

# Heads of State meet on security, human rights and political upheaval in war-torn Central African Republic

What are the key events that have led the Central African Republic (CAR) to go from being a land-rich nation full of optimism at independence, in 1960, to an impoverished country facing multiple challenges, and the subject of a high-level meeting at UN Headquarters on Friday?

What is now CAR was annexed by France until winning its independence in 1960.

Political crises quickly followed, with three successive mutinies by the armed forces within six years.

A truce, known the [Bangui Agreements](#), was signed in 1997 that mandated an inter-African military mission be deployed to the country.

In 1998, the UN replaced those troops with its own Mission in the Central African Republic, or [MINURCA](#), establishing the first UN peacekeeping mission there.

Since that time, the UN has maintained a continuous presence that has encompassed [peacekeeping](#), [peacebuilding](#) and [political](#) missions.



UN Photo/Hervé Serefio

Members of a Jordanian formed police unit (FPU) serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

## ***A gloomy picture***

Despite significant mineral wealth and rich arable land, the International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)) lists CAR among the 10 poorest countries in the world, with the [lowest](#) Gross Domestic Product for 2017. The UN Development Programme's ([UNDP](#)) 2018 statistical [update](#), ranked CAR second from last out of 189 countries, with the lowest level of human development.

A recent [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) ([FAO](#)) report revealed that civil conflicts, consecutive years of reduced agricultural production and poorly functioning markets, have left some 43 per cent of the population in need of [urgent assistance](#).

Public health is also at a crisis point. The [UN agency](#) leading the fight against HIV/AIDS said that less than 35 per cent of Central Africans living with HIV access treatment, calling it among “the [lowest](#) in sub-Saharan Africa”.

Moreover, the country's magnificent wildlife continues to suffer, also. According to UN Environment ([UNEP](#)), elephants, giraffes, rhinos and others are being [targeted](#) in wildlife conservation areas – caught in the crosshairs of armed groups and highly militarized illegal poaching operations.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

A peacekeeper from Senegal, serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), performs weapon maintenance at the MINUSCA field office camp in Bangassou.

At the same time, fighting between the mostly Christian anti-Balaka militia and the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition has plunged the CAR into civil conflict since 2012. While a peace agreement was reached in January 2013, rebels seized the capital of Bangui that March, forcing President François Bozizé to flee.

Concerned with the security, humanitarian, human rights and political crisis within the country and its implications for the region, [MINUSCA](#), the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR, began operating in 2014 under [Chapter VII](#) of the [UN Charter](#).

With the protection of civilians as its utmost priority, Chapter VII provides for the use of force – meaning, with Security Council authority, peacekeepers may respond to acts of aggression in kind.

The dangerous situation has prompted four dedicated Security Council meetings in 2018 alone, as well as two on the Central African region overall.

### ***Meeting for change***

More than two years after the inauguration of President Touadéra, and following the first meeting, in April, of the International Support Group on the CAR, the High-Level Ministerial Meeting is taking place as a side event of the UN's seventy-third general debate.

The meeting aims to take stock of CAR's political process and see what can be done to help stabilize the nation, including with regional countries; and also explore ways to address continuing violence and prevent worsening conflict

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## **UN chief celebrates spirit of hope in Mali, calls for greater international support**

Climate change, poverty, violence... As countless challenges hamper the stability and development of Mali and the Sahel region, a [high-level event](#) on Wednesday explored progress made in the implementation of the [UN Support Plan for the Sahel](#) (UNSS), and galvanized renewed commitment for the Malian peace process initiated in 2015.

A few weeks after the presidential vote in Mali, which saw the re-election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, the full implementation of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation has been hampered by persistent delays and frequently renegotiated timelines.

"It is time for all parties to honour their obligations," [said UN Secretary-General António Guterres](#), who visited Mali in May, and described seeing a "spirit of hope and possibility," amid all the challenges.

"The people of Mali must see the tangible dividends of peace," he stated.

Conflict in northern Mali started in 2012, with a sharp intensification of hostilities across the country in 2018, leading to a worsening of the humanitarian situation. The UN Stabilization Mission in Mali, [MINUSMA](#), has become the most dangerous place in the world to serve as a 'blue helmet'.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), about 5.2 million people – one in four Malians – are now estimated to be in dire need of assistance. After commending the efforts made by the Sahel States, the African Union Commission, and other partners to help achieve peace and development in the region through the UNSS, the UN chief appealed "to all international partners, including the International Financial Institutions and the business community, to step up."

"Now is the time for collective action. By doing so, we can help build the sustainable, inclusive, secure future that the people of Mali and the Sahel deserve," he concluded.

Watch our audio slideshow on Mali and the importance of the UN's work there, below:

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## [Korean Peninsula entering 'era of peace and prosperity,' Republic of Korea President tells UN](#)

With a self-proclaimed "sense of urgency and excitement," Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, told the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday that "something miraculous has taken place on the Korean Peninsula," namely, reunification efforts.

"For the first time in history," he stated, "the leader of North Korea (officially known as the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, or DPRK) crossed the Military Demarcation Line to visit Panmunjeom" – with the resolve "to usher in an [era of peace](#) and prosperity."

Moreover, he continued, "a historic summit between the United States and North Korea was also held on the Sentosa Island in Singapore," in which both sides "agreed to work towards achieving complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, ending hostile relations and establishing a permanent peace regime."

According to the South Korean President, North Korea dismantled its nuclear test site in Punggye-ri under the observation of the international community and his country suspended large-scale joint military exercises with the US.



He noted that that last week in Pyongyang, during his third meeting with DPRK's Chairman, Kim Jong Un, they agreed to turn the Peninsula into "a land of peace," echoing Chairman Kim's "hope of completing denuclearization as soon as possible to focus on economic development."

President Moon detailed that Chairman Kim committed to permanently dismantle the missile engine test site and launch platform in Dongchang-ri along with a "firm willingness" to take additional denuclearization measures, including the permanent dismantlement of nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, as the US States takes corresponding measures.

Over the past 65 years, the Korean Peninsula has remained under an armistice—making "an urgent task" an official end to the War.

"I look forward to seeing bold measures for denuclearization implemented among the related countries, leading to the declaration to end the War," Mr. Moon asserted.

## **Prelude to peace**

Turning to the 2017 Olympic Truce, Mr. Moon called it a "prelude to peace."

"The participation of North Korea's athletes and delegation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics provided a decisive momentum to break the impasse in building peace," he maintained.

Just over a month after the Pyeongchang Paralympic Winter Games had closed, both leaders met for the first time in North Korea's Panmunjeom village, where the 1953 Armistice Agreement pausing the Korean War was signed.

On 20 April, North Korea officially ended its policy of nuclear development and on 9 September, the 70th anniversary of its foundation, committed to peace and prosperity instead of boasting about its nuclear capabilities.

"North Korea moved out of long-standing isolation...and stands before the international community once again," he said, encouraging everyone to "assure Chairman Kim that he has made the right decision in committing to denuclearization."

Mr. Moon recalled that when each Korea acceded to the UN in 1991, they respectively told the Assembly that though separate now, they would eventually become one.

Twenty-seven years later they have "crossed the barriers of division and are tearing down the walls," he concluded, "realizing the pledge they made on that day."

**[Full statement available here.](#)**

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# Governments urged to 'do the hard work' to better manage global migration

As world leaders met at the United Nations on Wednesday to discuss the first global agreement designed to better manage international migration, a leading voice on migrants' rights urged them to "do the hard work" of turning words into action.

The [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), set to be formally adopted in December in Marrakech, Morocco, comprises 23 objectives covering all aspects of migration, including enhancing availability of legal pathways, promoting ethical labour standards, combatting trafficking and facilitating dignified returns.

"We all know that for this Compact to have its intended effect, you – each UN Member State – must do the hard work to create the laws and conditions that are safe and equitable for everyone who enters your borders," said Monica Ramirez, founder of the organization known as Justice for Migrant Women, during an event held on the margins of the General Assembly's annual high-level session.

We must all work together to foster a climate that welcomes migrants and celebrates the ways that they make our world better –  
activist Monica Ramirez

Ms. Ramirez shared the stories of three women whose stories reflect some of the factors that drive migration globally – safety, opportunity and prosperity.

Dolores is a migrant woman who fled her country after years of suffering gender-based violence at the hands of her husband and who would later experience sexual harassment and abuses in the new country where she ended up living.

Marisol was given the opportunity to travel on a temporary work visa with the promise of good pay and good conditions. But she found herself a victim of human trafficking without the possibility of visa portability in the country where she was working.

Edith travelled as a migrant on a student visa, intent on pursuing the American dream. Fortunately, she became a successful entrepreneur with a very different migration experience than her counterparts because of her education and socio-economic strata.

"Migrants like Dolores, Marisol and Edith offer so much to the cultural and

social fabric of the nations where they've migrated, not to mention their significant contributions to those economies," stated Ms. Ramirez.

She added that without shared goals and norms, there will continue to be a disparity in the treatment of migrants. Individuals will be at risk for violence, human trafficking and exploitation, including the estimated 50 million migrant children who are vulnerable to abuse.

"Their stories drive home so clearly why the UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is so important."

There are an estimated 260 million migrants in the world today. Migrants work, pay taxes and spend 85 per cent of their income in the local economy. They send to their home country an average of 15 per cent of their income in the form of what are called "remittances." Last year, these remittances to developing countries amounted to some \$450 billion – 3 times the amount of official development assistance that is given.

The President of the General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa, [said](#) the Global Compact would save lives, protecting the most vulnerable and putting an end to the deaths of thousands of women, children and men.

"It would help put an end to trafficking; smuggling networks; the mistreatment of migrants and to the separation of migrant families," she added. "The road to Marrakech is therefore the road of hope."

Migration, [said Secretary-General António Guterres](#), is a historic and multi-faceted phenomenon involving humanitarian, human rights and demographic issues. It has deep economic, environmental and political implications, and generates many different, legitimate and strongly-held opinions.

"Unfortunately, it is also an issue that has often been misrepresented and exploited for political gain," he noted. "Unregulated, unmanaged migration has created false and negative perceptions of migrants that feed into a narrative of xenophobia, intolerance and racism."

"That makes agreement on the text of this first-ever Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration a particularly difficult, but at the same time, extremely important achievement."

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## **Capitalism's greed fomenting terrorism, hurting sustainable development, asserts Cuban President**

The consequences of capitalism, imperialism and neoliberalism are not only

manifesting in fascism and conflicts around the globe, they are also diverting much needed resources which could have helped implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or address climate change impacts, the Cuban President told world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly.

Addressing the Assembly's annual general debate, President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez criticized the United States – “one of the major polluters of yesteryear and today” – for “refusing to accompany the international community in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.”

“It thus endangers the lives of future generations and the survival of all species, including humans,” he stated.

The Cuban leader also noted increasing closer historic and cultural bonds between the people of Cuba and the US, as well as the potential of business relations between the two countries, as being in the best interest of the entire region.

However, he noted that “the essential and defining element” of the relationship between the two continues to be the blockade, “which seeks to suffocate the Cuban economy [and] is a cruel policy, punishing Cuban families and the entire nation.”

The Cuban leader also reiterated his country's “unrestricted support” to a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of the two-state solution.

President Miguel also expressed support for a peaceful and negotiated solution to Syrian crisis, without foreign interference and with full respect to their sovereignty and territorial integrity; welcomed the process rapprochement on the Korean Peninsula; and “demand compliance” with the Iran nuclear deal.

The Cuban President informed world leaders of steps his country is taking to improve its socio-economic development model and that it has begun a constitutional reform process, through “a truly participatory and democratic exercise, through popular discussion of the draft which will eventually be approved in a referendum.”

**[Full statement available here](#)**