

CONTRIBUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND NON-STATE ACTORS TO RECOVERY AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Brussels, 17 November 2016

In the framework of the international Brussels conference for the Central African Republic (CAR), a meeting was organised with civil society stakeholders on 16 November 2016 so that they could discuss the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment in CAR (RPBA in CAR)). The meeting was organised by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO).

Members of national and international civil society organisations active in the Central African Republic have all stressed their full support to the Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding in Central African Republic. They express their strong desire to see partners and friends of CAR give a massive support in order to generate a genuine momentum for peace, reconciliation and recovery, which can ensure a better future for the country.

The civil society strongly supports the national plan and reiterates its full availability to take part in the implementation. Civil society actors highlighted a number of key elements for a successful implementation, such as:

- a) Show accountability from the Government of CAR, through a mechanism of monitoring by citizens;
- b) Put emphasis on the responsibility of CAR partners to honour their commitments to support the completion of national plan;
- c) Ensure ownership by the Central Africans through a massive information campaign on the content of the document, in a format which enables understanding, and especially in the national language;
- d) Give prominence to the youth and women in the implementation of the national plan, through the allocation of adequate funding for the implementation of initiatives which meet their specific needs;
- e) Establish a joint civil society/government framework for the monitoring of the implementation.

More specifically, and in relation to the three founding pillars of the plan, civil society actors have made recommendations which highlighted the following priorities:

SECURITY

The issue of safety is essential for the success of recovery efforts in CAR. It is vital that partners of CAR fully support the government in bringing the remaining armed groups to join the DDRR programme in order to put an end to insecurity, on the entire territory.

Today, more than ever, the challenges posed by the continuing insecurity require a discussion on the embargo on arms in CAR, so that the security can be rebuilt and become fully operational. Particular attention should be paid to the imperious need to build trust between the security forces and the population through training programmes.

JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION (TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE)

Without fighting impunity, it will be difficult to achieve lasting stabilisation in CAR. The operationalisation of the Special Court and the reinforcement of the independence of the judiciary are prerequisites to the ending of impunity, to reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Strengthening judicial independence must go hand in hand with the requirement of accountability and an appropriate sanctions regime.

In addition, support to the reconciliation process requires the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms:

- which are inclusive and participatory;
- which give importance to assistance to victims and witness protection;
- which involve all partners such as civil society in supporting local mechanisms such as the local committees for peace and reconciliation to be deployed.

The mechanism of justice and reconciliation should include initiatives for the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes, starting with the integration into the national legislation of the Kampala Convention of the African Union on protection and assistance to refugees and internally displaced people.

REFORM OF THE STATE AND RENEWAL OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Government reform should ensure that accountability guides the functioning of the public administration through:

- sanctions for non-compliance;
- the establishment of a service which would listen to citizens who would have complains, in order to improve the quality of public service.

In the framework of the redeployment of the administration throughout the country to restore State authority, it is essential to ensure the availability of basic equipment in each of the prefectures and district authorities to ensure that State officials have the means to carry out their duties.

In this respect, there is a need to strengthen the cooperation between the State and civil society to accompany the redeployment of public servants in remote areas where civil society organisations are active.

In this process of restoring the state authority, the media have a crucial role to play. Therefore, there is a need to enhance the role of public and private media so that they can, in partnership with civil society, make available quality information to the public.

Renewing the social contract in CAR requires that education has a prominent position. It is therefore important to articulate an education programme focused both on:

- civic education focusing on the values of citizenship, peaceful coexistence involving all public and private media as well as associations to ensure an effective link to the population;
- the adequacy between the training courses and the needs of the labour market in order to enhance the employability of the CAR youth.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Economic recovery must also and primarily have a local anchor, including recognition of the role of women in the household economy, which needs to be promoted through the microcredit, inter alia. Moreover, in the completion of reconstruction works of the various towns or villages, it is essential to involve more young people living there, as the primary labour force to be used to contribute to the revitalisation of the local economy.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In order to ensure an interaction which is conducive to the successful implementation of the plan for recovery and peacebuilding, there is an urgent need to create a framework for regular and structured dialogue between Government and civil society, which will allow:

- the government to meet its objectives, including by making recommendations to civil society;
- the civil society to fully play its role of observation and monitoring.

In this framework, there is a need to:

- perform a national mapping of actors and actions;
- give priority to sectoral dialogue for a more effective use of resources (i.e.: health, education, humanitarian aid);
- ensure a real integration of civil society in decision making bodies, representation and consultation bodies in order to ensure a smooth flow of information between decision-makers and the ground.
- strengthen cooperation of the government and of civil society on some issues, such as:
 - o prevention of conflicts related to land ownership and use;
 - o the involvement of local authorities and local leaders (traditional leaders, youth and women) in the management and resolution of local conflicts.

These are the main recommendations from the discussion among members of the Central African or international civil society to contribute to a successful implementation of the plan for recovery and for the consolidation of peace in Central African Republic.