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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Violence and impunity in Central African Republic

Attacks on civilians and compounds of international NGOs in the town of Bocaranga in February 2017 have shocked the international community and interrupted the humanitarian relief for the civil society. At least one office of international aid agencies was burnt down by militiamen. Shops and markets systematically were plundered by the gunmen. Some 9,000 people fled the violence to shelter for protection in the neighboring forests.

Fighting between different rival fractions of the ex-Seleka rebel group recently has intensified around the town of Bambari. Since November 2016, one of several movements of the ex-Seleka has tried to dislodge other rebel groups without caring about the fate of the civilian population. The armed conflict, which escalated at the end of January 2017 was extremely violent. Dozens of people were killed or wounded, many of the victims were civilians. More than 11,000 people were displaced. With a population of 42,000 inhabitants and 26,000 IDPs, the city of Bambari has a tremendous importance for the protection of the civilian population in Central African Republic.

In September 2016, the town of Kouï suffered from massive attacks by militiamen. Some 15,000 inhabitants have fled from the city to search elsewhere for protection. Between September and November 2016, some 53,000 civilians were displaced by armed conflict between rival militias in Bria and in Kaga Bandoro. The containment of violence and the protection of the civilian population are the biggest challenges for UN peacekeepers, French armed forces and regular armed forces of CAR.

Furthermore the protection of members of the Muslim minority outside of Bangui has been another important challenge. Intimidations, threats and attacks against this minority continued in 2016 and 2017. Especially in the Northern areas of CAR, minority people have been complaining about permanent threats and waves of violence against their settlements.

The government has been unable to extend the presence of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) beyond the capital Bangui across the whole country. The on-going armed conflicts are indicating that there is an urgent need for confidence-building measures on the local level between the militias, the authorities and organizations of the civil society. But these measures only might be successful, if law and order is reestablished across all areas of the country, not only in Bangui.

Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned by the failure of the international community to ensure a better protection for Muslim minority people and the civilian population in general and to effectively disarm all armed non-state official security forces. We are calling for a broader international support and for the implementation of a comprehensive strategy on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation (DDRR). More incentives for armed members of all conflict parties should be proposed in order to achieve a sustainable peace and a more effective protection of the civilian population.

There is an urgent need to increase humanitarian relief for the 434,000 IDPs and the 462,000 refugees in neighboring countries. Especially in Cameroon, refugees are suffering from insecurity and a lack of humanitarian relief.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council to:

- Urge all conflict parties to respect basic international principles of Humanitarian Law and an effective protection of the civilian population,
- Strengthen the efforts to end impunity,
- Urge the international community to broaden their financial and logistical support for a comprehensive DDRR and to enhance humanitarian relief for IDPs and refugees.