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ADDRESSING CRISIS, SUPPORTING RECOVERY:
THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC AT A CROSSROADS

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Introduction and Moderator:

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The Brookings Institution

Featured Speaker:

HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR STANISLAS MOUSSA-KEMBE
Ambassador of the Central African Republic to the United States

Panelists:

HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR W. STUART SYMINGTON
U.S. Special Representative to the Central African Republic
U.S. Department of State

SANDRA MELONE
Executive Vice President
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SY: Welcome to Brookings. Welcome to the Africa Growth Initiative. My name is Amadou Sy, and I'm serving as the director of the Africa Growth Initiative here. Thank you all for joining us today to discuss the Central African Republic at a crossroads and way to address the crisis and to support recovery.

This is our third high-level event on the Central African Republic, all of them in cooperation with Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground. In March 2014, we had the pleasure to host the interfaith leaders of the Central African Republic, Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, whose work to prevent violence and promote interreligious tolerance has won national and international praise. Then in September 2014, we were honored to host Her Excellency Catherine Samba-Panza, president of the transitional government of the Central African Republic.

And today, we have a very distinguished panel to continue the conversation. We have His Excellency, the ambassador of the Central African Republic to the United States, Ambassador Moussa-Kembe. We also have Ambassador Symington, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Africa and African Security, and U.S. Special Representative for the Central African Republic. We have also with us Sandra Melone from Search for Common Ground, and Madeline Rose from Mercy Corps.

So I would like again before starting to thank the African Growth Initiative team, Christian, Amy, Otito, Drew. And I would also like to say that we are also launching a report on the Central African Republic, and we would welcome your report. We've distributed some copies, but it's also available on the Internet. And our friends from Mercy Corps are also launching, I understand by Friday, another report on the Central African Republic entitled Building Community Resilience during violent conflicts.

So you can see that we are trying our best here.

So recent headlines about the Central African Republic are not really reassuring. Yesterday, just yesterday, one headline was saying, "U.N. mission in Central African Republic on high alert as armed group threatens the capital."

On October 10th, another headline was saying that CAR elections chief, Dieudonne Kombo Yaya, resigns, and many fear the security situation is still too turbulent for a peaceful vote. October 7, U.N. chief condemns killing of peacekeeper in Central African Republic. October 6, CAR goes back to square one.

So if we don't have good news in March, it will be three years that we are having a conflict in the Central African Republic, and the people of this country, of the Central African Republic, are continuing to pay a very heavy price in terms of loss of life, loss of property and security, political uncertainty, and economic collapse. So today, we really hope that this conversation will contribute for this country not to go back to square one, and I will invite Ambassador Moussa-Kembe to have the opening remarks for about 10 minutes, and then we will continue the conversation with a very distinguished panel.

Thank you very much.

MR. MOUSSA-KEMBE: Excellencies, ambassadors, and representatives of diplomatic missions, ladies, gentlemen. Let me first say thank you to the president of Brookings Institution who welcomes us, and to the organizers, to wit, Mercy Corps, and Search for Common Ground, as well as the participants here and stakeholders among which I would like to welcome the presence of Ambassador Stuart Symington, U.S. special representative for my country, the Central African Republic.

I would also like to welcome the large audience here. Many people who are interested in the difficult situation that the Central African Republic has been undergoing since March 23, 2013, with the seizure of state power by a rebellion coalition

called Selaka.

In this new situation which is marked with the destruction of public and private good and properties, large scale massacres and serious human rights abuses, the Central African Republic has always been able to count on the support of the international community as a whole -- the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), including the G8 contact group, this under the helmsmanship of the mediator, His Excellence Denis Sassou Nguesso, president of the Republic of Congo.

Now, allow me to place special emphasis on the partnership between the United States of America and the Central African Republic, which stems from a long and fruitful friendship and solidarity since 1960. The government of the United States of America, as a member of the G8, is among the strongest supporters to the Central African situation on the humanitarian standpoint; also from the standpoint of nonlethal military resources, equipment, transport, institutional reform, and support of the Central African Government, as well as international agencies and NGOs involved in the CAR. The Central African Republic has always welcomed and appreciated this multifaceted cooperation with the United States. And of course, the special representative for the Central African Republic who is among us today, will be able to give further details and clarifications.

Ladies and gentlemen, at the invitation of the Brookings Institute, Her Excellency Catherine Samba-Panza, Head of State of Transition of the Central African Republic, issued on September 19, 2014, an important message about the situation of her country, and she made note of the challenges that need to be overcome in order to stabilize the country. To wit, disarmament of armed militias, the reorganization and deployment of the administration over the totality of the territory, the fight against

impunity, restoration of the rule of law, restructuration of the defense forces, as well as the security forces, and the implementation of the DDR program and the resettlement of foreign combatants, organizing of a national dialogue furthermore.

These tasks were implemented on the one hand by the mediator, and by way of illustration I should like to mention the cease fire agreement of Brazzaville of July 23, 2014. And on the other hand, by the Central African Government with the organization from May 4-11, 2015, of the Bangui forum, sanctioned by the signing of the agreement on disarmament of armed groups and the signing of the Republican Pact, the passing of the law establishing the special criminal court, as well as a vote on a draft constitution.

It must be noted, however, that the security aspect in this crisis in the Central African Republic remains problematic. To this end, and in spite of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council under Chapter 7, the disarmament component has not been achieved. The head of state of the transition government has once again, after the dramatic events from September 26-29, 2015 in Bangui, which caused 61 dead, 300 wounded, and 37,000 displaced persons, as well as the destruction of residences and houses, she has launched a call for the disarmament on last September 30.

Faced with this chaotic and complex situation, the Central African Republic, under embargo, has no armed or defense forces at its disposal but only security forces (speaking in French), and the police forces. In short, understaffed and poorly equipped. On this basis, the protection of the civilian population is almost nonexistent, and the large number of weapons of war in circulation in the capital Bangui, as well as in the rest of the country makes the situation of permanent security is maintained and we also have the situation of the criminalization of the young population, which is ongoing.

Added to this, the presence of numerous foreign mercenaries who infest the whole Central African territory is also very problematic. In these circumstances, and in accordance with the constitutional charter of transition which was extended until December 30, 2015, the Central African Republic is expected to hold presidential and legislative elections before the end of the transition.

In this regard, the National Authority of Elections undertook the census of voters operations on the territory and among the refugee populations in neighboring countries and I would like to mention those countries -- Cameroon, Congo, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The National Authority of Elections, an autonomous and technical body, has already registered 1,800,000 voters, which represents about 70 percent of the total electoral body. But the president of this strategic organization has resigned on October 8, 2015. This, two months after his vice president.

Although justified fears remain, of course, the Central African Government is determined to meet deadlines and lead the Central African people in the elections that the international community as well as the population of the CAR itself want -- fair, transparent, and peaceful.

In concluding, I should like to invite the participants of this event today to mobilize in a sincere and altruistic commitment to help the Central African Republic, which is a landlocked country with a huge mining and oil potential, as well as promising agricultural and forestry resources.

The United States of American, knowing well the price of freedom of peoples aspiring for development and democracy, and who have always stood alongside the Central African people, will avail themselves and will use, I am convinced of this, of the significant energy and resources needed to contribute to the stabilization of the

Central African Republic and that of the Central African subregion overall.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. SY: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for those very relevant remarks.

Now we will have a panel. We will operate in two stages. First, we will have Ambassador Symington discuss with us for about 15 minutes, and then we'll open it to the wider panel.

So I guess one very broad question, Ambassador Symington, is that from where you sit you have a unique perspective about what the U.S. policy for this country, for the Central African Republic is, but you also state in all this international fora and you see what other stakeholders in the international community are also thinking and doing when it comes to this country. And including the many neighbors that the Central African Republic has. So if you could just maybe elaborate on what is the role of the United States, and how is this role evolving? What is the role of the international community, and how is this role evolving, too? And I would be particularly interested in having your views on the role of the neighbors.

MR. SYMINGTON: Thank you. Before I start, I wonder if I could ask for a show of hands, how many of the people in this room have been in the Central African Republic? Thank you. And how many of you in this room have colleagues and friends that have gone to the Central African Republic to work or to serve? I'm pleased to see both sets of hands, and I'm not surprised that the second is greater than the first.

Let me just end where my friend Ambassador Moussa-Kembe -- let me begin where he ended, which was he mentioned that what happens in the Central African Republic is important for a much broader area than the confines of that nation. From the

very beginning of the crisis -- of the latest crisis in the Central African Republic, the neighbors, all of Africa, the European Union, the United States, and the world, paid an awful lot of attention. We did this because, in part, the news was awful. But we also did this in part because the danger was intense that a country that many of you know that was a country where people of all faiths and of all groups not only had friends among those of other faiths or groups but married and had family members. We saw before our eyes the architecture of that house destroyed. And the message for a world already divided, seeing another house ripped apart, was itself awful.

The third reason why all of us focused on the Central African Republic is because it truly is what those words suggest. It is right at the heart of the crossroads of Africa. And for all those in the world who understand the importance of Africa, it is a very simple and direct notion that the center of the place is essential.

So in that essential place, to stop horrors and to keep a house already divided, a global house already divided from further damage to the spirit of mankind, the world acted. This wasn't about the United States. It wasn't just about the neighbors. It was an extraordinarily rapid response which took awfulness and didn't fix it. But it slowed it down and it saved lives.

You read some recent headlines. The bottom-line I think for me is this: the world recognizes the importance of the Central African Republic today. The question is whether or not the world will continue to focus on it when the headlines are not as bad as they were during the United Nations General Assembly. Or as bad as they were for a few days last week before the U.N. and other foreign forces stepped up and forced some armed men moving towards Bangui.

And then the biggest question of all is if we focus, will we succeed? And the answer to that question lies in defining the word "we." The "we" at play in Bangui and

throughout the Central African Republic is the people of the Central African Republic first. No amount of foreign interest, either altruistic or sometimes self-serving, can possibly open the door to a better Central African Republic if the people of that place are not themselves empowered.

Let me just say before I finish just two quick things about the United States. First, like some others, after some recent experiences elsewhere in the world, when it got too dangerous, we pulled my friend, Ambassador Larry Wohlers, who is here in the second row. Larry, will you raise your hand? Who remains interested in the Central African Republic a couple years almost after having -- more than two years after having been pulled out with our embassy staff. And I cannot begin to tell you how glad I am here at Brookings, which above all with the colleagues to my left who have made such a difference over these last years, to be able to not just announce to you but show you that the first American ambassador who has been given agreement and confirmed by the United States Senate last Friday for the Central African Republic, is with us today. Jeff Hawkins, would you please stand up and let me give you a round of applause?
(Applause)

My mother used to say the minimal essential was to show up. And with the people that we have on the ground now under the leadership of David Brown and an extraordinary American team, with all of those local Central Africans who kept our embassy going for almost two years without American officers, we have shown up. And when our ambassador arrives there very soon, we will once again be on the ground as a full-fledged embassy headed by a United States ambassador.

But here's the challenge. Having -- and I do this at the risk of watching American political campaign events described by candidates in the media -- I do this with some trepidation because I don't want you to only hear half of what I'm about to say.

Holding elections any time soon in the Central African Republic is at best a very difficult proposition. Not holding elections very soon in the Central African Republic is certain to make a bad situation worse. And I'll tell you why. The Central African Republic has for years been run by a small group of leaders, a relatively small political class, and the people have largely not been heard of except on Election Day. When my friend Ambassador Moussa-Kembe spoke, he gave this long list of things that in this House of Brookings last year the president of the transitional government of the Central African Republic said they had to do, and the last thing he said was the national dialogue.

The national dialogue was about listening to the people of the Central African Republic. It was about going around the countryside and having conversations, and then getting together in Bangui and listening to them again. For many people in that part of the world, this was the first time anybody in power had ever listened to them. This is the third countervailing force, and unless the people of the Central African Republic continue to be listened to, including when they vote, there will be no adequate power to offset the leaders of warlords or the political class that has always been in between. There will be no change in the future of the Central African Republic that doesn't come from the people of the Central African Republic themselves. And that's the great challenge.

This is not the work of a month, or a year, or five years, but it's a path that has to be walked beginning today. And the place that they have to get is very simple. It's good governance where the governors are the people, not some small group of those who have always held power. The place that they have to get is an economy where people work for themselves and make a living wage as opposed to all seeking office in the government.

And finally, it's a place where once again the costs of running the

government can be borne by taxes paid by those people working in the country, not because we're very good at seeking help on the outside. That's the long-term aim point for the Central African Republic, and the only way to get there is to start and continue both listening to the people of CAR and strengthening them as we go.

Now, a small announcement, and on this I'll quit. The United States Government now has put in -- by the way, how many American taxpayers are in the room? Could I have a show of hands? I'm glad to see that not everybody is an American taxpayer. I hope that those of you who aren't should not be paying taxes. This is an issue. But you have put in now more than \$800 million of your money into the Central African Republic in the past two years. Almost all of that has gone for peacekeeping and humanitarian emergencies. Thankfully, some has gone for reconciliation. Some has gone for justice. Some has gone to work on the constitution. Some has gone to set up a special query. If we are to succeed in achieving that aim point with Jeff Hawkins on the ground as our ambassador in CAR, working with the government of CAR, we will only achieve it if the resources for CAR, generated in CAR, can be used to create that kind of stable platform in a strong citizenry that CAR has always lacked.

Meanwhile, we have an immediate challenge, and because I can't lobby for money for any one country, or ask the Congress to do anything that the president hasn't already asked in our budget, I won't do that. But everyone in this room can be thinking about what needs to be done. What needs to be done is we need to figure out a way not only to invest short-term in taking guns from people's hands which the U.N. absolutely has to do a better job of, but there are not enough peacekeepers in the world to keep the peace if the people are not onboard. So the second thing that has to happen is we have to make sure that the people of the Central African Republic, they, themselves, become the peacemakers, and they can't do that if they're starving. They

can't do that if they're sick. They can't do that if they can't get around on a road. That's the challenge that we face.

And I would say this: the world responded quickly as I suggested, including the neighbors. The question now is whether the world will stay the course. And ultimately, Mr. Ambassador, the question is whether the people of the Central African Republic will continue to use this opportunity to have their thoughts and their guidance heard and affect the direction of their country, starting with elections as soon as they possibly could be held. But continuing afterwards so that all of these groups exercise the day-to-day control on their leaders that all of you in this room exercise on all of us who are privileged to work for you.

Thanks.

MR. SY: Thank you, Ambassador.

But you ask a very difficult question, so I'm going to ask it back to you.

MR. SYMINGTON: Sure.

MR. SY: How will the world stay the course? What needs to be done?

MR. SYMINGTON: The single most important thing, I think, is for the people of the Central African Republic to continue to demonstrate that it is not only the country that is important to the future of the world and Africa, but that they are willing to step up to the task. We have heard unbelievable stories, truly unbelievable stories, of course and sacrifice by many people in the Central African Republic. I think it's up to us to say will we back them? And answer in the affirmative. But if the people of the Central African Republic are themselves divided, and if the stories that come out of the Central African Republic are more requests than they are examples of selfless service to country, then the world will lose interest. So I think this is very much a two-way street. I think that we will back the horse of the Central African Republic in part because we know that it's

important but in part because we see the heart of the people of the Central African Republic and we want to make sure that those heroines and heroes are not left to stand alone. So these next few months are not the issue. The issue is the next several years.

I would say only one other thing and that is if we apply in the Central African Republic the rule I think we should apply everywhere in the world, here's how we should keep score. How many people are working in the formal economy that aren't employed by the government? How many people who are working in the informal economy are making substantially more money now than they were before and living better who are not employed by the government? And the third thing is what part of the cost of running CAR will come from the inside, from revenues generated by taxes, and what part will come from the outside? If we eye those numbers well, I think we'll have a good indication of what the people of CAR are doing for themselves. And I think this is critical because the capacity for the world to continue to fund indefinitely is sharply limited, especially if the folks of the country are not seen to be stepping up as leaders, as heroes, and as workers and taxpayers.

MR. SY: Well, thank you. Here at Africa Growth Initiative, as the name says, we like to focus on the economy, and in our report, what we try to do is to show how economic issues are also related to the other issues. For example, just anecdotally, just securing the Bangui to Douala corridor apparently has helped trade in the services sector, you know, grow. The same thing also, we are carefully looking at the crop calendar, saying that if you want to have a successful DDR, you need people to have a job, and agriculture is the most important activity in this country and you have to think about providing seeds and fertilizers and so on, but also thinking about when is the planting, the sowing season.

But we also like to look at things from different perspectives. So here we

had the perspective of veteran diplomat, Ambassador Symington, and we'll have also the perspective from really institutions that work very closely with communities on the ground.

But before that, I would just like to note that the government, the transitional government in 2014, had drafted a policy document on the national emergency program for sustainable recovery which had four pillars. The first pillar was restoring security and peace and reinforcing good governance and the rule of law. The second one was reinforcing civil protection and reestablishing and reorganizing the state administration which, as you can imagine, has been -- has taken a very severe blow from the rebellion. The third pillar was relaunching activities in the essential social services sectors, intensifying the fight against HIV/AIDS and protecting the environment. Forestry is very important in the CAR. And the fourth pillar is implementing economic and financial reforms to promote vigorous and sustainable economic growth. And this whole package was estimated at a cost of \$3.3 billion USD over three years. So about \$1 billion a year, of which the government was trying to cover 9 percent. So still a very aid-dependent country.

With this said -- if you want to know more, please read our report -- with this said, I will invite our friends from Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground. You are working on the ground with the communities, so what is the perspective? What can you tell us about the next steps?

MR. SYMINGTON: Can I add one thing just before they start? You guys, you cannot believe, when I talk of heroines and heroes, how many we have in some of the groups that you represent.

MR. SY: Would you like to start? Please.

MS. MELONE: First of all, thank you very much to Brookings Institution. Of course, thank you to you, Amadou, Ambassador Moussa-Kembe, Ambassador

Symington. What a pleasure to meet you, Ambassador Hawkins.

MR. HAWKINS: Likewise.

MS. MELONE: And with you, working is always wonderful. It's great to be in partnership in the Central African Republic with you, Madeline.

I have the great privilege of working at Search for Common Ground, and (speaking in French), despite the name, it's not about agricultural search for common ground; it is about how groups who have differences can work together to transform their differences nonviolently. And we've been working several years in the Central African Republic with precisely the majority of the population to whom Ambassador Symington was referring, who are absolutely peace-loving and want to see their country come together. There are -- the impassioned plea that we heard from Ambassador Moussa-Kembe and from Ambassador Symington, we could add many more facts to that. We could add, for example, that -- I don't know, the Global Hunger Index just came out. Number one country in the world on the Hunger Index before Chad and Zambia, is the Central African Republic.

Ten thousand, approximately, child soldiers, some of whom have been somewhat demobilized but many of whom have been not. And of course, that means more than a generational recovery process. As we've already heard today, we know that peacebuilding takes time. The harsher the violence, the deeper the wounds, the longer it takes.

One of the things that makes our appeal, which we haven't concerted before about doing this, but particularly pertinent to the United States today in the role that is unique, I believe -- at this moment, I'm speaking in my personal capacity, if that's possible, I don't know -- is that the United States are one of the only actors that have any credibility to be very frank in the Central African Republic. We know, all of us, I recognize

so many faces, people working in Central African Republic. We know the issues around the United Nations' interventions, the difficulties. We know France's role, or the perception of France's role. And all I can say is that our teams, who are very, very in the fields, on the ground in, of course, Bangui, but also Bossangoa, Bouar, throughout the country -- we work in deeper partnership with many organizations, both international and Central African -- have a perception that the reality is that the United States needs to continue to stay involved as the leader that it can be to help transform some of the relationships in the country and in the region.

One of the things that is coming up, and of course, linking this to economic development, is the issue around extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of them. We know that France *inter alia* is looking at pushing some deals, which may not be to the greatest benefit of the average Central African. And as we're speaking about peace for the entirety of the country, not for a part of the country, for all of the country's population, then I would just say, not being an economist at all, that it would be important to be very careful how we approach handling those deals that are being presented. Because on the one hand, economic development, naturally; on the other hand, care. Because who says natural resources and who says extractive industries of any sort, also knows that on a terrain that is highly fertile and fraught with violence, the potential for more violence increases tremendously.

Regardless of what the calendar ends up being -- not the crop calendar, but the elections and transition calendar -- the key, of course, is what Ambassador Symington was referring to, and naturally, we participate in trying to make as good as possible, and that is the participation of the population in the decision-making process in the Central African Republic. And how is it that a dialogue on a national scale, regardless of what the words are, if it's (speaking in French), whatever it is, that really,

from within the communities, there is a conversation happening whereby the decisions that get taken centrally really reflect what population the population is expressing as their needs. It's very difficult to do that because it's not, I'm sure it's not easy culturally, but it's also not easy in terms of where we are in the Central African Republic. But there are many people -- you talked about them as heroes -- who are engaging in promulgating community-based dialogue and even family conflict transformation methodologies.

So just by way of, you know, my first remarks, it was broad what you were asking me, so I went broad. I hope you don't mind, Amadou, but that would be my plea -- series of pleas -- role of the United States really as a leader and a transformer for the Central African Republic; making sure we don't get burned again and burn humanity again by not keeping the eye on the long-term transformation; and the key central role of what happens in Central African Republic has ramifications throughout Africa; and you know, what we hear from our colleagues on the ground is that our colleagues at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, at least the perception is, okay, well, we ain't going to do nothing until there's democracy. Well, I'm not sure when democracy will blossom; however, we know that we need to accompany the processes, and certainly not pull out from what truly is a beautiful commitment that has been made historically, but can only grow henceforth. So certainly, the working group which we have in the Central African Republic, with Mercy Corps, with the Danish Refugee Council, with Catholic Relief Services, with Islamic Relief, with FINAID Church, AIDS, with Cordaid, with Conciliation Resources, with IntraNews, with World Vision. We meet every second Tuesday and all of those groups are deeply connected and deeply Central African because as we've mentioned, so many foreigners have hit the road, literally leaving Central Africa, because of the dangers.

So as long as we have the capacity to increase helping, the bringing

together of the population around a truly community engendered national dialogue, then this is a very good thing. But you certainly have Search for Common Ground's commitment to continue because there's too much beauty in the people of the Central African Republic, so.

(Applause)

MR. SY: Thank you, Sandra.

Madeline, same question, different institution. What would you like to add to that?

MS. ROSE: Yeah, thank you. I'd like to echo the same things to the Brookings Institution, to Ambassador Moussa-Kembe, Ambassador Symington, and it's so lovely to meet Ambassador Hawkins after all the emails of seeing your name and not seeing a face. It's always very exciting.

I think I'll start off with, Amadou, some of your framing in the beginning of are we at square one, as well as your kind of last point is that there's so much momentum, we've made a commitment, but how do we kind of see that commitment through and not lose attention.

To "Are we at square one?" I think Mercy Corps would say no, we're not. And I'll start with some sort of hopeful statistics that we just pulled out from some recent assessments that we did that help illuminate why we say that. So Mercy Corps has worked in Central African Republic since 2006, which is not nearly as long as, you know, some other organizations, especially a lot of religious institutions that have been there for decades but, you know, having been there for years and years, it's a country that has suffered a lot of violence, and a long history of suffering and exclusion of populations. The people are extraordinarily resilient, and while right now we are in a very, very risky phase, we certainly don't think that we're at ground zero, and I'll offer reasons why.

So Mercy Corps just completed a 15-month conflict resolution and peacebuilding program supported by USAID's Complex Crises Fund. The program worked in Bangui and Bouar to help reduce immediate risk of violence, to break cycles of retaliatory violence, and to improve social cohesion that had been destroyed because of the recent wave of violence. We did this in a few different ways, but in the beginning of the program, in January 2014, we conducted a baseline assessment about communities' perceptions, their fears, what they thought they needed for peace, and then we just completed an end line assessment August 2015. From baseline to end line, we found a 532 percent increase in communities' perceptions that conflicts were being resolved peacefully, which is, for Mercy Corps, which has worked in this space for 20 years, in the peace and securities space, we have never had that strong of a quantitative data from any of our conflict mitigation programs.

The second big finding, we found an 86 percent increase in communities who trusted the other group or the adversary. And then the last big finding was that 96 percent of community respondents expressed hope and optimism for the future of the country. The methodology of the assessments on both sides were 600 people interviewed, about 86 percent Christian and about 10 percent Muslim, which reflects broadly the census of the country, and so it suggests that there has been significant transformations in areas where the international community has strategically intervened to stop violence, to ensure -- to keep the sort of physical security environment enabling for humanitarian response, and to support communities to reconcile and address their grievances and start to kick start the early economic recovery.

Compare -- and there's a lot of other programs, obviously, not just Mercy Corps, but it's a good case study to understand where we are focused and where communities have access and have the ability to process grievances and to discuss their

challenges and to agree together and strike, you know, peace accords and peace contracts at the local level and agree to nonviolent resolution. We're starting to see Muslims return. We're starting to see trade restored. We're starting to see what early economic recovery looks like.

Compare that to places like Bambari where Mercy Corps has also worked since 2006, where there has been no ability to reestablish state authority, where the peacekeepers have not been able to deploy. The violence was so bad and it became so chronic that we had to completely cancel programs. We have closed our office in Bambari because for 14 months we weren't able to do anything and we had to return our money to the donor. So it's an example that where we are strategic and judicious and committed to creating space for communities to kind of recover and to process this conflict, things are getting better.

So that's kind of the big picture. A few of the other illuminating findings from some of our assessments that, again, we hoped to have completed today but we didn't, was asking sort of, okay, what were the drivers of displacement? What are the factors most necessary for communities to want to return? So 92 percent of survey respondents on both sides of the assessment said that insecurity was the primary reason for displacement. So physical fear, risk of crime, risk that you couldn't even walk outside into your home without being physically assaulted, so physical insecurity was a primary driver of displacement. However, the primary factors that we found around reasons for return were both physical security, but also reconciliation and prospects of early economic recovery and economic livelihoods. So when we talk about a holistic approach, we think those are three of the biggest factors to consider in this immediate timeframe of triaging response priorities.

A couple of other statistics that we thought were particularly interesting.

So, yeah, improved security, prospect of reconciliation, and economic recovery. We have some more sort of stories from that report, and we also work in the agricultural economic recovery space, but just to start out with sort of the big picture of some of our recent findings.

MR. SY: Thank you, Madeline.

So we have now to hear from our fifth panelist, the audience, and I will open it to questions. But first, before opening to everybody, I'll just give the first question to Ambassador Moussa-Kembe. And just also, you mentioned the country, and for those who don't know the country, apparently, it's as big as Texas, or bigger than France and Belgium together. And we are one of the lowest densities in the world. But Ambassador, the first question goes to you, if you like. We're not putting you on the spot.

Okay. So maybe our most important panelist here today, so please raise your hand and introduce yourself. And please, if you could keep the question very succinct and to the point so we can have a chance to hear from different perspectives.

So I will start from the back. The gentleman there in the back, and then I will take this gentleman here and the lady here. And then we'll do a second round.

ALEXANDER: Hello, my name is Alexander. I'd like to ask you a question about a notion which is probably very familiar to many of you, the notion of Françafrique, and specifically, the role you see France in playing and resolving or not this conflict in CAR, and also the future role of France as the gendarme of Africa or Francophone Africa. Thank you.

MR. SY: Everybody heard the question? Okay. We'll have this gentleman here in the front, and then the lady on the left.

SPEAKER: Thank you. I have a couple questions for the ambassador. You talked earlier today about "we." And you said when you talk about "we," first of all,

you think about the population of the Central African Republic. We know that (inaudible) of all the militias in Central African Republic, but since the United Nations Peace Corps is over there, nothing has been done till today. So what the USA can do to push the United Nations to do (inaudible)? That's the first question.

The second question is about the army. The national army from Central African Republic. We cannot bring peace in Central Africa Republic without the national army. What about the rehabilitation of the national army?

That's both of my questions. Thank you.

MR. SY: Thank you. I think the second question to me is very important. And then we'll have the last set of questions from the lady.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much for holding this event. My name is Lise Howard. I'm a professor at Georgetown University and I was present in Bangui for the forum. Mr. Ambassador, it's nice to see you again.

My question has to do with the United Nations peacekeeping operation. During the forum in May, it seemed to me that that operation in conjunction with the French Operation Sangaris was actually progressing really quite well. The security situation had improved. The constitution of that operation is different from all other peacekeeping operations. It's focused on policing UNDP's integrated -- in other words, low level security -- and development and integration where fundamental components of that peacekeeping operation from its very inception which is innovative. But where that operation has failed, I think, is at the same level as where the French have failed, and that's in the sexual abuse and exploitation problems.

And what my question is is, is it possible for the international community to reestablish its moral authority in the wake of these crises and in the wake of the head of the U.N. operation being fired as a result? Is it possible to reestablish moral authority?

MR. SY: Feel free to check in. I'm sure, as I said, we'd really like to hear from the two different perspectives. So I'll start with Ambassador Symington, but please chip in.

MR. SYMINGTON: So let me take the first one. One person, one interchange at a time. We can reestablish the moral authority of anybody, but once you lose it, you've got to win it back. One person. One interchange at a time. Although the Central African Republic is the size of Texas, if you ask yourself how many soldiers does the Central African Republic need? What kinds of weapons? What kinds of transport? What kind of salaries? What kind of budget? You then ask, how many policemen does she need? And how many gendarme. You begin to get at the difficult question that you asked. The answer to the question, what will the FOCA look like, what will the police look like, what will the gendarme look like, depends on the discussion and the conversation that will happen with those people of the Central African Republic. And I hope that when they have that conversation, they think not just about what it would be nice to have but what they can sustain over time. Because my understanding is that some problems in the past have come from having soldiers that were not paid. Other problems in the past have come from having soldiers who were poorly led. So it is a profoundly good question and it's one that the people of CAR must answer for themselves.

And as for taking guns away and taking weapons away, if your gun is taken away, in many parts of the world, including the Central African Republic, you can buy another. It's important to collect the guns. It's even more important to put something else in the hands of the people that carry the guns, so that they can make a living doing something other than carrying a gun, or carrying a machete, or carrying some other implement that it's harder to take away. And if the people of the Central African Republic look to any outsider to take all the guns away from themselves and their neighbors,

they're looking in the wrong direction.

I'm convinced that in every cartier of every village of every part of the Central African Republic, people know who have the guns. So it will be a joint enterprise to do that. It cannot be the job of the international forces alone.

As for France, I won't discuss her role as France, but I will say this: the single-most remarkable positive thing I have seen in 30 years as a diplomat has been who the people of the Central African Republic, some of the people of the neighboring states, the African Union, the U.N., the French, the European Union, the United States, the World Bank, and the IMF -- no, actually, the economic community of East Africa, of Central Africa, ECCAS, those are what we call the G8. And the efforts that we have made together to continue to work together in the Central African Republic, while profoundly challenged and at times stressed greatly, reflect what all of us must do in Africa, which is to pursue the good of the people of that place and ourselves together in partnership.

Mr. Ambassador, when you mentioned the wealth of the Central African Republic, you mentioned minerals and oil, and you said and also promising wood and agriculture. In fact, the Central African Republic is stupendous agriculture, stupendous wood, remarkable minerals. And what's great about it is that it is the people of the Central African Republic who responsibly could be involved in harvesting wood. It's the people in the Central African Republic themselves who responsibly could be involved in finding alluvial diamonds. It is absolutely the people of the Central African Republic themselves who will make the agricultural promise of that country come forward. And no country acting alone and not in partnership, no country can achieve the goals that must be achieved in the Central African Republic unless the people of the Central African Republic are full partners. So I consciously won't answer the question because it's a little

bit like the question, who should lead the Central African Republic? And the answer is (speaking in French).

MS. ROSE: Yeah, on the issue of disarmament, the Brookings report that just came out endorses concept and its conclusion in particular around a community-based approach to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. It's something that we strongly endorse, and it really requires a paradigm shift to the way that sort of international institutions think about and finance these approaches, which I think we're far away from. But one example of what that looks like and why we think it's so valuable is precisely what the ambassador just mentioned is that you can't just take a gun and think that that solves the problem. The incentive structure needs to be right. There needs to be options. There needs to be a choice architecture that any individual chooses. It's in their best interest to give up their gun and choose a different livelihoods pathway. And that is happening.

In the 15 months of the program we just finished, we've found 220 anti-balaka have voluntarily disarmed and turned in their weapons to the community leaders in Bangui and Buwar and joined the peace committees and the community leaders to be advocates for nonviolence and social change. That's voluntary disarmament because community leaders had reconciled, had struck a peace agreement to maintain safety in the Buwar Town Center, for example. So that's one example of DDR that works.

And then on the sort of how to make that more sustainable moving forward, another kind of structure that we think is really promising in Buwar, facilitated over the past couple of months, 26 community leaders of all different religious groups and ethnic minorities have come together and designed a peace pact, and they signed this agreement that said they will agree to facilitate conditions conducive to the safe and voluntary return for IDPs and Muslims who have fled. They will stand against and

prevent any discrimination or marginalization. They will stand against and prevent any discriminatory-based violence within Buwar Town Center, and they will set up sort of a voluntary disarmament channel that is separate from the traditional official structures. So it's not to say that the U.N. process doesn't need to continue, but to say that there is a different way to consider what DDR means, we really need to think about what communities, what will actually make them choose and what enables them to choose, not just about the basic transactions of weapons.

MR. SY: All right. Second round.

MS. MELONE: Can I just add a couple things?

MR. SY: Sure.

MS. MELONE: Sorry, just quickly.

In addition to what you both said, what I would say is that it is incredibly important to work with the police, with the gendarme, with the national army, and not to put anybody with too much of a label on their forehead as being the bad guy, because the folk anywhere in the world who have the possibility to, and who make the choice to commit acts of violence, also are the folk who are a part of the solution in the future. And, you know, the best way as Madeline pointed out and as is in the Brookings report, is always to be inclusive in the conversations, because when you exclude people from finding solutions together, then they are potential distractors, naysayers, and they may choose violence rather than a more peaceful road.

So I'm half French, half American. I work at Search for Common Ground. I'm going to abstain on comments about some of those things, but I'm just going to reflect. And I'm sorry if it's a little moralizing, but I think both sides of me nationally should say, okay, great, "Viva la France, God Bless America," but how about we work together and we try to see what's best for Central African Republic citizens most

importantly. And, you know, when we have words like (speaking in French), well, let's apply those, the most possible, in the Central African Republic by engaging with the different parts of the population. I'm worried that the reaction of a lot of what are referred to as (speaking in French), different stakeholders in society, are currently not embracing the concept of national dialogue that's being presented by the president and the government. And the key is how do we enlist in helping to find a national dialogue that suits the various (speaking in French) and in which they are willing to participate?

MR. SY: I heard that Bangui has some of the best French pastries in Africa. (Laughter)

So one question there. Oh, sorry. Mr. Ambassador.

MR. MOUSSA-KEMBE: I would like to come back to something an American diplomat told me when I had arrived in the U.S. in 2009. "You know, the Central African Republic is a beautiful country. It is rich in many resources. And a peaceful population as well that is desirous of peace. Most welcoming population. Unfortunately, it lives in a bad neighborhood."

And it seems that this premonition that I have heard in 2009 to wit the fact that this country lives in a bad neighborhood became reality and materialized in a way because really, from a political, economic, and social standpoint in the country, there is so much antagonism today, so much fragmentation, and this is something that we had never, ever experienced. When we go back to the history of the country before colonization, after independence, and throughout the years, this is something that is completely unprecedented, this level of fragmentation and violence.

Why? Why has this rupture occurred? Are we actually, you know, these days talking about this religious conflict between Muslims and Christians, which is really not something that truly exists, and that is something that is talked about by the media?

It seems that the Central African Republic is the victim of manipulation and perhaps insubordination -- interference.

Not all interference is negative. This is a positive interference we are doing right now.

And ever since Selaka overthrew the government and took power on 23 March 2013, until January 2014, in other words, a timespan of nine months, the international community has seemed to just be a spectator, a bystander to what has going on.

In my introductory remarks I said that there were a great number of foreign mercenaries in the CAR.

And really, I should say that perhaps even though these mercenary forces were predominantly Muslim, what happened is that they didn't just massacre only Christians but both Muslims and Christians, and they proceeded by, of course, raids, and they never focused on the development of the country. And I have to say that this was far-reaching over the entire country because the furthest regions of the CAR were also reached and affected. This means 16 prefectures overall.

I really want to focus on this, and by way of conclusion, make a plea, that it is -- that aspect, that very aspect of foreign mercenaries entering the country, that is the root cause, but why have they come in so great numbers? And, of course, this is a question that we must ask ourselves. And there has been, of course, the reaction of the population, which does not accept this kind of situation. This is why today, what the Central African Republic is experiencing is manipulation by these mercenary forces that are entering the country in greater and greater numbers. So it is a plea I'd like to make that we focus on the reasons.

MR. SY: So I have one gentleman here, and we need two women.

Then we'll do another round.

SPEAKER: I can talk for these two women.

Thank you very much. It's very difficult to speak after the ambassador. But I just would like to premise my comments by a great saying that Alfred Barney used to quote when he talked about conflicts, particularly religious conflicts in Africa. He used to say that Cote d'Ivoire is 65 percent Christian, 45 percent Muslim, and 100 percent animist.

So one thing I take from the panel is that you have demonstrated, or at least you have proven that the Central Africans, particularly the ambassador, know what it is like to live in harmony. They used to live in harmony. So it shouldn't be very difficult for us to kind of show them what the end result of a good process would lead them to. But the question I have is do you really believe that today it is possible to engage in a peacebuilding process without having to rebuild the local institutions of political governance? I mean, really indigenous, meaning the cartier, the village chief, rather than focusing only on government institutions which is what we tend to do most often, and probably because that's what we know how to do best.

And the second question is that -- and I think you raised a very interesting question that shows that when we deal with conflict and post-conflict, we tend to not be honest enough with ourselves because we tend to censor what we can say or what is not politically correct to say -- the role of France, the U.S., and others. I think the question of the private sector, and the risk that you raise, which is really real on what are the exogenous factors that are not incentivizing the local population or local leadership to go into a solution, a political solution. Can we identify those factors and see to what extent we can bring them into the table to have the conversations? Because unless we get the private sector in the debate of peacebuilding, I think we will find it very difficult to

reduce your effect of the lack of desire as you were saying. We all know that the resources are getting out of the country. We know that the mining is still continuing, but we are not communicating with those people who are responsible for that. And my experience is that they may be willing to come if we make the attempt.

My last point is that in terms of --

MR. SY: I have --

SPEAKER: I'm speaking for two others.

My last point has to do with really the financing. I think the traditional institutions do not have the financing model to finance countries in conflict, and therefore, our organizations on the panel have to fight for very little resources. They do not have access to the resources, and peacebuilding is very expensive. So do you have any insight on how to push more money at this level so that we can address these issues properly and then do development data?

MR. SY: Thank you.

SPEAKER: My name is Geri Mihalka and I think my question is to Madeline about Bambari.

MS. ROSE: Bambari.

SPEAKER: Bambari, which is still off limits. Is that what you left saying? That's the last word?

MS. ROSE: There are some organizations working there. We had to close our office.

SPEAKER: So do you have your next step to approach it or you're working on it?

MS. ROSE: I can answer that.

MR. SY: Okay. And then I think there was a last question, yeah, in the

middle there.

MS. RAWLS: Hi, I'm Amanda Rawls. I'm the regional director for Africa with the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative.

Ambassador Symington had made two, a couple of important points I think that historically the people have not been heard from except on election day, that recently they have been heard from through the national dialogue process but that unless they continue to be listened to, including when they vote, that there won't be peace and growth. To me, the conclusion from those points is that I would prioritize setting up the institutions to make sure that they're listened to over prioritizing the schedule or the calendar for elections. And so I'm wondering, particularly from Mercy Corps and from Search, how you see the balance between the speed, sort of the rush to elections and setting up those institutions given the points that the ambassador made. Thanks.

MR. SY: Thank you. So there's a lot of questions, so maybe we should start with the last question given the time.

MS. ROSE: So quickly on elections, I think the way that the ambassador articulated it is perfectly accurate from our perception as well, is that to not hold them immediately is extremely risky. To hold them immediately is extremely risky. We do not think that elections can be conducted in a safe, inclusive, and participatory manner on the current schedule, and that the NGO community and local Central African civil society organizations have been very straightforward in their communication to the transitional government, to their international community, that until there are clear benchmarks and clear processes to ensure that the displaced populations are able to access a safe vote, that we do not endorse the process moving forward. That said, our team, you know, part of the recent outbreak in violence post-September 26th, a couple weekends ago, was in part due to some specific events but also just mounting public frustration and impatience.

So what we have been advocating for pretty consistently is take all measures necessary to ensure a safe process and trying to advocate for donors to fund the pieces of the puzzle and the structures to ensure that process. But most importantly, consistent public communication from the transitional government about the schedule and investments in radio stations and media and direct communication to dispel rumors and to keep people informed and make sure there is two-way communication processes is the most important, because it's that impatience and that frustration and those time periods where people aren't hearing anything where you create a situation conducive for violence to stir up again.

On the question of Bambari, so our local partners are still implementing. We shut down a conflict management program, but we actually do still operate a protection program which we've been running since 2007. It's a comprehensive gender-based violence prevention and response program that we are still running through our local partners. Mercy Corps doesn't have any -- our program director isn't there and our office was looted. All of our offices were looted in the last couple of weeks except for Bouar.

SPEAKER: They were what?

MS. ROSE: All of our offices were -- our primary offices were all looted in this most recent outbreak of violence. So it will be a little challenge for us to operate, but local partners still are.

And on the question of sort of local governance restructuring, just, so, I was in CAR in March 2014 for a while and in Bouar we were working with some of the local magistrates around sort of access to justice and trying to process cases of rape and to keep the sort of judicial sector going even though they had no funding, they had no pens, they had no pencils, they had no paper. All of the government administration

buildings were looted. But the commitment to public service was still very strong, and I think when you think about governance restoration, all of our communities that we've surveyed agree. They feel more connected to governance structures in their community and their community leaders and their religious leaders, and they do want to re-elect and to rebuild their local governance system. And sort of our argument would be, you know, they're not mutually exclusive but perhaps the best way is that through the restoration of basic public service around protection, around service delivery, we think justice sector, education sector, and health are sort of three of the sectors where basic transactions between communities and their local government are already happening, and that could be one area to start to rebuild that relationship between communities and their "government" that isn't quite that national.

MR. SY: I've just been informed that we are about 10 minutes over the time. I apologize for that, but it just shows that this is something important. But I will ask the panelists to keep it --

MS. ROSE: Be concise.

MS. MELONE: Sure. Okay. So first and foremost, we have to remember that the calendar is very rushed the way it's presented now. Okay, so if I have my dates right, the president and Prime Minister Cameron are talking about 6 December constitutional referendum, I think. 13 December presidential and legislative elections, 24 January second round of presidential elections, and 8 February, announcement of results. So in light of how things are today, it would seem that that's very, very rushed. And I can't echo enough what Madeline said about the misinformation that is permeating the country and that is so pernicious and at the root cause of a lot of violence. And therefore, in terms of hand-in-hand processes, I don't think that it's -- it's not community-based decision-making and restoration of community institutions solely and then no, you

know, high-level national institutional reforms and conversations. It's actually both. It seems very obvious, but it has to happen both ways. But there has to be dialogue. And one of the best ways to do dialogue is to have the capacity to communicate, particularly through radio, throughout the country. And in real time. So just a very big echo to that. And just in case somebody in the room doesn't realize, you know, kids are not going to school. So the schools were supposed to reopen. It was announced around the 21st of September that the schools would open on the 28th of September, and then while President Samba-Panza was at the U.N. General Assembly on the 26th of September, all hell broke loose and no schools. So unless we also focus on enabling enough safety for children to be able to go to school, I mean, imagine the ramifications of that.

MR. SY: Last word for the ambassador.

MR. SYMINGTON: One final thought before I turn it over for the last word to the ambassador of the Central African Republic to the United States, a long time ago, when Kennedy inspired our nation, he did it in many ways, but the phrase that all of us remember I think first was "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." This is a phrase that I heard several times from the people of Central African Republic during the Bangui forum. It was, "Ask not what the world can do for the Central African Republic, but we, the citizens of the Central African Republic, can do for ourselves." It's the central question, because it's true. We, the people of the Central African Republic, have been victims. It's also true we, the people of the Central African Republic, live in a rich house. And it's also true that we, the people of the Central African Republic, have not been united. And so for me the great question right now is essentially what you just heard. It is how can you simultaneously build cohesion, build trust, deliver services at the local level and at the national level in a terribly difficult region? And the answer is you cannot do it alone but no one can do it for you.

So the toughest question that I've been asked today is where do we get not just the vision together but the resources to continue to do this? And I am absolutely convinced that the answer to that question is we get them in the Central African Republic itself, in her people and her resources. So the issue of how you maximize the impact in the creation of employment and the generation of revenue from the Central African Republic's own resources, including the work of its own people, is the central question. The answer is probably that the new government will get help from the IMF. The new government will get help from the World Bank. The new government will, with a lot of support from a lot of people who know it well, do reintegration of whole communities, instead of individual actors. But the only way that that will be sustained over the period of 10, 20, 30, 40 years required to make a lasting difference is if the Central African Republic generates itself revenue to keep going. It will not be entirely dependent upon others for another generation or two. And if it looks to the outside world to do it, it should predict that the future will look like the past.

But I would say this last thing. It cannot do it alone. Whether we are a neighbor, where we probably need to make sure we're having a good effect on the Central African Republic and not a bad, or whether we are the former colonial leader where again we face the same question, or whether we are the subregion in Africa or we are the whole African continent or the United Nations, we all have to ask the same question, which is how do we get the people of Central Africa, not just to lead but to enable themselves together going forward. And I am absolutely convinced that the bedrock of that country is its people, and it has been cracked, but it's still there and it can still be made whole, but with a lot of help from all of you.

Mr. Ambassador?

MR. MOUSSA-KEMBE: Well, I hope I can be equal to this eminent plea

by the ambassador and I will try to do so. But first of all, I should like to thank you, Excellency. And IU must say that the Central African Republic and its people are certainly not desirous of this catastrophic situation, but we know that a number of factors have, indeed, led to it for governance, exclusion, human rights breaches, as well as a number of other factors that have come into play.

Now, to be concise, I should say that it is quite opportune that you used John F. Kennedy's words that are so known, "Ask not what a country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country." And I must admit that we must see it that way. But I also have to say that we really cannot act alone. We do need the support of the international community, and it has to be from an altruistic standpoint, this engagement, because what we are really suffering from is manipulation from without. Hence, U.S. leadership is indispensable and it has to be followed up as well. And, of course, we have had very good relations from a bilateral standpoint that have continued with the United States.

And thirdly, what I should like to say by way of conclusion is that we certainly can't trivialize the security concerns and the security problems that we have. And before the elections, what is crucial is that the sort of amplitude of insecurity be reduced as much as possible, and this requires rigorous action from all of us against what I would call today troublemakers. They're not necessarily all armed militias but I would call them more like gangs and troublemakers.

MR. SY: With these words, since I'm moderating I have the privilege of the last words. All I can say is if you watch TV footage of events in CAR and you turn off the volume and you focus on people's faces, it could be any African country. And I think as we are moving towards more regional integration, towards more growth, what is happening at the heart of Africa is important for the continent and also for the rest of the

world. And I hope that this is just a continuation of a conversation and we wish the best to the people of CAR and we'll keep on each now different capacities the struggle. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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