

News Bulletin

9 - 16 March 2009

Highlights

- MINURCAT replaces EUFOR
- CEMAC celebrations
- Fresh figures on displaced population
- UN annual work plans in place

Background and security

CEMAC – one year on

Monday the 16th of March saw the launch of the first 'CEMAC day' at the institution's headquarters in Bangui. The celebrations were presided over by the Central African head of state François Bozizé who is also President of CEMAC, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

President Bozizé made a speech the day before which was broadcast on radio to highlight the need for regional integration and exchanges on concepts around life in the community. According to CEMAC's president, the development of community infrastructures remains a priority, in particular in the areas of communication, basic infrastructure, the fields of energy and technology as well as taking advantage of the country's human and natural resources.

CEMAC was created on the 25th of June 2008 at the last community Heads of State summit in Yaounde in Cameroon. The aim of the annual celebrations is to raise awareness amongst member states' populations of the ideas of the institution as well as the benefits of regional integration and the advantages of joining forces with other nations.

Concerts and public broadcasts marked the holding of this first CEMAC day in Bangui.

News

EUFOR replaced by the UN

MINURCAT (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad) has taken over the reins from EUFOR (*European Union Force*) which has come to the end of its deployment in north east CAR

and eastern Chad. EUFOR had been in place since March 2008; the hand-over ceremony took place on the 15th of March 2009.

MINURCAT takes responsibility for protection of vulnerable civilians, in particular refugees and displaced people, facilitating humanitarian aid distribution and the movement of humanitarian staff. It also contributes to staff protection, UN equipment installation. Another MINURCAT mission is to create conditions on the ground in order to facilitate voluntary return of Internally Displaced People (IDPs).

2,300 of the total 3,300 troops will stay in place, including soldiers from Albania, Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Ireland, Poland and Russia. New troop contributing countries include Ghana, Nepal, Norway, Togo and Pakistan with Ghanaian, Nepalese and Togolese arriving in the next few weeks.

Clashes between self-defence groups and the APRD

Hopes for a peaceful future in the Central African Republic have been dampened by a rise in the number of displaced people due to clashes between self-defence groups and the APRD in the north of the country. 7 are reported to have died in violence at Bézéré in the sub-prefecture of Bocaranga on the 6th of March, leading to the displacement of approximately 795 people, or 157 households to the towns of Kouï and Bocaranga.

Initial assessments show that more than one in two of the IDPs (internally Displaced Persons) are women and children.

Humanitarian agencies have prepared a response to come to the aid of these IDPs on a sector by sector approach. WFP is working with CARITAS to look after food needs while IRC and UNICEF are evaluating the situation with a view to providing NFIs (Non Food Items).

WHO has expressed its readiness to help, on the basis of an evaluation, and MSF is looking after the wounded and others in need who have arrive in Bocaranga and its outskirts.

2009 UN Agencies Sign Annual Work Agreements

On the 13th of March, three United Nations agencies signed their work plans for the year, amounting to a total of over \$56 million, marking a steady increase in funding since 2007.

The signing ceremony took place at the Ministry for the Economy, Planning and International Cooperation

and involved the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) as well as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The work plans have been developed against a backdrop of United Nations reform as well as strengthened cooperation and inter-agency collaboration with the aim of greater use of available funds. 'If this challenge can be met,' said Mr Essan Niangoran of UNFPA, 'we can - with the participation of our partners - mobilise extra resources in order to strengthen our work on the ground.'

Restricted Humanitarian Access in northern CAR

FACA (Central African Armed Forces) restricted humanitarian access in several areas across the country, including on the road north of Kabo to Sido, as well as on three roads north of Ndélé this month.

The road from Ndélé to Ngarba was re-opened on 16 March 2009 but other roads in the northeast (Ndélé-Gordil-Birao and Ndélé-Miamani) remain closed to humanitarian workers due to security concerns relating to army operations and banditry. This is not the first time that humanitarian access to areas with people in need has had to be restricted since 2006.



Members of the joint mission team

A joint mission made up of WFP, UNICEF and OCHA visited Ndélé from the 15th to the 19th of March to do an evaluation of the humanitarian situation of IDPs (Internally Displaced People) in Ndélé and its outskirts on the Ngarba road. The mission met with civil society groups as well as military authorities and all NGO partners in Bamingui-Bangorn: DRC (Danish Refugee Council), Solidarités, IMC (International Medical Corps), ACTED as well as AMI (Aide Médicale Internationale) and FAO.

The situation on the road is worrying and food and NFIs (Non Food Items) is required for approximately 5,630 IDPs. An IDP site at Yangouberlo at 13 kilometres from Ndélé has approximately 200 people, UNICEF has already distributed NFIs thanks to IMC

and the humanitarian community is preparing a response to this emergency.

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