

# TOP-10 Reasons why Chad needs an Inclusive National Dialogue

July 2008

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Plagued by years of instability, Chad's internal conflict continues to have devastating consequences on the region. Poor governance, corruption, human rights violations, unilateral changes to the constitution and mismanagement of oil revenues are driving the current rebellion and affecting patterns of violence in eastern Chad as well as interfering with the peace process in Sudan. The following are 10 reasons why Chadians are calling for an inclusive national dialogue (with the armed and unarmed opposition) to discuss the root causes of instability in Chad and create a viable road map for sustainable peace:

- 1. A comprehensive regional strategy:** Only a process that includes all parties to the Chadian conflict and works in parallel with the Chad/Sudan mediation and the internal Sudanese peace process, can resolve the regional crisis in all its complexities. The piece-meal approach of resolving conflict in Chad has thus far proven unsuccessful. Ethnic affiliations overlapping both countries and strong historical ties make it impossible to resolve each crisis independent of the other.
- 2. Removing conflict drivers:** Without removing the internal and regional drivers of conflict and resolving the root cause of instability in Chad, violence will continue to be fueled by opportunistic governments taking advantage of people's discontent to advance their own agendas. When Sudan wanted to destabilize Chad, it did not have to look far to find the Chadian rebels.
- 3. Building trust among Chadians:** Twenty-eight years of tribal-based governments have affected the social fabric of Chadian society. Victims of "divide and conquer" politics, Chadians are extremely mistrustful of each other. An inclusive national dialogue will start the process of rebuilding the collaborative capacity of the various entities and help to develop a shared vision for a new Chad.
- 4. Creating an environment conducive to free and fair elections:** Human rights violations and oppressive tactics employed by the current government have created a climate of fear which will make voting one's conscience extremely risky. Creating new monitoring mechanisms that have the approval and participation of all components of the crisis are the best safeguards against fraud. In Africa, particularly in countries with autocratic regimes, dictators use the vast amount of money at their disposal to coerce village chiefs and other officials, mainly in rural areas, to pressure their people to vote for the ruling party. The stressors inherent to extreme poverty will make resisting corruption at the top levels of the administration, which will have oversight of the 2011 presidential elections, very difficult. Currently, Chad has no real national army, but instead the Chadian National Army is an ethnic militia formed by people allied to the president's own ethnic group. This militia is not loyal to the country but loyal solely to the president. If an election is held and a new candidate

elected, transfer of power will be hampered without an army able to ensure the security and the stability of Chad during this transition.

5. **Impartial resource allocation:** With the current regime controlling all resources in Chad, President Déby can freely mobilize all the financial and material resources of the state, giving him a disproportionate advantage compared to the means available to other contenders in the 2011 elections.
6. **Government capacity:** Free and fair elections cannot take place in Chad without a transitional government, led by a group of independent technocrats, who will reorganize the administration, the army, and the justice system with new administrative officials who have no ties to the political parties running for elections. The political will to improve governance in Chad must be present if real changes are to be made. To ensure its success, this transitional phase must be supported by a broad coalition of Chadians, present since the inception of that framework, and must be placed within a regional peace-building strategy.
7. **United Nations supervision:** Mr. Ban Ki Moon, in his April 2008 UNSC 3-month review of MINURCAT (S/2008/215), observed that neither MINURCAT nor EUFOR is ideally mandated to address this conflict. He also recommended that the Chad/Sudan/CAR crisis “should be addressed simultaneously in a coordinated effort that takes into account the root causes of the internal conflicts and the regional aspects”. Technical support for an inclusive national dialogue and supervision by the United Nations of the implementation of the resolutions emanating from this national forum will help avoid the failures of the 1993 “Conference Nationale Souveraine” (CNS). Broad support from the international community, particularly France, Libya, and the United States will also ensure its success.
8. **On the limitations of the Dakar Agreement:** The Contact Group may be able to persuade President Déby and President El Bashir to stop harboring, arming and supporting each other’s rebels, but this won’t remove the reasons why people take up arms in the first place.
9. **On the limitations of the Syrte accord between four CAOG and the Chadian Government:** This accord discusses the reintegration of rebel forces within the government without addressing the reasons for instability. Fighting has resumed since it has been signed, indicating that the agreement failed to resolve the causes of the conflict. Rebel groups, such as the “Alliance Nationale” (AN), have themselves called for an inclusive dialogue.
10. **On the limitations of the August 13<sup>th</sup> electoral reform agreement:** Since Chad is one of the top-ranking states in corruption indices (Fund for Peace, 2008), organizing elections with the current regime controlling all governmental apparatus is unlikely to produce free and fair elections. Prior elections have not failed due to process but when the minutes of the ballot centers were changed before they reached the Constitutional Court. The President of the “Comité de Suivi et d’Appui de l’Accord politique du 13 août 2007”, Lol Mahamat Choua himself, called for a national forum to be held, stating that the August 13<sup>th</sup> agreement would not stabilize Chad but needed to be broadened to include civil society and politico-military forces.