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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity , during the first meeting of the Group of Friends of the ICC to make a presentation on the crisis which has started a little over a year ago in the Central African Republic, my home country.

Much has been said and much has been written on this umpteenth CAR crisis, which is a security and humanitarian crisis that is now mobilizing the entire community at the sub-regional, regional and international levels. It has notably been said that it is a inter-community conflict and/or an inter-religious conflict. There is some truth in this characterization of the conflict when you look at current violence that is unfolding in the country: on one side, you have so-called Christian militia tracking down, killing or displacing Muslim civilians on the other side there are other rebel movements, predominantly Muslim who attack Christian civilians, burn their houses, plantations and granaries, torture peasants, kill them or force them to flee their villages. In the background of this context and the political instrumentalization of it, the conflict eventually appeared as an inter-religious one.

Yet in its essence, this conflict is not inter-religious but rather based on a fatal trilogy: the chronic instability of institutions, poor governance and hazardous allegiances with a criminal regional leadership for twenty years. It is essential to make the right analysis of those root causes of the crisis so as to not only give a partial answer to it, bearing therefore the risk to have, sooner or later, a new explosion.

I am thus proposing this re-contextualisation of the conflict that I propose to do in the first part of my presentation. I will then share with you some personal experiences of the conflict. This will not only add an interesting light on the modus operandi used in the context of this conflict, especially by the SELEKA, but will also give information on the conditions that led to the emergence of a villager self-defense militia called anti-BALAKA, and its evolution towards indiscriminate retaliation operations, precisely because of the laxity of the State to address atrocities committed by the Seleka and others for ten months.

It will also be necessary to review all the other major players in this crisis, the international community, the International Criminal Court, the transitional government, the PGA CAR national group, etc. and to consider what should be the role of each of those stakeholders in ending the massive human rights violations and international crimes committed in the country.

Finally, I will give the key elements of a roadmap proposal to end the crisis that I have discussed with a platform of religious authorities, including the Archbishop, the pastor and the imam of

Bangui).

I take this opportunity to thank all those who have invested vigorously in the search for solutions so that the Central African people can escape the doom of having another genocide on African soil, after the drama of Rwanda twenty years.

1. Background

The Central African Republic is a landlocked country in central Africa - 624.000 km², 4 to 5 millions inhabitants, which takes its name from its geographical position at the heart of the African continent. This geographical configuration gives it a middle position between two Africas:

- In the north, an Arab-Muslim Africa,
- In the South, a Bantu Christian and animist Africa,

and puts the CAR at an ethno-cultural crossroads that welcomes all major religions in the world, with no incidents based on religion so far. Experts say that even the Central African Islam, of Sufi inspiration, is one of the most tolerant of the sub-region, as it has accommodated itself with the local conditions and traditions. This clearly means that Central African problem, in its essence, is not religious.

Most of those who have regularly monitored the political history of the CAR know that it has experienced decades of conflicts, uprisings, mismanagement and military coups that have significantly weakened its development. The real factors behind this new crisis, which are a continuation of the aforementioned, although the scale of abuses is currently much higher, are political (lack of leadership, democracy deficit, governance deficit), socioeconomic (extreme poverty that makes young people susceptible to illusions calls dealers) and security-related (a bullied and poor national army, often neglected in favor of a clannish “praetorian guard” serving only Heads of State and therefore unmotivated and unable to fulfill its role of defending the state and citizens).

Since 1980, the weak governance of my country has further worsened the situation of the population, faced with extreme poverty, malnutrition and insecurity. The succession of dictatorships and / or corrupted political regimes, such as the one established by Bozizé and the inability of the state and the army to implement the peace agreements with rebel factions, in particular the Libreville agreement of 2008 and its component related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and their difficulty in having control over the whole territory led to a situation which became unbearable for a major part of the population. In addition to this, the high level of interference of some neighbouring states in the internal affairs of the Central African Republic, the porosity of borders and the infiltration of armed criminal groups became very concerning issues: we can cite the Chadian rebel militia BABA LADE, Sudanese warlords NDJADJAWIDES and various poaching gangs also from Sudan, etc.

It is in this context, that late 2012, the rebel force known as Séléka was created, whose attacks in December 2012 and the coup d'état in March 2013 led the Central African Republic in a very serious

humanitarian and security situation characterized by a total collapse of the public order, the systematic violation of human rights and the commission of international crimes by the rebels, including murder, rape, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture, sexual abuse, forced recruitment and the use of children in armed groups¹.

Crimes against humanity have been committed by the Séléka since late 2012 and during the 10 months of Michel Djotododia's reign. But since July 2013, self -defense groups that were quickly considered as Christians while they were actually a more complex gathering of persons began to retaliate against the Séléka rebels. Those groups, known as anti- Balaka, also committed serious crimes. The crisis has taken an ethnic and religious turn, since the Christian population continues to be the main target of attacks by former Séléka rebels and since anti- Balaka militias have also launched frequent attacks against the Séléka and Muslim civilians suspected of supporting them.

This radicalization of positions and uncontrollable spiral has recently resulted in clashes between the two factions on 5 and 6 December 2013, causing the deaths of over 1,000 people, including women and children. This escalation of armed violence has dramatically worsened the humanitarian situation and caused a massive forced migration of civilians in neighbouring countries². The emergency deployment of the French Sangaris operation in December 2013, which had just received the approval of the Security Council (Resolution 2121 (2013)) was able to save, in extremis, the Central African Republic from a certain genocide.

2. Personal experience as a victim of the coup and as a victim of the Séléka rebellion

Attacks my family and against other members of PGA perceived as supporters of the former regime

The first personal experience as a victim of the coup the Seleka is obviously to having lost abruptly and unconstitutionally my parliamentary mandate. The dissolution of the National Assembly pronounced immediately after the coup sent back home all members of the CAR Parliament, a large part of which are PGA members. Some of them, considered as belonging to the former regime, have been victims of persecution and attacks on themselves or their families. They lost their homes and property due to these targeted attacks.

Many of them have even had to hide for a long time in the camp of the multinational force FOMAC near the Bangui airport, thanks also to the support of the Embassy of France on site. I would like to pay tribute to the leadership of the Embassy of France in Bangui, which thanks to the PGA secretariat contact and a simple phone call from me managed to bring protection to two colleagues who were trapped in their home (Honourable Martin WIGUELE, General rapporteur of the PGA group and Honourable Leon AMORAN, both victims of anonymous calls threatening them of death because of their membership in the party of President Bozizé) .

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/SAPG%20Statement%20at%20UNSC%20on%20the%20situation%20in%20CAR-%202022%20Jan%202014.pdf>
<https://www.un.org/apps/news//story.asp?NewsID=46924&Cr=central+african+republic&Cr1=https://www.amnesty.org/fr/node/44845>

² <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/SAPG%20Statement%20at%20UNSC%20on%20the%20situation%20in%20CAR-%202022%20Jan%202014.pdf>
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14167&LangID=E>
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CF/CARPreliminaryFindingsasof13.01.14.docx>

For my part, twice my family was faced with Seleka violence:

- First in March 2013 when the Coup d'Etat started, the house where I lived in, near the National Assembly, was ransacked and all my belongings looted. My cousin, who was watching over my family while I was on a mission this time in Chad, almost lost his life: a bullet fired at close range pierced his ear. All my losses have been documented and a complaint has been filed with the court.
- Then, on the night of 3 to 4 September 2013, my oldest son, who lives 50 meters from our new home in another neighborhood, was robbed . That night at 2am, under a heavy rain, four armed men in military uniforms with Kalashnikovs and knives neutralized the sentinel of the house, entered in the property and broke down the door of the house. Under the threat of their weapons, the four men forced my son out of the house and to lie down on the ground, after what they beat him up and stabbed him repeatedly in the abdomen. They then simulated his burial by overlying sand and a tarpaulin on him. Then, during the next two hours, the attackers uploaded my own car with all the belongings found in the house and fled. It was only when my son heard the vehicle leaving the property that he called for help. At the hospital, the examination revealed a deep wound in his stomach and several wounds to his head and lips. Here again, we filed a complaint.

This event was widely reported in the local press, and a few days later, I received a visit from a government delegation headed by the Minister of Social Affairs of the time, accompanied by his colleague from The Ministry of Health, with a message of moral support from the government. However, not a word was said about the investigation.

I must emphasize that the house was in a street that is at 150 meters from a military camp, under the command of a Seleka general and at the same distance from the house of the Minister of security at the time, General Nouredine ADAM, highly guarded. It is therefore not possible for a group of men to get around this perimeter under the nose of all those soldiers, without their complicity. However, no action has yet been given to my complaint.

3. Personal experience as a witness of brutal attacks of the Séléka and hereafter of the anti-Balaka militias

In preparing this presentation, I hesitated to provide to you as well with images of rare savagery taken by mobile phones. But Youtube and some newscasts have already made public testimonies and images of crimes committed every day in the CAR.

The brutality of the Seleka even if mainly directed against Christians, has in fact spared no one: nor the members of their own government nor many Muslims. For example, the house of the Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Nicolas Tiangaye was destroyed by the Seleka, and the perpetrators have never been brought to justice, although they are known. The Minister of Youth at the time, a Muslim faction leader, was also a victim of robbery at his home where his family was molested by elements of the Seleka. The next day he brought his own troops to Bangui: 415 armed troops, to guarantee his safety.

This indicates that the violence met more a logic of factions that were imposed on a government without real power, than real concerted actions. I recall that until the end of its regime, the Seleka failed to have a unified command, the various elements were only taking orders from their "generals".

I would also like to report two very explicit stories in this regard. One day, the Head of State shall convened a meeting with the mayors of the districts of Bangui as well neighbourhood leaders to discuss security issues. At his side were two generals, both ministers of state: Nouredine ADAM , Minister of Safety and DHAFANE Moussa, Minister of Forestry. The President gives telephone numbers, telling the audience that in case of any incident in their neighborhood, they could call these numbers and he instructed his ministers to immediately take action when receiving those calls. At that moment, a female neighbourhood leader stands and asks the President if the generals could help to resolve the problem of a two teenagers kidnapped in her neighborhood by the elements of the Seleka against the payment of a sum of 70,000 CFA francs, about 140 U.S. dollars. While everyone expected the President to give instructions to his two generals, he reached into his pocket and said, "you said 140 dollars? Look, here's the sum to free the kids." However, as the city had been divided into spheres of influence by the Seleka, it would have been very easy to know the leader of the rebels in that area only by having the name of the neighbourhood. But, obviously, the President did not want to face the general in question.

The second story took place in the Council of Ministers. The Minister of Livestock complained because two cattle trucks from his Ministry had been taken. These are cattle trucks that drive cattle to the slaughterhouse. He asked the Head of State to intervene to ensure that the vehicles would be returned to the Ministry in order to avoid any disruption in the meat supply for the city. A Seleka minister then took the floor and told his colleague that it was too complicated to resolve this problem in the Council and that, in his opinion, a sum of five million CFA could solve the problem more quickly.

There are many other examples like those two. During the long ten months of the Seleka regime, generals and faction leaders, who were mostly Chadian and Sudanese mercenaries, have controlled the country, challenged the authority of the State every day and have installed a regime of total impunity for serious crimes. It is this very impunity that gave birth to the movement of villagers knows as ANTIBALAKA. Tired to cry for help to the authorities without being heard, the villagers organized themselves to defend their land. At least that was the story at the beginning. Initially welcomed by the people as heroes and saviours, the ANTIBALAKA who copied the same type of organization of the Seleka, with autonomous area leaders and without a unified chain of command very quickly ended up making the same crimes, quickly started committed the same crimes.

They have thus committed systematic massacres and caused massive displacement of Muslim civilians. They have committed several spectacular acts of savagery of a rare violence, with gruesome scenes set around the bodies of their victims, carrying their maimed members as trophies in processions where you could often find young people under fifteen years old.

The ANTIBALAKA also committed abuses against leading personalities, such as the assassination of a former Minister of Health, Dr. Kalité who was suspected of having a weapons cache in his house which was completely destroyed. It was the northern part of the CAR, the same region as NDJOTODIA. We can also mention the assassination of a member of the transitional parliament and his two children who had denounced in the National Transitional Council, the atrocities

committed by the anti- BALAKA, although he was a Christian. More recently, last weekend, Saturday, April 12, an attempted attack against a retired Christian general led to the death of two of the attackers. The Misca troops that protected the general found on the body of those attackers talismans and amulets that anti- BALAKA traditionally wear.

Thus, we can see that the so-called political violence has increasingly become banditry. Some have also said that there is a strategy behind the violence in order to install constant tension with the objective, not only to discredit the current transitional government by making it appear as weak, but also to impose as key contact persons to resolve the crisis some old dignitaries of the past regime. Public claims have been recorded from either the anti- BALAKA "coordinators" or party leaders of the former political majority BOZIZE. Connections with former President Bozizé have even been demonstrated.

4. What concrete steps to stop the killings and prevent an imminent genocide as well as ongoing crimes against humanity faced by CAR civilians

- a. Firm condemnation of all crimes against humanity, regardless of the religion or any other affiliation of the victims

The commission of international crimes by all parties concerned is unacceptable, regardless of religion or membership of the victims and must be put to an end without notice. It is necessary to keep denouncing them. The PGA group in CAR has called many times all parties to exercise restraint and to respect international law.

- b. The role of the international community, including the presence of foreign troops on the ground: the need for a robust response

Unfortunately, the response of the international community was (and is still) a bit late and inefficient , as evidenced by the deteriorating security situation: the African Union was the first to respond by announcing a new mission (the MISCA) in July 2013. Then, under the leadership of France the resolution 2121 (2013) adopted 10 October 2013 by the Security Council of the United Nations has helped to strengthen and broaden the mandate of the UN Office in CAR which yet remains poorly adapted to the reality on the ground . The arrival of the French troops part of the operation SANGARIS , however, allowed a partial securing Bangui , although the support of the European Union to the French operation authorized by the Security Council of the United Nations in its resolution 2134 (2014) has been slow to materialize making it difficult to work in the field. Nevertheless, we are relieved and pleased that the Security Council adopted on 10 April 2014 its resolution 2149 (2014) which established a new peace mission for CAR (the MINUSCA) for a duration of one year with the initial deployment of more than 10,000 military and 1,800 police forces.

This new mission, requested by the President of transition and also by the Central African civil society, had been facing a strong reluctance from some States contributors of troops for the MISCA.

We hope that this peacekeeping operation will benefit from a broad support and, we welcome its extensive mandate to protect civilians, to stop atrocities committed on the field, to support the transition process, the delivery of the humanitarian aid, investigations and efforts of the national and international jurisdictions and in the DDR process.

This mission is particularly welcomed, as in light of the complexity of the crisis, a clear overall integrated and multidimensional coherent response is necessary in order to put an end to mass atrocities, and to avoid a possible genocide against the civilian population given the new violent retaliatory dynamic prevailing in Central African Republic. In addition, the situation poses serious risks to the regional stability, given the possibility that the Central African Republic could become a hub for the exchange of small arms and light weapons, as well as a refuge for terrorists, jihadist groups and war criminals from neighbouring countries, as is already the case for the fundamentalist Christian group called the " Lord 's Resistance Army " (LRA) in northern Uganda, whose leader Joseph Kony and others are being indicted by the ICC since 2005. In my quality of Chair of the PGA group in Central African Republic, two weeks ago I have launched, alongside with the Presidents of the PGA groups in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a call for his arrest and surrender to the ICC³. This arrest is necessary for the stability of the region and is a warning to the leaders of the rebel factions, in particular of the Séléka, whose criminal practices are partly influenced by the tactics used by the LRA.

Indeed, restoring peace will be difficult as long as impunity is not put to an end, that those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights are not brought to justice and that assistance and adequate reparation to victims is not provided. Major national and international efforts are needed, especially of the International Criminal Court, including significant investments in the construction of a judicial, penal and penitentiary legal system. Moreover, the creation of mechanisms for truth and reconciliation could be considered. I will later come back on to these issues that I developed in my proposals for a sustainable exit from crisis in the Central African Republic.

c. Support to the ICC and its mandate

The PGA group in CAR also recalled several times the jurisdiction of the ICC on serious international crimes that have been or may be committed in the territory of the Central African Republic, in accordance with the Rome Statute of the ICC. In this sense we express our support for the preliminary investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC opened on 7 February 2014 on the situation in the CAR since September 2012. Hopefully the opening of this preliminary investigation and the establishment of an international commission of inquiry by the United Nations Organisation will be a sounding message from the international community to perpetrators of violations and serious crimes.

d. Which concrete steps to follow in order to strengthen the capacity of the forces of security and police in CAR so that they can (finally) protect the population of the CAR

I personally followed with great emotion the beginning of the reconstitution of the police and gendarmerie forces launched by the Minister of Security. It was not an easy achievement, given the

³ <http://www.pgaction.org/news/press-releases/pga-members-applaud-us-governments-renewed-efforts-to-arrest-joseph-kony.html>

reluctance of the international community towards the old security forces, in particular the former FACA.

Several material difficulties still appear to be insurmountable, given the bankruptcy experienced by the state. As a consequence, patrols sometimes only count a single weapon for four gendarmes. Nonetheless, the population feels protected simply due to their visible presence.

It now belongs to the government to quickly define an overall strategy in terms of security, which will allow it to start the discussions on the reform of the security system by engaging in talks for the reconstitution of FACA without further delays.

Thus, when the Central African Security Forces will be restored - including police and gendarmerie forces - they should be involved in actions of disarmament led by the MINUSCA in order to address the groups, uncontrolled elements and acts of violence over the whole territory. It will however be fundamental to pay close attention and ensure that the rebels or militia arrested, disarmed and demobilized are not automatically incorporated into the FACA.

It will then probably be necessary to undergo a deep psychological work towards elements to integrate in order to take into account feelings of hatred as well as the thirst of revenge that sometimes exists in the ranks of security forces.

It is also necessary to convey within the FACA a strong motivation for the forces to perform their "responsibility to protect". Indeed, the corruption and inefficiency of the previous regime had led to the failure of the DDR process with former rebels and had especially led to the tragic situation the country is experiencing now.

e. What method to adopt for a sustainable exit from the crisis and for the establishment of a genuine reconciliation between Central Africans.

The security and military response, based on a robust mandate of the multinational force and which consists in beginning the process of strengthening the police and the army forces, must be accompanied by a political process to be established in parallel. The objective is to force the warring parties to sit around the table of negotiations within a political process. This has to be built on an inclusive dialogue, on a participatory community process and on national reconciliation in order to achieve a long-term solution that will end, in a sustainable manner, atrocities committed against populations of civilians.

The ultimate goal - which is also one of the pillars of the roadmap of the transitional government - is to succeed in organizing free, democratic, transparent and fair elections for the return to an undisputed democratic constitutional order and to the establishment of a democratic parliament that will undertake the necessary reforms to exit the crisis.

Two prerequisites must be observed to achieve these processes:

- Firstly, the government should clearly show its willingness to initiate or to sustain, with a real expertise, a mediation process. Several mediation groups have emerged since the beginning of the crisis and work without any synergy. The mediation conducted by the religious platform (composed with the Catholic Archbishop, the Protestant Pastor and the Imam of Bangui) is probably the best known, as it is also the most publicized. Yet, other groups of the civil society exist, as well as a government department known as the Communication in charge of National Reconciliation, and have launched or are preparing to launch a few scattered initiatives. First, we do not have the adequate resources, but mainly for the sake of efficiency, I think we would benefit in pooling our efforts, for example by setting up a Joint Mediation Group – the JMG which would include all these different initiatives. The JMG would then officially be in charge of inter-religious and inter-community mediation in order to defuse tensions and to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.
- In a second time, the government must forge a fixed doctrine on the issue of anti-BALAKAs : the government cannot continue to treat anti- BALAKA as "enemies " while copying in this regards the MISCA, and at the same time, admit them in ministerial offices and even entrust them with a mediation mission as it was the case last March in a small southwestern town of the country!

I would like now to quickly give an outline of what could be considered as a JMG roadmap for a sustainable exit from the crisis:

- Signing of a cease -fire: solemn declarations of ceasefire by the belligerents, commitment to submit to disarmament, acceptance of responsibility in their areas of influence
- Signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, including the various rebel movements absent from the current conflict (FDPC of Abdoulaye MISKINE ; the Movement of NDJADDER Florian, etc), the A2R , etc.
- Once the conditions for disarmament are met in a village or in a neighborhood, launch of processes of restorative justice and community reconciliation (collection of records on victims; neighborhood meetings, citizen pact of neighborhoods);
- After the elections: preparation and organization of an inclusive dialogue with all of the stakeholders;
- Advocacy for the organization of a regional conference on the issue of stability of the sub-region, by addressing the interference of states in the internal affairs of neighborhoods

These are the cornerstone of the process. I will conclude by sending my warmest thanks to:

- The **PGA Secretariat and network**, which has supported us, provided assistance and shown tremendous solidarity all along this terrible ordeal.
- **NGOs** defending human rights and of strategic analysis (Human Rights Watch, International League of Human Rights, International Crisis Group), who launched the first warning signal on the situation in CAR in the aftermaths of the Coup d'Etat led by the Seleka rebels ;
- The **African Union** for its reaction, since July 2013, by deciding to mandate an operation of peacekeeping, the MISCA;
- **France**, as the French authorities immediately referred to the risk of a "pre- genocidal situation", raising fears of a new Rwanda situation. I wish to also acknowledge the rapid deployment and professionalism of the SANGARIS operation that managed to stop, as I mentioned earlier, a genuine genocidal process;
- The **USA** for their tireless struggle, made without much publicity but effectively, in tracking for several years Joseph Kony in eastern CAR;

- **The UN authorities** who quickly rose awareness on the gravity of the situation: the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, who reported on January 22 to the Security Council of the United Nations, "the risk of crimes against humanity and genocide"⁴ in the Central African Republic and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres who also announced during his visit to Bangui on 12 February 12 2014, that a " massive ethnic and religious cleansing " was taking place in the country⁵.
- **The UN Secretary-General BAN KI MOON** in person : a great man who has been attentive to the request of the Central African civil society on the importance of a UN operation and who also had the courage to quickly appoint a commission to investigate the incidents of March 29 2014⁶ that involved forces peacekeeping, incidents that have strengthened the religious hatred speech. Chadian soldiers were found responsible by the preliminary UN investigation of killing about 30 civilians and seriously wounding 300 others in an indiscriminate attack in a market close to Bangui. In this regard, we should perhaps suggest a doctrine on the composition of troops of the next MINUSCA? Based on the example of the MINUCI and UNOCI in Côte d' Ivoire, co-opting neighboring countries such as troop contributors should be avoided because of the difficulty to ensure standards of impartiality.
- Finally, and as so well said in English, last but the least, my thanks go to **Sweden**, for initiating this meeting. It is extremely important for my country, the CAR, that the attention of the international community keeps its focus on the drama experienced by our population. We are here all aware that the situation in Syria, North Korea and Ukraine are many topics that could eclipse the Central African drama. Therefore, whenever an opportunity to talk about the CAR is offered, it is extremely important to us. I would like to join to my thanks all the Friends of the ICC.

⁴ <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/SAPG%20Statement%20at%20UNSC%20on%20the%20situation%20in%20CAR-%2022%20Jan%202014.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/52fbc6e96.html>

⁶ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47506&Cr=central+african+republic&Cr1=#.U0bXVen8yV>