

ORGANISATION OF THE INCLUSIVE NATIONAL DIALOGUE IN CHAD: THE DIASPORA'S VISION

Note to the very high attention of partners and friends of Chad

I. Context

Chad is reeling under the weight of several decades of war with ethnic and regionalist dimensions, often under external influence. It seems to be getting even more bogged down, given the current political situation. It has once again found itself at a crossroads, after 60 years of independence and almost as much socio-political instability marked by civil wars and dictatorships. The last dictatorship was that of the late President Idriss Deby, which lasted 31 years and is now being taken over by Mahamat Deby Itno, his son.

Established in violation of the Fundamental Law as well as Chad's international commitments, the Transitional Military Council (TMC), which is chaired by Mahamat Deby Itno despite the contestation of the forces vives, has taken numerous decisions, including the suspension of the Fundamental Laws, the dissolution of the government and the National Assembly, and the adoption of a transitional charter that has concentrated all powers in the hands of one man, etc.

On a positive note, the military junta has agreed to organize an inclusive national dialogue so much demanded by the Chadian forces and recommended by international partners. The Chadian diaspora, gathered in a consultation framework, wishes to express its vision for this upcoming dialogue and is preparing to take part in it, if this vision is taken into account.

Indeed, the Chadian diaspora, like all African diasporas, is a vector of change; in addition to its widely documented contribution, both in terms of financial resources and technology transfer, it is also a vector of social change. It aspires to bring to the country the values and positive energy for change of mentality, peace and sustainable development. It has been formed over time by different waves of emigration due to civil wars, bad governance, and extremely deplorable living conditions in Chad. In recent decades, it has been fuelled by a surge of young people looking for education and jobs that are not accessible in Chad. Its commitment to confronting arbitrariness and violations of freedoms and democratic rights is not new. For several decades, it has worked hard to make possible, through modern means, debates, freedom of expression, awareness raising, etc. which were forbidden in Chad. During months it has worked alongside the active forces in the interior of the country to prevent Idriss Deby Itno's 6th term in office from being renewed.

II. Diaspora observations on the transition period opened by the coup of 20 April 2021

The Chadian diaspora has noted the clear desire of the junta led by the son of the late president to seize and retain power. The security context that was used to justify this coup d'état now appears obsolete, as the daily actions of the junta highlight its lack of political openness. The massacre of opponents during the peaceful marches of 20 and 27 April 2021, the unilateral establishment of a transitional charter that concentrates all powers in the hands of the President of CMT, the appointment of a Prime Minister who

is a former ally of the MPS, and a government dominated by people from the party of the deceased president highlight a cleverly conceived plan to retain power within the Deby family.

France and the African Union (AU), which, against all likelihoods, expressed support for the military junta, remain silent in this situation of multiplication of antidemocratic acts by the junta. Despite the call by AU to revise the transitional charter to ensure a minimum of balance, the junta, encouraged by the indifference of the international community, continues to set up transitional bodies on the basis of that contested charter and embarks on reforms that should normally previously have been the subject of discussions and guidelines of the inclusive national dialogue. It is proceeding, for instance, with the constitution of the National Transitional Council by co-option and the establishment of a body by ministerial decree to reform the army. Through these initiatives taken with great lightness, it is in the process of emptying of the content of the inclusive national dialogue, which sole has the vocation of providing orientations on major reforms. All these actions, added to the decision to allocate seats in the CNT to members of the illegitimate Parliament, which is in place since 2015, makes visible the desire to perpetuate the old system. It is imperative that these actions be stopped to allow the national dialogue to reveal its foreseen potential of rebuilding the Chadian state.

III. Diaspora Vision of the Inclusive National Dialogue

Common sense and international experience should inspire to avoid letting the dialogue process be conceived and implemented solely by this *de facto* authority - the CMT- whose illegitimacy and illegality are the triggers for the organisation of these meetings.

The inclusive national dialogue must have the character of an inclusive and sovereign national conference. It must draw the outlines of a new Chad. In particular, it should make it possible to define the contours of a new social contract between Chadians, to deal in depth with the main concerns of Chadian society (clan-based army, impunity, exclusion, misappropriation of public property, farmer/breeder conflicts, injustice, etc.) and to define ways of resolving them. The meetings should lay the foundations for reconciliation between all the sons and daughters of the country, within the framework of a truth, justice and forgiveness process.

Also, given the national scope and the need to make this dialogue inclusive, we call for a strong involvement of international partners to guarantee the material and security conditions for the participation of all segments of the population and the implementation of the resolutions that will be taken.

To realize its potential to rebuild the Chadian state, the national dialogue process must

- Include representatives of all socio-political and professional strata in the country;
- Be owned by key stakeholders (civil society, political parties, politico-military, trade unions, diaspora etc.) ;
- Be legitimate in the eyes of supporters and society at large; and
- be part of a process that helps to address power imbalances and allows for collective mobilization to achieve collectively agreed outcomes.

a. Mandate

As the design of the dialogue can only begin once a minimum consensus has been reached on its broad objectives, we believe that consultations should begin with a view to drawing up terms of reference which should clearly state the purpose of the national dialogue, the process for its organisation and be followed by the adoption of a provisional programme specifying the issues to be discussed.

A unilateral mandate can only harm ownership of the process and the perception of its legitimacy. Two successive forums organized by the late President Deby's regime were unable to provide real changes because large segments of society were not involved.

The mandate of the national dialogue must therefore be the result of a consensus between the main stakeholders that could impede the process (political parties, civil society, trade unions, politico-military etc.). It is also necessary to ensure that all participants, even the most marginal ones, adhere to the mandate. The success of the process of its conception will ensure sufficient participation and maximum ownership of the dialogue and its resolutions.

In view of the political, historical, economic and socio-cultural contexts that support the need to organize this national conclave, we believe that it should be **given a sovereign mandate to reform the foundations of the state and its institutions and to appoint Transitional Authorities**, with consistent objectives and guiding principles.

b. Objectives

The dialogue that will revisit the foundations of the Chadian State will have to discuss, without being exhaustive, the following issues:

- Defense and security ;
- Peace and National Reconciliation;
- Justice, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms ;
- Institutional Framework (for working on a draft constitution) ;
- Democracy and Election ;
- Modernisation of the State, Economic Development and Good Governance ;
- Youth, Culture and Sport ;
- Women, Gender and Vulnerable People; - International Relations and the Chadian Diaspora ; - Chad's long-term vision in the concert of nations.

These objectives will be further broken down into themes prepared in advance by the Steering Committee for communications, debates and possible draft resolutions.

c. Guiding principles

All stages of the process of organising and holding the dialogue should take into account the following principles

- **Inclusion:** forces the creation of a group of participants that is a microcosm of Chad. It should take into account criteria such as age, gender, ethnicity, geography, social sector, socio-economic category and political position;
- **Joint ownership:** every effort should be made to ensure that all stakeholders take ownership;

- **Long-term vision:** the refoundation of a new social pact and a New Chad; ○ **The sovereign nature of the deliberations ;**
- **Consensus in decision-making during the preparation of the conference and during the conference itself.**
- **Ensuring the safety of participants** during and after the dialogue

d. Sponsors

Considering the legitimacy concern, and therefore of the credibility of the *de facto* Authority which is the CMT, we believe that there is a need for a major involvement of the international community which is committed to accompanying the transition process in order to guarantee its inclusive nature. We therefore suggest that, in addition to the involvement of ECCAS, the AU, the EU, and the United States of America as sponsors, international organizations with expertise in facilitating similar processes should be involved in a role of facilitator of the dialogue, which would consist of supporting the development and facilitation of the process.

We would also like to see the international community firmly commit itself, beyond the role of mediators for the different participants, to the following three dimensions:

- Funding of the dialogue ;
- Security conditions for the transition ;
- Reform of the army (including demobilization, disarmament, reintegration of politico-militaries, professionalisation of defence and security forces).

e. Participants

The significant imbalance of power entirely captured by the TMC and its segregationist methods suggest a desire to co-opt and corrupt participants that will inevitably undermine the inclusive and sovereign nature of the dialogue.

We believe that all the active forces of the Nation should be represented at these meetings in an equitable manner, namely:

- Representatives of legally constituted political parties;
- Representatives of civil society organizations ;
- Representatives of political-military movements;
- Representatives of Chadian diaspora organizations;
- Representatives of the defense and security forces ;
- Representatives of religious denominations;
- Representatives of traditional and customary chiefs;
- Independent personalities or other representatives of the nation's active forces;
- etc.

f. Organization and convening process

The organization of such a meeting must be triggered by the revision of the current transition charter. This revision, also requested by the international community and which must be carried out by consensus, must make it possible to define the current period as a pre-transition period, to include the

sovereign nature of the forthcoming dialogue, to establish the transformation of the TMC into a Council of State comprising civilians and military personnel and, above all, to entrust the pre-transition prime minister with all the powers relating to the dialogue, the administration of the territory and internal security. Texts will have to be drawn up immediately to guarantee freedom of demonstration and human rights in particular.

A new independent national entity should be established to lead and manage the process in partnership with organisations with technical expertise in the field. This entity would be a Steering Committee made up of men and women of recognized integrity and representing the diversity of Chadians. The committee thus constituted in a consensual manner will strengthen the 'national ownership' of the dialogue for which it will be the convenor.

The politico-military issue should not be overlooked. The TMC, reconstituted as the Council of State, must declare a ceasefire, recognise the politico-military forces as a full-fledged entity of the living forces of the Chadian nation and declare its willingness to participate in a mediation sub-group (within the Steering Committee and with the support of international partners) responsible for meeting the conditions for their full participation in the Sovereign National Conference.

The Steering Committee, which will be responsible for the preparation and practical organization of the dialogue, will draw up the various mechanisms of the process, the documents to be submitted for debate and adoption, and the rules for its proper conduct.

All other aspects related to the preparation and organisation of the national dialogue will be developed through the Technical Committee with the support of an international dialogue specialized organization.

g. Expected outcomes of the inclusive national dialogue

At the end of the conference, a national consensus should emerge on the following points

- A National Transitional Charter;
- The Transitional Authorities (Transitional President, Transitional Prime Minister) ;
- A National Transitional Council to act as a legislative body until an elected National Assembly is in place;
- A Draft Constitution ;
- A Transition Roadmap;
- A vision document of a New Chad for the next two (2040) to three decades (2050).

These are the main lines of the vision of the inclusive national dialogue that should lead us to a New Chad.

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