

Central African Republic: Keeping the Dialogue Alive

I. OVERVIEW

The failure of President François Bozizé and his close circle to follow through with many of the concessions agreed on during the Inclusive Political Dialogue risks exacerbating the many conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR) and stalling national reconciliation. Those December 2008 talks made a valuable contribution to both reducing levels of violence and shaping the long-term reform agenda. The promised integration of rebel leaders into civilian political life, the precedent of decision-making by consensus and a concrete set of agreements that included rebel disarmament and security sector reform were welcome steps towards greater stability. To ensure these gains are not undone by another political crisis, however, the president must abandon the uncompromising attitude he displayed through much of 2009 and the government must quickly resolve new conflicts in the north east and prepare credible elections. Otherwise, donors should suspend financial support to a regime that is largely dependent on foreign aid.

Since Bozizé's coup in March 2003, the CAR has been unable to break the cycle of conflict and poverty in which it has laboured for so long. Elections in 2005, judged relatively free and fair, did not prevent rebellions breaking out in the north directly afterwards. It took two years of difficult negotiations interspersed with more violence to prepare the Inclusive Political Dialogue, but the event itself went relatively well. The participation of the presidential camp, opposition politicians, most rebel groups, civil society and ex-President Ange-Félix Patassé fulfilled a necessary condition for reconciling former adversaries. The main participants all sought to retain or acquire state power, but they arrived at a common plan for political and economic reconstruction.

Opposition parties let go their hopes for regime change and settled for governance reforms, including a new consensus government. Rebel groups affirmed their readiness to disarm in return for roles in state institutions. The regime agreed to open up management of state affairs and allow others a say in organising legislative and presidential elections. For the first time, Patassé, who is keen to rejoin the political scene, acknowledged his former chief of staff, Bozizé, as the legitimate president.

Bozizé's show of political openness, however, came to an abrupt end in early 2009. He apparently judged that holding the talks gave him the legitimacy, especially with donors, to choose a new government as loyal as its predecessor and make unilateral changes to the electoral law that favour his re-election. The opposition fought hard during the year to keep the foothold it gained at the dialogue and secure some influence in the Independent Electoral Commission. However, stubbornness on both sides postponed that body's creation and risked making credible elections in early 2010 a technical impossibility.

The dialogue endorsed a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) program for ending the rebellions in the north, but the self-interested demands of rebel leaders have delayed implementation and raised frustration among fighters on the ground. In the north west, clashes are rare but the people still suffer, unable to rebuild their lives. In the north east, the government's authorisation of Zacharia Damane's Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement, UFDR) to maintain security has awakened old tribal rivalries and provoked the formation of two new armed groups. Violence is on the rise, as rebels try to bolster their negotiating positions and the government remains set on pursuing a military solution.

All parties to the talks agreed extensive security sector reform (SSR) is needed to give the state the means to protect rather than endanger the population. The re-entry of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – originally a Ugandan insurgency – into the CAR in May 2009 and its almost free range in the south east exposed again the army's inadequacy. The Bozizé regime appears to care too much about winning elections and too little about what happens outside Bangui, the capital, to invest the necessary time and effort in the long-term stabilisation of the whole national territory. Until the government respects the spirit and method of consensus in which the dialogue was held and makes genuine changes in governance, SSR in particular will drag, and insecurity will hamper any efforts to establish state authority in the provinces or hold credible nationwide elections.

To make the most of what the Inclusive Political Dialogue achieved, the government and its foreign partners should thus concentrate on the following priorities:

- ❑ The priority over the first months of 2010 should be the consensual organisation of credible elections. The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), government and donors should, therefore, work hard to hold elections in April as planned, but if by March insufficient progress has been made in technical preparations or in improving the security situation, national actors should be prepared to postpone. The government should urgently engage rebels, opposition politicians and civil society to agree by consensus in advance on how to avoid a constitutional and political crisis if a postponement is necessary.
- ❑ To entrench the practice of political dialogue and decision-making by consensus, Paulin Pomodimo, the former archbishop of Bangui who now heads the National Council for Mediation, should lead efforts to set up a permanent framework for dialogue with the country's political and social actors that aims to achieve consensus governance before and beyond the elections.
- ❑ To reduce violence in the north east and create favourable conditions for DDR and elections, the government should quickly open negotiations with the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix, CPJP) rebel group with a view to obtaining its commitment to the peace process. With the support of the UN mission in the CAR and Chad (MINURCAT), the government should also facilitate dialogue between the Gula-dominated UFDR and Ahamat Mustapha's armed Kara group.
- ❑ The government and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) should rework plans for reintegrating rebels into civilian life or the armed forces, so that ex-combatants have the opportunity immediately after disarmament to participate in development projects alongside local community members. Rebel leaders, UNDP and the SSR permanent secretariat should agree on the number of ex-combatants to be accepted into the security services.
- ❑ The government should prepare a second roundtable on SSR, but donors should fund medium-term reforms only if it demonstrates commitment to implementing the already agreed schedule. The CAR will only be able to counter the threat of domestic and foreign armed groups, including the LRA, by deploying a fully professionalised army and extending state institutions across the national territory.
- ❑ Because accelerated rural development is crucial for alleviating the humanitarian crisis and creating favourable conditions for DDR and elections, the UN Peacebuilding Commission should mobilise donors to put their full support behind the European Com-

mission's "development poles" program, which aims to stimulate income-generating activities and restore basic infrastructure around provincial towns.

- ❑ The regular payment of civil servant salaries is one of Bozizé's strongest sources of popularity in Bangui. Donors should make it clear that they will stop providing the necessary funds for this, unless the government displays clear commitment to creating a security environment conducive to credible elections, including by negotiating with the last remaining rebel group.

II. SATISFACTORY TALKS AND PROMISING AGREEMENTS

The Inclusive Political Dialogue, held on 8 to 20 December 2008 in Bangui, was the third attempt in two decades to overcome the CAR's recurrent instability.¹ The talks were to be both a culmination of efforts to end rebellions in the north² and an opportunity for all political forces,

¹ Slightly larger than France and slightly smaller than Texas but with an estimated population of only some 4.2 million, the CAR has become virtually a phantom state, lacking any meaningful institutional capacity at least since the fall of Emperor Bokassa in 1979. A succession of mutinies and rebellions in recent years has produced a permanent crisis, and the situation in the north east has been further complicated by fallout from the conflict across the border to Sudan in Darfur. Some 300,000 Central Africans are internally displaced or refugees in neighbouring countries. For more on the CAR's past conflicts, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°136, *Central African Republic: Anatomy of a Phantom State*, 13 December 2007; for an analysis of the lead-up to the December 2008 talks, see Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°55, *Central African Republic: Untangling the Political Dialogue*, 9 December 2008.

² Since 2005, Abdoulaye Miskine's Democratic Front of the Central African People (Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain, FDPC) has controlled an area north of Kabo in the north-centre Ouham prefecture; the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie, APRD), the third major group now led by Jean-Jacques Demafouth, has controlled two distinct zones, one around Paoua in the north-west Ouham-Pendé prefecture and a smaller one around Kaga Bandoro in the north-centre Nana-Gribizi prefecture. Since 2006, Damane's UFDR has controlled territory in the north-eastern Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures. On 2 February 2007, the FDPC agreed to end hostilities; on 13 April 2007, the UFDR followed suit. Miskine has since reneged on his commitment and resumed attacks against government forces. On 9 May 2008, the APRD finally signed a ceasefire agreement in Libreville. On 21 June 2008, the APRD and UFDR signed the multilateral Global Peace Agreement in Libreville. It reiterated the provisions of the previous agreements, including a general amnesty, and anticipated the rebels' transition to civilian political life through

armed and unarmed, to agree through compromise and consensus on a shared vision for the country's future. In the short term, a plan was needed for dismantling the rebel groups and preparing legislative and presidential elections. In the longer term, the dialogue aimed at creating a reform agenda that would prevent new rebellions by improving governance and boosting development.

The almost 200 participants included representatives of six national entities: the presidential majority in the national assembly, rebel movements, opposition parties, non-aligned parties, the civil service and civil society. Also in attendance were national and international observers, representatives of the country's major religions and other CAR personalities. This inclusiveness was crucial to ensure against potential spoilers. Former Burundi President Pierre Buyoya presided over the plenary sessions. Behind the scenes, the mediation of the then president of Gabon, Omar Bongo Ondimba, made sure the event went relatively smoothly.³ Participants agreed on a broad set of recommendations that constitute a road map for better governance, improved security, revitalised economic growth and fair legislative and presidential elections in 2010.

A. ACTORS AND AGENDAS

The official aim of the dialogue was couched in terms of furthering the national interest, but each of the six participating entities had its own objectives. These differed according to political orientation and divided them into three more or less cohesive blocs.

First, the representatives of the presidential majority and the civil service sought to advance the interests of the regime.⁴ Since most ministers came from parties supporting the president, this bloc also represented the government. President Bozizé had initially refused to hold

talks that he knew would oblige him to accept a power-sharing agreement.⁵ But internal and external pressures grew to such a pitch that his continued legitimacy depended on allowing the event to take place.⁶ Having been forced into it, he then sought to use the dialogue to boost his credibility as a statesman ahead of the 2010 polls and impress donors. While maintaining this show of openness, the primary concern of Bozizé's representatives was to keep political concessions to a minimum.

Secondly, the four rebel groups that took part in the dialogue were looking for an advantageous way out of rebellion.⁷ None has the military strength to take power in Bangui. By participating, they sought recognition as national political forces, acknowledgement of their grievances and a stronger position from which to make demands on the government.⁸ However, rebel representatives were also strongly motivated by their own personal interests. These vary. The APRD's Demafouth wants to run for president,⁹ the UFDR's Damane wants to trade diamonds but the majority aim at lucrative government positions in Bangui or in foreign embassies.¹⁰

participation in the Inclusive Political Dialogue. For a glossary of these and other abbreviations see Appendix B.

³Crisis Group telephone conversation, international facilitator to the talks, 8 August 2009. Bongo's death on 8 June 2009 was a loss for the CAR. Since André Kolingba took power in Bangui in 1981 the Gabonese president had been a source of advice and assisted successive regimes in overcoming multiple crises. Crisis Group interview, opposition politician, Bangui, 27 August 2009.

⁴In the 2005 legislative elections, the president's supporters, collectively known then as Convergence KNK, won 78 of 105 seats in the national assembly. On 21 August 2009, Bozizé held a ceremony at Boali to transform Convergence KNK into a political party, the KNK. His parliamentary majority now includes the KNK and smaller parties that chose not to be part of the KNK. This stands for Kwa Na Kwa which means "Work, nothing but work" in Sango, the national language.

⁵See Crisis Group Briefing, *Untangling the Political Dialogue*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶Bozizé is relatively unconcerned about the demands of the domestic opposition, which is crippled by a lack of funds, but is attentive to the concerns of the international community. The pressure of President Bongo and Senegalese General Lamine Cissé, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in the CAR at the time, was critical in persuading him to hold the talks. Crisis Group interview, opposition politician, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

⁷The four rebel groups that took part were Jean-Jacques Demafouth's APRD, Zacharia Damane's UFDR, Abakar Sabone's Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice, MLCJ), which signed the Global Peace Agreement the day before, on 7 December 2008, and Florian Ndjadder-Bedaya's Union of Republican Forces (Union des forces républicaines, UFR), which signed during the talks on 15 December. The UFR formerly operated in the north east but is now inactive.

⁸This was particularly important for Sabone and Ndjadder-Bedaya as neither controls an effective fighting force. Crisis Group interview, member of the DDR steering committee, 14 November 2009.

⁹When the APRD formed in 2005, Demafouth was living in France to avoid prosecution in the CAR for involvement in the 1999 killing of five people close to former President Kolingba, known as the Kembe affair. He joined the APRD in March 2008 to win amnesty and "return to the political scene". Crisis Group interview, Jean-Jacques Demafouth, Bangui, 12 November 2009. For more on the Kembe affair see Crisis Group Briefing, *Untangling the Political Dialogue*, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁰Crisis Group interviews, rebel representatives in the dialogue, Bangui, November 2009.

The third bloc comprised the remaining three entities: the coalition of opposition parties, the Union of Live Forces of the Nation (Union des forces vives de la nation, UFDV); the alliance of parties officially aligned with neither the presidential majority nor the UFDV, the Autres Partis (Other Parties); and civil society representatives.¹¹ In large part they shared the objective of forcing the regime to allow broader participation in state affairs. The UFDV, judging that Bozizé had proved himself incapable of running the country and devoid of political vision, had first called for a dialogue in June 2006 intending to force his resignation and establish transitional institutions until elections.¹² In the dialogue's first plenary session, the UFDV maintained this position, but as it received no support from the Autres Partis, civil society or more importantly the international community, it lowered its sights and aimed at reducing the president's excessive power¹³ and denying him outright control of electoral preparations.

The other significant national actor was former President Ange-Félix Patassé. He has lost much favour with the Central African people for having invited Jean-Pierre Bemba's troops into the country to protect him from Bozizé's rebels during the earlier civil war.¹⁴ Between October 2002 and March 2003 both Patassé's forces and Bozizé's "liberators" committed crimes against civilians, but the Congolese were particularly brutal, raping women and children and pillaging property in and around Bangui.¹⁵ Despite this, Patassé retains pockets of support in

Bangui and the countryside.¹⁶ During the dialogue he apologised for his mistakes and for the first time acknowledged Bozizé as president. It looked like reconciliation, but for Patassé it was the first step in his return to the political scene and an effort to clean up his image in preparation for the 2010 elections.

After the opening ceremony, participants divided into three thematic commissions: politics and governance, including electoral preparations; security and armed groups; and socio-economic development. Each began by discussing the final report of the dialogue preparatory committee and concluded by drawing up recommendations.¹⁷

B. GOVERNANCE AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The stakes were highest in the first commission, charged with drawing up recommendations for making the government more representative, accountable, transparent and effective. This required the Bozizé regime to make concessions on a variety of issues and to some degree cede control of state affairs. The commission also had to agree on how to prepare for elections in 2010. The debate was heated and saw frequent exchanges of accusations.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the final recommendations included measures that could improve the state's capacity and credibility.

The UFDV, having failed to gain backing for Bozizé's resignation, demanded with support from other participants that a consensus government, including representatives of all six participating groups, be established to run the country until elections. The regime eventually acquiesced. The UFDV also demanded that the prime minister be from the opposition, so as to check Bozizé's

¹¹ Some of the Autres Partis are closer to the UFDV and some closer to the presidential camp, but all are characterised by a lack of formal political allegiance. Crisis Group interview, UFDV politician, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

¹² Crisis Group interview, UFDV politician, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

¹³ Crisis Group interview, Martin Ziguélé, president of the leading opposition party, the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain, MLPC), Bangui, 31 August 2009. The MLPC is one of five members of the UFDV coalition.

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Bemba is the leader of the main Congolese opposition party and former rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (Mouvement de libération du Congo, MLC). Following fighting between the army and Bemba's guards in Kinshasa in March 2007, he went into forced exile in Portugal. On 23 May 2008, he was indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by MLC members in the CAR. He was arrested near Brussels the following day and is currently detained in The Hague awaiting his trial scheduled to start in April 2010.

¹⁵ "Crimes de Guerre en République Centrafricaine: Quand les Eléphants se Battent, c'est l'Herbe qui Souffre", Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, February 2003. See also "Factsheet, Situation in the Central African Republic, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo", ICC, 11 June 2008.

¹⁶ Crisis Group interviews, opposition politicians and CAR citizens, Bangui, August and November 2009.

¹⁷ The preparatory committee was created by presidential decree on 8 October 2007 and included representatives from each of the six entities that were to participate in the talks, with support from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (Bureau d'appui des Nations unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine, BONUCA) and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, OIF). From 18 December 2007, it spent three months identifying the country's problems and their causes and in a final report recommended necessary operational measures.

¹⁸ Crisis Group interview, participant in the governance commission, Bangui, 19 November 2009.

powers.¹⁹ The regime was non-committal, and neither the opposition nor civil society were vigilant enough to ensure the recommendations specified criteria for the prime minister, the number of representatives each group should have in the new government or the mechanism for their selection.²⁰

Other recommendations sought to reduce the executive's interference with the judiciary and establish a high court capable of trying the president; required all members of the government and national assembly make public their assets; and called for audits of all revenue-collecting institutions and state enterprises.²¹ The UFVN, *Autres Partis* and civil society were particularly adamant that Bozizé give up the post of defence minister, which he has held since coming to power in March 2003 in contravention of the constitution, which forbids a president from holding any other political function.²² Zacharia Damane's UFDR and Abakar Sabone's MLCJ walked out when the regime did not acknowledge the marginalisation of Muslims. Buyoya brought them back and assured that there was a recommendation to forbid all forms of religious discrimination.²³

The opposition claims the regime rigged the 2005 elections.²⁴ In order to make sure this does not happen in 2010, it secured a recommendation providing for an ad hoc committee to revise the electoral code and that both this body and the Independent Electoral Commission (Commission électorale indépendante, CEI) include representatives from each of the six participating entities. The recommendations also specified that municipal

elections should be held in 2009 and legislative and presidential elections in 2010.

Fearing the government would not fulfil its commitments, opposition groups pushed successfully for the creation of a follow-up committee to monitor implementation of all recommendations and make public any shortcomings. In order to ensure the talks were not a one-off show of political openness, they also obtained a recommendation that the government should establish a permanent framework for dialogue among all national political and social actors.

C. SECURITY

The purpose of the second commission was to reach consensus on how to restore security in the country and in particular how to end the rebellions in the north. Consensus was reached relatively easily because much of the work had already been done. In April 2008, a broadly inclusive national seminar had drawn up a detailed security sector reform (SSR) program and on 20 November the follow-up committee to the Global Peace Agreement²⁵ had already decided on a framework document for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. Members of the commission discussed why previous DDR projects had failed and argued over whether combatants should be kept in camps while waiting for the process to begin.²⁶ However, their recommendations simply endorsed SSR and DDR, and left contentious practical details unresolved.

In order that the root causes of the rebellions could be addressed, Jean-Jacques Demafouth, Zacharia Damane and Abakar Sabone each presented the grievances that led their groups to take up arms. The issues centred on the state's insufficient protection and development of the country's remote regions.²⁷ This may have accurately reflected the frustrations of the rebel rank and file, but their representatives at the talks were more concerned with securing posts for themselves in the new government than arguing for measures that would improve liv-

¹⁹ Crisis Group interview, opposition politician, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

²⁰ Crisis Group interview, civil society member, Bangui, 19 November 2009.

²¹ The commission decided independent experts should carry out audits of the state's financial organs (treasury, customs, income tax collecting authority), the extractive industries (mining, oil and forestry) and the telecommunications sector.

²² Article 23 reads: "The function of the President of the Republic is incompatible with the exercise of any other political function, of any other elected mandate, of any lucrative activity on pain of removal".

²³ Crisis Group interview, MLCJ representative in the talks, Bangui, 12 November 2009.

²⁴ International observers judged the vote relatively free and fair. "Rapport de la Mission d'Observation des Elections Présidentielle et Législatives des 13 mars et 8 mai 2005 en République Centrafricaine", Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, May 2008. However, opposition politicians reported irregularities, including intimidation of voters by security forces in voting offices. A presidential adviser conceded that the electoral census was easily manipulated. Crisis Group interviews, opposition politicians and presidential adviser, Bangui, August and November 2009.

²⁵ For the Global Peace Agreement, see fn. 2 above.

²⁶ Crisis Group interview, rebel representative in the security commission, Bangui, 12 November 2009.

²⁷ Demafouth explained that APRD fighters took up arms to demand development of their north-west home region and to resist the repression they had experienced as suspected supporters of the previous regime. Damane said the UFDR's uprising was a response to the government's neglect of the north-east Vakaga prefecture and called for reinforcement of state authority in the region. Sabone pointed to Bozizé's failure to reward those who had helped him take power in March 2003, the ex-liberators, and discrimination against Muslims. "Final Report of the Inclusive Political Dialogue", January 2009, p. 17.

ing conditions on the ground. Thus, they made no efforts in the third commission to demand specific recommendations for tackling socio-economic problems in their home regions.²⁸

A further obstacle to the second commission's ability to address the north's insecurity fully was the absence of Abdoulaye Miskine. His FDPC has been active around Kabo in the north centre since 2005, refused to sign the Global Peace Agreement in June 2008 and in late 2008 was still clashing with government forces.²⁹ Miskine attended the dialogue's final plenary on 20 December but did not support the recommendations. He first refused to join the peace process because the APRD would not accept responsibility for killing six FDPC fighters.³⁰ However, he also feared that the government would arrest him and hand him over to the International Criminal Court because, on 31 October 2002 he is believed to have ordered the killing of at least 25 Chadian civilians.³¹

D. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of the dialogue's development commission was to draw attention to and stimulate more action on what participants considered the most urgent socio-economic reforms. The discussions suffered from an overly ambitious agenda set by the preparatory committee.³² The issues included how to rehabilitate infrastructure and basic social services, enhance transparency and efficiency in public finances, improve the exploitation and management of natural resources, increase support to the private sector and boost human capital by creating training opportunities for men and women. Unsurprisingly, it was not possible to address all this satisfactorily in three days.³³

Politics also got in the way of finding the best solutions. Opposition parties and civil society, seeing another opportunity to erode the regime's control of state administration, demanded that the heads of revenue-collecting ministries should be persons outside the president's close circle and insisted for two days that the president bring funds kept abroad back into the country. However, the government kept these proposals out of the recommendations.³⁴

Despite these handicaps, the commission drew up some valuable recommendations, including that the government pursue implementation of its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in particular by holding sector-specific roundtable conferences.³⁵ It was important for all actors to endorse this national plan that the government and foreign partners had agreed on as the single framework document for development activities.

The commission also put emphasis on improving management of the forestry and mining sectors. Both are major sources of state revenue and jobs but suffer from corruption and mismanagement.³⁶ Even though the government resisted, consensus was reached on the need for each commune to elect its own mayor rather than accept Bozizé's choice.³⁷ This would encourage mayors to work for the benefit of the people they represent instead of devoting their energies to pleasing the president and his regime and so ensure that they assist their constituencies to benefit from the extractive industries operating in their area.

By its end, the dialogue had in itself contributed to the peace process. The recognition of rebel groups as legitimate political actors that should be further integrated into state structures reduced the risk that they would

²⁸ Crisis Group interview, member of the chairing committee for the development commission, Bangui, 13 November 2009.

²⁹ On 11 November 2008, FDPC fighters attacked army troops near Kabo, killing thirteen. "Central African rebels kill over a dozen troops", Reuters, 12 November 2008.

³⁰ Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Bangui, 29 August 2009.

³¹ Although the ICC has not issued an arrest warrant for Miskine, an investigation connected to the Bemba case is currently open that covers the period. The International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) has argued that Miskine's offences lie within the court's jurisdiction. See "Crimes de Guerre", op. cit., pp. 25-31.

³² See Damiano Sguaitamatti, "Central African Republic: Inclusive Political Dialog (Pre-talks only)", in Annika Åberg et al. (eds.), "Unpacking the Mystery of Mediation in African Peace Processes", Mediation Support Project, Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, 2008.

³³ Crisis Group interview, member of the chairing committee for the development commission, Bangui, 13 November 2009.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ In October 2007, the CAR published a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for 2008-2010. The strategy's four pillars are: restore security, consolidate peace and prevent conflict; promote good governance and the rule of law; rebuild and diversify the economy; and develop human capital. Using the PRSP as a guide, each ministry is meant to draw up its own reform agenda and present it to donors at a roundtable conference.

³⁶ Forestry provides 10 per cent of the CAR's GDP and 45 per cent of its export revenue; in 2006, mining exports were valued at around \$64 million, 4.3 per cent of GDP. "Central African Republic PRSP 2008-2010", pp. 37-39. Bozizé's regime derives most of its profits from the mining sector and diamonds in particular. Only 30 to 40 per cent of all diamonds exported from the country are officially registered at the mines ministry. Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomat, Bangui, 31 August 2009; representative of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, Bangui, 2 September 2009.

³⁷ Crisis Group interview, member of the chairing committee for the development commission, Bangui, 13 November 2009.

resort again to violence to achieve their goals. The talks also sowed the seeds of greater political stability by setting the precedent of resolving disputes through consensus decision-making and producing a reform agenda to which all stakeholders pledged their commitment. However, with mistrust remaining on all sides, only consensual implementation of the recommendations can consolidate these initial achievements and translate them into tangible benefit for the country.

III. INSUFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION

In 2009 the government disappointed the hopes of the Central African people and the international community by showing reluctance and in some cases refusing to implement the recommendations. This was not the case across the board. The dialogue follow-up committee says some ministries have made “laudable efforts” to carry out reforms.³⁸ Others, however, and the presidency in particular have balked at making changes that would entail ceding control to the opposition. As a result, a year that could have seen significant progress on the reform agenda has been marked by more intense political confrontation and continued violence.

A. GOVERNANCE

1. Another regime-dominated government

In late December 2008, President Bozizé invited each group that took part in the talks to propose two representatives for a new consensus government. On 18 January 2009, he dissolved the old government and the next day, ignoring calls by the opposition for a change of

prime minister, reappointed Faustin-Archange Touadéra.³⁹ In protest the UFVN, Autres Partis and civil society refused to participate in the new administration. On 20 January, Touadéra assembled a 32-member government that included ten of the previous ministers but also, nominally at least, representatives of the rebel groups, UFVN, Autres Partis and civil society. However, the two rebel ministers – for housing and for environment and ecology – have no real influence.⁴⁰ The president chose André Nalké-Dorogo of the MLPC, the leading opposition party, to represent the UFVN as health minister, but his party suspended him immediately on grounds that he had been co-opted.⁴¹ The Autres Partis and civil society do not recognise the individuals chosen by the president as legitimate representatives of their interests.⁴²

The prime minister argued that the lack of new faces in the government was motivated by a desire to maintain continuity in relationships with development partners.⁴³ More likely is that Bozizé was not prepared to tolerate further challenges to the status quo. The government has thus continued to be dominated by persons whose loyalty to the president, the guarantor of their own prosperity, comes before reform of state institutions.

2. Half-hearted reforms

Under the watchful eye of the dialogue follow-up committee, the government has made some efforts to satisfy the governance demands of opposition groups but has been particularly resistant to reforms that threaten to weaken the regime’s control of the military and state resources. No steps have been taken to carry out audits of the state’s revenue collecting organs. This fuels suspicion that the regime is trying to hide corruption. Min-

³⁸ Transcript of the follow-up committee president’s press conference, annex to its evaluation report, June 2009. The Follow-up Committee of the Recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue (Comité de suivi des recommandations du dialogue politique inclusif, CSRDP) became operational on 9 February 2009. It has three representatives from each of the six entities that took part in the talks and one each from seven international and regional organisations: UN, European Union, International Francophone Organisation, African Union, ECCAS, the Community of Saharan-Sahel States (CEN-SAD) and the ad hoc committee on questions relating to the CAR in the CEMAC region. It has worked hard to monitor progress and shown “political courage” in drawing attention to where the government has missed targets. However, with power only to name and shame uncooperative ministries, its impact has been limited. Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomat, Bangui, 31 August 2009; civil society member, Bangui, 19 November 2009.

³⁹ Bozizé first appointed Touadéra, a former professor of mathematics at the University of Bangui, prime minister on 22 January 2008. The president chose a technocrat to avoid creating a rival within his own administration. Crisis Group interview, government minister, Bangui, 24 August 2009.

⁴⁰ Francois Naouyama (APRD) was made environment and ecology minister and Djomo Didou (UFDR) housing minister.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interview, member of the national assembly, Bangui, 31 August 2009.

⁴² Moses Kotaye and Raymond Adouma technically represent the Autres Partis as minister for the promotion of small and medium sized enterprises and deputy minister for planning, economy and international cooperation respectively. Youssoufa Yerima Mandjo was chosen to represent civil society as deputy minister for agriculture but was not one of the group’s two nominees. Crisis Group interview, civil society representative, Bangui, 19 November 2009. See also “Touadéra names rebels in new Central African Republic govt”, Agence France-Presse, 19 January 2009.

⁴³ Crisis Group interview, Prime Minister Touadéra, Bangui, 3 September 2009.

isters and members of the constitutional court but not of the national assembly have declared their assets.

Although the president is still the defence minister, he cites the appointment of his son, Jean-François Bozizé, as deputy minister at the presidency charged with national defence, to claim he is not in violation of the constitutional bar on holding two political functions at once. In reality, while Bozizé junior runs daily business at the ministry, the president has the final say on all decisions that involve considerable spending.⁴⁴ The new justice minister, Laurent Gon Baba, does not interfere as much as his predecessor with the judiciary, but the high court is not yet operational as judges have yet to take their oaths.⁴⁵

The dialogue follow-up committee reported that the government has implemented the recommendation proscribing religious discrimination, but the state still treats the Muslim community unfairly.⁴⁶ The government's failure to set up a permanent framework for dialogue with the country's other political and social actors reinforces the impression that it has had enough of consensus decision-making.⁴⁷

B. THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

1. Tailoring the electoral law

The regime has reverted to unilateral decisions, not least in its efforts to tailor the electoral law. In May 2009, as prescribed in the dialogue's recommendations, an ad hoc committee comprising all parties to the talks submitted a revised text of the electoral law to the government. In June, however, the government sent the national assembly a version containing changes it had made without consulting any other group. These mostly related to the size and composition of the national coordinating committee of the CEI.⁴⁸ One newly introduced provision (Article

12) particularly upset the UFVN, namely that members of the national coordinating committee should elect their president from four candidates, two nominated by the prime minister and two by the president of the national assembly. Since both men are close to Bozizé, there would be little chance for a politically neutral choice.⁴⁹

The UFVN and the dialogue follow-up committee publicly condemned the unilateral changes.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the national assembly, in a vote boycotted by the opposition, adopted the law on 27 June 2009.⁵¹ The UFVN and the *Autres Partis* rejected the law, and the president requested a constitutional court ruling.⁵² On 30 July the court made no comment on the way the CEI president was to be elected but found that the government must either remove two articles it deemed in breach of the constitution or send the text back to the national assembly for a second reading. Bozizé instead promulgated the full law on 3 August.

With concern mounting over whether election preparations would be finished by March 2010 as planned, the president officially established the CEI on 26 August and invited the six entities that took part in the dialogue to nominate five members each as per the electoral code.⁵³ On 3 September the UFVN and *Autres Partis* suspended their participation and demanded the constitutional court annul the electoral law, thereby stalling again the launch

practical sense, it should have been decided in consultation with other actors. "L'Assemblée nationale approuve la révision du code électoral", Agence Centrafrique Presse, 29 June 2009.

⁴⁹ Crisis Group interviews, UFVN and civil society members, Bangui, August 2009.

⁵⁰ "Code électoral: désaccord du Comité de suivi des recommandations du DPI", Agence Centrafrique Presse, 29 June 2009.

⁵¹ "L'Assemblée nationale approuve la révision du code électoral", Agence Centrafrique Presse, 29 June 2009.

⁵² Also in mid-July, Martin Ziguélé, MLPC president, returned from a trip around towns in the north west and reported the discovery of a clandestine electoral census that Elie Ouefio, minister for territorial administration, had initiated through the local authorities to ensure the predominance of KNK supporters in the electoral lists. Once exposed, the alleged attempt to rig the lists was abandoned. Crisis Group interview, Martin Ziguélé, Bangui, 31 August 2009. See also "Recensement électoral illicite: Martin Ziguélé demande une commission d'enquête mixte", *Le Confident*, 27 July 2009.

⁵³ The CAR uses a two-round system of voting for both presidential and legislative elections. If no candidate wins with an outright majority in the first round, the two leading candidates compete in a second. Article 24 of the constitution stipulates that a new president must be elected at least 45 days before the end of the mandate of the current president. Based on the 2005 electoral timetable, it was expected that the first round would take place in March 2010 to allow for a second round in May. The current mandates of Bozizé and the national assembly run out in June 2010.

⁴⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines, FACA) officers, Bangui, November 2009.

⁴⁵ Crisis Group interview, lawyer, Bangui, 19 November 2009.

⁴⁶ For example the government has not yet instituted public holidays for Muslim festivals, and the application process for a national identity card imposes higher bureaucratic hurdles on Muslims than Christians. Crisis Group interviews, representative of the Muslim community and other Muslim citizens, Bangui, November 2009.

⁴⁷ The dialogue follow-up committee has drawn particular attention to this shortcoming. "Le gouvernement centrafricain invité à appliquer les recommandations du DPI", Agence de Presse Africaine, 8 October 2009.

⁴⁸ The ad hoc committee charged with revising the electoral code decided that the CEI should have 61 members: a president and ten members from each of the six groups that took part in the dialogue. The government reduced this to 31 (five for each group). Although the reduction makes financial and

of the CEI.⁵⁴ Three weeks later the court reiterated its previous ruling.⁵⁵

It required a return visit from Pierre Buyoya, the intervention of Paulin Pomodimo, the head of the National Council for Mediation and one-time archbishop of Bangui, and some quiet words from Sahle-Work Zewde, the recently arrived Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG), to unblock the process.⁵⁶ The last two persuaded the government to give the posts of first and second vice president of the CEI national committee to the UFVN and Autres Partis respectively.⁵⁷ This satisfied the opposition's desire for a prominent role in the CEI but was not enough to ensure the body's impartiality.⁵⁸

On 14 October, a large majority of CEI members elected Joseph Binguimalé, a Christian pastor, as CEI president.⁵⁹ Binguimalé was one of the prime minister's two nominations and his loyalty to the president is well known.⁶⁰ Since the representatives of the presidential majority and the civil service both support the regime, and the rebels now also rely on it to guarantee their interests, it is doubtful whether there will be enough opposition voices in the electoral commission to provide the necessary checks and balances on its president.

⁵⁴ "RCA élections: l'opposition rejette le code électoral et la CEI créée par Bozizé et Ouéfié", Agence Centrafrique-Presse, 3 September 2009.

⁵⁵ "Centrafrique: la Cour Constitutionnelle appelle le gouvernement à modifier le code électoral", Agence Centrafrique Presse, 25 September 2009.

⁵⁶ Crisis Group interviews, opposition politicians, Paulin Pomodimo and SRSG Zewde, November 2009. See also "Buyoya invite les Centrafricains à résoudre rapidement la question du code électoral", Agence de Presse Africaine, 19 September 2009. Pomodimo, formerly archbishop of Bangui and now "mediator of the republic", has headed the National Council for Mediation (Conseil national de la médiation), since August 2009. Established by law in June 2006, the body has a broad mandate that includes protecting and promoting the rights of citizens in their relations with the administration, preventing and resolving conflicts and guaranteeing democracy.

⁵⁷ The two unconstitutional articles were also modified, but this was not as important to the opposition as having influence in the CEI national committee. Crisis Group interview, Paulin Pomodimo, 12 November 2009.

⁵⁸ On 10 October, a decree confirmed the 30 members of the CEI (all but the president), but the government accepted only four of the five proposed by civil society organisations and replaced the representative of human rights NGOs with a KNK loyalist. Crisis Group interview, civil society member, Bangui, 19 November 2009.

⁵⁹ Binguimalé received nineteen of the 25 votes cast. Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Bangui, 12 November 2009.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interviews, diplomats and politicians, Bangui, November 2009.

2. Problematic elections ahead

These lengthy legal disputes did not leave enough time for the CEI to organise municipal elections in 2009 as planned, and it faces considerable challenges to hold presidential and legislative elections in the first quarter of 2010. It lacks necessary office space, computers and cars and has been waiting on donors to provide the money and training needed to start work. It has drawn up an electoral timetable, but still must update voter lists and distribute voter cards.⁶¹ Even if the CEI makes rapid progress, widespread insecurity will make it difficult for it to access much of the population and will obstruct a free vote. Refugees abroad and others who have fled their homes will most likely be left out of the process.⁶²

Bozizé is in a strong position. He has already begun a countrywide campaign and, with unchecked access to state resources, he can win support from the poor with demonstrations of his largesse. In the countryside, where needs are great and a democratic culture has yet to take root, distributions of salt, soap or small bank notes are enough to buy support.⁶³ While the UFVN and Autres Partis coalitions have presented a relatively united front in their criticism of the regime, at election time individual parties based on regional and ethnic ties will most likely present multiple presidential candidates. All are crippled by a lack of money.⁶⁴

⁶¹ In April 2009, Elie Ouefié, minister for territorial administration, said the voter lists used in the 2005 elections had been destroyed, and a full electoral census was required. However, Binguimalé, the CEI head, announced on 17 December that he had found the lists, and it was now a simple matter of updating them. In light of the regime's alleged attempt at clandestine voter registration that came to light in July, this turnaround has increased opposition suspicion that it is trying to use voter lists favourable to its re-election. To allay these suspicions, the CEI should allow parties and voters to inspect the voter lists ahead of elections. As an indicator of how far behind the process is, in December 2004, three months before the first round of the 2005 elections, the electoral commission was already distributing voting cards.

⁶² In December 2009, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported 138,164 Central African refugees in neighbouring countries (74,000 in Chad, 63,919 in Cameroon and 245 in Sudan) and over 162,000 internally displaced persons. "Fact Sheet", UNHCR, December 2009. There are no provisions in the electoral code on whether or how refugees should be included in the electoral process. Since the refugees in Cameroon and Chad in large part fled violence caused by Bozizé's rebellion in 2002 and 2003, and many come from the north-western Ouham-Pendé prefecture, an MLPC stronghold, their inability to vote is likely to favour Bozizé.

⁶³ Crisis Group interview, member of the national assembly, Bangui, 31 August 2009.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interview, UFVN officer, Bangui, 27 August 2009.

The biggest opposition party, MLPC, which is a member of the UFVN, is torn in two. When its former leader, ex-President Patassé, went into exile in Togo in 2003, most of his supporters transferred their allegiance to Martin Ziguélé, who was the party's presidential candidate in 2005 and became its president in June 2006.⁶⁵ But one faction has refused to recognise Ziguélé's leadership. On 30 October 2009, Patassé returned from exile intending to take over the party again, but Ziguélé is adamant that his time is over.⁶⁶ On 21 November 2009, Patassé announced his intention to stand for president as an independent. It is difficult to say whether he can win back his former supporters. While many blame him for the crimes committed in 2002/2003, he is a powerful orator and can whip up popular fervour; a brief appearance in Bangui in November 2009 sparked jubilant singing in the street. Even without the MLPC banner, his candidacy will weaken Ziguélé's chances against Bozizé.

If Bozizé wins rushed and badly organised elections, his opponents are very likely to contest the results. There is a risk they might also encourage their supporters to take to the street. However, postponing the vote to improve the quality of elections and avoid a potentially violent reaction also risks causing political instability. The mandates of both the president and the national assembly end in June. There are no provisions in the constitution for what happens if they do not have successors by then, and since neither the president nor the national assembly would have legitimacy to govern, there would be a grave danger of a political crisis. Those with ambitions, whether leaders of armed groups or with strong constituencies, could see an opportunity to take power, possibly by force.

Some opposition parties say there is need for a political arrangement in which all parties work together in transitional institutions until elections are ready.⁶⁷ Given Bozizé's refusal to create a consensus government, however, it is highly unlikely that he will make any sort of power-sharing deal with his political opponents.

In October 2009, a group of parliamentarians proposed avoiding a constitutional void by extending the mandates of both the president and the national assembly.⁶⁸ Bozizé blocked this, insisting that elections will take place on time.⁶⁹ He would rather have an easy win in problematic elections supported by the international community and claim greater legitimacy than provoke the displeasure of his foreign partners by extending his mandate. In the likely event that elections are not ready in time, however, he may yet resort to that option. Indeed, a presidential adviser told Crisis Group several months ago that a mandate extension was inevitable.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, a UN electoral needs assessment mission that visited Bangui at the government's request from 29 October to 12 November 2009 concluded that, with considerable international support, the first round of elections could take place by the end of April 2010 and the second in May.⁷¹ This small postponement from the original March target will hardly make the challenge any less. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) will coordinate what must be substantial technical assistance to the CEI, and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in the CAR (Bureau d'appui des Nations unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine, BONUCA) will lead efforts to create favourable security, political and social conditions.⁷² No matter how much money or material support the UN and other donors bring, elections will still fall short of acceptable standards and

⁶⁵ Patassé was MLPC president from 1979, when he founded the party, until June 2006 when its national political council suspended his membership for supporting rebellion in the north and appointed Ziguélé president. MLPC militants wanted to dissociate themselves from Patassé to avoid persecution by the new regime, and Ziguélé was an obvious replacement. He is from the same north-west Ouham-Pendé prefecture, and his wife is Patassé's first cousin. Crisis Group interview, MLPC secretariat, Bangui, 28 August 2009. This family connection now works against Ziguélé as greater age gives Patassé a stronger claim to leadership.

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, Martin Ziguélé, MLPC president, Bangui, 31 August 2009.

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interviews, opposition politicians, Bangui, August and November 2009.

⁶⁸ "RCA: Vers une prorogation du mandat de Bozizé et des députés proposée par Dondon?", *ICI CEMAC*, 5 October 2009.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interview, national assembly member, Bangui, 21 November 2009.

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Bangui, 29 August 2009.

⁷¹ On 15 December 2009, the CEI national coordinating committee adopted as an electoral timetable the first round on 18 April 2010 and the second on 23 May.

⁷² In December 2009, the UNDP chief technical adviser took up his post and began recruiting his team. BONUCA, the UN's ten-year-old peacebuilding support office in the CAR, has proved weak in research, analysis, development of policy lines and ability to give political direction to the government. Crisis Group interview, BONUCA official, Bangui, 22 August 2009. However, the new SRSG, Sahle-Work Zewde, has demonstrated her ability and readiness to use her diplomatic clout at both national and regional levels. In January 2010, BONUCA's work is to be integrated with that of the other UN agencies, and will become the Integrated Office of the United Nations in the CAR (Bureau intégré des Nations unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine, BINUCA). Some worry that this will make the UN system even more top heavy, but better coordination and information exchange between the political affairs office and the other agencies should provide an opportunity to improve policy work and operating standards. Crisis Group interview, UNDP, Bangui, 21 August 2009.

risk sparking violence if the security situation does not rapidly improve.

C. SECURITY

The Inclusive Political Dialogue assured the involvement of most of the rebel groups in the peace process, and as a result insecurity in the north has decreased. However, delays in DDR, mainly caused by friction at the political level, have allowed rebel groups to continue preying on the population and new armed groups to emerge. Consequently, the obstacles to successful DDR have become more complex. The slow rate of SSR means there is also a risk that once rebel groups are finally disbanded, other armed groups might fill the resulting security vacuum.

1. DDR: delays and potential obstacles

On 3 February 2009 a national steering committee was established to plan and coordinate DDR of rebel groups signatory to the Global Peace Agreement,⁷³ but its work has been interrupted by changes in the representation of rebel groups. At first Hassan Ousman represented the MLCJ, but following an internal dispute, Abakar Sabone, its president, took his place. On 23 May, Ousman broke with Sabone and created his own rebel group, the National Movement for Salvation of the Homeland (Mouvement national du salut de la patrie, MNSP).⁷⁴ Ousman, not Sabone, is thought to command the loyalty of most of the fighters on the ground.⁷⁵ His MNSP signed a “commitment to peace” with the government on 20 October in anticipation of signing the Global Peace Agreement, but Ousman has not yet rejoined the DDR steering committee.

On 3 July 2009, the FDPC leader, Abdoulaye Miskine, under pressure from Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi and Chadian authorities, finally signed an act of adherence to the Global Peace Agreement in Tripoli and nominated his representative to the steering committee.⁷⁶ But three months later, after security forces arrested two of his men in Bangui, he declared both this and his previous agreement null and void.⁷⁷ This was the alleged cause behind the split between him and Christophe Gazambetty, FDPC president.⁷⁸ Despite Miskine’s withdrawal, the FDPC representative continued to participate in steering committee meetings, creating ambiguity over whether the group remains committed to the DDR process.

Much time has been wasted arguing over money the rebel representatives have repeatedly demanded to feed their troops and pay themselves large living allowances. Donors on the committee have been reluctant, lest it be used to buy arms or otherwise prepare more violence. Rebel representatives have boycotted meetings in protest.⁷⁹

In early 2009 the government asked the other five member states of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (Communauté économique et monétaire de l’Afrique centrale, CEMAC) to support DDR financially. Each agreed to contribute 1 billion CFA francs (about \$2.3 million), and the Central Bank of CEMAC states pledged another 3 billion CFA francs. Having received the money, the government has refused to hand it over to a trust fund run by UNDP, as planned. Its position was finally accepted, but UNDP will guarantee only those stages for which it controls the finances, namely disarmament and demobilisation.

With frustration mounting among rebel fighters and the population, Bozizé chose the 49th anniversary of independence (13 August 2009) to officially launch the three-year DDR program. The ceremony took place in Paoua,

⁷³The DDR steering committee is chaired by UNDP and includes three representatives of the government and one from each rebel group and from each of BONUCA, the European Commission (EC), France, the World Bank, the African Union and the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the CAR (Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique, MICOPAX).

⁷⁴Ousman attributes the break to Sabone’s increasingly unilateral decision-making, including in February 2009 his decision to ally with Miskine. Crisis Group interview, Hassan Ousman, Bangui, 12 November 2009. However, he probably also hopes the government will buy him back into the peace process. Sabone was alleged to have agreed to join the peace process in June 2008 after receiving 8 million CFA francs (about \$20,000). Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Bangui, 29 August 2009.

⁷⁵Sabone is said to be having difficulty providing a list of his fighters’ names because most MLCJ combatants are on Ousman’s MNSP list. Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Bangui, 24 August 2009.

⁷⁶Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Bangui, 29 August 2009.

⁷⁷Miskine had signed a ceasefire agreement at Syrte, Libya on 2 February 2007. The FDPC communiqué is reprinted in “Le FDPC d’Abdoulaye Miskine déclare la caducité des accords de paix signés avec Bozizé”, Agence Centrafrique-Presse, 2 October 2009.

⁷⁸“Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country”, S/2009/627, 8 December 2009.

⁷⁹After a month and a half, it was agreed that each rebel representative would receive \$1,500 per month to cover housing, communications and logistics. Demafouth, as first vice president, gets more. Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomat, Bangui, 24 August 2009; rebel representative, Bangui, 12 November 2009.

Ouham-Pendé prefecture, a north-western town in the heart of one of the two APRD-controlled zones. With disarmament still a long way off, the announcement was intended to placate impatient rebels and buy time. Shortly afterwards, four teams were sent on a three-week sensitisation campaign in Bangui and northern towns in rebel-held areas that was supposed to prepare fighters for DDR. They made contact with rebel groups but did not provide concrete information on what fighters could expect in return for laying down their weapons.⁸⁰ UNDP considered this a “pre-stage” and recognised that more substantial explanations will have to be given before DDR can begin.⁸¹

The process was most recently held up by a two-month diplomatic row between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the DDR steering committee led by France over military observers.⁸² On 5 November, ECCAS finally agreed to supply 31 observers, who arrived on schedule in mid-December. Disarmament and demobilisation could potentially start in February 2010.⁸³

If rebels feel safe enough to hand over their guns, they will likely go through these first two phases in order to receive the initial handout.⁸⁴ However, weaknesses in planning for their reintegration into either civilian life or state security forces may well result in their seeking new weapons and returning to exploitation of the local population. Plans for civilian reintegration lack a component to erode the social stigma they may face in host communities.⁸⁵

Leaders report that many of their fighters want to join state security forces, but no survey has been made to determine more exact numbers.⁸⁶ On this issue in particular, the DDR steering committee and the SSR team need to work together to find a solution that suits all parties, but there has been “total lack of coordination” between them.⁸⁷ The UNDP team that manages DDR has intentionally kept its work separate from SSR structures for fear that the same national institutions that allegedly embezzled money during the last attempt at DDR and are now working on SSR would do the same again.⁸⁸ Both teams must work around this problem and incorporate DDR into SSR more tightly if disarmament is to have lasting effect.

The rebel leaders’ prioritisation of personal agendas above the peace process also raises the risk that if they are not satisfied with what they gain from DDR or the election results, they will try to restart rebellion.⁸⁹ To prevent this, DDR must focus on a bottom-up approach that provides sustainable alternative sources of income for fighters. This means stimulating economic and social activities at the local level. If ex-combatants on the ground are satisfied with their new lives, former rebel leaders or others with political ambitions will have more difficulty mobilising support. The greatest obstacle to DDR, however, is the continued activity of multiple hostile armed groups. As long as rebels feel threatened, they will be reluctant to hand over their weapons.

2. Festering insecurity

The north west and north centre

The APRD in the north west and north centre has provided the local population a certain level of security by

⁸⁰ Crisis Group interview, member of the DDR steering committee, Bangui, 24 August 2009.

⁸¹ Crisis Group interview, UNDP DDR expert, Bangui, 3 September 2009.

⁸² The CAR government asked ECCAS to provide military observers to verify lists of rebel fighters and assure smooth disarmament and demobilisation stages. The regional body demanded more control over the DDR process and more funding than the CAR and its partners were prepared to give. Crisis Group interview, member of the DDR steering committee, Bangui, 17 November 2009. SRSZ took the matter to the ECCAS heads of state for resolution during their fourteenth ordinary conference, at Kinshasa in June 2009.

⁸³ Crisis Group interview, UNDP DDR expert, Bangui, 16 November 2009.

⁸⁴ At demobilisation each rebel is to be given a reinsertion kit that includes food or non-food items worth \$100 and \$30 in cash for transport. Crisis Group interview, UNDP DDR expert, Bangui, 16 November 2009.

⁸⁵ The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) initially planned to set up training centres on farms, with a quarter of each class to be former rebels, in order to break down the social barriers between rebels and farmers. This was judged infeasible,

and the present plan is to give ex-fighters reintegration kits with tools and seeds. Ibid.

⁸⁶ Rebel representatives say the current proposal that former rebels make up no more than 10 per cent of new recruits is unacceptable. Crisis Group interviews, rebel representatives, Bangui, November 2009.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group interview, SSR expert, Bangui, 2 September 2009.

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interview, UNDP DDR expert, Bangui, November 2009. The Ex-combatant Reinsertion and Community Support Program (Programme de réinsertion des ex-combattants et d’appui aux communautés, PRAC), 2004 to 2007, was heavily criticised for demobilising many false ex-combatants and allowing embezzlement of \$40 million. UNDP ran the program alongside the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion, CNDDR). Crisis Group interviews, UNDP officers, Bangui, August and November 2009.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Bangui, 29 August 2009.

keeping *coupeurs de route* (road bandits) at bay. Ground commanders are in regular contact with local authorities, the national military (Forces armées centrafricaines, FACA) and the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the CAR (Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique, MICOPAX), the regional peacekeeping force deployed in the west and centre of the country.⁹⁰ Each force keeps to its territory and clashes rarely occur. However, the APRD's road blocks make farmers reluctant to take their produce to market, and illegal taxes put an added burden on already desperately poor people. As a result more armed self-defence groups have emerged.⁹¹ Miskine's FDPC in the north centre fought with government troops in February and April 2009 and since then has also been collecting money at roadblocks.⁹²

Maradass Lakoué, commander of the APRD zone around Kaga Bandoro in the north centre, told the DDR sensitisation team in August 2009 that he would only disarm if the nearby group of *coupeurs de route* led by General Mahmat Abdul Kadre Baba Laddé, a former Chadian gendarme, was first removed.⁹³ Baba Laddé went to Bangui in early September with the government's blessing to negotiate his return to Chad. However, on 10 October the government issued a ministerial order for his expulsion and on the same day deported him to Chad. That did not solve the problem, as his some 500 well-

armed fighters still threaten Lakoué's APRD and the local population.⁹⁴

To avoid accusations that it is meddling in its former colony, France is particularly keen that MICOPAX take over as the CAR's first line of military support and become an example of an African solution to an African problem.⁹⁵ The principle is sound, but limited training and material constraints mean MICOPAX has little impact in terms of improving security.⁹⁶ There is also much popular mistrust of the Chadian contingent, especially in the north west, where Bozizé's Chadian "liberators" wreaked havoc and destroyed the cotton industry installations.⁹⁷ The "arrogant and aggressive" behaviour of the Chadian troops further undermines the force's neutral status and risks sparking violence.⁹⁸

The north east

In the north east, Zacharia Damane's UFDR is "untouchable".⁹⁹ Since the 13 April 2007 peace agreement, the government, aware of its army's weakness, has authorised the rebel group to maintain security in both Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures. Armed with this legitimacy and government munitions, the mainly Gula fighters have continued to extort money and diamonds from the local population and harass and kill members of other ethnic groups. Damane, also a Gula, has tried to enforce discipline but his authority is waning.¹⁰⁰ Jeal-

⁹⁰ Laurent Djimwe, unpredictable and prone to drink, commanded the zone around Paoua until replaced by Henri Tchebo Wafio for killing Soule Garga, president of the National Federation of Cattle Breeders, on 14 April 2009 near Paoua market. Crisis Group interview, SSR expert, Bangui, 1 September 2009; "News bulletin 104 (13-20 April 2009)", Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team CAR, 24 April 2009. Maradass Lakoué commands the zone around Kaga Bandoro. He maintains discipline among his fighters and ensures the safety of civilians. Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian workers, Bangui, August and September 2009. See also "Mapping Conflict Motives: Central African Republic", International Peace Information Service (IPIS), 17 February 2009, p. 37.

⁹¹ In a July 2009 incident in Dakawa, near Paoua in the north west, a meeting between the APRD and a self-defence group to negotiate terms of coexistence turned violent, forcing more than 500 people to flee into the bush. "Peace proves tenuous in CAR", Aljazeera video, 27 September 2009, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2009/09/2009927183258845531.html>.

⁹² For more details on the attacks at Batangafo and Kobo, see "Centrafrique: attaque rebelle contre une ville du nord", Agence France-Presse, 24 February 2009 and "News bulletin 104", op. cit.

⁹³ "Que peut-on retenir de la tournée de sensibilisation pour le DDR de Gonda et Demafouth?", Agence Centrafrique-Presse, 17 September 2009.

⁹⁴ Crisis Group interview, MICOPAX official, Bangui, 16 November 2009. The government has opened negotiations with four or five other groups of *coupeurs de route*, but its bad faith in dealings with Baba Laddé will make it harder to strike deals. Crisis Group interview, member of the DDR steering committee, Bangui, 24 August 2009.

⁹⁵ Crisis Group interview, French diplomat, Paris, 4 September 2009. MICOPAX acts under the authority of ECCAS, whose member states contribute troops on a rotating basis. Currently the force is a little over 500, including soldiers from Gabon, Chad, Cameroon and the Congo (DRC) and police from Equatorial Guinea. MICOPAX took over from the Central African Multinational Force (FOMUC), a CEMAC body, in July 2008; its mandate to support the FACA runs until 2013.

⁹⁶ Crisis Group interview, military official, Bangui, 28 August 2009.

⁹⁷ After helping Bozizé seize power in Bangui in March 2003, the Chadian mercenaries, known as "liberators", stayed in the capital awaiting their reward. Bozizé, however, refused to pay them and transported them to the Chadian border. They destroyed the local cotton industry in retribution, and many later joined rebellions against their former employer.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview, MICOPAX official, Bangui, 16 November 2009.

⁹⁹ Crisis Group interview, humanitarian worker, Bangui, 20 November 2009.

¹⁰⁰ Damane's men ignored his order to leave Ouadda for Sam Ouandja, both in Haute-Kotto prefecture, preferring Ouadda,

ousy of the UFDR's elevated status and resources and anger at its unchecked abuses have led to the emergence of two new armed groups.

The Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix, CPJP) began in late 2008 as a Runga resistance force and at first called for Damane's removal as UFDR head. However, former army and presidential guard members whose ambitions go beyond the provincial level have assumed leadership.¹⁰¹ After the FACA attacked its base north of Ndélé, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, in mid-January 2009, the group demanded Bozizé's resignation.¹⁰² After failed mediation by the respected sultan of Ndélé, CPJP fighters temporarily occupied the town on 26 November 2009. As with other rebellions, this show of strength was meant to bolster the group's negotiating position with the government, presumably in hope of benefiting from DDR and obtaining lucrative posts in the administration. However, Bozizé seems determined to pursue a military solution.¹⁰³

The Kara have taken up arms under the leadership of Ahamat Mustapha, a local dignitary. Unlike the CPJP, they remain focused on taking revenge on the Gula and retaining control of Birao, Vakaga prefecture's main town, their ancestral home and a trading centre on the main commercial artery linking the CAR with Sudan.¹⁰⁴

where they extort the artisanal diamond miners. Crisis Group interview, humanitarian worker, Bangui, 20 November 2009.

¹⁰¹ Charles Massi, a former minister under Patassé and Bozizé and briefly in 2007 UFDR coordinator, joined the CPJP late in 2008 and by April 2009 was its president. He was looking for a way back to power and the CPJP needed someone to push its case with the government. On 18 May 2009, Chadian authorities caught him trying to cross into the CAR. They released him from prison on 8 July but reportedly recaptured him in late December 2009. See "Le chef rebelle Charles Massi serait en détention à la gendarmerie au Tchad", *Centrafrique-Presse*, 4 January 2010. CPJP ground commanders no longer recognise him as their political leader. Crisis Group interviews, rebel representatives, Bangui, November 2009. The CPJP field leadership includes at least one ex-UFDR commander, Abdallah Youssouf. Crisis Group interview, presidential adviser, Bangui, 29 August 2009.

¹⁰² The CPJP's first communiqué is dated 7 January 2009 (available on the group's blog, <http://cpjp.centrafrique.overblog.org>), but it claims to have started life on 27 December 2008.

¹⁰³ On 7 December 2009 the FACA attacked the CPJP near Ngarba on the Chad border with the express purpose of "destroying the CPJP's rear base". "Several dead' in Centr. Africa attack on rebels", *Agence France-Presse*, 10 December 2009.

¹⁰⁴ Since independence, members of Ahamat Mustapha's family have almost continuously held the post of mayor of Birao. He was appointed mayor in 2005, but his position is threatened by the local KNK representative, Abderahman Ramadan

Tensions escalated when the Kara accused the Gula of killing one of their youths in February 2009 and when the UFDR entered Birao in April.¹⁰⁵ On 6 June and again on 21 June, some 60 Kara with support from Sudanese clansmen attacked the town, targeting the UFDR base. The fighting left at least 27 dead and 60 per cent of houses burned.¹⁰⁶ Government mediation supported by BONUCA has led to UFDR withdrawal from Birao and relative calm, but the ethnic feud is far from over. A UFDR representative said the mediation efforts were just the government "playing around" and had made little difference. Although the UFDR has been an active member of the DDR steering committee, it will not disarm as long as the CPJP and the Kara remain a threat.¹⁰⁷

On 15 March 2009, the European Union peacekeeping force, EUFOR Chad/CAR, handed over its job of protecting humanitarian workers and vulnerable people in Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures to the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (Mission des Nations unies en République centrafricaine et au Tchad, MINURCAT).¹⁰⁸ Over the year, the Togolese forces have improved coordination with NGOs and with the use of a helicopter have been able to gain a better understanding of the evolving security situation.¹⁰⁹ However, after the two attacks on Birao in June, the mission head, Victor Da Silva Angelo, reported that even though the mission had reached full deployment in the CAR, "the gravity of the situation went beyond its capacity to respond".¹¹⁰ The kidnapping of two French aid workers on 22 November from Birao town illustrated that.¹¹¹

The south east

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is a major security threat in the far south east. The rebel group, originally from Uganda, re-entered Haut-Mbomou prefecture in

Toukouch, who has the support of the UFDR. Crisis Group interview, UFDR representative, Bangui, 14 November 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Crisis Group interviews, UFDR representatives, Bangui, November 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Update briefing to the Security Council by SRS Victor Da Silva Angelo, SC/9718, 28 July 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Crisis Group interview, UFDR representative, Bangui, 14 November 2009. For MINURCAT's mandate, see Security Council Resolution 1861 (2009), S/RES/1861, 14 January 2009.

¹⁰⁸ In reality, the 500 French EUFOR soldiers stayed until the end of May under MINURCAT insignia, when the 300 replacements from Togo were ready to take over. Crisis Group interviews, humanitarian worker, Bangui, 1 September 2009; former EUFOR officer, Paris, 4 September 2009.

¹⁰⁹ Crisis Group interview, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) official, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

¹¹⁰ Update briefing to the Security Council, op. cit.

¹¹¹ "Centrafrique: deux humanitaires français enlevés dans le nord-est", *Agence France-Presse*, 23 November 2009.

May.¹¹² Since its previous incursion into the CAR, its military capacity has been noticeably reduced.¹¹³ Nevertheless the Tonga-Tonga, as Central Africans call them, have pillaged food and medical stores, abducted some locals to use as porters and killed and raped others.¹¹⁴ Villagers are too frightened to work their fields. In December there were 10,850 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Haut-Mbomou prefecture and over 3,500 refugees who had fled LRA hostilities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the south.¹¹⁵ Despite the presence of some 150 FACA and as many as 700 Ugandan troops in the area, the LRA continues to terrorise the local population.¹¹⁶

3. Security Sector Reform

The DDR program only aims at dismantling the rebel groups that have signed the Global Peace Agreement. Without extensive reform of the state security and law enforcement agencies and their deployment across the full national territory, the population will remain vulnerable to other rebels, self-defence groups, *coupeurs de route*, armed cattle herders from Chad, poachers from Sudan and the security forces themselves.¹¹⁷

The April 2008 national SSR seminar drew up a schedule that envisaged national actors completing initial short-term steps by the end of 2008, after which a multidisciplinary team of seven international experts would stay in the CAR for one year to help each sector launch medium-term operational measures and plan long-term reform.¹¹⁸ On arrival the international team first had to finish the preparatory work of identifying problems and proposing solutions that should have been done in 2008. The program has advanced at different speeds in different sectors, but in most cases one year has not been enough to ensure national actors have the ability and will to pursue the reform agenda without outside guidance and pressure.¹¹⁹

Two essential ingredients are still missing: political will and money. In August 2009, General Ngaïndiro, the national SSR coordinator, reported that the program was moving forward at the technical level but was being held back by a lack of national ownership at the political level.¹²⁰ International experts say ministers have since taken greater responsibility for achieving results and pushed harder to keep to the reform schedule.¹²¹ SSR is a process that could take decades. The security services urgently need a stronger institutional and legal framework; more and better infrastructure and equipment; and more training including human rights education to stop abuses against civilians. In the long term, the political and military leadership must nurture a new professional culture of service to the Central African people. It is, therefore, crucial that the CAR government at the highest level remain committed throughout but particularly during the approaching elections.

¹¹²In February and March 2008 the LRA made a violent month-long incursion into the CAR, taking out with them over 100 civilians to serve as porters, sex slaves and child soldiers. Crisis Group interview, national NGO worker, Bangui, 20 August 2009.

¹¹³Crisis Group interview, military official, Bangui, 28 August 2009. The joint Ugandan-Congolese operation, "Lightning Thunder", of December 2008 failed to crush the LRA. It scattered and pushed them north into Sudan and the CAR.

¹¹⁴Crisis Group interview, OCHA, Bangui, 11 November 2009. On 21 September 2009, 45km west of Obo, the LRA attacked a lorry that COOPI, an Italian aid organisation, was using to transport materials needed to build a school, killing two local staff and wounding two. "The LRA – not finished yet", IRIN, 1 October 2009.

¹¹⁵"Fact Sheet", UNHCR, December 2009.

¹¹⁶Crisis Group interview, OCHA, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

¹¹⁷State security forces, the presidential guard in particular, committed extensive abuses against civilians from mid-2005 to mid-2007 during operations aimed at repressing rebellion in the north. See "State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians", Human Rights Watch, September 2007. Sporadic abuses continue. In February 2009, the FACA reportedly killed 21 in the village of Sokumba near Ndélé, Bamingui Bangoran prefecture. "CAR soldiers blamed for killings", BBC, 31 April 2009. Philip Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, reported that Bozizé reined in his presidential guard, but the main perpetrators have not been brought to justice. Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mission to the Central African Republic, A/HRC/11/2/Add.3, 27 May 2009.

¹¹⁸The EC provided and paid for five experts, four of whom arrived in November 2008. UNDP provided two who arrived in March 2009. One expert oversees the program, the other six were allocated to: defence (army and gendarmerie); interior security (police); public finances; town and country planning; democratic control of the security forces; and justice.

¹¹⁹The defence sub-sector has seen concrete progress. MICOPAX is setting up barracks in main towns so the FACA can project state authority in the provinces and protect civilians. In April 2009, the national assembly passed a military planning law for 2009 to 2013; in June and September 2009, the army took in a total of 1,600 recruits. However, the recruitment process was "anarchic": a disproportionately large number came from Bangui, and many won places through connections, not merit. Crisis Group interviews, SSR experts, Bangui, August and November 2009.

¹²⁰The occasion was the mid-term review of the PRSP 2008-2010 on 24 August 2009. Crisis Group interview, SSR expert, Bangui, 2 September 2009.

¹²¹Crisis Group interviews, SSR experts, Bangui, November 2009.

While foreign partners are providing considerable support to the program,¹²² a lack of funds is undermining the gains made so far and preventing the implementation of more expensive medium-term reforms.¹²³ To remedy this, a donor conference was held in Bangui on 29 October 2009, but it was “a disaster”.¹²⁴ Late invitations and a lack of preparatory advocacy in foreign capitals meant that only the CAR’s traditional partners (France, the EU, the UN, the World Bank and the IMF) attended, none of which pledged additional money.¹²⁵ A greater commitment by these donors is essential, as only concrete progress on the ground will encourage others to give.

D. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The government’s implementation of recommendations relating to socio-economic development has been patchy. Because the commission had such a short time to discuss an ambitious range of issues, many recommendations lacked the detail necessary to make them readily operational.¹²⁶ The more costly reforms have lagged because participants did not think through where the money would come from to implement them.¹²⁷

With the assistance of the World Bank, the mining ministry drew up a new mining code that became law on 29 April 2009, but in the UN Peacebuilding Commission mission’s evaluation, its adoption “represents another set back to the transparent management of natural resources

and the equitable distribution of related state incomes”.¹²⁸ Ignoring the World Bank’s advice the new law has increased the tax that foreign mining companies must pay, thereby making the investment climate even less attractive.¹²⁹ In early January 2010, Bozizé ignored the recommendation that mayors be elected and appointed new ones. Until such officials are locally accountable, they will lack incentive to advocate for the social and economic well-being of their communities.

Progress has depended to a large extent on the levels of competence and will in each department and also on whether the measures recommended in the dialogue were already featured in the PRSP.¹³⁰ The commerce and industry ministry has done well. Having held a sector-specific roundtable in February 2009, it started rehabilitating the chamber of commerce and has established a single service point for investors. This should boost the private sector by considerably reducing the delays involved in setting up a company.

The water and forests ministry also deserves credit for revitalising the forestry sector. Having observed a widespread neglect of regulations it cancelled all logging permits, then began to award them on criteria that require companies to plant new trees and support those who live in affected areas. In October 2008, a new forestry code was passed, and in 2009 the ministry continued to demand higher levels of environmental awareness, finan-

¹²² Even though France, keen to distance itself from the unsavoury memories of “Françafrique”, has considerably reduced its bilateral military cooperation, its 250-strong Operation Boali continues to train the FACA. The CAR expected South Africa to play a much larger role in SSR, but friction with the presidential guard and domestic political upheavals have caused it to withdraw all but 80 personnel. Crisis Group interviews, SSR experts, Western diplomat, Bangui, November 2009.

¹²³ MICOPAX has already handed over the barracks at Bria, Haute-Kotto prefecture, but the FACA lacks enough petrol to run the generators, and the camp is falling into disrepair. Crisis Group interview, MICOPAX officer, Bangui, 16 November 2009.

¹²⁴ Crisis Group interview, UNDP official, Bangui, 16 November 2009.

¹²⁵ A South African representative was present in the morning but did not stay to hear the proposals for medium-term reforms. The government proposed 24 medium-term projects, which are expected to cost \$102 million. Crisis Group interview, SSR expert, Bangui, 13 November 2009.

¹²⁶ Crisis Group interview, World Bank representative, Bangui, 23 November 2009.

¹²⁷ Crisis Group interview, member of the chairing committee for the development commission, Bangui, 13 November 2009.

¹²⁸ “Report of the Peacebuilding Commission mission to Central African Republic (CAR), 3 December-10 December 2009”, Peacebuilding Commission, December 2009.

¹²⁹ Crisis Group interview, foreign mining company official, Bangui, 19 November 2009. See also “Confusion over New Mining Fund”, *Africa Mining Intelligence*, no. 203, 20 May 2009. The world economic crisis has made revival in the sector much more difficult. A drop in global demand for diamonds and timber has caused many mining operations and logging firms, both concentrated in the south west, to stop work. In 2008, diamond production fell 80 per cent and wood production more than 70 per cent. Kersten Jauer, “Economic crisis hits Central African Republic”, Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team (HDPT) CAR, 12 August 2009.

¹³⁰ In June 2009, progress in implementing the PRSP, including structural reforms aimed at macroeconomic stability, saw the CAR reach the completion point under the enhanced initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), earning it \$600 million in debt relief. “IMF, World Bank cancel Central African Republic debt”, Reuters, 1 July 2009. In September 2009, the Paris Club of creditors forgave \$56 million, equal to 6 per cent of total external debt. Tino Kreutzer, “Paris Club’ cancels \$56 million debt, an important step towards full debt relief”, Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team CAR, 28 September 2009. This released funds that the government used to reduce civil servant salary arrears from nine months to two.

cial transparency and participation of local residents in management issues.¹³¹

These Bangui-centred institutional reforms are necessary but a long way from making a concrete difference to living conditions of the rural poor. International NGOs agree that the dire humanitarian emergency, as bad in the south as in the north, is a result not so much of conflict as of under-development.¹³² It is crucial that development efforts focus on quick impact measures in the provinces. The European Commission-financed “development poles” program set to become operational in 2010 will be crucial, as it aims to increase efforts to rehabilitate community services and infrastructure around regional towns.¹³³ These bottom-up measures are most suited to creating favourable conditions for reintegrating ex-combatants into society and allowing refugees and IDPs to return home, both also prerequisites for credible elections.

IV. BUILDING ON THE GAINS OF THE POLITICAL DIALOGUE

The Inclusive Political Dialogue and the implementation of its recommendations, however incomplete, have been valuable contributions to the peace process, but the government, with the support of the international community, needs to make every effort to build on the achievements.

A. ENSURING CONSENSUAL ELECTIONS AND PURSUING THE REFORM AGENDA

The priority over the first months of 2010 should be the consensual organisation of credible elections. Given Bozizé’s strong position, there is little chance that elections will bring about a major change in the country’s leadership. But if they are badly organised and unevenly contested, they risk seriously harming the peace and democratisation processes. The CEI, government and donors should, therefore, work hard to keep to the current electoral timetable. If by March insufficient progress has been made in technical preparations and in improving the security situation, however, national actors should be prepared to postpone. The government should ur-

gently engage rebels, opposition politicians and civil society to agree by consensus in advance on how to avoid a constitutional and political crisis if a postponement is necessary, since a unilateral decision by the president at the last minute could have violent repercussions.

To entrench the practice of political dialogue and decision-making by consensus, Paulin Pomodimo, the former archbishop of Bangui and current head of the National Council for Mediation, should set up a permanent framework for dialogue with the country’s political and social actors that aims to achieve consensus governance before and beyond the elections.

Elections present both a risk and an opportunity for Bozizé. If he approaches them in the spirit of political inflexibility he has displayed since the Inclusive Political Dialogue concluded and does not allow opposition candidates a fair chance, he will lose even more legitimacy and possibly provoke more violence. If he engages the opposition and collaborates fully with the UN electoral support team, he can reinforce democratic principles and improve his international image.

The government committed itself to implementing the reform agenda agreed during the dialogue and should make good on that commitment. Opposition parties, civil society and the international community should hold the government to account for its shortcomings. In order to maintain pressure after elections, the mandate of the dialogue follow-up committee should be extended for another year and made renewable.¹³⁴

Bozizé’s popularity and chances of re-election depend significantly on his access to donor support and consequent ability to pay civil servants’ salaries. The CAR’s international partners should not bankroll the regime if it undermines the country’s best chance in years to put itself on the path of stability and recovery. The electoral process must be administered by consensus, and dialogue should remain the principal method of dealing with the political opposition and rebel groups. Only if these key elements of democratic culture are supported and upheld in Bangui can progress be made in the country. Donors should make clear to the government that they will penalise it and stop paying civil servant salaries if it does not display clear commitment to abide by these principles.

¹³¹ Crisis Group interview, CSRDP officer, Bangui, 11 November 2009.

¹³² Crisis Group interviews, international NGOs, Bangui, August and November 2009.

¹³³ The “development poles” strategy, part of the PRSP, seeks to redress the government’s neglect of the interior and promote a more geographically equitable distribution of wealth by making secondary towns engines of regional growth.

¹³⁴ The CSRDP’s mandate currently expires when a new president is elected.

B. IMPLEMENTING DDR AND MAINTAINING MOMENTUM OF SSR

The December 2008 talks advanced the rebels' political engagement with the government on DDR, and the program finally is nearly ready to be implemented. However, for it to have any chance of taking off and improving security, the government must urgently negotiate the disarmament of both Baba Laddé's force in the north centre and the CPJP in the north east. It must also seek a lasting solution to the conflict between Zacharia Damane's mainly Gula UFDR and Ahamat Mustapha's armed Kara group. Given the perception that the UFDR is now an auxiliary of the government, a neutral actor such as MINURCAT needs to mediate between the two groups. Only when these ethnic tensions are calmed will the UFDR have the confidence to disarm.

The government, with the advice of UNDP, must strengthen planning for the reintegration phase of DDR. A clear mechanism for introducing former rebels into constructive, money-earning activities alongside members of the community in which they will be living is necessary, both as an incentive for them to disarm and to ensure that they do not subsequently go back to exploiting the local population. The DDR steering committee – its rebel leader members in particular – should negotiate with SSR experts and agree on the number of rebels to be recruited into the security forces and the mechanism by which they can apply for positions.

Long-term security primarily requires maintaining momentum in SSR implementation and transforming state security forces into an effective and depoliticised defence tool. The president and relevant ministers must make personal commitments to ensuring the SSR schedule is understood and adhered to before and after elections. The government and the SSR permanent secretariat should accept the Peacebuilding Commission proposal of another SSR roundtable in 2010 and start preparing immediately. To avoid the failure of the last one, the government must launch advocacy missions in foreign capitals six months in advance, armed with transparent and detailed budgets for the use of foreign funds, in order to bring more donors to the table. Donors should provide the necessary funds so the international experts can stay another year to help medium-term reforms take off. If not, the security forces will remain more a liability than a reliable tool, and impunity will continue to undermine the rule of law.

C. TACKLING THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

The dialogue's recommendations on socio-economic development can still contribute to the climb out of poverty but should be revisited and thought through in

more detail, so that if still valid, they can be integrated into the second PRSP. The most immediate development need, however, is improving basic services, employment opportunities and infrastructure in rural areas. As noted above, the quick launch of the EC-financed "development poles program" is essential to this.

In June 2008, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) added the CAR to its agenda. Jan Grauls, the head of its configuration on the CAR and Belgium's UN ambassador, has taken a strong personal interest. Both in New York and through regular visits, he has been drawing more attention to the country and putting diplomatic pressure on the government.¹³⁵ The PBC's Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the CAR, adopted in May 2009, identifies three priority areas: SSR including DDR; governance and the rule of law; and the development poles program.¹³⁶ Its first biannual review mission to the CAR, 3 to 10 December 2009, highlighted the need for the government to take strong ownership of the development poles project and in particular set up a technical committee to take charge.¹³⁷ The PBC can make a real contribution to the peace process by mobilising more foreign assistance for the development poles program and maintaining pressure on the government to expand its development focus beyond Bangui.

V. CONCLUSION

The Inclusive Political Dialogue was intended to be the culmination of the CAR's peace negotiations, but the delay in disarming the rebel groups already engaged in the process has allowed more fires to break out. The government must realise that with state security forces stretched thin, including in the effort to contain the LRA, the only feasible and promising course of action is to negotiate with the CPJP and find a lasting resolution to the Gula-Kara conflict. If President Bozizé resorts to force, the hard work that went into bringing the other rebel groups to the table will be for nothing. One group will not disarm until they all do.

The talks were also an early step in the struggle for political stability and accelerated economic development. On this front, the initiative, like its predecessors, failed to change the regime's winner-takes-all mentality.

¹³⁵ Crisis Group interview, EC official, Brussels, 7 September 2009. The PBC has also been able to lessen the load for other donors by giving financial support through the Peacebuilding Fund. It contributed \$4 million to DDR.

¹³⁶ "Strategic framework for peacebuilding in the Central African Republic 2009-2011", PBC/3/CAF/7, 9 June 2009.

¹³⁷ "Report of the Peacebuilding Commission mission", op. cit.

Bozizé's refusal to allow his adversaries meaningful participation in the government and resistance to other governance reforms show he and his entourage are not prepared to give up their monopoly on power and wealth. Nevertheless, the president's legitimacy, both nationally and internationally, is now dependent on upholding the practice of consensus decision-making. It is in the gov-

ernment's best interest to allow its opponents greater involvement in state affairs and thereby reduce their temptation to take power by force.

Nairobi/Brussels, 12 January 2010

APPENDIX A

MAP OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



APPENDIX B

ABBREVIATIONS

APRD	Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie). The rebel group emerged in 2005 in the north west and north centre. Jean-Jacques Demafouth, a former defence minister under President Patassé, became its president in March 2008.
BEAC	Central Bank of CEMAC States (Banque centrale des états de la Cemac)
BONUCA	UN Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (Bureau d'appui des Nations unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine). It was set up in February 2000 to provide political guidance to the government. In January 2010, its name will change to UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (Bureau intégré des Nations unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine, BINUCA), as part of the effort to promote greater coordination with the UN political affairs office and other UN agencies in the CAR.
CEI	Independent Electoral Commission (Commission électorale indépendante)
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community (Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale)
CEN-SAD	Community of Saharan-Sahel States (Communauté des Etats sahélo-sahariens), an international organisation of 21 African states created on 4 February 1998.
CPJP	Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix). Rebel group that emerged in late 2008 north of Ndélé in the north-east Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture.
CSRDP	Follow-up Committee of the Recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue (Comité de suivi des recommandations du dialogue politique inclusif)
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EUFOR Chad/CAR	European Union Force in Chad and the Central African Republic. Operational from March 2008 until March 2009, its mission was to protect civilians in eastern Chad and north east CAR with 3,700 troops from fourteen EU countries. It was replaced by the follow-on UN operation, MINURCAT.
FACA	Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines)
FDPC	Democratic Front for the Central African People (Front démocratique pour le peuple centrafricain). Abdoulaye Miskine's rebel group emerged in 2005 in the north centre near Kabo, Ouham prefecture. It did not participate in the Inclusive Political Dialogue.
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KNK	President Bozizé's party. Kwa Na Kwa means "Work, nothing but work" in Sango, the national language.
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army. Joseph Kony's anti-Kampala rebel movement formed in 1987 in Uganda. It has since spread into the DRC, South Sudan and the CAR.
MICOPAX	Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the CAR (Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique). Launched in July 2008, it is a multinational force mandated by ECCAS to support peace and security in the CAR and facilitate political dialogue. It consists of some 500 soldiers and civilians from Gabon, Chad, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Congo (DRC).

MINURCAT	United Nations Mission for the Central African Republic and Chad (Mission des Nations unies pour la Centrafrique et le Tchad). It was first launched in September 2007 to train local police and improve judicial infrastructure in Chad. In March 2008, a military component was added so that it could follow on the work of EUFOR Chad/CAR.
MLCJ	Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice). It was part of the UFDR rebel group in the north east, but in August 2008, its leader, Abakar Sabone, broke away, and it participated separately in the Inclusive Political Dialogue.
MLPC	Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (Mouvement pour la libération du peuple centrafricain). Former President Ange-Félix Patassé founded this political party in January 1979. Following his overthrow in March 2003, Martin Ziguélé became its presidential candidate for the 2005 elections and remains its head.
MNSP	National Movement for Salvation of the Homeland (Mouvement national du salut de la patrie). In May 2009, Hassan Ousman, former MLCJ spokesman, broke away and created the MNSP.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PBC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. Formed in December 2005 by the UN General Assembly and Security Council, it is an inter-governmental advisory body that helps countries in post-conflict peacebuilding, recovery, reconstruction and development.
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. It describes the CAR's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty.
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UFDR	Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement). Zacharia Damane's largely Gula rebel group was formed in November 2006 in the north-eastern Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures.
UFVN	Union of Live Forces of the Nation (Union des forces vives de la nation). A coalition of five opposition parties: the MLPC, the Central African Democratic Rally (RDC), the Londo Association, the Association for Solidarity and Development (ASD) and the Democratic Alliance for Progress (ADP).
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme