



Brussels, 22 July 2014
140722/01

FACT SHEET

The EU engagement in the Central African Republic

EU response to crisis

Due to the interlinked nature of the challenges, the Central African Republic (CAR) is a country where only a genuinely comprehensive approach, focused on security, humanitarian aid, stabilization and development cooperation, will enable the problems to be tackled effectively. The EU has committed more than €360 million of new funding to respond to the crisis in CAR since it unfolded in 2013. The EU has also provided over the years development assistance to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable people. Between 2008 and 2013, around €225 million were allocated through the different financial instruments (€160 million through the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) and €65 million through the EU budget).

On 15 July 2014 the EU launched its first ever multi-donor development trust fund, in support of CAR, which aims to facilitate the transition from emergency response, such as humanitarian aid, towards longer-term development assistance through an LRRD approach (*Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development*). It will contribute to the reconstruction of the country, in particular restoring the national and local administrations, re-establishing economic activity and essential services such as electricity, transport, health and education and food security, and stabilizing the country.

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The activities will also focus on enabling neighbouring countries to overcome the consequences of the crisis in CAR. The fund, which is open to the European Union as well as to international donors, starts with an initial amount of €64 million, which includes contributions from the EU Commission, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

The European Union is actively involved in efforts undertaken by the international community and it is playing a key role in facilitating international consultation among key partners such as the United Nations, the United States, France, the European Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the African Union. In addition, the EU is both the country's main development partner and main provider of humanitarian assistance.

EU priorities in CAR

The EU's comprehensive approach to CAR covers a number of priorities:

1) Security

Restoration of security is one of the key goals in order to stabilize the country and to restore a more stable government in CAR.

The EU is committed to pursue its current support to African-led mission MISCA (€ 50M granted, plus €75M under preparation) under the African Peace Facility. The EU contribution covers the costs of allowances, accommodation and feeding the troops deployed in the field. The salaries of civilian MISCA personnel and various operational costs such as transport, communication or medical services are also supported by the Facility. This assistance is essential for the proper functioning of the mission.

The EU military operation EUFOR RCA contributes, in the Bangui area and for a period of up to six months, to international efforts to provide a secure environment and to protect the populations most at risk, thus creating the conditions for the provision of humanitarian aid. On 1st April, the Council gave the green light for the launch of the operation EUFOR RCA and on 15 June, the Operation Commander declared full operational capability of the operation. EUFOR RCA is assuming responsibility for M'Poko Airport security and securing the 3rd and 5th arrondissements. The common costs of the operation are estimated at € 25.9 million.

2) Humanitarian emergency

The European Union is currently the largest humanitarian donor of CAR. The European Commission and the EU Member States have substantially scaled up their humanitarian engagement in CAR (from € 20M in 2012, to over € 150M in 2013/2014). Commissioner Georgieva organized a joint ministerial meeting on the CAR's humanitarian situation in Brussels on 20 January 2014 during which €366 million of support were pledged for life-saving interventions and short to medium-term assistance: €150 million for life-saving aid and €216 million for stabilisation and short to medium-term assistance.

These funds are being used to support protection, access to health care, food and nutrition assistance, drinking-water distribution, sanitation services, logistics and humanitarian coordination. In addition, since the surge of the current wave of violence, the EU has organised repeated airlifts of life-saving items and aid personnel into CAR to help the victims.

3) Stabilization

Specific attention is paid to the imperative of fighting against impunity and re-establishing the rule of law. Complementary to EUFOR RCA, the EU is supporting a range of projects aiming at restarting urgently a basic criminal justice system in Bangui. It consists of reinstatement of police and gendarmerie capacities for community policing as well as riot control, reinforcement of the judiciary, and the rehabilitation of prison facilities. Furthermore, a long-term project to extend access to justice beyond Bangui is underway (for a total amount of €21.5M).

In addition, the EU is supporting initiatives, often in collaboration with the transitional authorities, to promote dialogue, the de-escalation of tension and confidence-building between communities. As part of the €12m stabilization package, adopted in August 2013 through the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) the EU supports the restoration of the capacities of independent media and a network of community radios in the provinces. It also fosters inter-community dialogue and the de-escalation of the tensions and conflicts between Christians and Muslims, mainly through assistance to the Inter-faith Commission and civil society networking and through the establishment of 20 Peace Cells throughout the country. The deployment of human rights' observation missions, in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), aims to help prevent further human rights' violations.

Furthermore, the EU (€ 4M, also through the IcSP) supports communities at risk to help them retain their ethnical and religious diversity. This pilot project functions in those few areas of Bangui (including arrondissements 3 and 5) where co-habitation persists. It aims to help maintain a basis on which a reconciliation process could be founded in the future, once basic security has been re-established. The action provides urgent community-based support seeking to bring about 'quick win' deliverables and increased 'normalcy', so as to assist preserving and reconstituting mixed communities under pressure of further fissure.

4) Preparing for a sustainable recovery from crisis

Another area of ongoing EU assistance consists of preparing for the transition from emergency response towards longer-term development assistance through an approach linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD).

On 9 July 2014 the EU adopted a support package of €119 million, including the above mentioned Trust Fund. The amount will help restore basic social services and livelihoods; particularly in the areas of education (for example, to help classes restart in schools which have been closed due to the conflict), health (to rehabilitate and reequip health centres). It also includes a State Building Contract that will provide direct funding to the government budget of the CAR to support transition authorities, like ensuring the payment of the salaries for civil servants and support to the election process. The holding of the elections depends on establishing the right political environment so that the polls will help strengthen social cohesion and advance stability rather than become a source of conflict.

Although the EU's development cooperation has slowed down considerably due to the security and institutional situation, it was never suspended. EU engagement for development in the CAR aims to foster economic recovery, the creation of livelihoods and the restoration of state presence. For instance, one of these ongoing projects comprises the rehabilitation of infrastructures and public offices in eight cities in the West and Centre part of the country, to restart the local economy.

The EU also provides support to the political transition process and the new authorities, notably through the provision of technical assistance to key ministries..

5) Regional impact of the crisis

In order to mitigate the regional impact of the CAR crisis on neighbouring countries, the EU is providing targeted humanitarian assistance for recent arrivals from CAR in border regions in Chad, Cameroun and DRC (€ 10M). Through an upcoming IcSP-funded project in Chad, it intends also to facilitate the integration of returnees/refugees in host communities and to prevent a potential radicalization (up to €12 million). A similar initiative is under preparation for Cameroun.