Dialogue international sur la construction de la paix et le renforcement de l'État

Contribution du Gouvernement de la République Centrafricaine

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SUMMARY

Results

Priorities

In the Central African Republic (CAR), one of the main difficulties for national and international actors is ranking priorities when the needs of the country are immense and resources and means are limited.

The main priorities and fields of intervention identified for the purposes of peace building and state building are as follows:

- safety and peace, through security sector reforms (SSR) and demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR);

- economic and political governance, including the elections as an immediate priority under the latter heading, and the implementation of the recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue (IPD); and

- economic and social development, primarily by rolling out the local development programme (development centres) countrywide.

These priorities have the full agreement of the main national actors and the support of the international actors. However, because of the complexity of the situation, the order of priorities varies from one region to another depending on the security situation and the challenges of reconstruction. Despite the positive impact of the peace agreements and the IPD on security, stability is fragile and uneven across the regions.

In the short term, the main priorities identified should be pursued jointly: elections, SSR, DDR and development centres, as so well reflected in the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding Fund. In the opinion of national and international stakeholders, it is vital that the elections be valid and transparent from both the technical and political standpoints. However, the democratic process is only one of the (important) ingredients of political legitimacy, which has to be based on development operations not enough of which have as yet been launched throughout the country; this gives the impression that government action is not sufficiently visible.

The issue of the climate of confidence between society and the state's political elite is also one of the main priorities identified, both a cause and a result of the consolidation of the fragile peace and stability climate. Progress on the formulation of legal texts and frameworks has been noted, but they must actually be complied with and enforced.

As regards the security sector field, the first priority in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Peace Building Plan -- the following are noted.

- The defence and security force operationalisation pillar, in particular, rallies only little financial support from partners. Nor does the economic situation of the state allow funds to be raised within the limits of projections.

- Security problem management must incorporate all segments including justice as well as development policies. The approaches to these problems must ensure de-compartmentalisation of the constituent elements, while ensuring good interfacing between them. The importance of analyses is acknowledged in proposals for solutions to problems or factors which breed conflict and law and order problems, but since the medium term is not systematically considered in crisis management, there are difficulties in moving beyond short-term crisis management.

- Conflict management must make dialogue and mediation priorities by turning to local stakeholders and

traditional conflict management mechanisms. Recourse to regional and/or international actors must be complementary to the internal approach.

One main priority that has been identified is the extension of the territorial government. The fact is that the sparse presence of the administration and the limited supply of public services mean that government authority is not very much in evidence. The extension of government is hampered by a dearth of resources, which is itself attributable to the shrunken economy. Improving the economic and financial governance of the State is therefore beneficial for state building and promoting development. The areas of intervention already identified are being addressed as follows.

- Ensuring the transition from the informal economy to the formal economy: formalising the economy, while attempting to minimise the social and economic impact of measures on the most vulnerable.

- Building the State's collection capacity: promoting job creation initiatives and the development of local economies.

- Re-establishing trust between private sector operators and government departments, particularly through compliance with, and enforcement of, the legally applicable regulations. Ensuring the transparency of decision-making;

- Investing in training and seeking solutions to the problems of being land-locked, the lack of infrastructure and finance so as to enable the private sector to be more competitive.

- The process of reforming the administration and progress towards decentralisation should be maintained in order to facilitate the extension of territorial government and its legitimacy at local level. Decentralisation in particular is seen as an opportunity to renew the ties between government and society.

Strategic planning for peace building and state building

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which provides the framework for recovery initiatives, is motivated by an ambitious vision for reconstruction and restructuring of the State. It is recognised as a key paper in the dialogue with partners. Its guidelines have served as the basis for launching the sectoral round tables already held or in the course of preparation.

The Peace Building Plan is in line with the four pillars of the PRSP and establishes commitments among the various national actors and partners. Its priorities are aimed at state building.

Main operating and policy challenges in international aid for peace building and state building in the CAR

The financial support, capacity and procedures of partners do not match the priorities identified. Implementation of commitment and best practice principles seems weak in the CAR. The DDR and the election preparations are two examples that illustrate these weaknesses. Tentative commitments have led to delays, despite the importance accorded these priorities by international and national stakeholders.

In the security field, despite support for the SSR, some segments, such as operationalisation of the security forces, planning and training are, oddly, not treated as urgent. Neither is the longer-term commitment of the international actors guaranteed.

In the peace building and state building strategy in the CAR, it is clearly acknowledged that economic recovery contributes to social and political stabilisation. However, in reality, economic recovery initiatives are tentative and very limited geographically.

Examples of good practice

The Inclusive Political Dialogue process has generally been well conducted and has had a positive impact on the peace process in the CAR. The SSR process is also considered a good example of inclusive programming and planning. The attention given to decentralised development (development centres) is also a positive example of recognition of the need to extend government and its functions and duties to the hinterland.

However, at this stage it is difficult to class these initiatives as good practice since they are quite recent and have grown out of a dynamic that will have to be sustained over time. The fact that the CAR has reached its completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative is seen as a success since the populations concerned have understood and taken ownership of scale of the reforms and their impact on the outlook for investment growth and the consolidation of economic growth. One of the very first benefits is the clearance of social (salaries, grants, pensions) and internal trade arrears, in what proved to be a particularly difficult context given the negative impact of the worldwide financial and economic crisis.

Recommendations for International Dialogue

- Focus on basic community priorities and needs, integrating them into the largest-scale national initiatives and political processes. Since the process of peace building does not take place in a vacuum either in social and economic terms, or in terms of the relationship between the State and society, international initiatives must be tailored to both the national and the local context.

- Develop country-specific approaches and take local diversity into account. In order to do so, there must also be a switch from the disbursement approach to a process and qualitative results approach.

- Optimise resources and attract qualified personnel: given the sheer scale of needs, the limited number of donors and the dearth of human and financial resources, what resources there are must be used as efficiently as possible.

- Step up co-ordination between donors.