

News bulletin

21 - 28 July 2008

Highlights

- General Abdoulaye Miskine, leader of the Union of Democratic Forces of Central Africa (UFDC) says he is ready to sign the Global Peace Agreement
- China donates agricultural equipment and office supplies worth \$450,000

Background and security

Miskine ready to sign the peace agreement

General Abdoulaye Miskine, leader of the *Union of Democratic Forces of Central Africa* (FDPC), one of the three rebel groups based in the centre north of the country, has said he is ready to sign the Global Peace Agreement. His commitment is a prelude to the much anticipated political dialogue expected this month in Bangui. *"I am ready to sign the Global Peace Agreement in order to give the political inclusive dialogue a chance -- considered by all the only way out of crisis,"* said General Miskine in a press release issued Saturday in Bangui.

The Central African government and two rebel movements, *People's Army for the Restoration of Democracy* (APRD) and the *Union of Democratic Forces for Renewal* (UFDR) already signed the comprehensive peace agreement last month in Libreville, Gabon.

Abdoulaye Miskine, who had been former Ange Felix Patasse's bodyguards, joined the armed opposition in December 2005.

A \$450,000 gift from China

China has donated agricultural equipment and office supplies worth \$450,000 to the Central African Republic. On 21 July, the Central African Minister of State for Planning, Economy and International Cooperation, Sylvain Maliko approved the gifts which include two cars, 100 computers, 50 laptop computers, 50 laser printers, 20 scanners, 100 inverters, 300 fax machines phones, 10 air conditioners, four digital photocopiers, five LCD televisions sets and several machetes, hoes and shovels. Last June, China donated \$300,000 worth of anti-malarial drugs.

Additionally, on 16 July, China signed a nine million dollar agreement with the Central African Republic for the installation of transmitters for *Radio Centrafrique* in Bimbo, near the capital Bangui.

Current events

FAO supports seed sector

Funded by the European Union, the *United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization* (FAO) has launched a one million euro project to support the production of seeds in CAR. The project began in April and will end in March 2010.

The project aims to support the government in boosting agricultural production, reconstructing the seed capital of major food crops, facilitating seed multiplication by farmers associations in rural areas and in facilitating seed distributions to vulnerable households.



A peanut field in Kaga Bandoro in mid-June

The project will be implemented in partnership with REPROSEM and other organizations working on multiplying seeds as well as the Central African Agency for Agricultural Development (ACDA). The peanut (10 tons), sorghum (1.2 tons) and cowpea (6 tons) crops will be the main focus for seed multiplication.

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The rise in food prices in Paoua

The *World Food Programme* (WFP) sub office in Paoua has been monitoring food prices in two markets in Paoua and Beboy (25 km from Paoua). In Beboy, other than wild fruits, fritters and local beer, there is no food for sale. At Paoua's market, most food commodities are available but at high prices.

Since 30 April, prices of most staple foods in Paoua have increased, except for millet. For example, the price of 12 kg of cassava has risen to 1,500 CFA from 1,200 CFA in April. A 50kg bag of rice was 22,000 CFA in April and now costs 30,000 CFA.

Mission in the extreme south-east of CAR

An inter-agency mission that visited the extreme south-east of CAR from 24 June to 15 July, made the following recommendations:

- Ensure the safety of the population, their property and their freedom of movement by strengthening the security and defense forces in the area, particularly as it relates to securing the borders.
- Condemn and denounce the kidnappings, looting and recruitment of children as soldiers and advocate for the release of those still detained by the forces of the LRA.
- Strengthen local capacity to provide psycho-social support for survivors of abuse / rape, but also to actively promote the prevention of future abuses.



Some young vulnerable women in Haut-Mbomou

- Educate parents and parent associations on the Convention on the Rights of Children.



Children going to school in Obo

Ensure emergency education (rehabilitation and equipment of schools) in the sub-prefecture of Bambouti, revive the school feeding program to reduce the rate of nonattendance in schools

(currently 14.59%) and provide food for the training of teacher-parents in the Haut-Mbomou.

Education in Bamingui-Bangoran

A team from of the *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs* (OCHA) in Ndélé evaluated the poor state of schools in the region.

The sub-prefecture has 1,521 students in 10 primary schools, of which only four have a full year of school. Barely fifty children were able to enter the first year of high school.

Several factors are driving this crisis: the inaccessibility of the area, a lack of logistical resources that enable the supervision of teachers and poor motivation among teachers in general because of the low wages paid by the State and by the City Council.

The team also found that giving better access to water and providing functioning school canteens would, at the very least, build motivation not only for primary school pupils but also for those in secondary education.

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