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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 18.12.2023

on an exceptional assistance measure regarding the Central African Republic

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012¹, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009², and in particular Article 23(6) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The Central African Republic continues to face a multitude of challenges, including high levels of poverty, lack of sustained access to basic services, illegal exploitation of natural resources, and frequent violence and abuses involving various armed groups as well as Wagner Group mercenaries. Moreover, the political situation remains fragile. In August 2023, the Constitutional Court validated a constitutional referendum that not only delayed local elections but also removed presidential term limits. Regional developments, notably the violent conflict in neighbouring Sudan and movements to and from Chad have led and continue to lead to further instability. Foreign actors that have direct interests in an unstable environment use hybrid attacks, such as disinformation, thereby contributing to a deteriorating political situation. Disinformation adds to the challenges of maintaining a consistent long-term approach to stabilisation and to communicating the objectives of the partnership between the EU and the Central African Republic. In fact, the EU expressed concern over the risk of further polarisation of the country's political context and continues to call for inclusive and transparent dialogue among the parties and democratic processes. The present situation makes it necessary to adopt an exceptional assistance measure regarding the Central African Republic.
- (2) In order to ensure the implementation of the measure, it is necessary to adopt a financing decision. Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 ('the Financial Regulation') establishes detailed rules on financing decisions.

¹ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

² OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1.

- (3) The planned assistance is to comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures³ adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU.
- (4) The objective of the measure set out in this Decision is to address political polarisation and its consequences on peaceful coexistence in the Central African Republic and includes efforts on stabilisation, mediation as well as on a strengthened peaceful coexistence and democratic space in order to remedy exceptional and unforeseen situations as referred to in Article 4(4)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
- (5) In accordance with points (a), (b), (l), (n) and (q) of Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph of Regulation (EU) 2021/947, the activities set out in this Decision will provide mediation support to the revitalisation and implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and the follow-up of issues not fully addressed in the 2022 Republican Dialogue; support the preparation of inclusive, transparent, and peaceful local elections with a particular focus on reducing the risk posed by disinformation and hate-speech through access to independent, fact-based as well as context-specific information in both French and Sango, and on full, equal and meaningful participation of Central African women in political processes; contribute to ongoing stabilisation efforts based on a stabilisation programme drawn up by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as to focus on needs for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to populations affected by violent conflicts, with a focus on children.
- (6) The effectiveness of the Union response to the situation referred to in recital (1) depends on the rapid and flexible implementation of an exceptional assistance measure of limited duration in accordance with Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
- (7) The measure provided for in this Decision is complementary to assistance provided under other Union short-term or long-term external assistance instruments. No fully adequate response can be provided under those instruments to the specific needs being addressed. Therefore, an effective response is required to enable early action in accordance with Article 4(4) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
- (8) The measure provided for in this Decision is consistent with the Union strategic policy framework for the Central African Republic. Synergies and complementarities are expected with other Union interventions, as detailed in point 7 of the Annex.
- (9) In order to provide support to the stabilisation programme drawn up by the UNDP, it is necessary to use indirect management for the implementation of the measure.
- (10) The Commission is to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union with regard to entities and persons entrusted with the implementation of Union funds by indirect management as provided for in Article 154(3) of the Financial Regulation. To this end, such entities and persons are to be subject to an assessment of their systems and procedures in accordance with Article 154(4) of the Financial Regulation⁴ and, if necessary, to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with Article 154(5) thereof before a contribution agreement can be signed.
- (11) The Commission should authorise the eligibility of costs as of a date preceding that of submission of a grant application, which is prior to the date of adoption of this

³ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy, the OJ prevails.

⁴ Except for the cases set out in Article 154(6) of the Financial Regulation, where the Commission may decide not to require an ex-ante assessment.

Decision, for reasons of extreme urgency in crisis management aid or in situations of imminent or immediate danger to the stability of the Central African Republic, including by an armed conflict, where an early engagement of the Union may prevent an escalation.

- (12) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (13) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (14) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the measure, it is appropriate to define changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (15) The European Parliament and the Council have been informed of the exceptional assistance measure to be adopted by this Decision, in accordance with Article 25(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1
The measure

The financing decision for the implementation of the exceptional assistance measure regarding the Central African Republic, for 2023, as set out in the Annex, is adopted.

The measure shall include the following action: “Supporting mediation and stabilisation processes, and strengthening peaceful coexistence and democratic space”, set out in the Annex.

Article 2
Union contribution

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the measure for 2023 is set at EUR 5 000 000 and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in the budget line 14 02 03 10 of the general budget of the Union.

The appropriations provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

Article 3
Methods of implementation and entrusted entities or persons

The implementation of the actions carried out by way of indirect management, as set out in the Annex, may be entrusted to the entities or persons referred to or selected in accordance with the criteria laid down in point 6 of that Annex.

Article 4
Grants

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in point 6 of the Annex. Grants may be awarded to the body/bodies selected in accordance with point 6 of the Annex.

For reasons of extreme urgency, the eligibility of costs prior to the submission of a grant application and which is prior to the date of adoption of this Decision shall be authorised as of the date set out in the Annex.

Article 5
Duration of the measure

The maximum duration of the exceptional assistance measure adopted under this Decision shall be 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.

If the implementation of this measure or any of its components is suspended owing to ‘force majeure’ or circumstances beyond the control of the contracting authority and its implementing partner(s), the period of suspension shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the duration of the implementation of this measure.

Article 6
Flexibility clause

Increases or decreases of up to EUR 10 million and not exceeding 20% of the contribution set in the first paragraph of Article 2 or cumulated changes⁵ to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20% of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation provided that these changes do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

The authorising officer responsible may apply the changes referred to in the first paragraph. Those changes shall be applied in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

Done at Brussels, 18.12.2023

For the Commission
Josep BORRELL FONTELLES
High Representative / Vice-President

⁵ These changes can come from assigned revenue made available after the adoption of the financing decision.