

**Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Ursula Mueller Opening remarks at UN Member States Briefing on the Central African Republic**

*UN Headquarters, New York, 13 November 2017*

*As delivered*

Honourable delegates and representatives. Your Excellency Mr. Kpatamango of the Central African Republic to the United Nations. Thank you for being here today to discuss the situation in the Central African Republic.

We are also honoured to have with us Ms. Najat Rochdi, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the Central African Republic and Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Ms. Rochdi is also the Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme.

In his recent visit to the Central African Republic, Secretary-General António Guterres witnessed the fragile situation in the country, where armed groups have splintered and multiplied, making the security situation more difficult to manage.

The worsening security situation in vast areas of the country is creating instability and forcing vulnerable civilians to once again bear the brunt of the crisis. Displacement trends indicate a significant increase in the number of internally displaced people and refugees. This year has seen more than 600,000 internally displaced people. This level had not been reached since August 2014 and represents an increase of almost 50 per cent since January 2017.

Only one year ago we were celebrating progress made, with the end of the three-year political transition and the election of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. We hoped that we could seize the opportunity to focus on reconciliation, reconstruction and stabilization, and address the root causes of the conflict.

However, the magnitude and scale of the clashes between armed groups in recent months and the subsequent impacts on civilians indicate that the Central African Republic is at a critical juncture. There is a real risk of a relapse into a crisis only comparable to the 2012-2014 conflict.

There has also been an increase in violence against humanitarian workers and their assets, which in addition to violating international humanitarian law also seriously hinders the delivery of aid. The recent death of an ICRC staff member in the line of duty brought to 13 the number of aid workers killed in the country this year alone.

The protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance remain top priorities for the United Nations in the Central African Republic. The presence of MINUSCA underscores the critical need for peace and security, as evidenced by a recent proposal to the Security Council to increase troop numbers as part of a comprehensive strategy to address the deteriorating situation, while working closely with the Government and creating space for the political process.

Without sustained engagement, we risk losing the significant investments made by the international community in the Central African Republic. Our chances for success remain high if we urgently invest in humanitarian assistance and strengthen the protection of civilians and their human rights.

As a demonstration of your generosity and solidarity, the international community should equip the Central African Republic with the tools to heal and rebuild, and provide sustained and predictable financial support for humanitarian assistance.

Already, the consequences of underfunding and insecurity are evident in the lives of vulnerable people who need assistance. In several regions where resilience is still too fragile, aid workers have had to reduce or stop their operations. As of 31 October 2017, only 34 per cent of the US\$497.3 million requested for life-saving assistance, through the 2017 Central African Republic Humanitarian Response Plan, had been received.

For an in-depth perspective on the situation in the Central African Republic, I now invite Ms. Rochdi, who I would also like to congratulate on the signature of the civil-military guidelines between humanitarian actors and MINUSCA that will strengthen our engagement and facilitate humanitarian access, while upholding humanitarian principles.

Thank you.