

Central African Republic peace agreement brings hope to millions of children

*Statement attributable to UNICEF Executive Director
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NEW YORK/BANGUI, Central African Republic, 18 February 2018 – “The peace agreement signed by the Government of the Central African Republic and other parties to the conflict is a welcome step towards lasting peace and the hope of a better future for the country’s children.

“We particularly welcome commitments to protect children’s rights and put an end to grave violations against children, but commitments are not enough. Now is the time for action.

“For too long, violence, instability and chronic underdevelopment have devastated children’s lives in the Central African Republic. Two-thirds of children need humanitarian assistance, one in four is displaced or living as a refugee, and millions are out of school, malnourished and vulnerable to disease, abuse and exploitation.

“There are concrete steps that can help translate the peace agreement into meaningful action for children:

All parties to the conflict should take steps to release any and all children associated with armed groups;

The judicial system should treat children arrested or detained due to their association with armed groups as children and victims first, and should ensure that their rights are upheld;

The Government should accelerate the process of adopting the Child Protection Code and align the country’s juvenile justice system with international standards.

“UNICEF stands ready to support national efforts to help children affected by the conflict and is hopeful that this agreement will be a fundamental step towards long-lasting peace for the country’s children.”