

PRESS RELEASE

UNAIDS urges greater protection for the most vulnerable in the Central African Republic

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé on joint humanitarian mission warns of a growing health crisis

GENEVA/BANGUI, 19 February 2014—The political and military crisis in the Central African Republic is obstructing humanitarian efforts and endangering the already limited access citizens have to essential health services.

UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé is conducting a joint mission with Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos, the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs Aicha Abdullahi and the Assistant Secretary-General of the UN Department of Safety and Security, Mbaranga Gasarabwe from 18-20 February to the Central African Republic.

Mr Sidibé, Ms Amos, Dr Abdullahi and Ms Gasarabwe met with the country's President of the Transitional Government, Catherine Samba-Panza who expressed her appreciation to the United Nations for its efforts in bringing humanitarian aid to people in need. However the President said more humanitarian action is desperately needed as many people are hungry. She said reconciliation was essential and that so far the root causes of the crisis had not been tackled.

The President's words of reconciliation were echoed by Christian and Muslim leaders who met with the delegation as well.

The United Nations has called for US\$ 551 million to meet humanitarian needs—of which 13% has been raised. Global solidarity is crucial to ensure funding is made available for the two and a half million people reportedly in need of assistance.

"There is no longer a fine line between living and dying in the Central African Republic. People are dying—we are on the brink of a health catastrophe," said Mr Sidibé. "If we do not act now, a generation will be gone forever—under our watch. This is not acceptable."

"Some 2.6 million people need immediate humanitarian assistance, while reports of terrible atrocities and attacks against civilians and aid workers continue," said Ms Amos.

Dr Abdullahi said, "With my initial interactions here in Bangui, my impression is that there are key priorities; security of lives and properties, humanitarian assistance, guarantee of human rights, rule of law and justice, public service reforms including the building of a new constitution and return to constitutional order. The African Union Commission is committed to supporting the Central Africa Republic (CAR) transitional government in addressing these multifarious concerns as key to restoring constitutional order, political stability and democratic governance in the country."

The delegation is also scheduled to travel to Bossangoa in Northwest Central African Republic, a region that has suffered a wave of sectarian violence. The delegation will meet with Christian and Muslim communities and visit a site for internally displaced persons.

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UNAIDS

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