

News bulletin

22 - 29 September 2008

Highlights

- Extension of MINURCAT's mandate until 15 March 2009
- Second meeting of the sectoral committee for security sector reform on 19 September
- Help for 7,800 displaced people by the International Committee of the Red Cross
- Assistance to the vulnerable people of Bossangoa by the World Food Programme
- The Common Humanitarian Fund allocates \$2.5 million

Background and security

Fuel tanker blast kills seven

At least seven people were killed and over 20 badly burned on 26 September in Gbahon, 75 km north of the capital, when a petrol tanker exploded as villagers tried to salvage fuel from it. The truck carrying gasoline and diesel oil had overturned after blowing a tyre. The driver and his assistant escaped unhurt, but dozens of local villagers, mostly women and children, rushed up to the overturned truck to try to siphon off its load of fuel when it exploded.

Extension of the mandate of MINURCAT

The Security Council of the United Nations on 24 September unanimously extended the mandate of the *United Nations Mission in Central African Republic and Chad* (MINURCAT) until 15 March 2009 so as to create the conditions for a voluntary safe and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons.

The Council will decide by 15 December on the deployment of a United Nations force to succeed to the *European Union Force* (EUFOR), whose departure is planned for 15 March 2009.

On the same day, President Bozizé pleaded with the UN General Assembly that *"with the end of EUFOR in March 2009 and taking into account the fragility of the situation not only in the north-east but also the developing insecurity in the south-east, the revision of MINURCAT's mission and its scope is to be desired."*

ICC Fund for victims

The Victims Trust Fund of the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) launched a €10 million appeal to donors on 10 September to assist victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Uganda and Sudan. The Victims Trust Fund, established in conjunction with the ICC by the Statute of Rome in 2002, promotes and assists victims affected by crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The funds raised will serve at first to finance some 50 programmes over three years in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. They should be available within the next year.

Current events

Security sector reform moves ahead

On 19 September, five months after the national seminar on security sector reform (SSR), Prime Minister Faustin Touadéra chaired the second meeting of the SSR sectoral committee.

The aim of the meeting was to revitalize the implementation of the operational recommendations adopted at the national SSR seminar held in Bangui from 14 to 17 April 2008 with the support of the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP). The five thematic groups (Defense, Interior, Justice, Finance and Water & Forests) presented the status of the implementation of the reform activities and identified priorities for the last quarter of 2008.

According to Jean-François Bozizé, Deputy Minister of Defense, the meeting was to give a new impetus to the work of the thematic groups within each ministry responsible for the implementation of the reform and of all actors involved. At the same time, the office for International Humanitarian Law was established within the *Central African Armed Forces* (FACA). Its role is to disseminate the principles of International Humanitarian Law to soldiers, in order for them to comply with these principles in times of peace and war.

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Help for 7,800 displaced people around Bouca

The *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC), in collaboration with the Central African Red Cross, delivered humanitarian aid for the first time to some 7,800 people living in the 26 villages situated on the main road between Bouca and Marazé, in Ouham province in the north-west of the country.

The emergency supplies (tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito nets, buckets, soap, hoes, sleeping mats, clothing and household items) were delivered to people who had fled the fighting between government forces and the *Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy* (APRD) in 2006 and 2007, and also to people recently displaced by the bandit attacks in May 2008. Most of them lost their possessions when they fled or as a consequence of bushfires. The remoteness of the area, the poor condition of the roads, and the lack of security make their living conditions all the more difficult.

In addition to distributing essential goods to displaced people, the ICRC Kaga-Bandoro sub-delegation, which was set up in February 2007, helps the local population to access safe drinking water and spreads knowledge of the basic rules of International Humanitarian Law among armed groups. It also provides support for local Red Cross chapters.

Assistance to the vulnerable of Bossangoa

The *World Food Programme* (WFP) launched a series of new projects in Bossangoa in the north-west of the country in August. WFP provides food to the 135 displaced from Nana Bakassa, more than 1,000 people ill with tuberculosis or living with HIV and other patients of the hospital of Bossangoa, 225 malnourished children and as many accompanying adults at the Therapeutic Feeding Center and health centers, and 183 orphans and vulnerable children. The association of 220 blind people is being supported by a Food for Work programme.

The food assistance is composed of maize flour, legumes, soy beans, oil and sugar. The rations cover 30 days. The project managers received a training on storage techniques, stock-keeping, distribution and report writing.

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The International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace was commemorated on 20 September in Bimbo, 7 kilometers from Bangui. Cyriaque Gonda, Minister of Communication, local authorities, representatives of various associations, and Francois Lonseny Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations were all present at the event.

In his speech, Mr. Fall stressed the need to raise awareness on the issues of peace, national unity, democracy and development.

"The celebration of the International Day of Peace is all about making people aware of their rights and duties. We have come ... to urge people to understand that dialogue must become a social requirement, a means of growth and a factor in the consolidation of a social cohesion," he said.

Coordination

CHF allocates \$2.5 million to projects

The newly established Common Humanitarian Fund has allocated \$2.5 million to 16 priority projects in the northern provinces of CAR. With this funding, aid agencies will protect the lives of newly displaced people, provide health care and safe water to people struck by violence, ensure the survival of infants and young children and help the displaced who are returning to destroyed villages to restart their lives.

Roughly a quarter of this money has been reserved for the cash-strapped humanitarian air service, which would otherwise have had to halt operations.

Close to \$2.8 million has so far been pledged to the fund by Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and Sweden. The details of the projects benefitting from the first-ever allocation of the CHF are available on <http://hdptcar.net/chf>

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