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**INFORMATION NOTE OF THE COMMISSION ON THE INCIDENT THAT TOOK PLACE IN
BANGUI ON 29 MARCH 2014 AND THE WITHDRAWAL BY THE REPUBLIC OF CHAD OF ITS
CONTINGENT FROM MISCA**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 426th meeting held on 7 April 2014, Council was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security on the latest developments in the Central African Republic (CAR), including the decision of the Government of the Republic of Chad to withdraw its contingent from the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA). On that occasion, Council expressed the wish to have additional information regarding the situation, in order to be in a position to take the required measures.

2. This Information Note provides an update on the incident that took place in Bangui on 29 March 2014 and subsequent developments. The Note concludes with observations on the way forward.

II. OVERALL SECURITY SITUATION

3. Since its deployment on 19 December 2013, MISCA has made remarkable progress in the implementation of its mandate, as determined by Council in its communiqué of 19 July 2013 [PSC/PR/COMM.2(CCLXXXV)] and the United Nations (UN) Security Council in its resolution 2127 (2013) of 5 December 2013. In the report submitted to Council at its 416th meeting held at the level of Heads of State and Government on 29 January 2014, the Chairperson of the Commission provided detailed information on the deployment of MISCA and its operations. The information contained therein was updated in the first progress report on the situation in the CAR and the activities of MISCA submitted to the UN Security Council, pursuant to paragraph 32 of resolution 2127 (2013).

4. MISCA, which has reached its authorized strength of 6,000 uniformed personnel as provided for in communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.2(CDVIII) adopted by Council at its 408th meeting held on 13 December 2013, is not only deployed in Bangui, but also in the countryside. Thanks to the action of the Mission, with the support of the Sangaris Operation, the security environment has considerably improved, particularly when compared to the situation that was prevailing after the attacks carried out by elements of the anti-Balaka group in Bangui, in early December 2013. In Bangui, life has more or less returned to normalcy, as evidenced by the reopening of schools and universities, the resumption of public administration and formal and informal economic activities, as well as by the reduction of the duration of the curfew from 11:00 p.m. to 05:00 a.m., instead of 18:00 to 06:00 a.m., at the beginning of December 2013. The situation inside the country has also significantly improved. From a security point of view, it has entered a normalization phase.

5. One of the most tangible results of MISCA's action relates to the protection of the corridor that connects the border with Cameroon to Bangui, which is vital not only for the delivery of humanitarian aid, but also for the functioning of the country's economy. MISCA has put in place an arrangement to escort vehicles using this route. To date, MISCA has escorted about 3,050 vehicles carrying goods and humanitarian aid, as well as cars belonging to individuals taking advantage of this arrangement.

6. However, in recent weeks, the security situation has deteriorated in some locations. Attacks have been carried out against civilians, as well as against MISCA personnel. It is worth mentioning, in this regard, the grenade attack perpetrated in Bangui on 27 March 2014, which resulted in several deaths and injuries, as well as a number of other incidents. Following the grenade attack, the CAR Red Cross dispatched a team to the area to assist the wounded and collect the bodies of the deceased. However, it could not do so as some youth and anti-Balaka elements erected barricades and refused to allow anyone to access the area. Similarly, the anti-Balaka group has intensified its attacks against MISCA, both in Bangui and in the countryside. On 23 March 2014, armed assailants attacked a MISCA vehicle, wounding three elements of the Mission, two of them belonging to its medical component seriously. On 24 March 2014, a MISCA vehicle was attacked in Boali, about 80 km north of Bangui, killing one soldier. Since its deployment, MISCA has sustained 21 losses of life, while 141 other uniformed personnel were wounded.

III. INCIDENT OF 29 MARCH 2014 AND SUBSEQUENT DECISION OF CHAD TO WITHDRAW ITS CONTINGENT

7. On 29 March 2014, around 15:00 local time, a convoy of Chadian soldiers from MISCA, who were returning to the Force Headquarters in M'Poko, in Bangui, and were transporting weapons seized from militia groups in and around the city of Kanga-Bandoro, in the northern part of the CAR, fell into an ambush by armed elements at PK 12. The twelve kilometer point (12), or PK12, is a neighborhood located to the north of the city of Bangui. The heart of the district is located at the junction of the roads to Boali (linking Bangui to the North-West) and to Damara (linking Bangui to the East). The junction between these two roads is the scene of a bustling market. Having sustained a grenade attack and caught under heavy fire from the attackers, who operated from civilian residential areas, the Chadian elements of MISCA had to fire back against the assailants and to shoot into the air to be able to extricate themselves from the area of the ambush. Initial assessments reported four dead and 21 injured. Two Chadian soldiers were wounded and the vehicles of the contingent sustained heavy damages as a result of machine gun fire. For its part, a team of UN human rights experts announced that the Chadian soldiers had deliberately, without any provocation, fired on a crowded market of unarmed civilians, killing 30 people and leaving about 300 seriously injured, including pregnant women, children, disabled and elderly people.

8. Thereafter, the MISCA team of human rights observers conducted an investigation which revealed the following:

- the Chadian contingent of MISCA fell into an ambush by members of the anti-Balaka group, who had taken position in the area before the arrival of the military convoy. The anti-Balaka elements deliberately fired on the Chadian elements, who responded in self-defense to protect themselves; and
- estimates provided as regards the number of the deceased, on the basis of information from various sources, indicate between 6 and 13 deaths.

9. The sensational and inaccurate reporting by the team of UN observers of what happened and the wide dissemination of that account by the mainstream media, without any verification, have increased the climate of hostility against the Chadian contingent and generally against Chadian and Muslim populations in the CAR. In fact, the Chadian contingent has been the victim of a sustained stigmatization campaign for several months. During a visit in Bangui in December 2013, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Congo and Chad, the Minister of

Defence of the Republic of Congo and the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security had warned against this stigmatization and its consequences.

10. It is against this background that the Government of Chad, in a statement issued on 3 April 2014, announced its decision to withdraw its contingent from MISCA, after having informed the Head of State of Transition in the CAR, the Chairperson of the Commission and the UN Secretary-General. In the statement, the Chadian Government stressed that, despite the sacrifices made, Chad and Chadians were victims of a baseless and malicious campaign to present them as being responsible for all the ills affecting the CAR. The statement reiterated the solidarity of Chad with the CAR and its commitment to continue supporting the country in other ways, so that it recovers peace, security and unity, and ensure reconciliation among its sons and daughters. Finally, the Government of Chad indicated that the practical modalities of the withdrawal of its contingents would be determined in coordination with the AU and that, in the meantime, Chad would continue to assume its mission in the areas under its responsibility in the CAR.

11. The Chairperson of the Commission immediately reacted to this situation. In a statement issued the same day, she took note of the decision of the Government of Chad; stressed that, over the past weeks, MISCA contingents, particularly that of Chad, had been the target of repeated attacks by anti-Balaka elements and unfounded accusations from a number of actors; and noted that the stigmatization of the Chadian contingent had contributed to a climate of insecurity and hostility against Chadian nationals. Under these conditions, while regretting the departure of the Chadian contingent, the Chairperson of the Commission stated that she fully understood its rationale. She expressed AU's full solidarity with the Chadian Government and people. The Chairperson of the Commission acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Chad to peace and reconciliation in the CAR, highlighting the sustained efforts of President Idriss Deby Itno to facilitate the completion of the transition process; the contribution of the Chadian contingent to the stabilization of the situation; and the generous financial support that Chad extended to the CAR, despite the challenges it faces itself, thus displaying a strong sense of African solidarity.

12. The ECCAS Secretary-General, in a statement issued on 3 April 2014, expressed understanding for the frustration of Chad due to the lack of appreciation of its efforts and sacrifices in the CAR. He regretted the withdrawal of the Chadian contingent, as it may negatively impact on MISCA. He welcomed the reaffirmation by Chad of its solidarity with the CAR and its commitment to continue to support that country in other ways. For his part, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Integrated Office in CAR (BINUCA), General Babacar Gaye, in a statement to the media, affirmed that the Chadian troops which were attacked during the incident of 29 March 2014 at PK12 belonged to MISCA and that they reacted to an ambush.

IV. MEASURES TAKEN BY THE COMMISSION FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE CHADIAN CONTINGENT AND FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF MISCA

13. The Commission is working to identify troops that can replace the Chadian contingent. This contingent includes 830 military and 34 police personnel, and is deployed in the North and North-East Sector, which covers the following CAR administrative areas: Ouham, Nana-Gribizi, Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga.

14. At the same time, the Commission has taken the necessary measures in follow-up to Council's communiqué of 7 March 2014, authorizing the deployment of additional police elements, as well as that of specialized capabilities. In this context, Burundi has offered two Formed Police Units (FPUs) of 140 personnel each. A pre-deployment visit has already been undertaken by the Commission. The air lifting of these FPUs to the CAR will be provided by Algeria, and is expected to take place in the coming days. The imminent deployment of the Burundian FPUs will enable the Mission to adjust its deployment in order to continue to ensure the protection of civilian populations in highly sensitive areas, such as Bossangoa, where the presence of the Chadian contingent has brought an end to violent confrontations between communities. In addition, Djibouti, following a request from the Commission, has also confirmed its willingness to deploy an FPU of 140 gendarmes.

V. OBSERVATIONS

15. The decision of the Chadian Government to withdraw its contingent from MISCA will undoubtedly pose new challenges to MISCA, while at the same time impacting negatively on the humanitarian situation. Indeed, the Chadian elements have been playing a crucial role in the stabilization of the northern part of the country. Thanks to their presence, the safety of the people living in these areas has been guaranteed. The Commission, in consultation with Chad, will spare no effort to ensure an orderly withdrawal and speedily fill the resulting vacuum. The Commission will also provide the necessary assistance to the Government of Chad to facilitate the return of its nationals who are still in the CAR, because of threats to their safety.

16. The decision of the Chadian Government is perfectly understandable. In recent months, Chad has faced a hostile and biased campaign, which has enormously contributed to the escalation of attacks against its citizens, the CAR Muslim community and against MISCA itself. Inaccurate and sensational reporting on the incident of 29 March 2014 has further aggravated the situation. In this context, it is important that Council expresses its full solidarity with the Government and people of Chad; reiterates its appreciation for the continued commitment of the Chadian authorities, particularly President Idriss Deby Itno, in favor of peace, security and stability in the CAR; and welcomes Chad's commitment to continue supporting peace efforts in the CAR. Council may also wish to reaffirm its support for MISCA in the implementation of its mandate, including the protection of civilians, and to again warn all spoilers in the CAR, especially the anti-Balaka elements, who have become the main threat to peace, security and stability in the CAR.