

**Launch of the 2015 Inter-Agency Regional Refugee Response
Plan for CAR Refugees
Palais des Nations, Geneva (room XXVI)
10-11:30, Friday, 23 January 2015**

Remarks by Max Hadorn, Senior Humanitarian Advisor

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the invitation to provide you with an update on the humanitarian situation inside the Central African Republic at today's launch of the 2015 Regional Refugee Response Plan for CAR Refugees.

The Central African Republic continues to witness one of the most acute humanitarian crises, and faces one of the world's greatest protection challenges. I am deeply concerned that we are still far from a solution and that the crisis continues to affect millions of people in the Central Africa Republic.

Sadly, violence has devastated the Central African Republic. Since the eruption of the conflict in 2013, at least 6000 people have been killed and up to 2.7 million people, that is more than half of the population [4.5 million], are in need of humanitarian assistance.

The security situation in the CAR remains volatile, with spikes of violence erupting regularly throughout the country, forcing thousands of families to flee from their homes, which are then looted and destroyed, leaving men,

women and children exposed. Unfortunately, relative security improvements have been offset by conflict in areas not previously affected, - including in the capital.

This has led to the displacement of more than 852,000 people both inside and outside the country. Inside the Central African Republic, some 430,000 people remain internally displaced, including some 62,000 just in Bangui, where the three international security forces are based. Although fewer people are now seeking refuge abroad, it is unlikely that people who have fled to neighboring countries will return to the Central African Republic in the short term, at least until security has markedly improved and law and order has been reinstated.

One of the grave concerns is the situation of almost 37,000 enclaved internally displaced people who remain caught in the midst of political dynamics (Yaloke, Carnot, PK 5 in Bangui, Bouar, etc.). Their basic human rights, including their freedom of movement, are at risk. I would therefore urge all stakeholders to promote compliance with international legal obligations and to stress the message that these obligations also imply accountability for violations and they cannot be overshadowed by political considerations.

The most pressing humanitarian needs are in protection, food, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and education. A total of 1.7 million Central Africans are food insecure: they lack seeds and equipment for farming and cannot safely tend to their fields. Malnutrition is severe amongst those hiding in the bush.

Two thirds of the population has no access to health care, due to lack of medication. There is a significant increase in the risk of epidemics, such as diarrheal diseases, malaria, measles, meningitis and respiratory diseases.

It is estimated that grave violations of child rights have increased four-fold since last year. Some 8,000 to 10,000 children have reportedly been recruited into armed groups.

Despite the scale-up and redeployment efforts, including the strengthening of the Rapid Response Mechanism, that have borne results, the ability to increase and/or sustain presence outside of the capital will be contingent upon security, humanitarian space and the receipt of additional funding. The L3, the highest level of System wide response, declared in December 2013 has been extended till June this year to further expand the response.

Humanitarian workers have also come increasingly under attack. Since September 2013, 24 humanitarian workers have been killed. Just recently, one humanitarian has been kidnapped on 19 January, and one peacekeeper on 20 January in Bangui.

To respond to increasing needs in the Central African Republic, the Strategic Response Plan 2014 for CAR sought US\$ 555 million and was 73 percent funded [US\$ 406 million] by year-end. The Strategic Response Plan for 2015 calls for US\$ 613 million.

Scaling-up the humanitarian response will require increased support from the international community, including sustained efforts to improve the

security conditions and increase funding to enable us to do more on behalf of the people in need.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that only decisive action to end the violence will enable the people of CAR to rebuild their lives and return back to normal. We must join forces and provide assistance to those who are trapped in conflict, those who seek refuge and those who offer refuge.

Thank you

**Background for Max Hadorn's briefing at the Launch of
the 2015 Inter-Agency Regional Refugee Response Plan
for CAR Refugees
Friday, 23 January 2015, Geneva**

Humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic

CAR faces one of the worst protection crises in the world. Security remains volatile, with spikes of violence erupting throughout the country. Relative security improvements have been offset by conflict in areas not previously affected including in the capital. International forces (UN, EUFOR and the French Sangaris) play a crucial role in securing areas throughout the country where people are displaced and humanitarian workers operate. However, to implement their mandate, international forces must engage with armed groups, which have incited community-based violence. This affects the communities' perception of not only the international forces, but also humanitarians. Moreover, attacks, including gunfire, stone-throwing and kidnappings targeting humanitarians are increasing and have affected UN agencies and their partners as well as religious leaders. Since September 2013, 24 humanitarian workers have been killed. Recent reports by, *inter alia*, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI) and the International Crisis Group (ICG) have denounced the violence against civilians and human rights violations. Since October, dozens of civilians have been killed, thousands displaced and several villages burnt. While acknowledging humanitarian efforts to deliver assistance in difficult security conditions, AI and ICG have denounced the prevailing impunity that contributes to the attacks on peacekeepers and humanitarian workers – lately, 2 humanitarians have been kidnapped on 19 Jan, and one peacekeeper on 20 Jan in Bangui-.

Sectarian violence has devastated the Central African Republic, and over half of the country's population is now in need. Although some progress seems to emerge in engaging both ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka elements on sparing civilians, we see that incidents of violence still erupt throughout the country, forcing thousands of families to flee from their homes, that are then looted and destroyed leaving women and children exposed. Since the conflict began in 2013, at least 6,000 people have been killed. 2.7 million people (over half of the population) needs humanitarian assistance. Almost 20% of the population (or 900,000 people) are still displaced – half of them abroad, most of them Muslim, have fled the country to escape persecution-. Although movements slowed significantly when the border was closed to non-Chadians at the end of May, a survey of Chadian in transit site and temporary camps indicated that 73 per cent intended to stay in these sites for the near future, 17 per cent wanted to go on to another location in Chad, 8 per cent planned to return to CAR and 2 per cent wanted to move to a third country. The situation of the IDPs is desperate: camps are makeshift, overcrowded and dangerous. Sanitation is poor and toilets insufficient, with flooding threatening to spread disease. A total of 1.7 million Central Africans are food insecure: they lack seeds and equipment for farming and cannot safely tend to their fields. These urgent humanitarian needs will only intensify as aid agencies struggle to access vulnerable populations.

The L3 emergency has been extended until June 2015. Ms. Claire Bourgeois has agreed to remain the stand-alone Senior Humanitarian Coordinator during the extended L3 period. Lack of funding continues to hamper humanitarians' ability to rapidly respond to spikes in needs. Humanitarian partners, particularly organizations which started operations more recently, indicate insufficient resources, particularly in the face of the high costs of setting up new offices outside the capital. The 2014 SRP, which requires US\$555 million, is currently funded at 70 per cent. Norway provided for 3% of the funding, with over US\$ 17 million.

Update on selected Protection Hotspots: The issues related to the relocations of IDPs is being looked at by senior UN officials, including in the framework of the Human Rights Up-Front initiative, led by DSG Eliasson.

Yaloke: Placed on the 'Hotspot' list, in the last week, the nearly 500 displaced Fulanis in Yaloke continue to indicate preference to relocate to neighbouring countries due to difficult living conditions. For example, 64 per cent of IDPs indicated a preference to relocate to Cameroon, 28 per cent to Chad and only 8 per cent, indicated they would like to remain in CAR, but mainly not in Yaloke. Over 42 deaths have been registered within this community over the past four months because of health and malnutrition caused by their forced enclavement. While relocation is finally being considered as a last resort option –but the transitional authorities strongly oppose it-, humanitarian actors are addressing priority needs including food, shelter and NFIs, but challenges have been reported by Human Rights Watch. MINUSCA together with the national Gendarmerie are providing a perimeter of security around the IDPs camp. On 10 January, a group of some 16 IDPs tried to flee hiding on commercial trucks but were prevented to move onwards by national authorities (allegedly acting on behalf of national transitional authorities).

Mpoko (Bangui): In Bangui, the transitional authorities have announced in November that they want to close Mpoko camp by February 2015 in order to allow the construction of a fence around the airport and to extend its parking. The position of the transitional authorities (Prime Minister included) has been very firm, likely supported by international security forces (e.g. France) that have asked for the closure of the site since the beginning of the crisis in Dec 2013. While most IDPs have expressed their opposition against being relocated there, no guarantees have yet been given regarding the securization of the alternate site (AVICOM), that would also present serious health concerns. The Humanitarian Country Team, NGOs and ECHO expressed their position against a forced relocation and shared it with the government, which guaranteed there would be no forced relocations and the 31 January deadline appears now more flexible.