

PRESS RELEASE

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THE VISIT OF THE POPE SHOULD TRANSLATE INTO A NEW START FOR THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, SAYS CHIEF OF MINUSCA

Bangui, 1st December 2015 - The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, welcomed the two-day visit of Pope Francis in Bangui which shed light on the attachment of Central Africans to the values of fraternity, solidarity and peaceful cohabitation between communities.

The Special Representative notes that "the demonstrations of fraternization that we witnessed prove that there is no inter-religious conflict in the Central African Republic", while urging to remain vigilant towards those who attempt to maintain divisions and stir up old resentments through manipulation and violence.

MINUSCA wishes to draw the attention of national and international public opinion to the danger of linking any loss of human lives from one community or the other to an intercommunity conflict.

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga further congratulates transitional Authorities and the Central African people for the success of this historic visit and calls upon all Central Africans to make their own the message of peace of Pope Francis in order to open a new page of their history, built on dialogue, reconciliation and social cohesion.

The Special Representative was also pleased that all the stops planned for in the Pope's program were respected and helped in breaking the mistrust between communities, artificially maintained. He believes the Pope's visit gives new reasons for hope to the most needy to whom Pope Francis showed compassion, in particular to the victims of violence, including the internally displaced persons.

The Special Representative was finally satisfied by MINUSCA's support to secure and prepare the Pope's visit, in close collaboration with the Central African Authorities, national security forces, Sangaris as well as the Vatican and the UN Secretary-General close protection teams. Nearly 3,000 MINUSCA

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peacekeepers were mobilized to secure Bangui during the Pope's visit. Furthermore, Onanga-Anyanga noted that the Pope arrived at a time when the electoral process, aiming at putting a final end to the crisis, made encouraging progress with the end of registration and submission of candidacies to the presidential and legislative elections.

"I wish that the Pope's messages are a fertile source of inspiration that would allow Central Africans to strengthen their commitment to a new start, in peace and with recovered constitutional order", stated Onanga-Anyanga

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