EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR’S KEY MESSAGES ON THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
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1. Key Messages

1. The political crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) worsened over the last year, leading to a breakdown of law and order and brutal inter-communal violence in December 2013. The extreme poverty, lack of governance, insecurity, and a range of complex political, religious and human rights issues have contributed to a major humanitarian crisis in the country, which is also affecting the region. Half the population of CAR now needs humanitarian aid and people are living in fear across the country. Reports of atrocities and gross human rights violations have continued against civilians, including children, despite efforts to restore calm and a strengthened international military presence. It is vital that attention is focused on efforts to restore peace and stability, so that people can start to rebuild their lives and their communities.

2. The situation remains extremely volatile and tense. Some 900,000 people have been displaced – nearly a fifth of the CAR’s population – driven from their homes by fighting, insecurity and fear. Over 245,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Men, women and children desperately need protection from the violence and access to life-saving food, clean water, medical care and proper sanitation. Hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people have sought safety in schools, places of worship or open areas with little or no access to basic supplies and services. Many displaced families and host communities are unable to tend their crops or livestock, which could lead to worsening food security and malnutrition. Pressure on scarce resources and services could increase tensions between the displaced and their host communities.

3. The violence needs to stop and all parties involved in the conflict must prevent this crisis from escalating further. Attacks against civilians, including killing and wounding them, the use of sexual violence, recruitment of children into armed groups, and wanton destruction of property, are reprehensible and must stop. The perpetrators of such brutal crimes must be held accountable. International Humanitarian and Human Rights Laws must be respected, and aid agencies allowed safe and unfettered access to all women, children and men in need.

4. The United Nations humanitarian agencies and NGO partners are scaling up their presence across the country and are delivering as fast as security and access conditions allow, under the leadership of a Senior Humanitarian Coordinator. The international
The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

5. Humanitarian aid workers are in CAR to help people in need, regardless of who they are or where they are from. Aid is delivered on the basis of need alone, not on ethnic, political or religious grounds. Given the continuing violence and tensions among communities, the presence of armed forces is important as they are helping to stabilize the security situation, which enables aid workers to do their jobs. However, it is essential that we clearly communicate the impartiality and neutrality of humanitarian action and distinguish it from political and military efforts.

6. United Nations and NGO relief organizations urgently require US$152 million to fund an emergency intervention plan, which aims to provide vital relief and protection to 1.2 million people across the country over the next three months. Throughout 2013, humanitarian funding to the Central African Republic was extremely limited. Now is the time for donor governments, individuals and the private sector to increase their support and help us help the people of the Central African Republic. Millions of people in need depend on the humanitarian community to survive. This crisis will last a long time and we need to do all we can to help people.