance with the Third Supplementary Agreement is yet to start. Problems relating to the conception and financing of these programs are said to be at the root of this state of affairs. In the meantime, the National Reintegration and Rehabilitation Program (*PNRRC*) assisted by a private operator – *STEL*, has embarked upon a *profiling* operation to take a census of and register the former fighters. As at 26 February, nearly 32,220 *FAFN* soldiers had been profiled. This operation conducted through *PNRRC* Regional Bureaus also concerned the militia. As regards demobilization of former *FAFN* fighters, 450 of them had gone back to civilian life on conclusion of the training dispensed by the *PNRRC* with a view to their socio-economic integration. On 12 May, the *PNRRC* organized a ceremony in which 192 demobilized soldiers participated.

D. Restoration of State authority and Redeployment of the Administration

31. Despite the difficult working conditions in which the prefects and sub-prefects had to operate (inadequate accommodation and lack of logistics to discharge their missions), remarkable progress was made in the restoration of State authority and redeployment of the Administration. As of 29 April, out of the 24,437 State public servants and workers concerned by the deployment, 19,555 made up of teachers, nurses and midwives had returned to their duty stations in the Central, Northern and Western regions of the country. Rehabilitation of public buildings is under way. Concurrently, the Government embarked upon negotiations with donors for assistance towards procurement of vehicles and office equipment. With the financial support of the European Union, the entire infrastructure of the districts of Bouaké, Danane, Kathiola, Man, Séguéla and Touba were rehabilitated at a cost of 456 million CFA Francs, and officially handed to the Ivorian authorities in April.

32. Redeployment of the Fiscal and Customs Administration based on the principle of *single treasury* is currently underway starting with the establishment of a joint *FDSCI/FAFN* customs belt to collect customs duty on goods from outside the ECOWAS space. An exploratory and reconnaissance mission tasked to map out the sites has traveled across the Northern parts of the country and has had fruitful talks with *FAFN* leaders. The task group created at the level of the Cabinet of the Prime Minister has already assessed the financial implications and devised the modalities framework for taking the New Forces on board in the new context. It was against this backdrop that a team of 26 officials comprising 13 customs officials and 13 elements of the New Forces, on 12 May, took up position at the Ouangolo customs post at the border with Burkina Faso, in the presence of the Economy and Finance Minister and several executives of the New Forces.

E. MONITORING AND CONSULTATION MECHANISMS

33. The monitoring and consultation mechanisms immensely contributed in maintaining serene climate amongst the key political players and in reducing potential tensions particularly those arising from election timelines.

34. At the end of its 2nd meeting held in Ouagadougou on 24 January, the PCF presided by the Facilitator, President Blaise Compaoré, comprising President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Soro, former President Henri Konan Bédié and former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara, decided to fast track the electoral process. The deliberation of this body focussed mainly on respect for the provisions of previous agreements regarding candidatures for the presidential election without exclusion, the facilities for inclusion of names on the voters' register for Ivorians who recently attained adult age and for those who had been issued with birth certificates following a decision of mobile court public hearings, reduced the legal deadline for publication of the voters' register, and discussed internet publication of the register and the representation of all the parties signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement in the offices of IEC branches.

35. At the end of its 3rd meeting in Yamoussoukro on 9 May, the PCF, among other things, underscored the need for a speedy start to the operation to reconstitute lost or destroyed civil registers which should be carried out in accordance with the set dates and deadlines taking into account the electoral calendar, invited the Government to explore the possibility of organizing supplementary mobile court hearings, and recommended the immediate dismantling of the militias, continuation of the encampment of former soldiers and a speedy start to the civic service. The PCF welcomed the fixing of 30 November by the Government as date for the first round of the presidential election as well as the adoption of the Code of Good Conduct and called upon the political parties to scrupulously abide by this instrument. It highlighted the need to ensure, for the political parties and candidates running for the elections, equitable access to State media not only during electioneering campaign but also during the pre-electoral period, invited the media, the print media in particular, to create a climate propitious to organization of peaceful elections, and urged the Prime Minister to hold talks with all the executives of the print and audio-visual media to get them to be moderate in their pronouncements. The PCF further highlighted the difficulties faced in the financing of the electoral

process and reiterated its urgent appeal to the international community to speedily lend support to the efforts deployed by the Government.

36. The EAC enlarged to include the international community representatives members of the International Consultative Organ (ICO), met in Ouagadougou on 14 January and 21 March, respectively. At these meetings, the signatory parties reviewed the status of implementation of the Agreements and put forward recommendations to overcome the obstacles encountered.

37. At the end of the 14 January meeting, the EMC expressed satisfaction at the continued improvement of the political climate in Côte d'Ivoire and, among other things, underscored the need to strengthen the measures designed to ensure security for the peace process and appealed to the parties to avail the Integrated Command Centre (ICC) with the facilities stipulated in the Third Supplementary Agreement. Members of the ICC placed particular emphasis on the importance of the UN certifying all stages of the electoral process. They encouraged the Facilitator to fully play his role of arbiter in all stages of the peace process. They also emphasized the need to plan and strictly budget for the actions defined in the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and called upon the Government to further involve the partners in preparations for the elections. The Facilitator invited the Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to review the security index of Côte d'Ivoire in light of the improved security situation in the country.

38. At its meeting of 21 March, the EMC (Evaluation and Monitoring Committee) welcomed the effective conduct of the public hearings which passed off in a climate of normalcy, and recommended scrupulous compliance with the three months time frame agreed for the conduct of exceptional public hearings. It also recommended speedy conclusion of an agreement with the technical operator and the launch of the operation for inclusion of names on the voters' register, and the early signing of the texts relating to the electoral process. The Committee further recommended that Government accelerate the encampment exercise and urgently implement the program for disarmament and dismantling of the militia, emphasizing in this connection, the need for urgent commencement of the national civic service and the *PNRRC*.

39. The EMC urged the Ivorian parties to take appropriate measures to make the single State treasury effective in pursuance of the relevant provisions of the Third Supplementary Agreement. It also called upon the Government to establish an organ to control and oversee the free flow and movement of persons and goods. The EMC was particularly concerned by the issue of financing the peace process and commended the Government for the efforts it deployed to clear its debts to international financial institutions and for the contributions already made or pledged by the partners. On this score, it highlighted the need for further financial support and better coordination in the procedure for release of the funds meant for financing the crisis exit process.

IV. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT

40. Apart from the efforts invested by the Ivorian parties to resolve the crisis, the sustained involvement of the Facilitator, the United Nations, countries and

international organizations members of the ICO, in the implementation of the Agreements are a reflection of the unalloyed international community support towards successful conclusion of the peace process.

41. In line with the terms of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, the Facilitator presided over all meetings of the PCF and the EMC. In view of the inclusive nature of the crisis exit process, he held talks on regular basis with Ivorian political players, representatives of youth and women's organizations affiliated to the political parties, as well as representatives of the civil society and religious institutions. In the exercise of his functions, the Facilitator appealed to the United Nations to scale down Côte d'Ivoire's security index. Subsequently, and in light of the continued improvement in the security situation in the country, the United Nations decided "to review the security alert downwards, bringing it to level 1 in certain areas in the South and North, as well as in the Bondoukou-Bouna zone; and to level 3 in Guiglo in the West, with the level left unchanged in the rest of the North of the country".

42. On 15 January, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1795 (2008) by which it, among other things, endorsed the Supplementary Agreements to the Ouagadougou Political Agreement signed on 28 November 2007 and decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) and the French forces which have been supporting it til 30 July 2008. A multi-sectoral mission of the United Nations was in Côte d'Ivoire from 3 to 12 March 2008 to assess the progress achieved and come up with recommendations to align the role of ONUCI with the context engendered by the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

43. In the same vein, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General who is playing a decisive role on ground to mobilize and coordinate international community representatives, in accordance with the provisions of Resolution 1765 (2007) and in consultation with the Facilitator and Ivorian parties, formulated a five criteria framework for certification of all stages of the electoral process. This framework defined the points of reference for determining: "a) whether the security conditions in the period preceeding the election are conducive to full participation of the populations and the candidates; b) whether the election process is open to each and everyone; c) whether all the candidates have equitable access to State media and whether the latter is neutral; d) whether the voters' registers are credible and accepted by all the parties; and e) whether the results of the elections are determined at the end of transparent counting and accepted by all or contested peacefully using the appropriate mechanisms."

44. As earlier indicated, the United Nations Secretary General visited Côte d'Ivoire from 23 to 24 April. In addition to talks with the signatories to the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and other key Ivorian political stakeholders, he sponsored the signing of a protocol agreement between the State and a number of donors (European Union, France, Japan and UNDP) and of the Code of Good Conduct for the elections.

45. The positive impact of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement on the security situation was reflected in the reduced number of forces deployed on ground. In this connection, and while guarding the capacity to carry out its missions which have remained unchanged, the strength of the French Forces "the Licorne" was cut from

2,500 to 1,800 troops. As for the ONUCI Forces, they were redeployed in more mobile formations in the former zones of confidence for more visible presence especially in the West and North of the country, and took measures to backstop the ICC in its mission of providing security for the operations spelt out in the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

46. Regarding the financing of the crisis exit programs, it is noteworthy that despite the pledges made at the Donors' Round Table in August 2007, the Ivorian Government has voiced the difficulties it is facing in terms of financing some components of the process. The donors took the view that they do not have enough details to enable them to release the funds, and so, would like to be further associated with the definition of the programs. This issue has now taken a turn for the better, thanks to consultations by the Prime Minister and within the framework of meetings of the EMC enlarged to include the ICO, as well as the involvement of the Facilitator and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General. The outcome was the creation of a Technical Committee for Monitoring and Oversight of the crisis exit programs, consisting of the representatives of the donors. The UNDP made available to Government a team of experts to assist it in the definition of the crisis exit projects and in putting the projects so defined in the required format.

47. At a press conference held on 7 May, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General presented, on behalf of the donors, the status of financing as at early May. This financing amounted to 11 billion CFA Francs for the elections, and 104 billion for the other crisis exit programs. These figures include the monies available in the calabash of funds managed by UNDP, the monies committed by donors and others already released or set aside for ongoing projects. The Government and the PCF (Permanent Consultative Framework) have the feeling that the financing difficulties are still there, and are requesting the international community to provide the needed support.

V. ROLE OF THE AFRICAN UNION

48. During the period under review, the AU Liaison Office in Côte d'Ivoire continued to encourage all the political forces and the civil society to invest their best efforts to consolidate the peace momentum generated in the country and to help create conducive conditions for organization of the presidential election. In this connection, the AU Liaison Office maintained regular contact with Government members, political party leaders, the Facilitator's representatives, those of the United Nations, ECOWAS, the countries and organizations involved in the crisis exit process. In February this year, given the *impasse* in the adoption of the legislative and regulatory texts observed at the time, my Special Representative embarked on working visits to some members of Government to assess the situation. At their various meetings, the Ivorian players indicated that Government's approach was geared to achieving only one objective, namely: secure the widest possible consensus. The same approach was employed in March vis-à-vis the leaders of the *FPI*, the Movement of Forces of the Future (*MFA*), members of the *RHDP* and the Ivorian Workers' Party (*PIT*).

49. My Special Representative and his collaborators pressed ahead with their regular briefing and consultation meetings with the international community partners involved in the crisis exit process, especially the Facilitator's representatives, those of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the countries and international organizations members of the ICO. My Special Representative also participated in the 3rd and 4th meetings of the EMC held in Ouagadougou on 14 January and 21 March respectively. On those occasions, he voiced AU's support for the ongoing process. Furthermore, he participated in the meetings convened by the Prime Minister for ICO members.

50. In pursuance of their mandate, members of the Liaison Office undertook missions to the interior of the country to obtain first-hand information on the political, security and humanitarian situation. They were also highly sought after by several organizations which would like to share AU experience. It was against this background that they presented a paper on themes such as "Bases and Objectives of Coordination of Election Observation in Post-Conflict Situations", at a seminar organized by the Electoral Assistance Division of the UNUCI on the general theme: "Circumstances, Prospects and Challenges of the Electoral Process", "Francophone Cooperation, Post-Crisis Reconstruction in Côte d'Ivoire and Sustainable Development" at a Seminar organized on 18 March on the occasion of Day of the Francophonie; "Organic Frameworks of the African Union", on 28 March at an international conference of African Youth organized by the Forum of Associations of the North; "African Union Solidarity" at a solidarity gathering organized by the Government in Yamoussoukro from 25 to 28 March.

51. At the same time, the military component of the Liaison Office regularly participated in meetings with the Impartial Forces, and consistently maintained working relations with the authorities of the two former warring forces. It is also active in the informal dialogue and interaction committee made up of the Defense Attachés in Abidjan.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

52. The remarkable progress achieved in the peace process is a measure of how far the country has gone since the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and its Supplementary Agreements. The positive results obtained in the implementation of these Agreements – proof of the commitment of the signatory parties – are an attestation of the irreversibility of the process. I wish, at this juncture, to express my delight at the fixing, by consensus, of the date of the presidential election at 30 November 2008. I invite all Ivorian parties to scrupulously abide by this date and urge them to do their utmost to create conditions propitious for successful presidential election. I encourage all the political forces and the civil society to preserve and consolidate the peace momentum that has taken hold in the country, thus enabling them to deploy their activities throughout the length and breadth of the country.

53. The progress achieved was as a result of the eminent role played by the Facilitator. I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for his initiatives in this direction and to assure him of the continued support of the African Union. I appeal to the international community particularly the donors, to extend all the

support needed to actualize the crisis exit process, especially in areas where financing is yet to be fully available.

54. With the date of the presidential election set, the Commission should place itself in sufficient readiness to contribute to the proper conduct of the polling by, among other things, deploying as many observer teams as possible. In this regard, I intend to field in the coming weeks, an assessment mission comprising representatives of the Peace and Security Department and of the Department of Political Affairs to evaluate the situation and formulate recommendations on the role that the AU should play in the coming weeks and months.