



FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE JOINT SOLIDARITY MISSION TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Bangui, Central African Republic, 15 August 2018

The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, UN WOMEN, the African Union, and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region led a joint solidarity mission to promote greater involvement of Central African women in the political and peace processes.

From 11 to 15 August 2018, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region facilitated a solidarity mission of African women leaders to the Central African Republic. The mission was led by Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, former Vice-President of Uganda, co-President of African Union-FemWise, and a member of the Advisory Board for the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework ("the Framework Agreement"). It further included Amb. Liberata Mulamula, former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and also a member of African Union-FemWise and the ICGLR Women's Platform, and, Amb. Eliane Mokodopo, Women and Children Programme Director representing ICGLR.

The mission took place within the framework of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and of the cooperation between the African Union, the United Nations, and ICGLR in the Great Lakes region to promote gender equality and women's political participation. It was also in accordance with the decisions of the Regional Heads of State at their seventh and eight high-level meetings of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Framework Agreement, held in October 2016 and October 2017 respectively, and the 2016 Goma Declaration, which aims to strengthen the role of women the consolidation of peace, security, and development in the Great Lakes region.

The objectives of the mission were to express solidarity with women, at a critical time in the Central African Republic, strengthen women's networks, help increase their political representation and participation in peace and mediation effort, and encourage them take a greater lead to improve their own socio-economic opportunities.

The delegation met H.E President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, the Prime Minister, Simplicie Sarandon, the Minister of Promotion of Women and Children, Gisele Pana, the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court, the First Vice President of the National Assembly, Jean Mapenzi, and women parliamentarian, former transitional President, co-President of African Union FemWise, and member of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform of the Framework Agreement, Catherine Samba-Panza, women leaders, representatives of political parties, as well as representatives of the international community, including the African Union representative to the Central African Republic, Moussa Nebie. The delegation further met jointly with the Archbishop of Bangui, Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga and the President of the Islamic Community, Imam Oumar Kobine Layama.

The exchanges highlighted the dire situation of women in the Central African Republic, where insecurity, high levels of poverty, and limited access to basic services, including education for girls, severely affect their wellbeing and socio-economic opportunities. The delegation further noted that, despite provisions for gender parity, including legislation promoting 35 % of female representation, and the current revision of the electoral code in favour of gender parity, women remain under-represented in elected and public offices. The absence of women's representation in the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was also noted.

The mission agreed that progress towards women's empowerment and participation cannot wait for the full re-establishment of peace and security in the country. A new narrative and a strategy that brings together women organizations, the government, and partners focusing on human security and on promoting the central role of women in all fields and sectors of socio-economic and political life across the country, is urgently required.

The mission welcomed the commitment by the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr. Faustin-Archange Touadéra to promulgate the decree of application for the gender parity law, promote a larger participation of women in the peace process, increase the number of women at different levels of the administration, as well as to continue the collaboration established within the framework of the solidarity mission.

It further welcomed the ongoing work to review the electoral code and move towards the implementation of the legislation on gender parity, including the commitment of some of the political parties to revise their statutes to guarantee equal opportunities to women to run for elected offices.

The mission highlighted the importance of supporting women leadership and capacities to engage in the political and peace processes from the grassroots' level, of ensuring women's full participation in all efforts to re-establish peace and stability in the country, and advocated for women's inclusion in the African Initiative, as well as in current and future reconstruction and recovery initiatives.

It further called for programmes to enhance women's educational and socio-economic opportunities, including through the creation of a dedicated Women Fund. Finally, it was agreed that it would be important to strengthen women networks in the Central African Republic to enable women to work for a common purpose.

These conclusions will be presented to the Heads of States and Governments at the ninth meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Framework Agreement, scheduled for October 2018 and shared with the African Union.

The Solidarity Mission expresses its appreciation to the Government of the Central African Republic for its hospitality and fruitful exchanges. It further thanks MINUSCA's Gender Adviser Gladys Atinga and the mission for all support rendered to the delegation.