



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 8 December 2013

Central African Republic: EU steps up relief effort, launches humanitarian air bridge

The European Commission is deploying its humanitarian air service with immediate effect to open up a vital line of support into and out of Bangui, the capital of Central African Republic (CAR), as international efforts to stabilise the strife-torn country intensify.

The first plane (run by ECHO Flight, the EU's humanitarian air service), with a capacity of 50 passengers or five tonnes of cargo, will arrive in Douala, Cameroon tomorrow. The CRJ 200 jet aircraft will perform daily rotations between Bangui and Douala, establishing a humanitarian air bridge to ferry humanitarian goods and personnel into the country.

"In recent days we have heard horrific stories of massacres from CAR," said Kristalina Georgieva, the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response. "The arrival of international forces in Bangui and their deployment beyond the capital represent the only hope of security for millions of people who have been living in fear most of this year.

"ECHO Flight is making a vital contribution to making sure that humanitarian aid reaches those most desperately in need, providing a means of delivery for essential life-saving services. I want to pay tribute to the aid workers from NGOs, the Red Cross and the UN who have stayed on to help people in Bangui and in the interior of CAR throughout the events of recent months.

The needs will remain enormous for some time and while we, the EU, have already doubled our humanitarian aid to twenty million euros it is clear that much more funding will be required. I appeal to international donors to be compassionate and generous for a crisis which remained forgotten far too long."

In addition to mobilizing ECHO Flight, the EU is doubling the size of its team of humanitarian experts based in Bangui, who work with humanitarian aid agencies to help channel assistance to the people in greatest need.

Background:

More than 400,000 people have been displaced by the fighting in Central African Republic. With €20 million in aid since the beginning of 2013 the European Commission is the country's biggest humanitarian donor.

The EC provides support in several sectors including protection, access to health care, food and nutrition, drinking-water distribution, sanitation services, logistics and humanitarian coordination as well as catering for the needs of those directly affected by fighting.

The EU's humanitarian air service, ECHO Flight, is based in Nairobi and operates several aircraft on a permanent basis to provide air services for humanitarian agencies in the Great Lakes region. It can be rapidly redeployed to provide services in the wider Central African region.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/car_en.pdf

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

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