

## News bulletin

16 - 23 June 2008

### Highlights

- Comprehensive peace accord signed between Government, APRD and UFDR in Libreville, Gabon on 21 June
- World Bank grants US\$ 7.9 million to CAR
- Close to 800 displaced people in Batangafo
- Common Humanitarian Fund to start on 1 July

### Background and security

#### Comprehensive peace accord signed

The Central African Government on 21 June signed a comprehensive peace accord with the *Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy* (APRD), led by former defense minister Jean-Jacques Demafouth, and Zakaria Damane's *Union of Democratic Forces for Unity* (UFDR). The agreement leaves the door open for the *Democratic Forces for the Central African People* (FDPC) of Abdoulaye Miskine, who was absent but represented, to sign on.

The accord, which builds on individual pacts earlier agreed by the government with each rebel movement, was signed in Libreville, Gabon, in front of CAR and Gabonese presidents François Bozizé and Omar Bongo. The comprehensive agreement uniting the three rebel groups and the government is a precondition for the organization of the Inclusive Political Dialogue that is to include all parties, the ruling administration, rebels, the legal opposition and civil society. The opening of the dialogue had been planned for June 8 but was postponed pending the deal between the government and the rebels.

The deal involves a total amnesty for fighters and for all activities related to the rebellions, with demobilization and resettlement plans still to be fully ironed out. A committee made up of representatives from the United Nations, the European Union and Central African countries was set up to monitor the implementation of the agreement.

#### Human Rights leader receives death threats

Goungaye Wanfiyo, lawyer and President of the *Central African Human Rights League* (LCDH) recently received death threats, according to the *International Federation for Human Rights* (FIDH).

The intimidation is allegedly linked to the arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba on May 25 by the International Criminal Court (ICC), and particularly to Mr. Wanfiyo's collaboration with the ICC for the benefit of the victims of the abuses committed by Bemba's forces in Bangui in 2002.

The FIDH also drew attention to the threats against Bernadette Sayo and Eric Kpakpo, leaders of the *Organization for Compassion and Development of Families in Distress* (OCODEFAD). This Central African NGO also supports victims of sexual abuse committed during CAR's conflicts since 2002.

### Current events

#### World Bank Support to CAR

The World Bank donated US\$ 7.9 million to help the Central African Government pay off its debt to the institution and to complete the reforms in economic management and for good governance in the country.

The project aims at supporting the implementation of CAR's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and will help the government to benefit from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). The World Bank will make the funds available to the Government at the end of June.

#### Close to 800 displaced people in Batangafo

On 15 May, 789 displaced people were counted in the town of Batangafo in the centre north of the country, with 715 of them coming from Croisement Moissala and 74 from Bezanga. Violent attacks by bandits, so-called *zaraguinas*, are at the origins of their flight. According to the testimonies of the displaced, their land is currently occupied by Peuhl herders and a return to the village is therefore not possible in the near future.

The displaced people have settled in related host families in Batangafo. Lodging conditions are inadequate, however, as the new arrivals often camp outside in the enclosure of their relatives. Some of the displaced work for survival as day labourers in the fields of local traders, but the remuneration of FCFA 300 to 400 per day does not suffice to feed their families.

Host families often allocated a part of their own farming land to the displaced staying with them, but

agricultural tools and seeds are in short supply. The nearly 800 extra residents also put an additional strain on water resources, already scarce before their arrival because of damaged or ill-maintained wells.



*'Impossible to return now,' according to the displaced*

Humanitarian NGOs present in the town are making efforts to offer social services to the displaced. They already have access to health care and immunizations provided by *Doctors without borders Spain/Belgium* (MSF E/B). About 100 displaced children are attending the main school in Batangafo, thanks to the support of the *Norwegian Refugee Council* (NRC). The NRC is also planning to support a temporary school for the other displaced children, with the collaboration of the parent-teachers of their villages of origin.

This rapid assessment is the result of a joint mission on 18 June of the *UN High Commission for Refugees* (UNHCR), the *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA) and the NRC.

## 20 June, World Refugee Day

UNHCR in CAR organized a number of events throughout the month of June to commemorate World Refugee Day 2008. These included quiz games on Radio Ndeke Luka, a popular local private radio station; an art contest for refugee children and young adults; a carnival refugee parade with the participation of Congolese music groups around the capital Bangui; a football game between two teams of refugees; a race with the participation of 20 refugee women; an Open Day at the Alliance Française; awareness-raising workshops on refugee's rights at police stations in Bangui; and a televised round table on this year's theme of protection, with the participation of representatives of UNHCR, the National Refugee Commission and refugees.

On 20 June, UNHCR held an official ceremony with the participation of members of the Central African Government, the diplomatic corps, representatives of UN agencies and international NGOs, the National Refugee Commission and representatives from the various nationalities of refugees residing in the country.

In addition, sports and other community activities were organized at the Sudanese refugee camp in Sam Ouandja and the Congolese refugee site at Molangue, as well as in the towns of Paoua and Kaga-Bandoro. In all, over 1,000 people participated in events organized to commemorate refugee day.

## Coordination

### Common Humanitarian Fund on 1 July

Representatives of the United Nations and international and national NGOs on 18 June attended the workshop on the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), organized by the *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA) with the support of the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP).

The workshop is the last step in a process which will lead to the transformation of the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), which has mobilized over US\$ 11 million in the past year, into a pooled fund.

Toby Lanzer, UN Humanitarian Coordinator, said at the opening of the workshop that the CHF stems from a recommendation made by donors for a balanced partnership between all humanitarian actors. The new fund will make money available for priority projects of the Coordinated Aid Programme early in the year, for starting up operations in regions with unmet needs and for emergency actions.

Clusters will receive, appraise and select projects eligible for funding. The Humanitarian Coordinator, supported by OCHA, will manage the Fund, while UNDP serves as administrative agent and manages the NGO projects. The CHF will begin on 1 July.

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