

AFRICAN UNION

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**EIGHTY-EIGHTH ORDINARY
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**REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHAIRPERSON OF THE
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE SITUATION
IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR) AND ON
RELATIONS BETWEEN CHAD AND THE CAR**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the communiqué which followed my statement on the outcome of the Summit of Heads of State and the Delegation of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), held in Libreville, Gabon, on 2 October 2002, the 85th Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at Ambassadorial level, held in Addis Ababa on 11 October 2002, had requested me to take the necessary measures, in consultation with the CEMAC, for the African Union to continue to contribute to the ongoing efforts aimed at normalizing relations between the Central African Republic and Chad and to promote peace and stability in the Central African region. At its 86th Ordinary Session, the Central Organ encouraged me, in close coordination with the CEMAC, to help resolve the crisis and to send a delegation to the Region to that effect.

2. Pursuant to those Decisions, I sent, from 13 to 29 November 2002, Professor André Salifou, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Niger, to Gabon, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad. Professor André Salifou was accompanied on his mission by Colonel Mayell Mbaye, Military Adviser in the African Union Liaison Office in Kinshasa.

3. This report gives an account of the Mission of Prof. Salifou and its outcome. It also contains recommendations on the role of the AU in the promotion of peace and stability in the Region.

II. CONTEXT OF THE MISSION

4. It should be recalled that for the nine (9) years that President Ange-Félix Patassé has been at the helm of the CAR, his regime has witnessed eight (8) attempts at destabilization, either in the form of mutiny in the National Armed Forces or in the form of attempts to take power by force. The two most serious attempted coups d'état were those carried out on 28 May 2001 by the former President André Kolingba and on 25 October 2002 by General François Bozizé, former Chief of Staff of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA).

5. Following the attempted coup d'état of 28 May 2001, President Patassé, among other measures, removed General François Bozizé from his functions and issued an arrest warrant against him for colluding with General Kolingba. After the fighting in the Central African capital, Bangui, between his supporters and the loyalist forces, General Bozizé withdrew towards the north with the soldiers loyal to him and ended up taking refuge in Chad.

6. The CAR requested the extradition of General Bozizé. Invoking Article 46 of the Constitution of Chad and relevant International Conventions to which their country was party, the Chadian authorities refused the request.

7. During the two attempts at military putsch, President Patassé appealed to external forces to save his regime. Given the extreme fragility of the situation, worsened by persistent economic crisis and high social tension, the countries of the Region took the situation on hand to try to find a lasting solution.

8. On 3 December 2001, a mini CEN-SAD Summit was held in Khartoum, The Sudan. That meeting in which I participated, decided to:

- establish a Peacekeeping Force in the CAR;
- set up a Political Committee to reconcile the Central African citizens;
- establish a Fund to support the economic recovery efforts in the CAR; and
- appeal to President Patassé to facilitate the adoption of a general amnesty in his country.

9. On 5 December 2001, an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State of the CEMAC, in which I participated, was held in Libreville. In the final communiqué adopted at the end of the meeting, the Summit among other things:

- appealed to President Patassé to adopt pacification measures compatible with his constitutional prerogatives, including the facilitation of the adoption of an amnesty law and to pursue implementation of the actions already underway for the return of refugees; and

- decided to establish, under the Chairmanship of President El Hadj Omar Bongo, an Ad-hoc Committee comprising the President Idriss Déby and Denis Sassou Nguesso, charged to bring together the political actors as well as the civilian and military elements involved in the events of 2 November 2001, with a view to establishing favourable conditions for the promotion of peace, security and stability in the CAR.

10. On 26 January 2002, the 8th Ordinary Session of the Central Organ at Ministerial level was held in Tripoli, Libya, to consider the situation in the CAR. At the end of its deliberations, the Central Organ, among other things:

- expressed satisfaction at and endorsed the initiatives taken by CEN-SAD and CEMAC at their meetings held in Khartoum and Libreville;
- appealed to the Central African Parties to facilitate the efforts deployed by the International Community to promote peace and stability in the CAR, particularly the resumption of political dialogue through the convening of the meeting of the political actors, as well as the civilian and military elements involved in the events of 2 November 2001; and
- urged the UN Security Council to consider positively the request for deployment of a Peacekeeping Force in the CAR. Pending the deployment, the Central Organ encouraged CEN-SAD and CEMAC to take appropriate measures with a view to consolidating peace and security in the CAR.

11. In February 2002, the CEN-SAD Forces, composed of Libyan, Sudanese and Djiboutian troops, arrived in Bangui with the mission to make the capital secure and ensure the security of the President of the Republic.

12. In spite of the efforts thus made, tension in the Region mounted and the military situation became quite alarming. Indeed, on 6 August 2002, the Chadian village of Sido was attacked; and on 10 August, the Central African city of Kabo was similarly attacked and temporarily occupied. The authorities of the two countries accused each other of supporting those responsible for the incidents on both sides of their common border. Chad accused by name, Abdoulaye Miskine, with Central African mother and Chadian nationality, of being the author of the attack against Sido. On its part, the CAR accused General Bozizé and his men of occupying Kabo.

13. In mid-August 2002, the CEMAC Chiefs of Staff meeting in Brazzaville on the occasion of the inauguration of President Denis Sassou Nguesso, decided to establish a Commission to verify and evaluate the situation along the Chad/Central African border and come up with proposals for a solution to the dispute. The Commission chaired by Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophony of the Gabonese Republic and comprising representatives of CEMAC, Mali, the African Union and the United Nations, visited the CAR and Chad from 22 to 24 August 2002.

14. At the end of its field mission, the Commission prepared a Report subsequently submitted for consideration by the CEMAC Extraordinary Summit held in Libreville on 2 October 2002. That Summit, in which I participated, adopted a communiqué whose major elements were as follows:

- Abdoulaye Miskine would be taken away from the territory of the CAR, and François Bozizé from the territory of the Republic of Chad. That measure was also applicable to other hostile elements of each of the two countries;
- Chad and the CAR pledged to deploy their regular armies, each on its own side of their common border, and to carry out joint patrols;
- within one month, and for six months (renewable) a contingent of 300 to 350 Gabonese, Cameroonian, Congolese, Equatorial Guinean and Malian troops would be in charge of the security of President Patassé, and observers would observe and secure the Chad-Central African border and participate in the restructuring of the armed forces of Central Africa;
- President El Hadj Omar Bongo would coordinate between CEN-SAD and CEMAC;
- Chad and the CAR pledged to revive their cooperation by reactivating the existing structures.

15. It was against this background that on 25 October 2002, men of General Bozizé attempted a coup d'état. In a communiqué dated 26 October 2002, I expressed my concern at that situation and condemned the resumption of violence which undermined the efforts made by CEMAC, with the support of the African Union, CEN-SAD and the United Nations to build peace in the CAR. The 86th Ordinary Session of the Central Organ also condemned that attempted coup.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION

16. Before his departure for the Region, I received Prof. André Salifou in Addis Ababa to discuss with him the objectives of the Mission in the light of the relevant decisions of the Central Organ. Prof. Salifou also held talks with other appropriate officials of the Commission. Letters were further sent to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Gabon, the CAR and Chad to inform them officially about the decisions of the Central Organ and my intention to send a delegation to the Region.

17. More specifically, the objective of the Mission was to:

- express the concern of the African Union over the situation in the Region and the tension characterizing the relations between the CAR and Chad;
- reiterate the support of the African Union for the efforts being deployed by CEMAC, particularly the implementation of the decisions contained in the Libreville communiqué of 2 October 2002;
- reiterate the readiness of the African Union to contribute to implementation of the measures contained in the Libreville communiqué and enlist the views of the Leaders of the Region on the modalities for a more effective support to the efforts of CEMAC;
- reiterate to the Central African and Chadian authorities the appeal by the Central Organ for necessary measures to be taken for the immediate implementation of the measures contained in the Libreville Communiqué;
- reiterate to the Central African authorities the strong condemnation by the African Union of the attempt by General F. Bozizé and his supporters to take power by force;
- examine in concert with the Representative of the UN Secretary General in Bangui, General Lamine Cissé, the modalities for closer cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations in the service of peace and stability both in the CAR and in the Region;

- meet with and collect the views of the African and non-African Diplomatic missions in the countries visited on how best to promote peace and stability in the Region.

IV. PROGRESS OF THE MISSION

18. **The Libreville Segment** : The delegation of the African Union stayed in Libreville from 14 to 15 November 2002, where it held talks with Minister Jean Ping, among others.

19. During the audience, Mr. Jean Ping took stock of the most recent political developments in the Region, particularly in the CAR, as well as the preparations for the establishment and deployment of the CEMAC Forces in the CAR. In that regard, he stressed the two major difficulties faced by that Force, namely, the lack of heavy equipment to beef up the force and the possible risks posed by General Bozizé's forces. He informed the delegation that part of the command component of the Force was already in Bangui where it was considering with the CEN-SAD command, the modalities for replacing the Libyan, Sudanese and Djiboutian troops.

20. The Minister expressed his appreciation for the support of the African Union to the efforts of the Region. He suggested that the African Union open, as soon as possible, an office in Bangui or that failing, appoint a special envoy for the CAR. He further stressed the need for the appropriate organs of the African Union to be updated regularly on the situation in the CAR and in the Region, including regular issuance of press statements to backstop the action of CEMAC.

21. **The Bangui Segment** : In Bangui, my envoy met successively with General Lamine Cissé Head of the UN Office in the CAR (BONUCA), the Commander of the CEMAC Forces General Ratanga, several Government members, the leaders of Political Parties from both the Presidential majority and the opposition, NGOs and diplomats. The delegation was, finally, received by President Ange Félix Patassé.

22. The talks with the different interlocutors, focused mainly on:

- the serious economic and social situation in the country and the near deliquescence of Central African Armed Forces;
- the negative effects induced by the absence of a cooperation programme with the international financial institutions whose reluctance is reportedly linked to the "uncertainty and

insecurity prevailing in Bangui and in the rest of the country”;

- the accusations of incursions by Chadian troops into the CAR;
- the need to resume dialogue with Chad through the already existing consultation structures;
- the interest for the Central African authorities to consider promulgating an amnesty law to facilitate the return of exiled Central Africans;
- the need to establish political dialogue among Central Africans;
- access to the media for the political parties of the opposition;
- the violence allegedly perpetrated against the population of Bangui during the fighting to chase away the Forces of General Bozizé from the capital; and
- the need for the African Union to open an office in Bangui.

23. During his audience with the delegation of the African Union, the President of the Republic stated in the main, that:

- two Central African exiles had already been granted amnesty between 1996 and 2002;
- the Central African state did not interfere in matters of justice particularly in the affair of Bozizé whose case had been reopened by the courts following the events of 25 August 2002;
- the CAR had met all its obligations to the IMF and the World Bank – the present blockade was the work of the political opposition;
- the political dialogue was already underway, through the National Assembly, with the political parties, trade unions, women and the youth;

- a complaint had been tabled against Chad at the United Nations for its involvement in the events of 25 October 2002;
- the State recognized the right to demonstrate but not to destroy; and the right to airtime but not to insult the President of the Republic or the Government.

24. **The N'djamena Segment** : In N'djamena, the mission of the African Union met the President of the Republic Idriss Déby, among others.

25. Opening the talks with President Déby, my Envoy spelt out the purpose of his mission, and then conveyed the following message from President Patassé which he was carrying: "Chad must stop arming the rebels who today occupy part of the CAR. What Chad is doing is unacceptable and must stop. In any case, the CAR is preparing to lodge a complaint against Chad at the UN Security Council".

26. Finally, Prof. Salifou in particular asked President Déby:

- if Chad was still ready to comply with the provisions of the communiqué of the CEMAC Summit of 2 October 2002;
- if Chad subscribed to the principle of convening, without delay, the Joint Chad-Central African Commission;
- if President Déby could consider having direct dialogue with President Patassé.

27. In reply, President Déby indicated that:

- the only problem Chad had with the CAR related to the 373 Chadian traders killed, missing or dispossessed of their goods in the Central African Republic, adding that a day would come when Chad would submit a complaint to the International Community so that the truth would be known about the fate of those Chadians;
- Chad could not encourage the seizure of power by force of arms;
- Chad had, so far, exercised great restraint when it was known that Abdoulaye Miskin had made four incursions into Chadian territory from the CAR;

- as long as the case against Chad was before the Security Council, a visit to the CAR, the convening of the Joint Commission of the two countries or implementation of the provisions of the Libreville Summit Communiqué could not be considered;
- Chad would not tolerate any operation aimed at preventing or disrupting the ongoing works in the oil zone.

28. The mission of the African Union returned to Bangui and then went back to N'Djamena on 28 and 29 November 2002 respectively. In Bangui, the Mission was received by President Ange Félix Patassé, in the presence of the Prime Minister and General Lamine Cissé. After giving a synopsis of his talks with President Déby to the Head of State, Prof. André Salifou hailed the decision of President Patassé, made public on 25 November 2002 in a message to the Nation, to immediately convene a Round Table, and stressed the need to throw it open to all strata of the Central African society. President Patassé on his part, reiterated the complaints he had previously made against Chad, and reaffirmed his gratitude to the AU for its efforts at promoting peace and stability in Africa.

29. In N'djamena, the Mission held talks with the Director of Cabinet of the President of the Republic. Prof. Salifou submitted to his interlocutors the summary of his talks the previous day with President Patassé. In reply, the Director of Cabinet of President Déby informed him that he would faithfully report on his talks to the appropriate authority. He informed the Delegation of the African Union of the appointment in Chad of a National Mediator, whose mission to the CAR pursuant to the normalization of relations between the two countries, was still on the agenda. Finally, he reiterated the concerns of his country as previously expressed to the delegation of the African Union by President Déby.

V. SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS

30. Following Prof. André Salifou's account of his mission, I wrote to President El Hadj Omar Bongo and to Presidents Ange Félix Patassé and Idriss Déby to thank them for the welcome and consideration given to my Envoy. I seized that opportunity to express my appreciation for the efforts President Bongo was making to build confidence, peace and stability in the Region. I encouraged Presidents Déby and Patassé to lend full support to the CEMAC to enhance trust and promote stability in the Region. I also wrote to General

Lamine Cissé to thank him for the support and assistance he gave to the Mission.

31. As part of ongoing efforts to resolve the crisis in the CAR, the United Nations Security Council, on 9 December 2002, held a closed-door session on the situation in that country. The Central African Prime Minister and Chad's Permanent Representative in the UN participated separately in the discussions. The two parties undertook to resolve the differences between their two countries through political dialogue and to implement without delay the provisions of the Libreville communiqué. The two parties also announced the reactivation of the Chad-Central African Joint Commission, the meeting between the two Presidents and the organization of joint patrols.

32. Council, for its part, encouraged the two governments to take advantage of the deployment of CEMAC forces to normalize their relations.

33. At his meetings in Bangui, the attention of my Envoy was drawn to the serious economic situation in the CAR which contributed to the high political tension in that country. It was against this background that I addressed correspondence on 28 November 2002 to the President of the World Bank and the Director of the IMF informing them of the efforts invested by the countries of the region, with the support of the African Union and the United Nations, to help the CAR reestablish security and stability. I encouraged the two institutions to promote the resumption of economic and financial cooperation programme with the government of the Central African Republic as a way of boosting the efforts deployed by the countries of the region.

34. In reply to my letter, the Director of the Africa Department at the IMF underscored the fact that his institution fully shared my concern at the serious situation currently prevailing in the CAR. He informed me that the meeting of the IMF governing body slated for 13 November last year to examine the possibility of a new triennial programme to be backstopped by the debt reduction and growth facility, had been postponed in the aftermath of the political/military incidents of October 2002. He further indicated that the IMF Management however remained open to the idea of a programme in the CAR and that a number of conditions have to be met for such a programme to be effective, namely:

- a demonstration of the continued commitment and capacity of the authorities to ensure satisfactory macro-economic performance and implement structural reforms following those incidents ;

- an end to hostilities and security guarantees needed to ensure the success of any programme;
- preparation of a global plan to clear the debt arrears with donors more especially the African Development Bank (ADB).

IV. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

35. The 25 October 2002 attempted coup d'état in the Central African Republic changed the context of the Summit of CEMAC Member States held in Libreville, Gabon, on 2 October 2002. As a matter of fact:

- relations between Chad and the Central African Republic deteriorated considerably. It is noteworthy however that the two parties committed themselves before the United Nations Security Council to create conducive conditions for normalization of their relations;
- the political, economic, social and security situation in the CAR similarly deteriorated significantly. Bozizé's men retreated to the north of the country from where they reportedly attempted to infiltrate other regions, after joining forces with deserters from the regular army and followers of former President Kolingba. On 7 December 2002, the main opposition groups and General Bozizé announced the formation of a military/political coalition;
- the efforts deployed by the countries of the region, the African Union and the United Nations are recognized and appreciated by all the parties;
- the commencement of deployment of CEMAC forces offers a ray of hope for the pursuit of the peace process in the CAR.

36. In view of the aforesaid, the Central Organ may wish to:

- reiterate its commitment to respect for the principles enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union particularly those principles relating to settlement of disputes between Member States and the rejection of any unconstitutional change of government;
- encourage the convening under the best possible conditions, of the Round Table announced on 25 December last year by

President Ange Félix Patassé. To this end, the African Union should invite the government to make the Round Table an inclusive forum where the components of the Central African society will be able to join hands and lay the foundations for genuine national reconciliation;

- encourage the Chadian and Central African authorities to reactivate consultations through the existing cooperation structures and encourage the Presidents of the two countries to meet with each other;
- reaffirm its support for the opening of an African Union Liaison Office in Bangui;
- invite the senior officials of the international financial institutions to work purposefully towards the rapid resumption of their cooperation programmes in the CAR;
- pay tribute to President El Hadj Omar Bongo Coordinator of the crisis resolution process in the Central African Republic, for the resilient efforts he has been making to find a solution to the crisis in that country and to the dispute between Chad and Central African Republic;
- commends CEN-SAD for its efforts at defending peace and stability in the CAR and supporting the legitimate institutions of and constitutional legality in that country.