

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

DEPUTY EMERGENCY RELIEF CHIEF URGES BETTER CIVILIAN PROTECTION IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, APPEALS FOR MORE FUNDING

(Bangui/New York, 30 July 2009): United Nations Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Catherine Bragg, ended a five-day mission to the Central African Republic (CAR) with a call for improved protection of civilians in the country.

“Despite a general improvement of the situation in some areas, the situation is still very volatile and the displaced population remains traumatised,” said Ms. Bragg. “Fear is very evident amongst the people who had to repeatedly leave their villages and watch their homes and livelihoods being looted, burnt and destroyed,” she added.

She said the absence of the police and the judiciary in some areas has led to human rights violations and a culture of impunity.

Although some displaced people started to return to their places of origin in 2008, hostilities this year caused further displacement and slowed the momentum of return, she noted, expressing hope that efforts by all parties to restore peace and security will help limit displacement and encourage voluntary return of civilians to their homes.

Humanitarian agencies estimate that one million civilians are affected by conflict in the Central African Republic, including 125,000 who are internally displaced.

Ms. Bragg also deplored the funding shortfall that humanitarian agencies continue to face. Current funding requirements amount to \$97 million. Some \$48 million of the total required for the humanitarian response remains outstanding.

During her visit, Ms. Bragg met President Francois Bozize and Prime Minister Faustin Archange Touadera. She also visited internally displaced people in the towns of Birao, Kabo and Paoua and had meetings with humanitarian workers in those areas.

Ms. Bragg said humanitarian organisations in some of the areas she visited still had difficulties accessing certain vulnerable groups due to insecurity and the bad state of roads and bridges, particularly during the rainy season.

The Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator urged the national authorities to ensure that humanitarian agencies had unhindered access to all those in need.

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