

## PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND HUMANITARIAN ACCESS ENDANGERED IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

**Bangui, 30 March 2017** – The prefectures of Ouaka, Haute Kotto and Mbomou are prey to a new outbreak of violence resulting from clashes between the armed groups. Since the beginning of March 2017, the humanitarian community has identified new waves of displacement with urgent needs to be met. This new deterioration comes at a time when the consequences of the violence which studded the Central African Republic between September 2016 and February 2017 are still heavily felt. In this short period, more than 100,000 newly displaced people have been registered.

The Interim Humanitarian Coordinator for Central African Republic, Dr. Michel Yao, warns the perpetrators of this renewed violence against the multiple consequences of their actions. “The humanitarian community is still responding to the urgent and critical needs arising from the September and November 2016 crises in Kaga Bandoro and Bria in particular. A response architecture was set up when no funding was provided for this purpose. In this context, the new violence and exactions against civilians is worrisome as they jeopardize the gains obtained at the highest price to help those whose vulnerability has been exacerbated. This situation is critical as the means of protection tend towards their limit” he said.

In this regard, Dr. Michel Yao expressed his great concern about the protection of civilians and the systematic targeting of vulnerable communities. “This dangerous trend blurs the nature of the conflict and is highly reprehensible under international law,” he said. He calls on all parties to the conflict to put the protection of vulnerable civilian populations above all other considerations and to give priority to political dialogue in order to reduce the suffering of populations affected by the upsurge of violence.

The Humanitarian Coordinator also reminded the parties to the conflict of their obligations to protect civilians. It also urges them not to infringe the freedom of movement of humanitarian actors so that they can help those in need. Michel Yao seized this opportunity to reiterate the principles of neutrality and impartiality that underpin humanitarian action.

Dr. Michel Yao recalled that with this situation, “the Central African Republic runs the risk of becoming a chronic crisis ignored and neglected by the rest of the world at a time when the humanitarian community and the government have decided to pool efforts to mobilize the funds for life saving activities”. It is worth recalling that at the end of the first quarter of 2017, humanitarian needs valued at \$ 399.5 million collected only 5% of funding.

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