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Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia/Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
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Gabon	Mr. Biang
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United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic
(S/2022/119)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2022/119)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; His Excellency Mr. Bertino Matias Matondo, African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic; and Mr. João Samuel Caholo, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/119, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ndiaye.

Mr. Ndiaye (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, as well as the Secretary-General, for once again giving me the honour to take the floor today to present his report on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2022/119), pursuant to the relevant provisions of resolution 2605 (2021) of 12 November 2021.

At the outset, I would like to welcome the Council's continued interest in the situation in the Central African Republic and its unanimous support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) by renewing its mandate and constantly adapting it to the context and requirements of the situation on the ground.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my congratulations and wishes of success to the new Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, Mr. Félix Moloua, and his Government, which certainly has many challenges to address. Those challenges include the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the organization of the republican dialogue and the restoration of State authority and services, in accordance with the requirements of the rule of law in order to provide effective care for the populations affected by the crisis.

There is no need to point out that those populations aspire only to resume their socioeconomic activities and benefit from the relaunch of development programmes, especially in light of the current post-coronavirus disease recession that is weakening the social fabric. The same applies to the holding of local elections, long awaited since 1988. In that context, MINUSCA and the United Nations country team have been and will remain fully mobilized alongside the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, together with all its partners.

I would once again like to express our gratitude to the members of the Council for their decisive support during the electoral crisis, in particular through the increased ceiling of military and police contingents. I express my appreciation to Headquarters for efforts to expedite the deployment of the new military and police capabilities, the most essential of which have begun to arrive and should endow the Mission with a greater ability to protect the civilian population and fulfil its mandate. While reiterating my gratitude for their continued support to MINUSCA, I encourage troop- and police-contributing countries to honour their commitments to deploying troops.

Progress towards peace and stability in the Central African Republic has been noted and continues in the face of ever-present challenges. Following the adoption of the joint road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on 16 September and the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by President Touadera on 15 October, representatives of that subregional organization paid a follow-up visit to Bangui

on 14 January to advance the effective implementation of the road map for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

I thank all regional and international partners and the States of the subregion involved in that initiative and call for their continued support in order to achieve the desired objectives. That initiative, it should be recalled, would benefit from being more firmly anchored in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. I therefore call on the Government to further demonstrate its commitment to advancing the peace process through the adoption of concrete and rapid measures. In particular, with regard to the road map, it is necessary to define follow-up mechanisms by making them operational and ensuring they are backed by a clear timetable, as well as by holding each and every stakeholder to account.

The road map will succeed only if there is strong political will and all actors unequivocally and irreversibly demonstrate their common desire to overcome the crisis by carrying out all their obligations in good faith. The Central African people are still waiting for a peace dividend. It is urgent that the political process alleviate the suffering of the people, who are victims of the violence of a conflict that has lasted far too long.

The Central African Republic's partners — with MINUSCA at the forefront — continue to play a proactive role in supporting the conditions for the peace process to continue. The complementarity between the joint road map and the political agreement of 6 February 2019 should facilitate synergistic interactions and promote the revitalization of the agreement.

To that end, the visit to Bangui in mid-February by Rwandan and Angolan experts from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region enabled the establishment and development of the terms of reference of a follow-up working group, in close coordination with the national authorities and international partners. That working group is responsible for monitoring three aspects of the Luanda road map agreed at the latest summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, namely, engagement with armed groups, the effects of the unilateral ceasefire declaration by the Head of State and the strengthening of the Government's operational capacity in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The working group should then allow for a coordinated reinvigoration of the peace process

and seize any new opportunities to pool expertise and resources in the interest of peace and security.

MINUSCA is working to remobilize all partners and is making optimal use of its good offices and its force to increase the contribution of international partners to the peace process, as well as to ensure, with all stakeholders, the credibility and integrity of the agreement. It is in our common interest to work with the Government to ensure that the guarantors and facilitators of the political agreement of 6 February 2019 are fully involved in the process of revitalizing the agreement through the implementation of the road map for peace and reconciliation.

Therefore, the Mission, through its good offices, is contributing to advancing the political process in the Central African Republic. Together with its partners, MINUSCA has worked with the Government and the political opposition to establish a climate of trust in order to break the deadlock that had arisen in preparations for the republican dialogue, owing to the opposition's withdrawal from the process. I am delighted that that collective investment has led to the return of the democratic opposition to the organizing committee of the republican dialogue, which has resumed its work. I call on all political actors to maintain that positive momentum in order to contribute to the holding of a sincere, inclusive and constructive republican dialogue that can generate agreements for stability and national reconciliation.

In accordance with its mandate, MINUSCA will continue to support the preparatory process and establish the necessary conditions for the successful holding of the dialogue, which the Government plans to hold in March. Expectations are high. The aim is to find lasting political solutions and create a political climate conducive to the successful holding of local elections. The sincere commitment of all stakeholders will be the key to success.

With its electoral assistance mandate, the Mission continues to support the national authorities and work with the international community to ensure the proper holding of the local elections, which will greatly contribute to the deepening of the democratization process by promoting inclusive local governance.

In that regard, the Mission is working with all political stakeholders to maintain a peaceful political climate and to strengthen trust in order to make it possible, when the time comes, for the people

to participate fully, without any obstacles, in that democratic exercise.

The success of those much-awaited elections will also contribute to deepening the process of decentralization as well as to the extension of State authority and the broadening of the political space throughout the country. For that process to fully meet the expectations of and serve the population as a whole, I encourage the Government to make every effort to pacify the political climate. I also call on the international community to continue to provide support for the holding of the elections, in accordance with the provisions of the Political Agreement. Approximately \$10 million would be necessary to ensure the full financing of the elections.

Despite the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire in October 2021, the security situation remains concerning. In some parts of the territory, military operations are under way against armed groups that are members of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement.

To those military operations are added retaliation by armed groups against both the national security forces and the people. I take note of the progress made during those operations to retake control of the territory previously occupied by armed groups. I nevertheless deplore the fact that violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law continue to be committed by all parties to the conflict, including the excessive use of force as well as the targeting of some communities in theatres of operation and sexual and gender-based or conflict-related violence, as well as the recruitment, abuse and use of children by armed groups. I call on the authorities of the Central African Republic to conduct the investigations necessary to prosecute the perpetrators of those violations and to bring justice to the victims. I encourage the national authorities to take tangible and immediate measures to prevent the human rights violations committed by the defence and security forces and other security personnel.

I also stress the need to combine resumed control of the territory with an effective restoration of State authority by deploying services for the people. The restoration of State authority and its corollary, the extension of its control over national territory, give the Government, the United Nations and all international partners an excellent opportunity to breathe new life into the process of the gradual assumption by State

authorities of their principal responsibility to protect the civilian population.

It seems to me more urgent than ever, in terms of the significant extension of State authority, to encourage the Government to explore a more balanced path that tempers the predominance of military operations by continuing political and peace processes. Military action is necessary but not sufficient in itself to provide lasting political solutions to the crisis. There will be no exclusively military solution to the crisis; the solution can only be political, as has always been said. That is all the more so because the use of additional supports by the armed forces of the Central African Republic, if no care is taken, could compromise the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiatives under way, erode the gains made in the process of reforming the security sector, weaken efforts at national reconciliation and create a climate of mutual suspicion that would heighten tensions of an ethnic and religious nature.

I call on the national authorities to maintain the integrity of DDR and repatriation efforts by respecting the current single framework and the programme for the reduction of community violence by preventing any parallel initiatives that might undermine all those efforts. I reiterate that the State has the main responsibility for protecting the civilian population. To that end, the deployment of national and internal security forces must be sustainably supported, under more effective command and control and on a structural basis, in order to achieve full functionality in their sovereign mission of protecting the people and ensuring the integrity of the territory. That calls for in-depth institutional reform that itself would be the result of strong political will, with the concerted and transparent involvement of all strategic partners of the Central African Republic.

I congratulate the national authorities on their will to implement the national security-sector reform road map approved by the Head of State in August 2021. Those framework documents, particularly the national policy for security and the national security-sector reform strategy, are currently being reviewed and updated. That is a positive prospect that is part of a dynamic of democratic and citizen-controlled accountability and governance in the security sector.

I would draw attention to the increasing use of explosive devices by the parties to the conflict,

particularly in the western part of the country. I strongly condemn the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which have tragic consequences, and call on stakeholders in the conflict to renounce their use immediately.

In that context, access to those needing humanitarian assistance and protection should be facilitated. Because of the increased use of IEDs in the Central African Republic, I call on the Government to explore, with the support of partners, the implementation of a national anti-mine mechanism. I welcome the fact that President Touadera has agreed to work towards the implementation of a national authority to combat the use of mines.

Justice must go hand in hand with reconciliation in order to promote a lasting peace. I encourage the national authorities, with the support of international partners, to continue their efforts to strengthen the legal system so as to ensure respect for the law in an impartial and independent fashion. I commend the holding of the first public hearing of the Special Criminal Court, which reflects the progress made in the fight against impunity. I call for respect for the independence and impartiality of the Special Criminal Court. It is vital to create an environment that makes it possible for the Court to fully comply with its mandate, particularly when it comes to investigations and prosecutions.

With the support of the Government's international partners, the structures and the bases of the fight against impunity have been laid. But justice can serve reconciliation only if judgments are handed down. I therefore call for all necessary measures to be taken to ensure the execution of the arrest warrants issued by the Special Criminal Court.

I would like to raise, as a positive development that I welcome, the efforts made by the Government to make operational the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation. Its members, who were appointed on the basis of gender parity, are working hard to make it possible for the Central African Republic to reach a decisive turning point in the promotion of the rights of victims to truth, justice and reparations, which is vital for national reconciliation. We believe that the Central African Republic, through the Commission, is entering an era of a comprehensive focus on transitional justice, which deserves the support of all strategic partners at a time when the resources necessary to the smooth functioning of its operations are scarce despite

the efforts of the Government, which continues to take responsibility for the salaries of the members of the Commission.

I deplore the negative climate that is being created by disinformation campaigns, which undermine the relations between the Government, the people and MINUSCA and fuel hostile behaviour by certain segments of the population, the armed forces and the internal security forces. I call on the Government to fight those actions, including through prosecutions, to strengthen our cooperation, in an atmosphere of trust, in the implementation of the mandate that the Security Council has given us. I also deplore the persistent violations of the headquarters agreement, with 17 violations documented between 1 October 2021 and 1 February 2022.

I nevertheless commend the reaction of the President of the Republic to the status-of-forces violations submitted to his attention. I invite the Government once again to continue its dialogue with MINUSCA in the interests of the security and safety of peacekeeping personnel. I welcome the availability of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Moloua, in that respect.

Furthermore, I wish to stress the progress made in dealing with incidents relating to sexual exploitation and abuse. MINUSCA has undertaken a strategic audit whose the main objective is to improve its management of the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in the framework of a more comprehensive and proactive focus.

Progress has been made in the Central African Republic, but many challenges remain. The active role of MINUSCA remains essential to support the necessary adjustments to the peace process, which is shaped by the peace agreement, the joint road map, the national dialogue and the upcoming local elections. Those tools for peace must be fully embraced and used skilfully, with the primary concern always being the protection of the civilian population. I once again call on the Government and the international community to support the implementation of resolution 2605 (2021) in order to peacefully bring about stability, social cohesion and development for all Central Africans.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Ndiaye for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Matondo.

Mr. Matondo: (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to express my deep gratitude for this opportunity to address this important meeting of the Security Council, the convening of which once again attests to the Council's ongoing interest in the development of the situation in the Central African Republic, where peace and security continue to be a prerequisite that merits our full attention.

The African Union's assessment of the current situation in the Central African Republic is made through the lens of the main developments that have taken place, particularly at the political level, the preparations for the national dialogue, the security situation and the ongoing efforts in the pursuit of peace and stability in the Central African Republic, which cannot be overlooked given that they remain key priorities.

There are many issues, linked in particular to the political tensions surrounding the preparations for the national dialogue, that have highlighted the need for the stakeholders to show a genuine spirit of cooperation in order to achieve a widely accepted compromise and bring the crisis to a definitive end. It is important to stress that, despite the efforts made by the political and social actors in the Central African Republic and the Government's policy of reaching out, tensions between the main political and social actors persist.

In the current context, where the Central African Republic is eagerly waiting to hold a national dialogue, it is fitting to welcome the consensus dynamic that prevailed during the consultations between the Central African authorities and the political parties of the opposition, including those grouped within the main political opposition platform, the Coalition of Democratic Opposition 2020.

Today that compromise seems to be mutual in order to maintain the possibility of a viable dialogue based on positive outcomes for a common, peaceful and harmonious future during the meetings planned for March, which we hope will result in concrete solutions and create conditions of hope for all Central Africans.

The African Union has taken careful note of the return of the representatives of the democratic opposition and the resumption of the work of the organizing committee for the national dialogue on 9 February after more than three months of deadlock. The African Union supports the continuation of the work of the organizing committee for the national

dialogue and sincerely hopes that the dialogue will be held during the planned period, from 14 to 21 March.

Allow me to commend the efforts of religious leaders, civil society groups, women and young people who are sparing no efforts and continue to work to raise awareness among the population towards their active participation in this dialogue and peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Meanwhile, the funding of the national dialogue remains a challenge. Although a large part of the budget is provided by the Central African Government, contributions from partners are eagerly awaited. While awaiting agreement on the date of the national dialogue, much remains to be done regarding some important issues, including the topics, the presidium of the national dialogue and the list of participants. The African Union therefore calls on all partners of the Central African Republic to continue to provide their material and technical support for the timely holding of the dialogue and for its success.

In the same vein, expectations remain just as high for the Central African Republic, which is continuing the country's democratization phase after the presidential and legislative elections of 2020 and 2021 and is making further progress towards the holding of regional and municipal elections, scheduled for September this year.

In terms of the peace process, three years have passed since the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was signed between the Government and 14 armed groups in Bangui on 6 February 2019. We have continued to take a critical and objective look at the progress in implementing the Political Agreement. At the twelfth ordinary meeting of the Executive Monitoring Committee, held on 14 February, the Government, the armed groups, civil society representatives and the guarantors and facilitators of the peace agreement took stock of the progress and challenges relating to its implementation. The overall assessment is positive in terms of respect for the commitments of the Government and the armed groups set out in articles 4 and 5, respectively, of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.

However, what remains to be done in the context of the implementation of the Agreement is still very important and should not be overlooked. I would like to welcome the initiative of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the efforts made in

the context of the joint road map to mobilize, in the broadest sense, the subregion in promoting dialogue in the Central African Republic, more specifically regarding contacts with the leaders of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), the regrouping of its combatants and its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) within the broader context of the Central African Government's national DDR programme.

For the African Union, the joint road map plays a critical role in expediting the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, particularly with regard to the conduct of the CPC and its leaders. The ceasefire declaration by the President of the Central African Republic on 14 October 2021, calling for an end to military operations and all armed action throughout the territory, was a positive effort to strengthen stability and security in the Central African Republic. That ceasefire measure was short-lived, although it encouraged a process of spontaneous demobilization, which may serve as a springboard for DDR priorities. It is clear that, as long as there is no ceasefire or cessation of hostilities, the DDR process will not be effective.

In the same vein, the follow-up meeting of the Luanda process, held in Bangui on 14 January, made it possible to take stock of the objectives of that joint road map and the concrete actions related to it. In that regard, it is important that coordination between the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the joint road map be further strengthened, bearing in mind the role of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the countries of the subregion as guarantors and facilitators of the Political Agreement.

It is worth pointing out that, despite this glimmer of hope regarding the implementation of the Agreement, its completion and the prospect of a national dialogue being held in the near future, developments in the security situation are still marked by the ongoing challenges in reducing the capacity of armed groups, which continue to pose a threat to the Central African Republic and the region, as evidenced by the persistent tensions and the continued presence of armed groups, especially in the north-western, northern and central areas of the Central African Republic. In addition, there are several illegal cross-border activities.

In military terms, the offensive by the Forces armées centrafricaines, supported by bilateral forces, is under way and seeks to decrease the potential trouble-making of armed groups. Nonetheless, as underscored several times by its Peace and Security Council, the African Union remains convinced that a military solution to the current political and military crisis in the Central African Republic, as promoted by some stakeholders, risks becoming a mirage if it is not accompanied by a political compromise or consensus. The consequences of such violence have had a negative impact on the civilian population, who, in addition to suffering reprisals and forced displacement, find themselves in a very vulnerable situation and face food insecurity.

Approximately 2.5 million people, more than half of the population of the Central African Republic, are without adequate humanitarian assistance due to, inter alia, the inaccessibility of certain sites for displaced persons.

Situations of armed conflict and respect for human rights are often uneasy bedfellows, and the Central African Republic is no exception. The African Union would like to express its deep concern about reports of gross human rights violations perpetrated against civilians, in particular in areas in which military operations are under way. In the same vein, the use of landmines and improvised explosive devices against the contingents of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and civilians is also a reprehensible act that the African Union strongly condemns. Such acts should be meticulously documented so that political and judiciary responsibility is brought to bear to allow perpetrators and their accomplices to be identified.

In conclusion, looking ahead, I would like to underscore that taking specific measures to ensure the successful implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the joint road map; the timely holding of the inclusive republican dialogue; the dissolution of armed groups and continued disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives, in particular the operationalization of the mixed security units; the promotion of improved regional cooperation on peace initiatives and in the area of cross-border security and collaboration on efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic; cooperation and harmonization of positions among the various

stakeholders and international partners of the Central African Republic; the prosecution of those in violation of human rights law and international humanitarian law; and the participation of all partners of the Central African Republic in post-conflict reconstruction, without neglecting humanitarian needs — those are all priorities that can help the Central African Republic once and for all turn the page on perpetual political and military instability and embark upon the path of peace, stability and effective economic revitalization.

On behalf of the African Union, I take this opportunity to thank the countries of the region, MINUSCA, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the European Union and other international partners for the cooperation among our various organizations and for their support to the Central African Republic. We implore them to continue their solidarity with the country.

I cannot end my remarks without paying tribute to my dear brother His Excellency Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye for his decisive role at the head of MINUSCA for the past three years. I have been in daily contact with him, which has been characterized by courtesy, candour and respect. That has helped the African Union and MINUSCA to engage in robust cooperation as we seek to achieve our respective objectives.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Matondo for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Caholo.

Mr. Caholo: At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Russian Federation on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. I also extend my gratitude to the Russian Federation, through its Permanent Representative, His Excellency Mr. Vassily Nebenzia, and his team for the able leadership exhibited thus far and for inviting me to address the Council.

It is always an honour to speak to the Security Council. As per the invitation, I am required to present my perspective on the situation in the Central African Republic. I will therefore provide an update on the major developments in the Central African Republic, in particular political developments and the security and humanitarian situation. I will conclude by providing some recommendations for consideration by the Security Council.

The genesis and political and social economic ramifications of the conflict in the Central African Republic are already well known by the Security Council. Those negative social, economic and political ramifications and spillover effects to the region impelled the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), through His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the ICGLR, to take a keen interest in finding a solution to the deterioration of the political and security situation in the Central African Republic.

The ICGLR has thus far hosted three mini-summits of Heads of State and Government of the Conference on the political and security situation in the Central African Republic, namely, on 29 January 2021, 20 April 2021 and 16 September 2021. As members will recall, at the third mini-summit, held in Luanda, the Heads of State and Government of the ICGLR adopted a joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic, in which participants called for an inclusive dialogue in support of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and urged the Government to declare a ceasefire.

Furthermore, members will recall that, as a result of the resolutions of the third mini-summit, on 15 October 2021, the President of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, declared a unilateral ceasefire and the cessation of fighting against armed groups, thereby signalling his Government's commitment to revitalizing the peace process and promoting peaceful dialogue. That generated some momentum in the peace process. Incremental progress in the context of mitigating political and civil tensions, resolving the humanitarian crisis and further preventing human rights violations continued to be observed.

We note with satisfaction that, six months into the ceasefire, the Government of President Touadera continues to adhere to the political agreement for peace and reconciliation. His Government also continues to be committed to implementing the joint road map for peace in that country. Furthermore, his Government is inclusive in nature and has established and inaugurated the organizing committee of the republican dialogue framework, comprising the political opposition, armed groups, religious leaders and civil society.

Unfortunately, the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the

Central African Republic faces challenges, owing to many interlinked factors, some of which are beyond the control of the Government. The Government's institutional capacity to expeditiously implement the agreement is hampered by both financial and non-financial challenges.

The Government has limited human resources capacities, owing to the negative ramifications of insecurity and political instability in the country. There is also the demotivation of civil servants, including military personnel, owing to the delayed payment of salaries. The situation is affecting the expeditious implementation of the demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) processes, which was one of the critical recommendations of the third mini-summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The Government has established the necessary political and administrative structures, such as the appointment of a Minister of State for Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration and Repatriation and a Minister for Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation, and has formally designated the executive monitoring committee to monitor the implementation of the agreement. It has also identified approximately 4,205 elements of armed groups, which will benefit from the DDRR programme. However, due to limited fiscal space and institutional capacities, the process has slowed down, causing concern and panic among the beneficiaries.

Members will recall that on 14 September 2021, the Government of the Central African Republic announced the adoption of the electoral calendar for the municipal, regional and senatorial elections. The Government pledged to hold municipal, regional and senatorial elections on 11 September 2022, the first in more than three decades, since 1988.

While we applaud that move, we express concern that the country lacks the resources to carry out the critical activities that are required for holding inclusive credible and fair elections, such as voter registration and education. Currently, the registration of citizens, including internally displaced persons, refugee returnees and newly eligible adults are yet to be fully on course, and the country may not complete the task by 30 April unless it manages to mobilize approximately \$10 million. That is a recipe for political and electoral

violence arising from disputed results, owing to inadequate preparation.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we note with concern that approximately 3 million people, representing 63 per cent of the population, continue to be in urgent need of protection and humanitarian relief. Additionally, due to violence and conflict, there are approximately 641,300 internally displaced persons in the country. Generally, poverty and youth unemployment remain at very high levels in the country. We in the ICGLR are of the view that it is time that we engaged young people in a real process of transformation. The youth must be considered as active partners for the implementation of development projects and programmes.

The security situation in the Central African Republic remains unstable. Although the ceasefire was signed, the *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* and the *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* movements continue to perpetuate abuses against civilian populations and attacks against the defence and security forces. We have written time and again, through the ICGLR presidency, calling for the armed leaders and groups to respect their commitments and condemn the use of anti-personnel mines.

We have also noticed that the Government has yet to strengthen its command-and-control mechanism. The country currently lacks a dynamic and adaptive social-technical system configured to design and execute joint regional actions. The country has very few security troops and State police officers with the right skills, necessary equipment and capacity to protect civilians from large-scale outbreaks of violence. That has contributed to inadequate public service provision, the inability to implement regional programmes and the deteriorating security situation.

As I conclude, allow me to say that there is a need for the Security Council, through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, to work with the Government of the Central African Republic to pursue vigorous country-driven security sector reforms to help the country better address complex security challenges.

In the same vein, I call on cooperating partners to fully honour their pledges so that the Central African Republic can fully support National Electoral Authority and hold credible and fair elections. Furthermore, importantly, allow me to reiterate the request of His

Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the ICGLR, that the Security Council needs to reconsider the arms embargo, which continues to impinge on the security forces' ability to safeguard the territorial integrity of the Central African Republic and restore and maintain law and order in the country. Political stability and economic development can be brought about only with the improvement of the security and humanitarian situation of the country.

We in the ICGLR will remain committed to facilitating long-term stability in the Central African Republic and the entire region. We applaud the Government and all stakeholders' commitment to promoting peace, bolstering institutional stability and restoring security in the country and the region. We fully support and will continue to fully support the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which serves as a legal framework and agenda for creating the conditions for security, stability and development among its member States.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Caholo for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the African Union and the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) for their briefings. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic, Ms. Baipo Temon. I thank her for coming to reaffirm before the Security Council the commitment of the Central African Republic to finding a lasting solution to the problems caused by armed groups.

I will say it unequivocally — armed groups represent a serious threat. The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/119) once again condemns their actions towards civilians, the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA), State institutions, Blue Helmets and humanitarian personnel. The international community must do its full part in imposing the sanctions set out in the peace agreement against those groups. That is why, in December, France proposed to the Council to sanction Ali Darassa.

The path of arms chosen by all the protagonists is not the solution. The repeated violations of the ceasefire by the armed groups and FACA do not offer a path to sincere dialogue. However, that path does exist. It is the Luanda road map, supported by the ICGLR, the Economic Community of Central African States, Angola and Rwanda. I call on the authorities of the Central African Republic and the armed groups to implement their commitments without delay. It is imperative that the ceasefire be implemented.

The return to peace will also require an effective disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process. I welcome the demobilization of more than 400 combatants since October by the Government, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We must continue in this direction. This process must be conducted in a transparent manner, by the Government authorities themselves and with the support of MINUSCA, the region and the international community. France is concerned about the ad hoc recruitment of anti-balaka militias by FACA, with the help of Wagner Group mercenaries. This parallel and opaque process bears the seeds of new intercommunal violence.

On the political level, France notes with satisfaction the imminent resumption of the republican dialogue, through which the Government and the opposition are showing that they can compromise in the interest of the country. That must continue. The local elections in September must be organized in a collaborative manner and with respect for freedom of expression and information. The unarmed opposition must find a political space for expression and freedom without fear of reprisals.

Thirdly, I call on the Government authorities to step up their efforts in the fight against impunity. I welcome that 26 investigations are under way against perpetrators of attacks on MINUSCA, as well as the start of public hearings of the Special Criminal Court. The Court must be able to carry out its mandate independently, without political interference. There is still one actor who is not being prosecuted: the Wagner Group. In Aïgbando in mid-January, more than a dozen civilians were killed. The evidence is clear — these people were executed by Wagner Group mercenaries. After the event, mercenaries laid mines around the village to prevent MINUSCA from investigating. This is not an isolated incident. This violence is systematic and deliberate. It

is part of a pattern of terror to control and profit from certain territories. We know that some FACA have been abused by the Wagner Group. We know that jammers are being used to prevent MINUSCA from acting; we have little doubt as to who is responsible. I call on the Central African Republic to prosecute all perpetrators of violence, whoever they may be.

I will conclude with some observations on the arms embargo. While United Nations reports show that the violence in the Central African Republic over the past year has further escalated, it remains clear that the spread of arms is part of the problem. Changes to the sanctions regime must be part of an overall strategy that takes into account political progress in the Central African Republic, regional efforts and progress in achieving the arms control objectives set by the Council.

France regrets that the operation of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic, whose work sheds light on the situation, remains blocked by the Russian Federation. Finally, I would like to commend the work of MINUSCA and that of its Head, Special Representative Ndiaye. We greatly appreciate the work he has done over the past three years under the most difficult conditions.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank this meeting's participants for their briefings and statements, and I welcome Foreign Minister Baipo Temon to the Security Council.

Today I will focus on three issues that Mexico considers central to supporting efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic.

First, we must take into account developments in the security situation. The Secretary-General's most recent reports indicate significant changes in the presence of the international community in the Central African Republic, specifically with regard to the arrival of new actors to the country. That complicates an already precarious situation. In addition, the so-called Coalition des patriotes pour le changement has become fragmented. Despite the unilateral ceasefire declared in October by President Touadera, we see an alarming increase in the use of anti-personnel mines by armed groups. We also see the persistence of illicit arms trafficking despite the current arms embargo.

Mexico is of the view that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in

the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), in close coordination with the national authorities, must focus on helping the Central African Republic overcome its challenges. Let us therefore adapt its mandate accordingly. We also request that the Government authorities fully collaborate with us in that regard.

Secondly, we are convinced that we must prioritize the strengthening of the justice system. In that regard, we see encouraging signs, such as the establishment of the Special Criminal Court. The Government is obligated to investigate and punish those who violate the legal frameworks. There can be no true peace without justice for the victims. In that context, transitional justice systems must be set up with the support of the partners of the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, we reiterate the deeply held conviction that the only viable solution to the conflict is a political one. We therefore welcome the agreements reached between the Government and the opposition in order to promote dialogue. We also welcome the mobilization of partners, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, to facilitate that dialogue. We call on the Government authorities to ensure an inclusive process throughout the national territory, with the active and equal participation of women. Mexico believes that republican dialogue is an opportunity for actors to commit to necessary reforms to improve State governance, particularly as it relates to decentralization. Republican dialogue must proceed in that direction.

Finally, I want to recognize the work of the Special Representative Ndiaye as Head of MINUSCA over the past few years and wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Ambassador Bertino Matias Matondo and Mr. João Samuel Caholo for their valuable briefings. I welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad, in this meeting.

My country supports efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions in the Central African Republic, which lacks stability. The country is witnessing deteriorating humanitarian and economic conditions and, against that backdrop, I would like to make the following points.

First, the United Arab Emirates stresses that achieving sustainable and lasting peace in the Central African Republic requires, first and foremost, a full commitment to the ceasefire. In that regard, we regret that the announcement by President Touadera of a unilateral ceasefire last October was not respected and that armed groups have continued to launch attacks, exacerbating the humanitarian and security situations in the country.

Secondly, engaging in a meaningful and inclusive political dialogue, as well as implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Luanda road map, remains critical to strengthening peace, security and sustainable development in the country. We hope that regional efforts will continue to support peace and help make tangible progress in the implementation of the agreement, including through continued dialogue between the Governments of the Central African Republic, Angola and Rwanda, as guarantors of the Luanda road map.

Further, I note that we must strive to empower women and young people to effectively contribute to the peace process. To that end, we commend the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in fostering the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the upcoming local elections.

Thirdly, we stress the importance of improving and developing policies aimed at protecting civilians, particularly women and children, given the alarming escalation in violence, including sexual and gender-based violence despite the tireless efforts of MINUSCA to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

Finally, my country expresses great concern at the increase in the number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance in the Central African Republic. We call on all parties in the country to guarantee humanitarian access and to refrain from attacks on humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers. My country condemns and deplores such attacks.

The Government's continued efforts to explore economic and financial partnerships are critical to addressing both economic recovery and long-term peace and stability. The United Arab Emirates continues to provide the necessary support to that end.

In conclusion, we stress the importance of continued regional and international initiatives and efforts to achieve stability in the Central African Republic and, subsequently, stability and security throughout the entire region.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): Let me thank all of the briefers for their insights and welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Since the previous briefing in October (see S/PV.8882), we have witnessed some setbacks and fragile progress. Allow me to mention some examples.

First, we have sadly observed how the unilateral ceasefire has not produced the expected results in terms of ending hostilities. Albania reiterates the need for all actors to effectively abide by the ceasefire and calls on the Government to accelerate the implementation of the International Conference on the Great Lakes road map within the framework of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 2019.

Secondly, Albania underscores the importance of making further progress in the republican dialogue, welcoming the return of members of opposition to the committee. We expect that, during the next dialogue scheduled for March, all parties will set their differences aside in order to reach a tangible and inclusive agreement.

In that vein, preparations for local elections in September 2022 are encouraging. Albania reiterates its call for credible elections, which will ensure the equal participation of women and youth.

Thirdly, we remain deeply concerned about the persistent human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by all parties. We condemn in the strongest manner the killing of innocent civilians, the recruitment of children, gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence against women and children, and attacks on schools and hospitals. Albania is particularly alarmed by regular operations similar to those conducted in Aïgbando from 16 to 18 January by national security forces and the Wagner Group, which resulted in several civilian deaths and displacements.

Accountability for criminal acts committed by any party must never be sacrificed for the sake of security provisions. In that vein, we welcome the Special Criminal Court and call on national authorities to

spare no effort in bringing those responsible to justice, starting with immediate and credible investigations into human rights violations and abuses.

We are very troubled by the effects of the security situation on the humanitarian front. We are following with great concern the continued targeting of humanitarian personnel and call on all parties to provide a secure environment and unhindered access for humanitarian workers providing critical assistance to civilians.

We commend the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and its Head in supporting the peace process and ensuring the protection of civilians. We regret that, in carrying out its mandate, MINUSCA still faces immediate challenges, as mentioned by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Albania encourages the national authorities to further engage and fully cooperate with the Mission to get to the bottom of recent cases of signal losses for United Nations aircraft, and welcomes the 26 ongoing investigations into attacks against peacekeepers.

Finally, I would like to express Albania's support for the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013). We hope that the members of the Panel of Experts are appointed as soon as possible, in order to do their work.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya.

We welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic in this debate. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, as well as the African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic, Mr. Bertino Matias Matondo, and the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Mr. João Samuel Caholo, for their respective briefings.

The matter of debate today is crucial for the A3 because it concerns the stability and security of a vast

region in the heart of Africa. The Central African Republic finds itself in a pivotal phase in terms of laying the foundations for lasting peace and stability. We must maintain consensus within the Council and propose realistic, concrete solutions on the political, security and humanitarian fronts that are commensurate with the scale of the crises and distress plaguing the Central African population.

On the political front, it is important to highlight the efforts of the Central African authorities in implementing the Luanda road map arising from the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Those efforts are characterized in particular by the announcement of a ceasefire by President Touadera, as well as by the decision to hold a republican dialogue in March and local elections in September. We also note the decision by the Central African Government to suspend the judicial prosecution of certain members of the opposition with the aim of securing détente.

We welcome the support provided by partners of the Central African Republic — in particular the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations, especially the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region — to the republican dialogue. It is essential that the dialogue be inclusive and organized in a calm environment where the voices of all components of Central African society can be heard. Only the reappropriation of the political process by Central Africans themselves will lead to solutions that are compatible with the realities on the ground and the aspirations of the population for sustainable peace.

The A3 invites the Central African political class to demonstrate realism and underlines that a military solution will not serve to restore peace and stability in Central Africa. We must take advantage of international mobilization and seize the opportunity that the national dialogue and the reconciliation process present to end the cycle of violence. The holding of municipal and regional elections for the first time in more than 30 years represents an opportunity to revive democracy in the Central African Republic and to spur enthusiasm and interest on the part of the population in the political process. The A3 therefore encourages the political parties to involve themselves further and to work for the effective participation of women and young people throughout all electoral processes.

In security and humanitarian terms, the situation in the Central African Republic remains concerning. It is extremely difficult to hold credible and peaceful elections in a highly volatile security situation. Another area of concern is protecting the population against acts of violence by the heavily armed rebel groups that target them and, regularly, their supplies, and are intensifying the use of improvised explosive devices.

The A3 firmly condemns the attacks committed by armed groups against civilians, Blue Helmets and humanitarian workers. Such heinous acts are unacceptable, and those who commit them should be prosecuted. Thus the implementation of a national special investigation commission to shed light on serious crimes and violations of human rights and humanitarian law must be welcomed.

The A3 underlines the fact that beyond those various legal mechanisms and instruments, an urgent solution must be found to the proliferation of weapons, which clearly fuels insecurity in the country and throughout the region. It would be unacceptable to stand by and not react to the sad spectacle of armed groups and terrorists making use of increasingly sophisticated weapons and causing suffering to the people, whose exodus is also exacerbating humanitarian tensions. That persistent insecurity in one part of the Central African Republic continues to worsen the living conditions of the people, who resent the forces on the ground.

We must have a more decisive commitment on the part of the international community to truly cut off sources of supply for armed groups. That means adequate financing from the international community for programmes aimed at the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

The A3 underscores the need to lift the arms embargo imposed on the Central African Republic by the Security Council in order to allow the country to strengthen the capacities of its armed forces to effectively discharge their constitutional mandate to defend the country. The Central African Republic must be able to protect its own people and territory. Allied forces and MINUSCA are not to remain the country forever; that is not their job.

Restricting the military capacities of the legitimate authorities of the country today means condemning the country to powerlessness and to making its instability chronic. The A3 welcomes the outstanding efforts and the commitment of MINUSCA to protect the population.

However, given the alarming humanitarian situation and the ongoing humanitarian crisis, MINUSCA needs a more robust mandate. A reinforcement of its personnel and its operational capacity will certainly allow it to improve the security environment.

We welcome the efforts at coordination between the authorities of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA. We encourage further cooperation between the country and neighbouring States, as well as the resolution of border conflicts through dialogue in a climate of calm. Partnerships between the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of the Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as bilateral partners, have a real impact on political progress, in particular in terms of peacebuilding, and should be welcomed.

The ongoing security problems are being worsened by extreme weather and have had severe impacts on the humanitarian situation and increased tensions in the Central African Republic. We commend the efforts of all humanitarian stakeholders and encourage international and regional donors, as well as the country's partners, to overcome the financing deficit for humanitarian activities. It is vital that we support the Government of the Central African Republic in building the State and in peacebuilding to respond to the aspirations of the people over the long term.

It is clear that there is a need to offer prospects to the people of the Central African Republic by ending the root causes of conflict, encouraging economic development and setting up robust institutions to ensure equitable justice and genuine national reconciliation.

In conclusion, the A3 reiterates its firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic — and the corollary is non-intervention in the domestic affairs of the country — while also underlining the scale of what is at stake and the interconnection of the security challenges in that country, located at the edge of the Sahel.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Allow me to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mankeur Ndiaye and the other briefers for their insightful remarks. I am also pleased to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Ms. Baipo Temon, here today. I look forward to working

with her Government in bringing peace to the Central African Republic.

When President Touadera announced a unilateral ceasefire in October, we had all hoped that that would lead to greater security and much-needed progress in the political process. Unfortunately, the fighting continues, and a genuine, inclusive dialogue has not yet started. The rebels are certainly to blame, but the Government's choice of partners also affects the prospects of sustainable peace in the Central African Republic.

Norway commends the region, in particular Angola and Rwanda, for its continued engagement, which seems to have led to a renewed impetus and a date for the long-awaited republican dialogue. We encourage all actors, especially the Government, to finally make that happen.

Only a dialogue that addresses the grievances of all segments of society — including with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women — can lead to sustainable peace. We also underscore that the protection of civilians, including children, is critical to averting new cycles of violence.

Reports of continued high levels of gross violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law are frustratingly familiar. Norway is particularly appalled by the reported high number of incidents of gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence, reported grave violations against children and the targeting of religious minorities. We also condemn in the strongest terms the targeting of humanitarian workers. The main perpetrators continue to be the armed groups of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement.

But reports show that the Forces armées centrafricaines and their partners — the Russian Wagner Group — continue to commit numerous violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. Incidents such as the ones in and around Bria are particularly shocking because the Forces armées centrafricaines and their partners should be held to a higher standard than armed groups. We call on the authorities of the Central African Republic to investigate all incidents and hold the perpetrators accountable.

We are also worried by reported new trends such as the recruitment of ex-combatants as proxies against armed groups; the dangerous and unacceptable jamming

of the navigation signals of the air assets of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and the use of explosive devices.

We welcome the improvement in the Government's implementation of the status-of-forces agreement. Good working relations between the authorities of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA are essential.

That being said, Norway is very worried about the multiple reports of the obstruction of and denial of access to MINUSCA by the Forces armées centrafricaines and the Wagner Group. MINUSCA must be allowed to do its work, including in the investigation of incidents involving alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law.

Finally, Norway would like to express its concern about the continued absence of a Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic. After a hold of more than six months, one Member State has rejected the nominated experts. We urge the Secretariat to swiftly propose new names, and we hope that the Panel can resume its work as soon as possible.

Allow me to conclude with special thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his hard work and commitment to the Central African Republic. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I would like to start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye, African Union Special Representative Matondo and Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Caholo for their comprehensive remarks. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye's time comes to an end at the helm of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), we commend him for his leadership over the past three years, and we wish him well in his next chapter. We look forward to working with his successor to further strengthen and support MINUSCA in the future.

I also welcome the participation of the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic. I visited the Central African Republic several times in my former position as Assistant Secretary for Africa. I am saddened that the situation in the Central African

Republic continues not to significantly improve, but I look forward to working with the Foreign Minister and her Government towards a peaceful solution to the situation in the Central African Republic in the future.

Today I would like to address three aspects of the situation in the Central African Republic: the work and safety of MINUSCA; the threat that Wagner Group forces pose to human rights in the Central African Republic; and progress towards a political solution to the conflict.

First, let me start by saying thank you to the women and men of MINUSCA and to the troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment to peace in the Central African Republic. I know that they have been under attack — both physically and with disinformation — and I condemn those attacks in the strongest terms. MINUSCA has done a significant job attempting to restore security to the Central African Republic. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/119) notes, its increased operations ousted armed groups in Boyo, as well as other areas.

However, we must remain firm in supporting the peacekeepers whom we have collectively sent into harm's way, call out those who are willing to harm them and hold those individuals and entities accountable. In particular, we must address the disturbing news from the Secretary-General's report that the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA), working with the Kremlin-supported Wagner Group, perpetrated 17 violations of MINUSCA's status-of-forces agreement in the past four months. That is simply unacceptable. Together, as the Security Council, we must call on the Central African Republic and the Wagner Group to stop threatening and obstructing MINUSCA personnel and their work.

That leads me to my second point: we must address and take on the threat to human rights that the Wagner Group forces pose. National defence forces and Wagner Group contractors, referred to as "other security personnel" in the report, perpetrated over 40 per cent of all violations documented during the reporting period. For that reason, we find it hard to even think about lifting an arms embargo where arms could be used against innocent citizens. In particular, credible sources have reported that Wagner Group forces in the town of Aigbado massacred more than 30 unarmed civilians on 16 and 17 January, and that included over 20 execution-style killings. Those forces are committing

horrific acts and trampling over the human rights that we have fought so hard to preserve, including for the people of the Central African Republic, who deserve to have their human rights respected.

We call upon the Government of the Central African Republic to cooperate fully with MINUSCA and other partners to investigate all allegations transparently and hold those responsible for such heinous acts accountable. The initial steps taken by the special commission of inquiry, led by the Central African Republic's Minister of Justice, are positive. Now is the time to follow through on the investigations.

We are deeply concerned by reports that FACA and Wagner Group forces continue to target predominantly Muslim communities in their military operations. That poses grave risks to the country's delicate social fabric, and it contributes to further destabilization.

That leads me to my third, and final, point: there is no military solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic. That point was aptly made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The only durable way forward is through the full implementation of the 2019 peace agreement, justice for victims and inclusive political dialogue. To that end, we call upon the Government of the Central African Republic to abide by its 15 October ceasefire and immediately stand up and enforce a ceasefire monitoring mechanism. We commend the Government of the Central African Republic for its decision to lift immunity for the political opposition, and we welcome further progress towards the organization of an inclusive republican dialogue process.

To further prepare for local elections in September, we call on the Government of the Central African Republic to launch and staff the Cadre de concertation and to implement the April 2020 decentralization law. That is an opportunity for the newly appointed Prime Minister, Félix Moloua, whom I want to congratulate here today.

The United States remains a committed partner of the Central African Republic, and we look forward to working with it to realize the promise of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the republican dialogue and the country's first local elections in 34 years.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): At the outset, let me thank Special Representative of the Secretary-

General Mankeur Ndiaye for his briefing regarding the progress made on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and for updating the Security Council on the recent political developments in the Central African Republic. I also thank the African Union (AU) Special Representative and Head of the AU Office in the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Bertino Matias Matondo, and the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Mr. João Samuel Caholo, for their respective briefings. I also welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic, Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon.

The challenges faced by the Central African Republic remain significant. While the overall political situation is stable, a new Prime Minister was recently appointed. We hope that this development will facilitate the reform process and the national dialogue. The Government is planning to hold local elections in September. They will be crucial in deepening the democratic process across the country. We hope that the necessary legislation will soon pave the way for that process to begin.

The holding of the national dialogue, scheduled next month, will be important to capitalize on the gains of the unilateral ceasefire, which was announced by President Touadera last October. We hope that the withdrawal of prosecutions against the opposition members on 31 January will help to fast-track the process of national dialogue. The implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic will be possible only once the six signatory groups, including factions of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement that are based outside the Central African Republic, engage in good faith.

In that context, we welcome the holding of the executive and follow-up committee meeting of the Political Agreement on 14 February. We look forward to the early commencement of the work of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation. We also commend the regional efforts in the peace process through the ICGLR initiative.

The security situation has remained volatile, particularly in the north-western regions of the country, with continued fighting between the opposition groups

and national defence forces. The lives of ordinary civilians, particularly women and children, continue to be at risk, with increased displacement and abuses. We hope that progress in the national dialogue will lead to an improvement in the security situation in the coming days. There is also the need to expedite the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, as well as that of security sector reform.

The implementation of the status-of-forces agreement improved over the past four months. That is a clear indication of enhanced cooperation between MINUSCA and the Central African Republic authorities. Unfortunately, peacekeepers remained the victims of targeted attacks during the reporting period. We strongly condemn attacks on peacekeepers and hope that the leadership of the Mission will take the required measures to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. Resolution 2589 (2021), adopted by the Council in August 2021, requested the Secretary-General to report on certain key tasks reflected in paragraph 4 of the resolution, concerning crimes against peacekeepers. We look forward to the reporting on those issues in upcoming MINUSCA reports.

The Central African Republic is at an important juncture in its tenuous journey towards peace. The continuing support of the international community, including the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of the Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, is crucial.

India has assisted the Central African Republic through development partnerships, including lines of credit for industrial and mining projects, the supply of buses and hydroelectric projects, as well as through capacity-building programmes. We will continue to support the people of the Central African Republic in these challenging times.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me start by thanking Special Representative Ndiaye, Special Representative Matondo and Executive Secretary Caholo for their briefings.

I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, to today's meeting.

The points my delegation will raise today focus on the security situation, peace talks and the republican dialogue. In a very succinct and direct way, it is our

view that security remains a concern in the Central African Republic. As described in the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2022/119), armed groups continue to destabilize local communities on a large scale. Sexual violence, the lack of humanitarian access and the recruitment of children in armed conflict are troubling realities.

The most recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2021/437) depicts growing cases of serious violations. Even if armed groups provoke the vast majority of the abuses, it is critical that the Government of the Central African Republic draw on the Child Protection Code in response. Ongoing investigations on the perpetrators of attacks against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) are also laudable.

My second point relates to peace talks. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives are particularly urgent. At present, unfortunately, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, cannot take advantage of the intelligence provided by the Panel of Experts. The Central African Republic should make extensive use of MINUSCA's resources and expertise to accelerate weapons collection.

We also call on all stakeholders to step up their efforts to implement the joint road map for peace, designed by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We commend the work done by Angola and Rwanda to establish the Luanda road map.

We commend the resumption of the national republican dialogue. We also hope it will lead to better understanding among political actors in the Central African Republic. We also commend its organization before the September local elections.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the African Union Special Representative and Mr. Caholo for their briefings.

First, the United Kingdom is concerned about the fact that the continued violence in the Central African Republic undermines the chance for inclusive political dialogue. We urge all parties to respect the ceasefire. We also welcome the return of opposition parties to the republican dialogue process and acknowledge the

immense efforts on the Luanda joint road map initiative. That is positive progress. The political agreement remains the only way to achieve long-term peace and stability for the citizens of the Central African Republic.

Secondly, the United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and the ongoing threats to civilians. The high levels of displacement and conflict-related sexual violence, highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/119), are unacceptable. The ongoing targeting of humanitarian personnel and denial of humanitarian access must stop. Sadly, reporting shows that violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights by all parties to the conflict continue.

The United Kingdom deplores the indiscriminate killings of unarmed civilians and targeting of the Fulani and Muslim communities by the Forces armées centrafricaine and the Russian mercenary Wagner Group, as we have heard from others. The Wagner Group plays a destabilizing role in the country. Its presence undermines the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), to the detriment of the citizens of the Central African Republic. We call on the Government to ensure the full application in the country of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and that all perpetrators of violations or abuses are held to account.

Thirdly, I would like to touch upon threats to the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers. We note the decrease in violations of the status-of-forces agreement in the latest reporting period. However, we continue to call for clarity regarding the attack on a United Nations police bus last November, which resulted in United Nations casualties and a civilian death. We are also deeply concerned about the jamming of MINUSCA's GPS signals and satellite communications. That requires urgent investigation. Any delay in resolving the issue will put United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel at unacceptable risk.

I would like to once again emphasize that the arms embargo exists to prevent weapons falling into the hands of armed groups and fuelling violence. It is not intended to prevent the Government from obtaining the equipment it needs for defence and security sector reform. Indeed, to date, the Committee has approved

all exemption requests submitted under the framework of the arms embargo. We welcome any progress the Government has made with regard to meeting the Council's benchmarks, but it is critical that the block on the Panel of Experts be lifted soon.

Finally, if I may, I would like to add my voice to that of my Council colleagues to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his tireless work and service over the past three years and wish him the best in his future endeavours.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ndiaye, the African Union Special Representative, Mr. Matondo, as well as Executive Secretary, Mr. Caholo, for their very informative briefings this morning.

I would like to acknowledge the presence at today's meeting of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon.

I take this opportunity to commend and sincerely thank Mr. Ndiaye for his invaluable work in extremely difficult circumstances in the Central African Republic.

Last October (see S/PV.8882), we welcomed the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in the Central African Republic, which represented a very important step towards peace, as well as a return to the conditions of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. It is regrettable that progress has stopped there and that civilians suffer the most. I recall the Secretary-General's call for all parties to commit to a ceasefire and engage in a genuine dialogue for peace, with the full and meaningful participation of women.

A political solution based on a constructive and inclusive national dialogue represents an opportunity to advance peace and security, which the people of the Central African Republic fully deserve. We welcome the return of opposition leaders to the organizing committee of the republican dialogue, and we urge all political actors in the country to engage constructively.

(*spoke in English*)

Human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law continue to be perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. Suffering in the Central African Republic has intensified. We are seeing higher levels of gender-based violence

and conflict-related sexual violence against women. Moreover, we have seen yet another increase in the number of grave violations against children. The significant level of human rights violations committed by national security forces and other security personnel is particularly concerning. We once again urge the authorities to ensure that there are thorough, impartial and effective investigations into all alleged violations and abuses, and we urge the authorities to hold those responsible to account, regardless of their nationality or affiliation.

Ireland is deeply concerned about the reports of serious human rights abuses and violations involving other security personnel in the Central African Republic, particularly the Wagner Group. Accountability is key to ending the cycle of conflict. We take note of the announcement yesterday that the International Criminal Court has scheduled the opening of the trial in the case against Mahamat Said Abdel Kani for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Bangui in 2013. That should serve as a reminder to all parties that severe crimes must not go unpunished.

Today a staggering 3.1 million people — 63 per cent of the population — are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. We condemn continuing attacks against humanitarian actors and obstructions to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the strongest terms. Progress on the investigation into attacks against United Nations personnel is welcome, and we encourage the authorities of the Central African Republic to advance their efforts to bring those responsible to justice. We remind all parties involved in hostilities of their obligation to comply with international law, including humanitarian law, in all circumstances.

Continuing status-of-forces violations are unacceptable, as are disinformation campaigns against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and international partners. It is ultimately the people of the Central African Republic who suffer the most when the Mission is not free to fulfil its mandate.

The local elections represent an opportunity for progress in the Central African Republic. We urge all actors to work to create an environment conducive to the peaceful holding of the local elections later in the year. We welcome efforts to promote the full participation of women in elections, both as voters and candidates.

We have repeatedly insisted across many dossiers here in the Security Council that women's participation is not a luxury or an optional extra. It is crucial to achieving and sustaining peace. It is the right of all women to be in the rooms and at the tables where key decisions are made for the future of their countries and local communities. We also encourage efforts to ensure the inclusion of returnees and displaced persons in the forthcoming elections.

(spoke in French)

Sanctions are an important tool used by the Council to support the restoration of peace and security in the Central African Republic. I reiterate Ireland's support for the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) and once again call for ending delays in appointments to its Panel of Experts.

In conclusion, the region's engagement has greatly contributed to the efforts to restore peace and security in the Central African Republic, including support for mediation efforts. The Council should continue to support such initiatives in the pursuit of peace in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Diaspora of the Central African Republic, Ms. Baipo Temon, at our meeting today. I also thank Mr. Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Matondo, Special Representative of the African Union, and Mr. Caholo, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), for their briefings.

With regard to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/119), I would like to make the following comments.

Currently, the situation in the Central African Republic is generally improving. China welcomes the fact that the Government of the Central African Republic has taken a series of measures in maintaining political stability, improving the security situation, resuming economic development and conducting exchanges with other countries. The republican dialogue is about to begin, and preparations for local elections are under way. China welcomes those developments.

We expect that all parties in the Central African Republic will actively participate in the dialogue, bridge differences, enhance mutual trust and inject new impetus into realizing a comprehensive ceasefire

and accelerating the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. China supports the mediation efforts by regional and subregional organizations, appreciates the leading roles played by countries such as Angola, the Congo and Rwanda. We hope that the ICGLR will enhance communication with the Government of the Central African Republic in the implementation of the road map and strive to form synergies based on the reality on the ground and its needs.

Since President Touadera announced the ceasefire on 15 October 2021, the security situation has generally improved thanks to the great efforts made by the Government of the Central African Republic and relevant parties. The recent political turmoil in some African countries has repeatedly demonstrated that safeguarding their territorial integrity and protecting their own citizens are the basic requirements underpinning sovereign countries. In the final analysis, the achievement of lasting peace in the Central African Republic depends on the strength of the country. According to the needs of the Government of the Central African Republic, the international community should help the country's armed forces improve their security capabilities, counter threats posed by armed groups and respect the right of the Government to independently conduct security cooperation with other countries.

In carrying out its duties, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should focus on helping the Central African Republic expand State authority, strengthen the deployment of security forces and promote security sector reform. The Government of the Central African Republic and countries of the region have repeatedly stressed that the arms embargo is the main obstacle to the enhancement of the security capabilities of the Central African Republic and have therefore called for lifting it as soon as possible. China urges the Security Council to help fulfil their aspiration by lifting the arms embargo at an early date and providing support for the Government of the Central African Government to address security challenges and safeguard national stability.

The improvement of the security situation in the Central African Republic has brought about the recovery of economic development to some extent, but the country continues to face multiple challenges, such as financial constraints and the coronavirus disease pandemic. The humanitarian situation is not positive,

with 3.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The international community, especially the major Powers, should provide financial assistance in a timely manner to help overcome difficulties. At the same time, it is necessary to help the country restore its economy, improve people's livelihoods and turn its advantages in natural resources into development advantages to lay a solid foundation for peace through sustainable development.

In November 2021, Foreign Minister Baipo Temon, in her letter to the President of the Council, laid out important views and suggestions concerning MINUSCA's mandate and performance. Respecting the views of the countries concerned is a prerequisite for peacekeeping operations to carry out their work with positive results. MINUSCA should continue to listen fully to the opinions of the country, align its work with the needs and priorities of the country and rebuild trust with the Government and all sectors of society to form synergy. No one wants to see security incidents involving peacekeepers in the Central African Republic. MINUSCA and the Government of the Central African Republic have been actively engaging in communication and coordination recently to jointly safeguard the status-of-forces agreement, which has achieved good results. We hope that the two sides will work in the same direction and enhance the safety of peacekeepers.

In conclusion, I thank Mr. Ndiaye for his last briefing to the Council as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. China will, as always, support the work of the Mission and hopes that the Mission will make a greater contribution to comprehensive peace, stability and development in the country.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Mr. João Samuel Caholo and Mr. Bertino Matias Matondo for their briefings. We welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon.

We are closely monitoring developments in the Central African Republic. We believe that there has been success overall in stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic and in limiting the military potential of illegal armed groups. We therefore welcome

the announcement by President Touadera on 15 October 2021 of a ceasefire regime.

State authority is gradually being strengthened in the region. The judicial system is getting back to work, and the number of law enforcement officials deployed around the country is increasing. There are also preparations for municipal elections in September 2022.

We are convinced that the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 is the base document for achieving lasting peace and security. We note the efforts of the authorities to carry out the President's initiative to organize the republican dialogue. It is important that the authorities are committed to the principle of inclusivity when implementing the road map on actualizing the political agreement, which was developed with regional assistance.

We welcome the active involvement of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States in the efforts being undertaken by the United Nations and Bangui's foreign partners to stabilize the situation in the country. We believe that any mediation initiatives in the format of subregional organizations must be agreed with the Government of the Central African Republic.

We believe it important to be guided by the priorities outlined by the President of the Central African Republic at the Security Council meeting held on 18 October 2021 (see S/PV.8882). Those priorities include the cessation of military activity, the dissolution of illegal armed groups, the implementation of programmes for the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of militants, security sector reform, the strengthening of national borders and gradual progress on the political process.

We note that the illegal armed group Coalition des patriotes pour le changement and its various splinter groups have not ruled out continuing the armed struggle or their plans to seize power by force. We are also concerned by the high-tech weapons in their possession. In those conditions, we think it important to help strengthen the capacity of the legally elected authorities. We believe that without effective support for the leaders of the country in strengthening the military capacity of the national armed forces, it may take a long time to overcome the domestic crisis. We are convinced that the presence of a well-armed and well-trained army

and law enforcement is an important condition for long-term stability in the Central African Republic.

Considering the functions that peacekeepers carry out, including in combating illegal armed groups as part of their civilian protection measures, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should be an important element in guaranteeing security in the country. We advocate closer cooperation between MINUSCA and Bangui and with bilateral partners on the ground. We are convinced that the full implementation of the peacekeeping mission's mandate will be possible only with trust-based dialogue and mutual understanding with the authorities of the country of deployment. We hope, therefore, that the planned changes to the leadership of MINUSCA will have a positive effect on the relations between the Mission and Bangui.

We abstained in the voting on 12 November 2021 on resolution 2605 (2021), on the extension of MINUSCA's mandate. In so doing, we sent a signal to its leadership about the need to overcome the shortcomings in its work, first and foremost establishing the proper cooperation with the authorities in Bangui.

At the same time, we must also realize that MINUSCA cannot and should not replace the efforts of the national authorities. It is they who bear the major responsibility for the fate of the country and for protecting civilians. In that regard, there is a need to continue to strengthen the capacity of the Central Africans themselves. That task is being impeded by the arms embargo. The Security Council sanctions regime must therefore be adapted in timely fashion to the situation on the ground. Russia has consistently advocated a relaxation of the arms embargo until such time as it is fully lifted. Resolution 2588 (2021) adopted on 29 July 2021, at the request of Bangui, makes provisions for additional easing of the sanctions regime. There is a need to take further steps in the direction of the official authorities.

Our country is helping Bangui to strengthen its military capacity. With the knowledge of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), we have repeatedly supplied the Central African Republic with military products. In addition, some 94 citizens of the Central African Republic are being trained in our military academies. There are also Russian instructors working in the country. The campaign to discredit

them is bewildering to us, to say the least. We repeat that specialists from Russia are present in the Central African Republic on the basis of a request from the legally elected Central African authorities. Russia strictly complies with all the restrictions introduced by the Security Council with regard to the Central African Republic.

Today we have once again heard accusations against Russian specialists. In the light of recent international events, including in Africa, we are struck by the level of hypocrisy in the statements of some of our colleagues. While stressing the sovereign right of countries to select partners for cooperation and alliances, in other cases, if the partners do not suit our Western colleagues, they become hysterical, claiming that the sovereign State in question does not have a right to cooperate with such partners. In one case, when regional organizations support Western decisions or policies, that is good. In other cases, as with the Central African Republic, the assessments of regional organizations are ignored and their position on lifting the arms embargo is not taken into account.

A number of countries represented at the Security Council table have for a number of years provided so-called military assistance to African States — and not only African States. Then, a few years later, they simply abandoned those countries to their fate. That was the case in Afghanistan, and today we will also discuss a range of other African issues. Thereafter, it seems that suddenly everybody is guilty except those countries that were there for several years.

Colleagues in the Security Council today have repeated, one after another, unverified information about cases of violations of human rights and other crimes. Why do they not demand from each other the results of investigations into the air strike in Kabul that killed seven children, or air strikes in Iraq, Hajin and Baghouz, in which 80 people were killed, but nobody was punished for these crimes? Was no one responsible? Why are those questions not raised on a regular basis?

I would also like to note that this is Mr. Ndiaye's final briefing to the Security Council in his current capacity. I thank him for his briefing and to wish him every success in the future, whatever his chosen endeavours.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Baipo Temon (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I am particularly honoured to be able to participate in this meeting of the Security Council to consider the periodic report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/119). Before presenting the remarks of the Central African Republic, I wish to extend to you, Madam President, my sincere congratulations on your country's presidency of the Council this month. Since I have the floor, I take this opportunity to thank the technical and financial partners of the Central African Republic, both bilateral and multilateral. I also wish to thank the representatives of the States members of the Council, the organ responsible for the maintenance of peace and security in the world. Their presence here today demonstrates their commitment to the cause of the Central African Republic and the efforts to build peace in my country. I thank all speakers for their contribution, for the expression of their concerns and for their support to the mechanisms and processes of peace in the Central African Republic.

It is important to note that, despite a difficult security and political situation, the Government, under the guidance of the President of the Republic and Head of State, Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, has continued to make the efforts necessary to significantly improve the security and political situation in the Central African Republic. In that regard, courageous steps have been taken at the political level by the Central African Government to speed up the peace process, particularly the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, as well as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region road map.

Steps have also been taken to move the political and socioeconomic situations forward, including the unilateral ceasefire declared by the President of the Republic and Head of State in accordance with the Luanda road map; the suspension of criminal prosecution of some leaders of the democratic opposition, thereby accelerating the republican dialogue process; the launching of the process of regional and local elections, with the help of bilateral and multilateral partners; improvement of the social climate via ongoing dialogue with social partners and the reassessment of the guaranteed minimum wage; the conclusion, through dialogue with technical and financial partners, of

an expanded facility programme; and the extension of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan to 2023, pending a new framework of reference for the mobilization of resources.

We note the calls to speed up the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region road map. It is important to recall, as evidence of the Government's will to make progress in the peace process, that all peace process initiatives, either defined or ongoing, were born of the calls of the Central African authorities, either bilaterally or multilaterally. All those calls were motivated by the sole desire of the Government to strengthen peace and stability and to improve our people's daily lives and prospects for a better future.

That commitment to peace, to calm and to development has not changed. On the contrary, it has been strengthened in the face of the unacceptable injustice of seeing Central Africans deprived of their rights when elsewhere there is unanimous condemnation of the terror and misery of some people caused by the tyranny and oppression of others. That resolve and commitment to emerging from decades of subjection to violence are strong — very strong. That is why, aware of our situation of precarity and weakness, the Central African Republic calls on partners, friendly countries and organizations that have the capacity and whose fundamental principles are to support those who are in situations of difficulty and our efforts in a committed, practical and non-bureaucratic way, taking into account the realities on the ground in order to avoid unrealistic goals and conditions that would block the various peace processes, in particular the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) road map. That will depend upon our ability to work together in workshops where our differences in terms of visibility must be overcome if we are to reach our shared objective to emerge collectively, as opposed to individually, as winners. That will also depend upon our will to remain committed, in solidarity, when faced with the enemies of peace — that is, armed groups.

Allow me to raise a point regarding the initiatives taken within the framework of the Luanda road map, and in particular at the initiative of the Central African Government, in accordance with the communiqué that emerged from the 16 September 2021 mini-summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The Government of the Central African

Republic was requested to establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the joint road map. At the initiative of the Government, a meeting to monitor the implementation of the joint road map was organized on 14 January in the country. Gathered there was a ministerial committee established in the framework of the summit of the ICGLR Heads of State, comprising the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Rwanda and the Central African Republic, assisted by a group of technical experts set up by the ministerial committee to conduct and lead useful workshops to complete the implementation of the road map, in complement with the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. As I said, the meeting was also held in accordance with the communiqué indicating that responsibility for the monitoring and implementation mechanism fell to the Central African authorities in order to establish coordination with technical and financial partners of the Central African Republic, with the support of representatives of the ICGLR and the Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS).

I call for the unequivocal support of the international community and the member States represented here today for the proper functioning and implementation of the joint road map. From this point forward, we must work together on the recommendations and challenges that were raised at the meeting on 14 January. It will also be a question of working together to reach the goals set by the six thematic areas of the road map, which I will recall here.

The first is the commitment of armed groups. First and foremost, armed groups must be brought to reason. They must renounce violence and adhere to the peace process. The second is the ceasefire to create a climate of trust in the peace process. The third is the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation processes for the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, with the commitment of the leaders in the framework of the ICGLR initiative. The fourth is a reform of the defence and security sector, taking into account respect for sovereignty when it comes to designing and setting up the national army. The fifth is securing the borders by implementing bipartite or tripartite agreements defined with neighbouring countries. And the sixth is the political process, broken down into the restoration of State authority over the entire Central African territory and support for the presidential initiative for the republican dialogue. On the latter, I want to specify that it was supported by the

summit of ICGLR Heads of State, not recommended by them.

A first implementation analysis took place on 14 January. With the goal of being practical, we focused on the first three thematic areas in order to take stock, identify the challenges and make recommendations by means of which all partners should work together in solidarity. A failure by armed groups to respect the commitments they undertook under the first thematic area to renounce violence; violations of the unilateral ceasefire declared by the country's President; difficulties in carrying out the processes of demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and repatriation for members of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement; and a lack of willingness by armed groups to respect the process — all of that now obliges us to remain firm in our decision to support the peace process and the initiatives by the subregion so that ultimately, beyond keeping the peace — in fact, even before — we can actually achieve the peace so yearned for by the Central African people.

Simply put, I would say that we should make the aspirations of the Central African people a common objective. The republican dialogue, to be held next March, as already mentioned, is intended to be inclusive and respecting of the principle of saying no to impunity — a cherished principle on the basis of which we want to build the rule of law in the Central African Republic. The dialogue, linked to the frame of reference recognized by everyone as the sole instrument for peace — the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic — should, as the report of the Secretary-General indicates, reinforce national ownership over peace and the political process, without any interference whatsoever.

When it comes to the security situation, bearing in mind the concerns mentioned in the report presented here and the fact that the security situation continues to be unstable, we should recognize that it has indeed reached a level of stability thanks to the joint efforts made by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and allied forces. The Central African Republic welcomes the decrease in the crime rate in the city of Bangui. The process of disengagement by armed groups remains faithful to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation — for instance, with regard to the special mixed security units — and continues to take place, such as in Bouar and Paoua. Moreover,

it should be noted that the weakening of the rebellion by the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement was driven further by significant dissent among its own armed elements who are turning away from violence and from their leaders. The rebuilding of the defence and security forces is continuing apace in line with the national defence plan and the support of the international community and partners.

Alleged human rights violators are being systematically prosecuted and sentenced by the relevant military tribunals of the Forces armées centrafricaines, without prejudice to the pursuit of disciplinary measures by the Inspector General of the armed forces. The decrease in human rights and international humanitarian law violations during the reporting period was due to convictions and disciplinary measures taken by the competent authorities. Operations to secure mining sites are intended to take back control from armed groups and to combat the illicit trade in natural resources and the unauthorized presence of foreign nationals.

There must be no doubts as to the efforts made to entrench peace. Central African authorities have not just chosen not to opt for a military approach alone, they have made a choice as recommended by the Charter of the United Nations as well as Security Council resolutions to ensure the protection of their people and the integrity of our territory — that is our responsibility.

We must also listen to and understand the concerns about the alarming humanitarian situation and crimes against civilians and foreign nationals and violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law. But we must also hear and understand that the Central African people are weary and exasperated by the perpetual use of force by armed groups, which has been going on for decades. They are tired of being subjected to violence and the practice of impunity justified on the need for dialogue with those who harm them, while elsewhere criminals are hunted down and brought to justice and care is taken to avoid double standards.

We note and understand members' great concern about violations and attacks on Blue Helmets and humanitarian personnel. But do not forget the millions of Central African victims who lost their lives at the hands of armed groups and during the various attempted coups d'état — whether successful or not — in 2003, 2013 and 2020, without mentioning those martyred during the coups and mutinies in the 1970s, 1980s and

1990s. Human rights violations are unacceptable. But it is also unacceptable to legitimize the violence of armed groups by focusing on violations over a limited period while ignoring more than 20 years of being subjected to their barbaric acts.

Tangible progress on the political front and in the quest for peace and stability is dependent upon our capacity to provide justice and combat impunity. That is why the Government is pleased to announce the following.

The Special Criminal Court, which was developed gradually, is set to begin taking cases in March.

A communication and consultation framework between the Court's Special Prosecutor's and the Ministry of Justice is being formalized to allow for the timely identification of difficulties related to carrying out the Court's tasks and to promote appropriate measure for facilitating the trying of persons operating under legal, political or military mandates.

Management and accountability bodies within the judiciary and the army are hard at work to identify dysfunction and establish responsibility while executing judicial warrants against political and military figures.

The judicial and penitentiary coverage rate has improved significantly in recent times, as the Secretary-General points out in his report, thanks to a considerable effort to redeploy staff.

Faced with the recurrence of allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in connection with the crisis, the Special Investigation Commission, whose initial mandate was limited, was established *mutatis mutandis* as a permanent body in order to interact with the Human Rights Division.

Allegations of human rights violations committed during the reporting period, including military incidents that took place in Boyo, Matika and close to the residence of the Head of State, are being legally dealt with in an appropriate fashion by the regular mechanisms and will be addressed in a national report that will be issued subsequently.

When it comes to this last point, the Government continues to deplore the lack of specificity in reports on human rights violations and sexual violence in conflict, which does not facilitate legal investigations or criminal prosecutions. It is imperative for reports of human rights violations to be exhaustive and applied to all actors so

as to be impartial and not geared towards geopolitics or creating a hierarchy of victims based on whether or not the character of the person on trial is reputable or not. In the main, it is about convicting those who merit conviction. All actors who have committed crimes and violations on Central African territory must be convicted so as to show — not just to Central Africans but to humankind as a whole — that guaranteeing peace in the world and safeguarding human rights is not simply an issue of talking about humanity but, above all, practicing humanity, and that the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen should not be mere words on an illegible scrap of parchment.

It is essential to practice zero-impunity when it comes to human rights. For while in the Central African Republic we saw a contingent dismissed on the basis of unproven allegations that were deemed sufficiently serious to warrant its withdrawal, we also saw how 40 accusations and 40 testimonies resulted in zero trials.

Let me conclude on the issue of security by discussing the reforms made in terms of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and security sector reform.

The former demobilized combatants who were arrested in possession of military materials in Haute-Kotte prefecture following a search operation were ultimately released after an investigation.

With regard to security sector reform, and specifically when it comes to weapons and munitions management, a committee was established in February 2021 for implementation and follow-up. The committee has come up with a list of trained, qualified personnel to serve in arms and ammunition depots. In the absence of lethal equipment, those personnel are not all operational.

It seems important to me that we learn from the past and look to the future and better coordinate our work together in order to reach our shared objective, which is to regain lasting peace in the Central African Republic and create the conditions for the economic and social development of the country. That is not a lofty or pious dream. It is possible. Others have shown that it is possible, and we should all be driven by the same conviction, the same commitment, to work resolutely so that our solidarity and partnership will not be manipulated or subject to disinformation campaigns.

Respect on both sides for the commitments we have made and for the well-thought-out principles of the Charter of the United Nations should help us overcome our feelings, differences of opinion and criticisms, knowing that constructive criticism is an asset that must be deployed, according to the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, with “humility and courtesy that leaves no bitterness behind”.

The persistence of too many crises in the Central African Republic continues to lead to serious consequences and to create obstacles to building a country that is respectful of human values. My Government wishes to assure the international community that issues linked to human rights, sexual abuse in conflict and the free circulation of goods and persons are major concerns for the Central African Government. The Government continues to draw up appropriate mechanisms to provide the best solutions to the problems that continue to exacerbate the situation in the country. In that regard, the Government again calls on all its partners to continue supporting us to achieve lasting stability.

The Government reiterates its call for the complete lifting of the arms embargo. We call on the Council to drop the inappropriate and arbitrary sanctions that are to the detriment of Government forces. They are unfair and ineffective because they do not align with the goals and the situation on the ground. We urgently need joint commitment to work to decrease the capacities of the enemies of peace — the armed groups — in line with MINUSCA’s mandate.

I take this opportunity to thank and commend our bilateral and multilateral partners for their many forms of support, which have made some progress possible. On behalf of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, I also want to thank MINUSCA for its support, especially on efforts to mediate community dialogue, adapt early-warning mechanisms and support the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants.

I particularly want to commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, my dear brother Mankeur Ndiaye, under difficult conditions. The Central African context is a difficult one because it is a situation of conflict that has gone on for too long. I address my sincerest thanks to Mankeur for having worked with us and for us in the struggle for peace. The peace process

still faces many challenges, but I thank him for his contribution and firm commitment to the process. We urge him to continue to plead our cause even beyond the borders of the Central African Republic.

I will conclude my statement by recalling that the need for the support of the international community for the Central African Republic has never been called into question. My Government is pleased at the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate. It is now a matter of becoming more effective in order to dampen the frustrations and reach the legitimate aspirations of our people, to whom we are accountable for our actions. The extension of the MINUSCA good offices should lead to an increase in effectiveness and results, particularly in the support for training programmes for domestic security forces; rehabilitating roadways used by tanks and other heavy equipment; supporting the commission of inquiry into the use of explosives, as provided for in the work plan for the implementation of the ICGLR joint road map; supporting the implementation of the joint road map

itself; as well as continuing the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, for which disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration are essential.

Beyond the significant progress made in all areas to achieve lasting development, the Government reiterates that it gives pride of place to ongoing consultation with its partners, with a view to finding solutions to reach our goals. Allow me to conclude with a quotation from Robert Sabatier: "the friends of our enemies — whom we believe are enemies — are our allies through the power of their nature".

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.