Fractured peacebuilding in the Central African Republic
Lessons for African Union engagement

Gustavo de Carvalho and Amanda Lucey

Key findings

1 The impact of the African Union (AU) can be seen most clearly in its capacity to convene stakeholders, including government, thereby supporting larger peacebuilding initiatives.

2 The AU's mandate to engage on a post-conflict reconstruction and development framework can be more clearly defined in order to maximise its impact in this area.

3 There is an increased AU interest in the Central African Republic (CAR), which could provide further opportunities for linking with other AU-led initiatives.

4 There are opportunities to strengthen coordination between the AU in CAR and the AU Commission.

5 The AU and other international organisations, including the United Nations, can enhance coordination on how to best to support peacebuilding in CAR.

Summary

The Central African Republic (CAR) has seen decades of fractured peacebuilding processes. After holding elections in 2016, the country can seize the opportunity to reach sustainable peace. This policy brief looks at the role played by the African Union in supporting CAR's peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development processes; and identifies ways for the continental body to enhance its engagements.

THE PEACEBUILDING FIELD is desperate for more effective responses to countries facing or emerging from conflicts. A growing number of actors support peacebuilding processes on the African continent, but, despite all their efforts, responses do not always achieve the desired results. The various peacebuilding actors and processes provide a complex and interlinked array of responses that may complement, parallel and even compete with each other.

In this context, an important case study is the Central African Republic (CAR). The country has been through various phases of conflict and has undergone some peacebuilding processes. However, continuous outbreaks of violence have forced external interveners to rethink their engagements and adopt more peacebuilding-specific tasks. The fractured peacebuilding process in the CAR shows that it desperately needs long-term rather than just short-term responses for peace to be sustained.

During 2016, with the election of a new government, the CAR has an opportunity to effectively implement long-term strategies to improve the country's resilience to conflict. A number of actors are already engaged in supporting the country's processes, but moving forward will require cohesive and harmonised strategies. One of these actors is the African Union (AU), which has been engaged in the country since December 2013, initially through the International Support Mission to the CAR (MISCA). MISCA was subsequently taken over by the United Nations (UN). The AU has retained a political office in the country – the AU Mission for Central Africa and the CAR

(MISAC) – and now wishes to adopt a more prominent role in the country's post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding initiatives.

This policy brief is part of a series of policy briefs and papers from the Institute for Security Studies' (ISS) Training for Peace Programme (TfP) that reflects on peacebuilding processes in Africa. The series provides and gathers lessons, knowledge and evidence on the planning and implementation of these peacebuilding processes. This policy brief is based on field research conducted from 13–19 September 2015 in Bangui with 19 stakeholders. It focuses in particular on ways in which the AU can further enhance its peacebuilding role in the CAR.

Current context

The CAR's history is marked by several conflict cycles and disrupted peacebuilding processes. There are several reasons for the conflict, including poor governance, unequal access to resources and basic services, and disconnected political systems that fail to serve the needs of the majority of the country's population. The country was plunged back into violence when the Séléka rebel coalition launched a series of attacks on the government in December 2012. Despite the signing of the Libreville peace agreement in January 2013, the rebels ousted President Francois Bozizé two months later.

> While religion has certainly played role in the conflict in the CAR, it is important to note that it is not the only dimension of the conflict

When the Séléka took power in March 2013, Michel Djotodia was named president. He struggled to control elements of the different armed groups that made up his coalition. This resulted in a considerable breakdown in law and order, perpetrated mostly by Séléka members. With the Séléka being a Muslim-dominated coalition, negative sentiments brewed against Muslims in the CAR, leading to the creation of the self-defence militia anti-balaka. In December 2013, anti-balaka activities intensified against Djotodia and the Séléka, leading to the resignation of the president in January 2014.

The resignation of Djotodia paved the way for an interim government headed by the former mayor of Bangui, Catherine Samba-Panza. However, over the past three years the CAR has continued to be plagued by violent conflict. For example, on 26 September 2015 the killing of a man in Bangui led to a series of violent acts in the capital, allegedly along religious lines.[1] The conflict between the Muslim-dominated Séléka and the Christian-dominated anti-balaka, amid accusations of human rights abuses from both sides, highlights the fragile state of peace in the country.

While religion has certainly played role in the conflict in the CAR, it is important to note that it is not the only dimension of the conflict. Analysts state that the violence is about more than religion, and came about due to 'a lack of political stability and the absence of credible state institutions in the CAR'.[2] In this context, the conflict in the CAR is characterised by a complex situation where the government has little capacity to govern the majority of the country – its presence is largely confined to Bangui – creating a vacuum that has allowed competing groups to emerge and eventually forge an anti-government alliance.

20 May 2014

THE *PLAN D'URGENCE*, A PLAN OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND SOCIAL COHESION, IS LAUNCHED

Following the second round of elections in 2016, Faustin-Archange Touadéra was elected as the new president of the country. While largely considered peaceful, the election process has shown how fractured the peace process is in the CAR. For example, after the first round of voting a protest march was held in Bangui demanding a rerun of the presidential vote. The CAR has a long way to go, with the government still attempting to extend its authority to the majority of the country. Yet these developments also open a space for implementing a new phase of short- and long-term peacebuilding responses.

Current peacebuilding processes in the CAR

Since 2014 there have been a number of attempts to identify priorities and define plans of action to support the country's peacebuilding processes. The plans, while providing an opportunity for the country to identify better ways of sustaining peace, also highlight some of the critical challenges in ensuring the coherent and continued implementation of such policies.

The Ministry of Communication and Reconciliation launched the *Plan d'urgence,* a plan of national reconciliation and social cohesion, on 20 May 2014. The plan has four main pillars: 1) the urgent dissemination of political messages on security, impunity, peace and reconciliation; 2) the continuation and intensification of dialogue with armed groups and their supporters; 3) the transformation of intergroup dynamics in priority areas; and 4) direct dialogue with displaced populations, refugees and foreigners.[3] This plan shows that political dialogue and conflict transformation are seen as essential immediate priorities that will enable the country to achieve sustainable peace.

The *Plan d'urgence* provides for the immediate needs of the country and has been complemented by other, longer-term planning frameworks. The CAR has been engaging with the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (the New Deal) since its inception and has been one of the pilot countries among g7+ members.[4] As part of this process, the CAR Ministry of National Planning, along with international organisations such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), identified priorities under different New Deal 'peacebuilding and statebuilding goals', namely security, economic foundations, revenues and services, justice and legitimate politics. Through the process of defining the CAR's specific fragility framework, it was identified that security is the most pressing concern, followed by development.

None of these processes gathered as much attention and interest as the Bangui National Forum. The forum was organised in May 2015, and it identified several responses that the country should take. Those responses, based on the different sub-committees' discussions, included aspects of peace and security; justice and reconciliation; governance; and economic

and social development. The forum was intended to be an inclusive process that would lead to national reconciliation in the country – a critical step. The aims of the forum were to define a comprehensive agreement, highlighting the need for a roadmap, and identify the drivers of conflict and peace. All of the common pillars in peacebuilding processes were expected to provide a way forward for planning and determining priorities.

> The Bangui National Forum identified several responses that the country should take

The priorities of the *Plan d'urgence* and the New Deal are similar to those of the Bangui Forum, especially its five major recommendations. The first major recommendation of the Bangui Forum pertains to the development of principles for engagement in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), which many interviewees called a pre-DDR process that involves the provision of cash for work, sensitisation, and some aspects of disarmament itself. The second relates to the release of child soldiers, and the third to timelines for elections, which were not met. Fourth, it addresses the need for processes for justice and reconciliation, including a national truth and reconciliation commission and local peace and reconciliation committees.[5] Finally, it deals with social and economic concerns, emphasising governance priorities and reducing poverty and inequality. In particular, the forum highlights issues in the mining and agricultural sectors as being key to economic and social development.

Role of key external actors supporting peacebuilding in the CAR

Since the early 2000s various external actors have engaged unevenly in the CAR, supporting political processes aimed at enabling peace. This led to the country's being characterised by many as a forgotten crisis.[6] This section provides an overview of some of the key international organisations' roles in the country in the last 15 years.

Regional and continental actors, initially led by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), began engaging with the CAR in the early 2000s,[7] with neighbouring states deploying the Multinational Force of CEMAC in 2002.[8] This was followed by an ECCAS deployment from 2008–2013 with the Peace Consolidation Mission in the CAR (MICOPAX).

Following the escalation of the conflict in 2013, MICOPAX required larger support. UN Security Council Resolution 2127 (2013) authorised an AU-led International Support Mission to the CAR

(MISCA), accompanied by a French-backed peacekeeping force, Operation Sangaris.[9] ECCAS also remained in the country, with a refocus on conflict prevention and developing its Early Warning Mechanism (MARAC).[10]

The UN has included the CAR in its peacebuilding architecture (PBA) since 2008, engaging in a series of processes to support catalytic responses to peacebuilding in the country. It is one of the countries that has a country configuration at the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and which receives support from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

The UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) in particular has been present in the country since January 2010 with the aim of consolidating peace and strengthening democratic institutions. It has since changed its mandate to 'support for the implementation of the transition process; support for conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance; support for the stabilization of the security situation; promotion and protection of human rights; and coordination of international actors involved in the implementation of those tasks'.[11] A particular focus has been on supporting the government to draft strategic frameworks for an inclusive peace process, including support for specific DDR efforts.

> With the rehatting of the AU mission into a UN operation, the AU maintained an office in the country, namely MISAC

The violence has had an impact on the UN's deployment in the CAR. While a UN takeover of the AU mission was discussed, it also required internal transitioning from a peacebuilding to a peacekeeping operation. On 10 April 2014 the UN deployed a peacekeeping mission, MINUSCA, to take over BINUCA, and on 15 September MINUSCA took over MISCA in accordance with Resolution 2149 (2014).[12] The primary mandate of the mission has been to provide a secure environment, although the mission is focusing increasingly on state capacity as the security situation improves.[13]

MINUSCA remains the main peacekeeping mission, but a number of other actors also operate on the ground, including the French peacekeeping force. With the re-hatting of the AU mission into a UN operation, the AU has maintained an office in the country – the above-mentioned MISAC.[14] MISAC was charged with supporting the political transition and elections; the disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) process; security and justice sector reform; post-conflict reconstruction and support to gender mainstreaming; and facilitating the coordination of the AU-led initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).[15]

As with other external actors, the PBA's engagement with the CAR has also been affected by the violence. With the crisis in 2013 its support from the PBF was suspended, and it later reengaged through its immediate response facility. These engagements have since supported important peacebuilding efforts in the country, such as human rights monitoring, reconciliation (supporting the Bangui Forum), redeployment of state capacity, and elections.

External role players in the country face tough decisions, as the interviews in Bangui revealed. Disarmament is a priority but remains challenging. The Bangui Forum brought together over 700 participants in May 2015 to define a vision for the country's future. Although an agreement on principles for engagement in a DDR process was

MINUSCA IS THE MAIN PEACEKEEPING MISSION, BUT OTHER ACTORS ALSO OPERATE ON THE GROUND

signed between the Séléka and anti-balaka, there are significant impediments to implementation and funding.[16] Unequal disarmament, challenged by the lack of infrastructure, strategies and financial resources, for instance, could inflame further tensions. The Bangui Forum also agreed on elections to be held in August 2015, but these were postponed until the end of the same year. Interviewees in the CAR expressed concern that, without equal disarmament, free and fair elections that would lead to sustainable peace could not be guaranteed.

> Since the departure of its peace support operation in late 2014, the AU has started transitioning its role, with a stronger focus on political dialogue

The forum created hope for an inclusive and forward-moving process, but little has been done to follow up on its decisions. Stakeholders interviewed in the CAR suggested that there has been a lack of political will to follow through on decisions made in the different sub-committees. With the holding of elections and a new government in place, there are expectations that the current political environment could create a momentum where some of the forum's decisions could be implemented.

Part of the international push for elections at the end of 2015 was linked to donors' budgetary cycles. Funding from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would only be released to an elected government in the CAR, in accordance with their rules and regulations. The UN also encountered difficulties in developing national plans for the country in the absence of elected government officials. Frequently, stakeholders lamented the lack of a national strategy for the country. Some stated that a lack of vision was notably absent among some political leaders.

With the election of a new government there are a number of opportunities for engaging in future peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) initiatives, for the AU in particular.

The evolving role of the AU in the CAR

In all of the above-mentioned processes, the AU has played different roles. Since the departure of its peace support operation in late 2014, the AU has started transitioning its role, with a stronger focus on political dialogue. The process of re-hatting from MISCA to MINUSCA had a direct impact on the structure of the AU in terms of both its military component and its civilian personnel. Many civilian personnel moved to the UN, and the small AU office that was left behind had its mandate expanded to include the rest of the Central African region. Some interviewees felt that this mandate change created a somewhat ambiguous situation, as the AU lacks the means to fully deal with the situation in the CAR, let alone the entire region.

While the AU office has individual officers dealing with one or more thematic areas, the UN mission has large sections with a considerably greater number of individuals dealing with these issues. This suggests that the AU will not be able to implement activities, take part in discussions and follow up on decisions to the same extent as the UN.

In addition, when analysing the mandates of MISAC and MINUSCA, there are many similarities and some differences. This creates confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the UN and the AU respectively. Table 1 compares their mandates.

FUNDING FROM THE WORLD BANK AND THE IMF WOULD ONLY BE RELEASED TO AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT

There are mixed views on the ability of the UN and the AU to collaborate. While many of those interviewed mentioned the importance of high-level collaboration on the political transition and implementation of joint responses in relation to DDR, SSR and more local-level reconciliation, many also suggested this interaction did not, in fact, exist. Some, anecdotally, shared the view that the AU was not really seen as being relevant in activities. Moreover, the relationship between the AU and ECCAS (one of the regional economic communities [RECs] considered to be the building blocks of the AU) was also said by some stakeholders to be fractured, with frustrations on both sides.

Some areas are identified as a priority only in the MISAC mandate. An important aspect relates to PCRD. The UN mission does not make direct mention of its work on PCRD (or peacebuilding), which constitutes an important space where the AU could

Table 1: Comparison between MINUSCA and MISAC mandates

Theme	MINUSCA[17]	MISAC[18]
Political transition and elections	To take a leading role in international efforts to assist the transitional authorities; working with ECCAS, the AU, relevant stakeholders and the international community to devise, facilitate, coordinate and provide technical assistance to the political transition and electoral processes	To enable the AU, in close coordination with ECCAS, MINUSCA and other relevant international actors, to continue to support the ongoing national efforts, with particular focus on support to the political transition and the organisation of elections
Reconciliation	To assist the transitional authorities in mediation and reconciliation processes at both the national and local levels, working with the relevant regional and local bodies and religious leaders, including through inclusive national dialogue, transitional justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms, while ensuring the full and effective participation of women	To enable the AU, in close coordination with ECCAS, MINUSCA and other relevant international actors, to continue to support the ongoing national efforts, with particular focus on national reconciliation
DDR and Security Sector Reform (SSR)	To support the transitional authorities in developing and implementing a revised strategy for the DDR and DDRR of former combatants and armed elements to reflect new realities on the ground, while paying specific attention to the needs of children associated with armed forces and groups, and support for the repatriation of foreign elements	Support to the DDRR process, as well as to the reform of the security and justice sectors
Post-conflict reconstruction	No direct reference	To enable the AU, in close coordination with ECCAS, MINUSCA and other relevant international actors, to continue to support the ongoing national efforts, with a particular focus on post-conflict reconstruction
Gender	It refers to the importance of women in the sections on the protection of civilians, support to transition, and promotion and protection of human rights	To enable the AU, in close coordination with ECCAS, MINUSCA and other relevant international actors, to continue to support the ongoing national efforts, with particular focus on gender
LRA	No direct reference	Facilitation of coordination between the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) and MINUSCA, in the discharge of their respective mandates

Source: UN Security Council Resolution 2149 and AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué CDLVIII.

further identify ways of supporting the planning and implementation of strategies. This is not to say that the UN is not working on peacebuilding matters. To a large extent many of MINUSCA's functions, as well as those of the country team, directly support early peacebuilding functions. The limited, and potentially catalytic, funding from the PBF has also assisted some peacebuilding matters. However, many of the stakeholders interviewed felt that the PBC has had limited impact in the country.

There certainly could be closer interaction between the PBA and MISAC on the ground. PBF funding for AU human rights observers in Burundi is currently seen as an important new space in which both the AU and the UN can further engage.[19] This is the first time that the PBF has funded AU activities, and follows calls from the UN General Assembly and Security Council to ensure there is closer collaboration and partnership between the AU and the UN on peacebuilding as a means to increase effective support in peacebuilding contexts.[20] Current experiences in the CAR show that the closer collaboration between the two organisations on peacebuilding is critical in ensuring a more relevant and present role for the AU in such matters.

MISAC, now with a reduced presence in the country, must adapt to better clarify its role and relevance in the political process. In particular, the AU can play two roles: as convener and implementer. On the convening side, the AU has been considerably more successful. To date, its most visible and possibly effective role (since the departure of its peace support operations) has been engagement with and facilitation between local partners and the international community. This has been especially visible in the actions of the special representative of the chairperson in the AU's capacity as the co-chair of the International Contact Group on the CAR (ICG-CAR). As a result, the AU engages with the UN in weekly cluster meetings, such as on the protection of civilians and humanitarian issues.

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While that participation provides the AU with an important space to influence and support the process, interviewees mentioned that the AU could do more to convene relevant stakeholders.[21] Some felt the AU needed to take more action, moving beyond just participating in coordination and meetings. Other interviewees felt that the challenges it faces in implementation and hence supporting processes, beyond its role in the ICG-CAR, are a sign of the AU's under-staffing and limited capacity.[22]

The AU has shown less capacity in other types of engagement, such as the implementation of peacebuilding activities. While it has engaged in the development of certain initiatives, e.g. on SSR and DDR, implementation has so far been limited. Stakeholders voiced their frustration with local competition over space, where smaller actors such as the AU are often sidelined in relation to larger actors such as the UN mission and agencies.

To a large extent, while the AU's comparative advantage as a convener appears clearer than that of an implementer, challenges are seen in both types of engagement in the CAR. These challenges were often mentioned in the interviews as being part of a range of issues, particularly in relation to capacity. Some interviewees even said that

THE AU CAN PLAY TWO ROLES: AS CONVENER AND IMPLEMENTER

they perceived the AU as facing some sort of identity crisis, in that the organisation was still defining its best course of action in the country.

AU lessons from the peacebuilding processes in the CAR

Table 2: The AU's comparative advantages in the CAR

Ability to emphasise the African context
Capacity to convene stakeholders on a broader range of issues
Ability to act as a bridge between the international community and the government
Mandate to engage on the pillars of the AU PCRD framework, through clear identification of where it can have the biggest impact
Possibility of connecting responses in the CAR to other on-going AU initiatives
Possibility to further develop the African Solidarity Initiative to build a database that can be used in experience sharing between other African governments and the government of the CAR

Source: Authors.

This section assesses the AU's priorities, as well as its ability to implement responses in a highly complex environment. It builds on the responses of participants regarding the AU's comparative advantage in the CAR.

Planning challenges are not unique to the AU, and have been identified by the ISS as a challenge in most peacebuilding processes: peacebuilding actors often try to do too much, focusing on short-term gains rather than long-term impact.[23] This leads to peacebuilding responses that do not provide a critical assessment of realistic planning and the identification of potential impact.

In moving forward, the AU will have to consider its role as a convenor, an implementer, or both. From a theoretical point of view, the AU has the advantage of having an established PCRD framework to draw on. This framework has six pillars: security, political governance and transition; human rights, justice and reconciliation; humanitarian assistance; reconstruction and socioeconomic development; and gender. The AU should look in detail at how its framework relates to the priorities set by the CAR at the Bangui Forum, in its *Plan d'urgence* and in the New Deal. It also needs to pragmatically consider in which of these pillars it can best engage. Humanitarian assistance, for example, is costly and may not be appropriate given the AU's financial constraints. Also, given the political nature of the AU, it may be difficult to apply the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

The PCRD framework needs stronger support to become more active and relevant. A small section at the AU Commission is dealing with the implementation of PCRD, making it hard for it to provide comprehensive guidance to the mission offices. During the interviews it was mentioned that while the AU has increasingly reached out to MISAC itself on PCRD matters, AU structures would often make it hard for the interactions to be implemented. There is a need to better link the mission with the PCRD Unit at the AU Commission, which would support the identification of needs and joint implementation of actions between Bangui and Addis Ababa.

2012

THE YEAR THE AU INITIATED THE AFRICAN SOLIDARITY INITIATIVE, WHICH LOOKED TO IMPLEMENT THE MOTTO 'AFRICA HELPING AFRICA'

The challenge of implementing certain PCRD strategies goes beyond the structure of MISAC. While the AU's political forums pay increased attention to PCRD and peacebuilding matters, decisions still need to be translated into greater support for the AU Commission's capacity to implement such policy.

There are some potential movements within the AU that might help address this. Current discussions on the creation of an inter-departmental working group at the AU could help to increase internal coordination within political offices such as MISAC.[24] As the AU PCRD gains further momentum within the AU Commission, it is hoped that this will trickle down by enhancing internal collaboration and practices across the AU Commission and offices.

From a practical point of view, the AU can also push for implementation and follow-up on peacebuilding processes, particularly in relation to the Bangui Forum. With the new government in place, the AU can then create a space to support national stakeholders in their own decisions and plans. As a continental organisation the AU has the legitimacy to engage with the government of the CAR on complicated political issues. In this way it is also believed to have a better understanding of the context required to carry out long-term activities in the country. Peacebuilding and PCRD are inherently political processes, and recent reviews by the UN on peacekeeping[25] and peacebuilding[26] have emphasised the primacy of politics in any kind of peacebuilding. Previous peacebuilding initiatives (e.g. in South Sudan)[27] have been criticised for failing to tackle difficult political issues such as legitimate politics, and here the AU may have an added advantage. It can also emphasise this in its engagements with other stakeholders involved in peacebuilding processes.

Previous peacebuilding initiatives have been criticised for failing to tackle difficult political issues

And while the issue of capacity is often mentioned, the AU has a great advantage that could be better utilised on the ground: convening and mobilising actions from other African countries. This could help it to move beyond quick and isolated responses (often materialised and understood under the umbrella of Quick Impact Projects) and support the long-term implementation of responses. In the past few years increased attention has been given to the practical support provided by African countries. As other African countries have gone through similar developmental processes, they may be best placed to engage on PCRD and peacebuilding.

An important way that the AU could further engage relates to ensuring experience sharing, such as through study tours to other African countries through its border programme. Study tours are important practices that allow stakeholders to compare and share ways in which responses are developed and identify how lessons from other countries can help them in identifying potential gains and shortfalls in peacebuilding.[28]

Mechanisms exist for this potential AU engagement. It has already initiated the African Solidarity Initiative in 2012, which looked to implement the motto 'Africa helping Africa' by sharing expertise on the continent. The AU must persevere with this initiative to build a database of areas in which African countries have carried out innovative and context-specific processes related to PCRD. Currently the initiative lacks resources and the political will of member states to make it operational.[29]

The AU has a great advantage that could be better utilised: convening and mobilising actions from other African countries

It is also important for the AU to more clearly define its engagement with ECCAS, which still has an essential presence in the CAR. RECs are seen as the building blocks of the AU, intended to enhance regional integration but increasingly working in areas such as peace and security, development and governance. However, the principle of subsidiarity is not clearly understood and the different roles of the AU and RECs must be further refined. The AU should engage with ECCAS to promote regional ownership of peacebuilding strategies and public oversight.

The role the AU can play in the CAR must be understood within the context of the complexity of relationships within the organisation itself and among relevant external stakeholders. The AU needs to increase its relevance in the country and rely less on its role as co-convener of the ICG-CAR. In doing so, the AU would be able to showcase its ability to convene, by bringing different African actors together to assist the country to ensure long-term and effective planning, which is so crucial in the CAR context.

Supporting such a process will be difficult. The CAR conflict is highly complex, placed in an environment where everything seems like a priority for the country. Hence the AU, by ensuring that its own initiatives are planned realistically, can increase its reach and critically identify limitations. In doing so it will ensure not only that its own structures are fit for purpose in the country but also that it is better positioned to make a meaningful contribution to peace.

Notes

1   *Reuters,* Central African Republic leader leaves UN early due to violence in Bangui, 28 September 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/29/us-centralafrica-violence-idUSKCN0RS1N920150929.

2   Liesl Louw-Vaudran, Conflict in the Central African Republic: it's not just about religion, *ISS Today,* 26 February 2014, https://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/conflict-in-the-central-african-republic-its-not-just-about-religion.

3   *Deutsche Welle,* Un plan d'urgence pour la RCA, 6 June 2014, http://www.dw.com/fr/un-plan-durgence-pour-la-rca/a-17686356.

4   According to the g7+ website, it can be described as a voluntary association of countries that are or have been affected by conflict and are now in transition to the next stage of development. The group, currently comprised of 20 countries, including CAR. Available at http://www.g7plus.org/.

5   Amy Copley and Amadou Sy, Five takeaways from the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, Brookings, 15 May 2015, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/africa-in-focus/posts/2015/05/15-bangui-forum-central-african-republic-copley-sy.

6   United Nations (UN) News Centre, UN warns Central African Republic is becoming largest forgotten humanitarian crisis, 27 April 2015, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50700#.VsRaAJN978M.

7   The Organization for African Unity had a small mission in the country in the 1980s, with limited success.

8   Angela Meyer, Preventing conflict in Central Africa: ECCAS caught between ambitions, challenges and reality, *Central Africa Report,* 3, August 2015, https://www.issafrica.org/uploads/CentralAfricaReport No3.pdf.

9   UN, MINUSCA background, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusca/background.shtml.

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11 Ibid.

12 UN, MINUSCA, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusca/.

13 Ibid.

14 AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué, PSC/PR/COMM(CDLVIII), 17 September 2014, http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-com-458-car-17-09-2014.pdf.

15 Ibid.

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20 UN Security Council Resolution, UN/Res/2282, 27 April 2016.

21 Interview, international stakeholder A, August 2015.

22 Interview, international stakeholder B, August 2015.

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About the authors

Gustavo de Carvalho is a senior researcher in the Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Division of the ISS. Gustavo has extensive experience in capacity development, policy support and research initiatives in the peacebuilding field in Africa. From 2009 to 2014 he worked at ACCORD as an analyst in its Training for Peace programme, and later as coordinator of its Peacebuilding Unit. Gustavo holds a BA in International Relations from the University of Brasilia, and an MSc in African Studies from the University of Oxford.

Amanda Lucey is a senior researcher in the Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Division of the ISS. Her areas of focus include peacebuilding, south-south cooperation and South African foreign policy. Amanda worked with MONUSCO as a political affairs officer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and previously worked with the UNDP in South Sudan as a rule of law officer. She holds an MPhil in Justice and Transformation from the University of Cape Town.

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Acknowledgements

ISS Pretoria
Block C, Brooklyn Court
361 Veale Street
New Muckleneuk
Pretoria, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 346 9500
Fax: +27 12 460 0998

ISS Addis Ababa
5th Floor, Get House
Building, Africa Avenue
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 11 515 6320
Fax: +251 11 515 6449

ISS Dakar
4th Floor, Immeuble Atryum
Route de Ouakam
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 860 3304/42
Fax: +221 33 860 3343

ISS Nairobi
Braeside Gardens
off Muthangari Road
Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya
Cell: +254 72 860 7642
Cell: +254 73 565 0300

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