

REPORT

EISA PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT

MISSION

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, March 2010



EISA PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

EISA deployed a pre-election assessment mission to the Central African Republic (CAR) to examine political and legal conditions prevailing in the country prior to the holding of the presidential and legislative elections scheduled to take place on Sunday 25 April 2010. The team met election stakeholders in Bangui, the capital of the country, from 6 through 12 March 2010, which enabled it to assess the state of election preparedness and determine whether the conditions existed for the conduct of credible elections and whether EISA should deploy an election observer mission (EOM) to the CAR.

The pre-election assessment mission led by Mr. Dieudonné TSHIYOYO (Programme Manager, EISA Elections and Political Processes Department) included Mr. Anselme SIAKAM NANA (Programme Officer, Elections and Political Processes Department) and Aimé Kouadio KONAN (Assistant Head of Project, EISA Côte d'Ivoire).

The deployment of the EISA's mission is part of activities made possible by a sub-grant provided by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

MISSION OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the pre-election mission was to assess the state of election preparedness and determine whether the conditions existed for the conduct of credible elections and whether EISA should deploy an election observer mission (EOM) to the CAR.

In line with this purpose, the team was to gather, analyse and provide all the relevant background information for the proposed EISA EOM as well as examining the technical preparations and political dynamics surrounding the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in the CAR. Finally, the mission was to make appropriate logistical arrangements for the deployment of an EISA observer mission (see attached **Terms of Reference**).

MISSION ACTIVITIES

The following tasks were undertaken by the EISA's mission during its assignment:

- Familiarisation with the political system and electoral process in the CAR as part of preparations for the deployment of an EISA continental observer mission to the 2010 presidential and legislative elections;
- Collection of legal documents related to the current electoral process and assessment thereof in light with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation;
- Consultative meetings with main role-players in the electoral process to review the state of preparedness ahead of the forthcoming elections.

MISSION METHODOLOGY

The mission conducted consultative meetings with key stakeholders involved in the electoral process in the CAR, including the *Commission Electorale Indépendante* (CEI) established in August 2009 to conduct and oversee the electoral process. The mission also held meetings with a number of political parties, government officials, non-governmental organisations and faith based organisations operating in the field of elections, the media, as well as international organisations providing assistance for the forthcoming elections. The findings of the mission are based on these consultations. The EISA team was mindful in ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are consulted and their views included in the recommendations of the mission.

THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Population	4,422,000 (2009 estimates)
Capital	Bangui
Total Area	622,984 km ² (240,534 sq miles)
Major languages	French (official language) and Sango (national language)
Monetary unit	Central African CFA franc (XAF)

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a landlocked country in the central sub-region of the African continent, bordered by Chad (North), Sudan (East), the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo Republic and Cameroon (West).

The country has been unstable since its independence from France in August 1960 and is one of the least-developed and poorest countries in the world. The contemporary history of the CAR is characterised by a series of authoritarian political regimes and coups d'état, as well as a notorious interlude as an empire under Jean-Bedel Bokassa. The Bokassa era started in December 1965 when the then army colonel overthrew David Dacko, the country's first head of state. The brutal Bokassa regime ended in 1979 when he was overthrown by Dacko in a comeback coup. In September 1981 Dacko was ousted for a second time in a coup instigated by General André Kolingba. The military junta introduced progressively multiparty politics in the country, which culminated with the organisation of relatively competitive presidential elections in August 1993. Kolingba fared so poorly that he was eliminated in the first round, and Ange-Félix Patassé was ultimately elected through a run-off in September 1993.

Patassé won a second term in the presidential elections of 19 September 1999, held against a backdrop of extreme political tension and the crumbling of the State. As a result, Patassé had to deal with serious social and political turmoil which led to a military coup led by General Francois Bozizé in March 2003. A new constitution was approved by the people of the CAR in its majority through a referendum held on 5 December 2004.

Bozizé went on to win the presidential election held in March and May 2005, which marked the end of the transitional process. Unfortunately the country slid back into conflict when insurgency broke out in the Northern part.

Some progress towards ending the conflict was made in 2008, when an all-inclusive national political dialogue led to an agreement establishing an independent electoral commission and a national unity government integrating rebel groups. However, according to the committee established in January 2009 and tasked to monitor the execution of the recommendations of the Dialogue, the implementation process has been slow with regard to key political recommendations pertaining to the effective separation of powers and the establishment of a permanent dialogue mechanism among political actors.

As for the overall security situation, it remains generally volatile, with the persistence of tensions among and within political parties, and insecurity in the north of the country due to continued activities of rebel and criminal groups. The country has also become a sanctuary for armed and foreign rebel groups, including Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). This undermines the authority of the government, which remains precarious outside Bangui.

FINDINGS OF THE MISSION

Based on the EISA's mission meetings and discussions with relevant stakeholders in Bangui, as well as information gathered on the ground, following is a brief summary of the salient issues identified by the mission and upon which it draws its conclusions and formulates appropriate recommendations.

I. Institutional Framework and Electoral System

Politics in the Central African Republic takes place in a framework of a semi-presidential system, whereby the President is both head of state and head of government, with a separate Prime Minister. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament.

Under the 2004 Constitution, the President is elected by direct universal suffrage for a 5-year term of office that can be renewed once. For a candidate to be elected President of the Republic, he/she must secure at least 50% plus one of the total votes cast. If no candidate receives an absolute majority of the valid votes in the first round, there is provision for a run-off between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes.

The President can both dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss the Prime Minister at any time. The Prime Minister is appointed by the political party enjoying the majority in the National Assembly.

The unicameral Parliament is composed of 105 members, elected by direct universal suffrage to serve five-year terms, using the two-round system. In this system, if no candidate has an outright majority in the first round, a run-off is organised for all candidates who have secured at least 10% of the votes. The candidate who garners the highest number of votes is proclaimed winner in the constituency.

The CAR has a 9-member Constitutional Court (3 appointed by the President, 3 by the Speaker of the National Assembly and 3 magistrates elected by their peers). The term of office for judges of the Constitutional Court is 9 years. Besides, there is a Supreme Court made up of judges appointed by the President.

II. The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI)

It is worth mentioning that the CEI is not provided for in the 2004 Constitution. The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) derives its authority from the amended Electoral Code promulgated on 2 October 2009. President Bozizé signed a decree establishing the CEI on 3 October and appointed thereafter the 30 members of the national coordination of the CEI, drawn from the six groups that had participated in the inclusive political dialogue of December 2008. The CEI President is a presumed to be a neutral personality elected by members of the national coordination, on proposals made jointly by the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister. This election is approved by the President. Pastor Joseph Binguimalé was elected as the CEI President on 12 October 2009 by the national coordination. All the members of the Commission were sworn in on 16 October 2009.

The mandate and powers of the CEI are outlined in Chapter III of the Electoral Code. Relevant provisions stipulate *inter alia* that the CEI is responsible for "the preparation, organisation and supervision" of elections and referendums, in partnership with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation.¹ The mission is of the view that this specific provision creates a nebulous relationship between the two structures with regard to the effective implementation of election-related activities and operations.

¹ Loi N°09.016 portant Code Electoral de la République Centrafricaine, 02 Octobre 2009, Article 10.

The current CEI is composed of representatives of all entities of the 2008 all-inclusive political dialogue. Its term expires 45 days after the announcement of the final elections results.² Since the CEI is not permanent, there will be a problem of institutional memory which has been a particular feature of the debate around the 'loss' of archives related to the 2005 voter's register.

The broader view is that the institution suffers from a pronounced lack of expertise and therefore requires thorough training for its members to acquire the necessary skills for an effective management of the electoral process. Moreover, most stakeholders highlighted the dysfunctional nature of the current leadership of the CEI, which has been brought together from different quarters and the challenging task of organising the 2010 elections. There is obviously a lack of communication and consensus between the various members of the national coordination, which has resulted in a kind of improvisation when it comes to planning and implementing the organisation's activities.

President Binguimalé was persistently accused by most of the stakeholders, especially the opposition, of being acquainted to President Bozizé and the ruling party, taking initiatives and making decisions without referring to other members of the CEI Bureau and national coordination from the opposition. The controversy around the progress report which formed the basis for the decree convening the electorate and setting the election date to 25 April 2010 is one of the illustrations. In fact, the CEI President has allegedly produced a report on the status of the electoral process and submitted this to President Bozizé in order for him to set up the election date. None of the other members of the CEI Bureau and national coordination was consulted in the process.

All in one, the mission noted that the structure of the CEI is to some extent cumbersome and that the size of the national coordination (31 members) appears to affect its efficiency and effectiveness. The mission conceded, however, that the current composition of the CEI is justified by the efforts made to ensure fair and balanced representation of the different political and social forces in the CAR, following the 2008 national political dialogue.

III. The 2010 Elections in the CAR: Preparedness and Readiness

As much as the mission noted that a number of positive aspects of the electoral process are underway in the CAR, it also identified a number of issues of serious concerns that could impinge on public confidence in the process, if not addressed properly and timely. These positive developments and the issues of concern are analysed below.

Among positive developments, the mission noted the replacement of members of the national coordination of the CEI by the opposition. It is worth mentioning that the functioning of the CEI was relatively stalled when the opposition started rebuffing its representatives at the CEI Bureau, accusing them of not representing and defending effectively its interests within the Commission. It was further alleged that opposition representatives at the CEI were now aligned with the ruling party. As a result, the opposition sought their replacement with people who would better represent and defend its views and stances at the CEI. This was done at the national level around mid-February 2010. The Commission was busy establishing structures at local levels throughout the country while the mission was in Bangui.

Issues of concern are related to the controversy surrounding the date of elections and efforts to implement the outcome of the 2008 inclusive political dialogue, in particular aspects of the voter registration process, the delimitation of constituencies and the implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme and the preparation of the 2010 elections.

² Loi N°09.016 portant Code Electoral de la République Centrafricaine, 02 Octobre 2009, Article 22.

1. The elections date

One of the critical issues raised by most of the stakeholders was the timing of the presidential and legislative elections. According to relevant provisions of the Constitution, the election of a new President should take place between at least 45 days and 90 days at the most before the formal end of the incumbent President's term of office.³ This means that the 2010 presidential election must be held between mid-March and the third week of April 2010 as President Bozizé was sworn in on 11 June 2005.

In fact, on 25 February 2010 President Bozizé issued a decree convening the electorate and setting the legislative and presidential elections for Sunday, 25 April 2010.⁴ Most of the stakeholders that the Mission met expressed their disagreement with the appropriateness of this date for the effective holding of the presidential and legislative elections highlighting shortcomings of political, technical, legal and administrative nature, namely:

Political: President Bozizé set up the date in breach of internal procedures of the Electoral Commission, as most of the members, if not all, of the CEI Bureau were not consulted in the decision process leading to the proposed date;

Technical: the decree was hurriedly issued and does not reflect the real progress of the electoral process on the ground;

Legal: the decree seems to ignore all other statutory prerequisites included in the amended electoral code;

Administrative: the decree was seemingly based on a report compiled unilaterally by the CEI President on the status and progress of the electoral process. None of the other stakeholders the mission met appeared to have seen the report before its submission to the President.

While President Bozizé and his close political allies were pushing for the holding of the presidential and legislative polls before the June 2010 deadline, the donor community, including the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and some countries, like France, are calling for the postponement of the polls. The reasons being advanced for this postponement are, among others things, the unavailability of funds necessary to organise effectively the polls and the fact that the voter lists are not finalised yet.

The mission noted that the CAR Constitution is silent on the eventuality of the presidential election being not held according to the legal schedule, leaving prospects for a crisis of legitimacy in case the presidential poll took place beyond the June 2010 deadline. The opposition, especially the *Collectif des Forces du Changement* has been calling for the elections to be postponed to January 2011, in order to give to the CEI sufficient time to carry out all the necessary operations for a peaceful, credible and transparent electoral process. The ruling party accuses the opposition of using dilatory techniques aimed at leading to an institutional void after 10 June 2010, which would force President Bozizé to share executive powers with it; hence the president's seemingly rush to determine an early date for the holding of the polls.

Initially tough and inflexible to the opposition calls for a poll postponement, President Bozizé has however now conceded to delaying the presidential and legislative elections to 16 May 2010. Is this new date going to hold? That is the biggest question. There is still ongoing discussion in this regard and it is not clear at this point what the outcome will be.

Whatever the case may be, the mission suggests that the elections date be established on a consensual basis, with thorough consultations of all significant stakeholders and role players. More than a mere political decision, the date must be based on technical parameters on the ground and all the relevant legal requirements in order to establish a genuine timetable for the 2010 elections.

In this regard, the mission has drawn from the Constitution and the Electoral Code that:

- The distribution of voter cards must be completed at least one (1) month before the election date⁵;

³ Constitution de la République Centrafricaine, Décret N° 04.392 du 24 décembre 2004, article 24, alinéa 5

⁴ Décret N° 10.041 du 25 février 2010 portant convocation du Collège Electoral

⁵ Loi N°09.016 portant Code Electoral de la République Centrafricaine, 02 Octobre 2009, Article 43, paragraph 1.

- The election date must be set and announced at least 60 days before the effective holding of the poll⁶;
- The electoral campaign should start 14 days before the election date⁷;
- The number, name and location of polling stations must be established and published by the CEI 60 days before the start of the electoral campaign⁸;
- The appointment of the electoral personnel to be deployed at the polling stations level must be made by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation 45 days before the start of the electoral campaign.⁹

2. The voter registration process – the voters register for the 2010 elections

The issue of the voter list to be used for the 2010 elections remains one of the major stumbling blocks of the current electoral process in the CAR. The mission noted the uncertainty and confusion surrounding this issue as it was unclear which method is being used to establish the 2010 voters roll. According to the CEI President, Pastor Joseph Binguimalé, the electoral commission has adopted, after much procrastination, the revision of the 2005 voter's register. This choice is also supported by *Kwa Na Kwa* (KNK), the ruling party. The problem with the 2005 register is that records on which it was based were initially supposed missing before being found in a warehouse belonging to an international organisation in Bangui.

In addition, the mission learnt that the computerisation of the 2005 register has been allegedly granted in a unilateral and non-transparent manner to a technical operator, known as New Tech, which is supposedly managed by a close acquaintance of President Bozizé and his ruling party. Moreover, the computerisation process is being conducted in complete opacity, so much so that none of the stakeholders met by the team could confirm having seen these records since they were rediscovered or how the provisional voters register is being established. The team heard of rumours suggesting that the lists were being made up in parallel in some municipalities, known to be strongholds of the ruling party, to form the basis of what is called the 2005 register. The mission was not able to verify these allegations given the short time of its deployment.

As for the opposition and most civil society organisations, the best way of establishing a viable voters' register would be a general census, or at least a census limited to people legally qualified to register and vote, which would include many of the displaced people throughout the country.

The two options are at odds and it was not clear to the mission which one would ultimately prevail.

3. Delimitation of electoral constituencies

The delimitation of electoral constituencies or districts is generally guided by objective factors such as population density, the ease of transport and communication, geographical features, existing patterns of human settlement, financial viability and administrative capacity and financial and administrative consequences of boundary determination, as well as community interests. It must therefore be based on clear and objective criteria and need to be conducted by an independent commission.

All the political stakeholders, except the governing KNK, drew the attention of the mission to Decree N° 10.049 issued on the 2nd March 2010 and pertaining to the delimitation of constituencies for the 2010 elections. According to the decree, the delimitation of constituencies was made on the basis of a report compiled by the Ministry in charge of the territorial administration. There is no reference whatsoever to the contribution of the CEI in this regard. Most of the political stakeholders pointed a finger at the fact that

⁶ Idem, article 54, paragraph 1

⁷ Idem, article 54, paragraph 2

⁸ Idem, article 62, paragraph 1

⁹ Idem, article 63, paragraph 1

the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation is led by a prominent member of the ruling party and one of the President Bozizé's close followers.

The delimitation of constituencies and allocation of parliamentary seats is provided below.

Table: Delimitation of constituencies and allocations of parliamentary seats

Constituencies	Population	Number of seats
1 Commune of Bangui	531,763	9
2 Ouham-Pendé	325,567	9
3 Ombella-M'Poko	304,025	9
4 Mambéré-Kadéï	289,688	10
5 Ouham	280,772	9
6 Ouaka	224,076	8
7 Lobaye	214,137	7
8 Basse-Kotto	203,887	7
9 Nana-Mambéré	184,594	6
10 Mbomou	132,740	6
11 Kémo	98,881	4
12 Sangha-Mbaere	89,871	4
13 Nana-Gribizi	87,341	3
14 Haute-Kotto	69,514	4
15 Bamingui-Bangoran	38,437	2
16 Haut-Mbomou	38,184	4
17 Vakaga	37,595	3
Total	3,151,072	104

Source: Decree N° 10.049 of 02 March

The mission undertook a close examination of the decree and noted that the allocation of seats was undertaken without any clear or defined criteria. The distribution of seats is generally handled on the basis of population size. The guiding principle is to ensure that every person's vote carries the same political weight. One of the main complaints from the opposition parties has been that the president and his government have eroded the principle of 'one person, one vote' in allocating less seats to constituencies that have traditionally assumed to be opposition strongholds, despite the large size of their populations.

The allotment of seats for the constituencies of Bangui, Ouham-Pendé and Ombella-M'Poko, which have nine seats each for a population of respectively 531 763, 325 567 and 304 025, is in itself a case of obvious disproportion, compared to a constituency such as Ouham, with 280 772 and the same number of 9 parliamentary seats. Vakaga (37 595) has 3 seats, while Kémo with almost three times its population size (98 881) has only 4 seats.

Moreover, in some prefectures, the cumulative number of seats does not coincide with the total of seats of its sub-prefectures. This is particularly the case in Mambéré-Kadéï, which 289 688 inhabitants for 10 seats, according to the decree. But in reality, the sum of seats in this prefecture reveals a total of 11, with slightly half of the population of Bangui which has been allocated 9 seats.

Furthermore, the fact that the delimitation of electoral constituencies was based on the controversial 2005 voter's register is also an issue. It would have been preferable to establish the constituencies on the basis of the outcome of the voter registration process of 2010.

4. Nomination of candidates

According to the CAR Electoral Code, potential candidates to the presidential and legislative elections can submit their nomination papers 30 days at the latest before the start of the electoral campaign. There is no clear mention in both the Constitution and the Electoral Code of when potential candidates can start to registering as candidates or when the final list of candidates must be published.

The mission noted that political parties and coalitions are actively positioning themselves and preparing for the forthcoming elections. As it stands now, a number of prominent personalities have expressed their intention to compete in the 2010 presidential race, namely:

- The incumbent President Bozizé, proposed by the *Convergence Nationale* KNK;
- Former President Patassé who will stand as an independent candidate after being expelled from MLPC;
- Martin Ziguélé from *Mouvement pour la Libération du Peuple Centrafricain* (MLPC);
- Jean-Jacques Demafouth, from *Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie* (APRD).

5. Security Situation and the DDR Programme

While the capital city Bangui is relatively calm, the overall security situation remains generally volatile and precarious throughout the country, especially in the north of the country where rebel groups are notably active and entertain havoc among rural populations. The security situation has particularly deteriorated in the south-eastern part of the country as a result of the presence of LRA insurgents in the area, which they use as their rear base.

Even though most of the famous rebel leaders are part of the ongoing process to end the crisis in the CAR, the country is far from being effectively reunited. Demafouth of APRD has expressed his intention of running for the presidential seat. But in areas under his control, APRD imposes the payment of a fee in order to operate there. The mission was shown a document suggesting that people, even officials, intending to visit the APRD-occupied zones must disburse an amount of FCFA 50 000 to get the authorisation to move freely within these zones.

The opposition made the mission aware of its concerns about the widespread presence of road blocks which limit free movement of people in certain parts of the country. There were also reports of intimidation on some members of the opposition by the security forces, but the mission was not in a position to verify such allegations. Some members of the opposition and the civil society went as far as conditioning the effective holding of presidential and legislative elections on the full implementation of the DDR programme.

The DDR programme was established in line with the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Libreville in June 2008, under the auspices of the late President Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon. The mission noted that the programme has experienced delays in regard to the initial timetable. One of the major reasons mentioned for this is the problem of financial management of the programme.

The mission is of the view that there is a crucial need to expedite the implementation of the DDR programme in order to create the minimum security conditions conducive to peaceful and competitive elections.

6. Civic and Voter Education

The mission noted that civic and voter education remains one of the biggest challenges that the CEI faces. There was no election-related awareness activity despite the imminence of the polls and all the changes that have been included in the amended Electoral Code. Both the CEI and civil society organisations which

would be normally expected to be involved in such programmes suggest the lack or unavailability of funds as the main reason for this shortfall. But the mission noted the lack of clear planning and vision in this regard.

The mission further observed the low level of information and awareness about the ongoing electoral process in the CAR. The majority of citizens in Bangui, for instance, seem to have just a rough idea on the status and progress of the process. The situation might most probably be worse in the rural areas where communication means are inexistent or poor, and the rate of illiteracy very high.

There is a pressing and crucial need for the implementation of civic and voter education about voting procedures and the importance of voting, as well as where and when to vote. Such education campaigns would preferably be conducted by the CEI, faith-based and non-governmental organisations operating in the fields of the elections, as well as political parties.

The mission noted that civil society organisations in the CAR are facing particular challenges due to the lack of organisational capacity and inadequacy of resources. All the CSOs that the mission met expressed their willingness to take an active part in the ongoing process through awareness campaigns for voters, election observation and other activities, including advocacy for a greater representation of women in decision-making institutions such as the government and Parliament.

7. Media: access and fairness

Media, especially radio and television, can play a crucial role in shaping public opinion pertaining to electoral choices. The mission noted that relevant laws and regulations call for fair access for political contestants to State-run media during the election campaign.

The *Haut Conseil de la Communication* (HCC) which comprises nine members is responsible for monitoring the use and regulating access to the media during the electoral process. The mission learnt that the media were reluctant to cover effectively and fairly current political affairs, for fear of being harassed or victimised. Threats and incidents of intimidation are common, even though they are concealed.

Some opposition parties and leaders met the mission while it was in Bangui and denounced the monopoly of state media by the ruling party KNK and President Bozizé. The HCC alluded however that the airtime is available for all parties, but opposition parties do not make requests to use it.

The mission listed about 40 newspapers of which only 15 were published and circulated on a regular basis. In most cases, the quality and the content were poor. This is obviously due to the absence of relevant legislation meant to govern the recruitment and career of journalists in the private sector.

All in one, the coverage and impact of the media, both audio-visual and printed, are very limited. The vast majority of the territory is not covered at all. The lack of substantial financial and logistical resources restricts the scope of the media only to Bangui.

8. Election observation

Election observation can make a valuable contribution to the conduct of democratic elections by promoting transparency, credibility, accountability and confidence in the electoral process as it can help deter violations and fraud by its presence before, during and after elections.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is particularly active in assisting civil society organisations involved in the monitoring of the electoral process in the CAR. The Institute has established a field office in Bangui with the main aim of assisting civil society organisations in the area of election

observation. Other groups committed to observing the forthcoming elections include faith-based organisations, namely the Commission Justice and Peace of the Episcopal Conference. In general, local organisations lack necessary resources to train and deploy observers throughout the country.

As for international election observation, the CEI has expressed its willingness to welcome international missions to observe the 2010 elections. A number of organisations plan to deploy election observer missions in the CAR. These include the EU, the African Union and EISA. UNDP is in the process of establishing a technical secretariat, which will coordinate activities of international observer missions.

Both national and international observers are to be accredited by the CEI. However, the mission noted there was no any mechanism in place to cater for this specific need.

9. Role of the international community in the Electoral Process

The international community contributes significantly to the promotion of credible, transparent and democratic elections in the CAR. A basket fund managed by UNDP has been established in this regard and is serviced by various contributions from members of the donor community which amount approximately to US\$17 million. The European Union, with an assistance estimated to 6.5 million Euros is the main contributor. In addition, a Steering Committee (*Comité de Pilotage*) consisting of the main contributors to the UNDP basket fund has been established to advise and support the CEI and CAR authorities with regard to the conduct and management of the electoral process. UNDP is also providing technical assistance and expertise to the CEI with operations related to the voter registration process.

The mission noted that the international community has conditioned the funding of the electoral process to the strict application of governance and transparency rules, especially with regard to the CEI. The mission learnt that an audit of the CEI financial affairs commissioned by the donor community was underway but could not ascertain the status of this process.

The CAR government share to the basket fund amounts to approximately 2-billion FCFA (roughly €3 million). But because of some conditions imposed by members of the international community before releasing their financial contributions, President Bozizé has allegedly advanced from his own pocket an amount of 400 million FCFA (roughly €600,000) to the CEI for its activities and operations.

In fact, the CEI needs approximately 9-billion CFA francs (US\$18 million or €14 million) to cover and implement all the operations related the 2010 elections. The United Nations and France have contributed respectively with US\$300 000 and €200 000 so far. The initial 2009 budget of the CAR did not include relevant line budgets meant to fund the electoral process. This shortfall was interpreted by the opposition as a sign of the CAR government's lack of intention to hold the elections. In order to solve this situation, the National Assembly convened an extraordinary session during which the 2009 supplementary budget was discussed and adopted. This additional budget made provision for 1-billion FCFA (roughly €1.5 million).for election-related activities and operations. The 2010 budget includes a similar amount which translates to approximately US\$ 2 million. Much of this money has not been yet put at the disposal of the CEI for its functioning and operations.

The mission learnt that the CAR government has been relying on financial pledges undertaken by various governments throughout the sub-region and the African continent to contribute to the electoral process. But so far, nothing has materialised into concrete financial contribution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on a number of issues raised during our meetings and discussions with stakeholders and highlighted in this report, the EISA pre-election assessment mission draws following recommendations aimed at enhancing the credibility and fairness of the current electoral process in the CAR:

- a) There is a pressing need for a sincere dialogue and regular consultations among political parties and stakeholders, both in government and opposition, in order to ensure inclusive, credible and peaceful elections in the CAR. The mission is of the view that the political dialogue initiated in the past should continue and be heightened by all sides in order to address the issues of concern raised by various stakeholders and particularly opposition parties. Dialogue is particularly needed among all stakeholders to consider appropriate ways of preventing, managing and resolving election-related conflict;
- b) Many of the opposition parties lack confidence in the independence and impartiality of the CEI despite the fact that they have representatives in the Commission. The mission recommends that the CEI actively engage in dialogue with political parties and all other stakeholders concerning its activities and operations in the run-up to the elections. The dialogue might include regular meetings with these stakeholders, as well as providing updates and relevant information aimed at addressing their concerns. This will probably improve the transparency of the process;
- c) Given the numerous complaints about the registration process and given that most opposition political parties and civil society organisations expressed a lack of confidence in the ongoing revision of the 2005 voters' records, the mission is of the view that all appropriate actions should be taken to first establish what is the best way to get a reliable and comprehensive voter's register for the 2010 elections. Then clear procedures must be set forth, after consultation with all stakeholders, particularly political parties, to achieve this objective;
- d) The mission encourages efforts to conduct civic and voter education programmes in order to raise the awareness of voters about the importance of voting, voting procedures and the need for peaceful electoral competition;
- e) The mission was informed by the CAR election stakeholders that EISA will be welcomed in the CAR to observe the forthcoming elections. It is advisable that if invited, EISA deploy a continental election observation mission;
- f) The mission urges the international community to continue to work closely together to make the most of their support and, as a result, assist the CAR in organising peaceful, credible and transparent elections. This is critical to maintaining the momentum of the inclusive political dialogue, contributing to the establishment of democracy and promoting lasting peace in the country;
- g) The mission urges the CAR government and all other relevant authorities to ensure the security of all political stakeholders, in particular those from opposition parties, in order to enable them to participate freely in the electoral process. For the ongoing electoral process to be seen as fair and credible, it should be devoid of widespread acts of politically-motivated intimidation, harassment or violence.

MEETINGS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The EISA Pre-election Mission met with a broad range of stakeholders, including:

- Mrs Georgette Florence Koyt-Deballe, Deputy Secretary General, KNK;
- Reverend Joseph Binguimalé, CEI President;
- Me Aristide Sokambi, Lawyer, Bar of the CAR and Belgium – Former Minister of Justice;
- Mr. Modeste Gonda, Chairperson, Inter-ONG Council of the CAR (CIONGCA);
- Mr. Gabriel Jean Edouard Koyambounou, Member of MLPC and *Union Active des Force Vives de la Nation* (UFVN);
- Me Mathias Barthelemy Morouba, Lawyer and member of the Justice and Peace Commission;
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