



Security Council

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Letter dated 25 January 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by 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, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the Russian Federation, Tunisia (on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in the Central African Republic” convened on Thursday, 21 January 2021. A statement was also delivered by Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representative of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, this briefing and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tarek **Ladeb**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the 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, Mankeur Ndiaye**

[Original: French]

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to report on the latest major developments in the Central African Republic since the recent release of the final results of the 27 December presidential election by the Constitutional Court on 18 January, which validated the re-election of the incumbent President, Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera. As Council members already know, the situation on the ground remains tense due to the continuing violence since the first round of elections owing to the new Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), whose collusion with some political figures, notably former President François Bozizé, has now been established.

However, since 3 December, when the Constitutional Court validated the final list of candidates and rejected the candidacy of former President Bozizé, the latter has mobilized elements of some of the 14 armed groups, signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, that joined together to form the CPC with the stated intention, first, to prevent the holding of elections and, recently, to bring about the fall of President Touadera. This situation of violence caused in the regions by allied armed groups, such as the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique, the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group, the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique, some factions of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the anti-Balaka, against the civilian population, public authorities, defence and security forces and MINUSCA, is testing the Mission's capacity to carry out its key mandate for the protection of civilians in a tense political and electoral context, exacerbated by identity-based divisions. I therefore thank the Council for its support, which has enabled the rapid deployment of troops and helicopters of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in the context of inter-mission cooperation. That has not only increased the Mission's capabilities, but also the morale of the personnel working in particularly difficult conditions, especially with the coronavirus disease. I am grateful for that.

The only sustainable response to today's challenges, however, is clearly political. The re-election of President Touadera will benefit the country only if the new Government is able to calm the situation by building bridges with the political actors of the opposition, as well as the social sectors they represent. An even more integrated Government will be necessary, with the most radical elements being replaced by those who are more committed to peace and reconciliation in Central African Republic. In addition, a renewed dialogue with elements of armed groups that have opted to join the CPC, but have not perpetrated serious crimes, will be fundamental in order to embark on a path of reconciliation that can stabilize the country without compromising the pursuit of justice and the fight against impunity — a balance that is truly difficult to achieve, that between justice and peace, which is at the heart of every successful peace process. The second anniversary of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation should surely offer a new opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the signatories to the provisions of the Agreement, as well as to revitalize its implementation mechanisms, which will be fully realized only with the full support of all stakeholders.

Allow me to draw the Council's attention to the current security challenges of the national side that we support. Elements of the defence and security forces,

including some 2,600 military personnel, were deployed in July 2020, having received only two months of training, and some 1,000 new gendarmes and police officers have limited tactical capabilities and still seem to have little experience on the ground. Added to that is the lack of logistical and material resources to be able to carry out their missions. The result is the great desertion observed during the first rebel assaults. The situation is exacerbated by a weak chain of command, an absence of penalties due to the lack of functioning internal oversight mechanisms within the defence and security forces, such as the General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces, the military justice system and the military command. Human rights abuses and violations are common.

While recognizing the efforts made so far with regard to security sector reform, it is important for the Government to redouble its efforts, with more coordinated and focused support from the international community, in order to build institutions and sustainable governance of the sector security, including regarding weapons management. Serious work on border control must also start. Without those priorities, the State will not be able to fend for itself and the country will find it difficult to get back on its feet. That will continue to cause populations further suffering.

An analysis of the Mission's capacities in the light of the evolving security situation and the reliability of the defence and internal security forces shows that the CPC will continue its violence and attacks wherever it can in order to undermine the stability of Central African institutions and the integrity of the territory. This means that, if the Mission's current capacities are to be further tested at a time when, more than ever before, it must ensure the protection of civilians and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, which has been seriously impacted by the latest waves of violence and threats from the CPC, a strategy for adjusting the mandate is needed. To that end, a substantial increase in the strength of the Mission's uniformed components, namely, the Force, the Police and the Prison Service, should enable it to maintain its robust posture while having greater mobility.

In that regard, given the increase in violence and the practice of ambushes as a *modus operandi* by CPC combatants, to date causing the deaths of more than five peacekeepers, I would also be grateful to you, Mr. President, for a two-month extension, at least of the inter-mission cooperation already rapidly established thanks to the Council's strong support through the deployment of troops and helicopters from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

The force is now facing a paradigm shift. The armed groups belonging to the CPC voluntarily attack any manifestation of the State, whether they be civil servants, such as prefects, or members of the defence and security forces. Moreover, the recent losses among our peacekeepers in both Grimari and Bangassou demonstrate the readiness of those armed groups to now attack the Mission directly. Finally, the difficulties encountered by the defence and security forces for more than a month are significant and leave entire areas without any State presence.

In order to address that new threat, which could take root on Central African territory if our request is not heeded, the Mission response, particularly that of the force, must be bold, clear and robust. The troops currently deployed are operating over an extremely large territory with few communication channels. Furthermore, the force has only a limited reaction capability in terms of personnel strength, which cannot operate over the entire territory due to the size of the country. Finally, there is a lack of critical capabilities in the theatre of operations, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, attack helicopters, clearance capabilities and special forces, further impeding our capacity to act and react.

In parallel with the combat actions under way, the force has conducted a review of its capabilities to enable it to respond in the long term to the new threat that is further destabilizing the country. The force generation proposal has been developed, substantiated and assessed to ensure a lasting resolution of the conflict. While the force may look substantial, with 3,000 peacekeepers requested, those additional troops will provide the Mission with a robust tool adapted to the threat. It is therefore proposed to raise the ceiling of authorized peacekeepers to 14,650 troops. There are further details in the annexed document entitled “Force surge”.

During the attacks on the outskirts of Bangui on 13 January, as in other recent operations, the MINUSCA police component mobilized its full potential to support the military operations and civilian responses. The United Nations police (UNPOL) component, in particular its special units, the formed police units, is carrying out robust actions similar to military operating procedures for the protection of civilians, but also provides the judicial and police components. UNPOL provides support to the International Criminal Court, the Special Criminal Court and other jurisdictions in order to bring the alleged perpetrators of major crimes to justice. The demands of the Heads of Office and many MINUSCA entities often exceed UNPOL’s capacity.

Without any prospect of increasing UNPOL’s resources, the only mechanism available is therefore to improve performance, but also to prioritize to the utmost. The UNPOL component continues to work with Headquarters for the provision of task-specific personnel, but we will require an increase in the number of individual police officers and formed police units to be able to perform all tasks in all field offices.

With the changing situation and the detention of alleged combatants, the judicial process is under severe pressure. While it is hoped that proceedings against detainees will be expedited, a solution will have to be found to the overcrowding in prisons, which is exacerbated by prolonged police custody and pre-trial detention. As the prison demilitarization strategy is in its early stages, the reinforcement of the prison administration officers is an urgent need, which the Mission will have to help the Central African authorities meet.

I take this opportunity to request the lifting of the restrictions on our logistical support to the Central African Armed Forces, as provided for in paragraph 32 (a) (iv) of resolution 2552 (2020) under MINUSCA’s mandate. At present, we can provide only limited logistical support for the progressive redeployment of a limited number of Central African Armed Forces units trained or certified by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, as well as a limited number of vetted or trained internal security forces, engaged in joint operations with MINUSCA, including joint planning and tactical cooperation, to support the implementation of MINUSCA’s current mandated tasks, including the protection of civilians, and to assist the national authorities in restoring and maintaining security and the rule of law. We request the Council’s authority, as agreed in the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to provide adequate logistical support to the Central African security forces, namely, for the protection of civilians, the restoration and maintenance of public safety and the rule of law, as well as to establish sustainable governance and command-and-control mechanisms and to secure the country’s borders.

This is the time and place to recall the subregional context, characterized by the multiplication and sophistication of cross-border organized crime networks. I therefore propose that, in order to combat cross-border criminal networks and armed militias involved in arms trafficking, aggressive transhumance and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, the bilateral commissions should be reactivated, in line with paragraph 6 of resolution 2552 (2020), including by adopting innovative

cross-border security cooperation mechanisms, such as the establishment of Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre in Goma by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in November 2011, as well as to urge the Government to re-establish joint border security, surveillance and management mechanisms, which MINUSCA can support. These factors are all the more important, as neighbouring countries are also facilitators of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Internally, increased technical support to the National Commission for the Fight against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons for the implementation of its national action plan of July 2019 could help to ensure responsible management of Government arms and ammunition and to control the flow of weapons in the country.

In view of the country's fiscal austerity, support for the restoration of State authority in the mining sector, through the revival of the institutional and legal framework for mining security in relation to the Kimberley Process, would be an excellent tool for economic recovery. As armed groups continue to exploit mining resources in order to strengthen their own capacities, it is essential to highlight and support the restoration of State authority over that activity in order to reduce the threat from armed groups and to allow the State to reappropriate resources, which would ultimately lead to a better redistribution of wealth and, in turn, reduce poverty. We therefore advocate for a mandate that authorizes more resources to support the national security and defence forces to that end.

Specifically, we need to consider how the international community — the United Nations, bilateral partners and regional actors — could best collectively support the strengthening of governance and the assiduous building of the country's institutions. The Central African Republic is at serious risk of a setback in terms of security and peacebuilding, which could undermine all that the Council and the Central African Republic's partners have helped to build.

Nevertheless, the courage shown by the men and women of the Central African Republic during the crisis demonstrates that they are no longer willing to tolerate the use of violence to deprive them of a fundamental right, such as the right to vote. In large numbers, citizens have braved the threat of arms and have gone out to vote at the risk of their own physical safety, overcoming the old identity conflicts that the same armed groups — now trying to subvert the constitutional order — have too often manipulated to justify their existence.

The resilience and enthusiasm shown by the people of the Central African Republic during the 27 December elections encourage the Mission and the entire international community to continue to support them on the path of reconciliation, reconstruction, dialogue and inclusion, as indicated by the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, whose second anniversary will soon be celebrated. It is certainly a difficult road to travel, but it remains the one and only path towards lasting peace. I therefore call on the Council to consider the most appropriate measures to ensure that MINUSCA adapts to the new situation.

Annex II**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: Chinese]

I wish to thank Mr. Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, for his briefing. I would also like to welcome Ms. Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic to this meeting. The Security Council is convening this open meeting at the request of the Government of the Central African Republic in order to speak with one voice, which is crucial to efforts to maintain peace in Central African Republic.

The situation in the Central African Republic is at a critical juncture. After overcoming difficulties to conclude the general elections, the country entered a new stage of development. At the same time, there are threats to political stability. The security situation is still fragile, and many challenges remain on the path to long-term stability. In that connection, I wish to emphasize the following points.

First, we must respect the choices made by the people of the Central African Republic. On 18 January, the Constitutional Court announced the final election results. China congratulates President Touadera on his election. We believe that, with the help of the international community, the people and the Government of the Central African Republic will make great strides on the road to national development. China calls on all parties concerned to put the interests of the country and its people first, respect the final decision of the Constitutional Court on the election, abide by the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, renounce violence and resolve disputes peacefully within the national legal framework. China commends the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States in stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic and supports a greater role for the two organizations.

Secondly, we must help the Central African Republic improve its security capabilities. The country is facing a daunting task — safeguarding its national sovereignty and security and ensuring the safety of its people. The international community should vigorously support the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to build its security forces so that they can expeditiously assume the primary responsibility of maintaining stability and managing the country's borders. In the light of the situation on the ground and the strong wishes expressed by the Government, the Security Council should lift the arms embargo at an early date and create more favourable conditions for improving the country's security capacities and promoting a political settlement in the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, we must support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to enable it to continue to implement its mandate effectively. For some time now, MINUSCA has played a critical role in supporting the legitimate Government of the Central African Republic and ensuring peaceful elections. China highly commends its efforts. In recent weeks, MINUSCA has provided security guarantees and helped facilitate the transfer of civilians of the Central African Republic and the diaspora of various countries, including 64 Chinese nationals who were trapped in a conflict.

I wish to express my special thanks to Special Representative Ndiaye and MINUSCA. China supports temporarily bolstering the Mission's military capacity through inter-mission cooperation based on the situation on the ground so as to ensure that the Mission has sufficient resources to implement its mandate. Recently, MINUSCA was attacked multiple times, resulting in the unfortunate deaths of

peacekeepers from Burundi, Rwanda, Gabon, Morocco and other countries. We must look into those attacks, identify their causes through careful analysis and effectively strengthen security measures to ensure the safety of peacekeepers, pursuant to resolution 2518 (2020).

Fourthly, we must step up assistance and development cooperation with the Central African Republic. The active participation of its people in the general elections reflects their aspiration for national development and a happy and stable life. The international community should increase assistance to the Central African Republic and support its efforts to prevent and control the pandemic, restore the economy and improve people's livelihoods so that infrastructure development can continue as soon as the security situation is stabilized. We must also ensure that energy and resources can be translated into development and — through the sharing of peace and development dividends — that the root causes of violent conflict can be gradually eliminated and development leads to lasting peace

The Central African Republic is China's good friend, partner and brother in Africa. China vigorously supports its efforts to maintain stability and promote development. Within our means, we have supported the country in its fight against the coronavirus disease pandemic and in its preparations for the general elections. China will work with the international community to make continuing contributions to peace and development in the Central African Republic.

Annex III

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Gert Auväärt

I thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting to discuss the difficult situation in the Central African Republic. I also thank Special Representative Ndiaye for his invaluable updates and insights.

Estonia strongly condemns the violence and attacks perpetrated by armed groups over the past weeks, which claimed the lives of civilians, humanitarian workers, security personnel and United Nations peacekeepers. Those attacks may constitute war crimes, and its perpetrators and instigators must be brought to justice. We strongly support the rapid and robust response by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in order to ensure the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

I would like to extend my personal condolences to the peacekeepers of MINUSCA who paid the ultimate price while protecting the lives of the people of the Central African Republic.

Despite the actions of several parties to destabilize the electoral process through violence, the people of the Central African Republic went out to vote and will do so again. Their decision must be accepted and respected by all political actors. Any disputes regarding the electoral results must be settled peacefully and lawfully.

There is no road to lasting peace through violence. We call on the guarantors and facilitators to strengthen their engagement in supporting the effective implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Those who would spoil the agreement and the democratic electoral process must be held accountable. We would also like to emphasize the importance of regional and cross-border initiatives that help ensure stability in the country and promote solutions through political dialogue.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

First of all, I would like to welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, and I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, for his briefing and for his work at the head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). I pay tribute to the seven peacekeepers who lost their lives since the violence that began in December. I would like to emphasize three points.

First of all, France condemns in the strongest possible terms the violence carried out by the self-proclaimed coalition des patriotes pour le changement, supported by former President Bozizé. The coalition not only attacks peacekeepers and Central African Armed Forces, but also civilians, humanitarian personnel and institutions. That is unacceptable. France therefore calls upon all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, especially as the needs and the number of displaced persons continue to increase.

In that context, France urges the armed groups and the authorities of the Central African Republic to resume dialogue as soon as possible, with the support of the guarantors — the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). New sanctions could be adopted against those who oppose that process.

All those who have called for hate and violence, all those who have violated human rights, international humanitarian law or the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and all those who have contributed to disinformation, will be held accountable for their actions.

Like the European Union, France will continue to promote justice and the fight against impunity in the Central African Republic. We hope that the Special Criminal Court will begin its trials in 2021. The Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation must also be able to begin its activities with all the necessary support and in full independence.

Secondly, France took note of the Constitutional Court's decision confirming the re-election of President Touadera. We call upon all parties to respect that decision. The electoral process must continue to its conclusion, in accordance with the legal and constitutional framework.

We also took note of President Touadera's words to the democratic opposition during his address to the nation on 18 January. We invite the Government of the Central African Republic to implement that announcement as soon as possible, with the support of ECCAS, by creating the conditions for an inclusive dialogue that respects all political views and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of the press.

As President Macron recalled, France will remain committed, alongside the Central African Republic, to contributing to the stabilization efforts in the country. As a Council member, we pledge our commitment to provide MINUSCA with all the necessary means to continue its difficult mission. I would like to commend the excellent attitude of the contingents engaged in ongoing operations. I recall that attacks against peacekeepers constitute war crimes. Those responsible will be held accountable.

I also commend the action of international partners that provide assistance at the request of the Central African Republic authorities. It is essential that all actions taken by the legitimate military forces on the ground be coordinated with MINUSCA. In that regard, I recall the operations carried out by French military aircraft in support of the Mission and of the Central African Armed Forces.

France recalls that the embargo decided by the Council is aimed, above all, at preventing the flow of arms into the Central African Republic that would fall into the wrong hands. The lifting of that embargo will depend on progress made in achieving the objectives set out by the Council — beginning with the management of arms and ammunition. Under no circumstances should the embargo be an obstacle to the strengthening of the Central African Armed Forces, which France fully supports. We take note of the concerns and requests expressed by the authorities of the Central African Republic. France would like the Council to duly consider them.

In conclusion, I would like to call upon the Government of the Central African Republic and all its players to do all they can to put an end to the hostilities and engage on the path of reconciliation.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ravindra Raguttahalli**

Let me begin by thanking Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, for his comprehensive briefing on the recent developments in the Central African Republic and for the action taken by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to address the security situation in the country.

We extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the peacekeepers from Morocco, Gabon, Rwanda and Burundi who lost their lives during the attacks in the Central African Republic. We also wish the injured peacekeepers a speedy recovery. The deaths of seven MINUSCA peacekeepers as a result of the launch of the coordinated and simultaneous attacks by the coalition of anti-Government rebel groups is a tragic reflection of the deteriorating situation on the ground. Those attacks on peacekeepers are shocking and unacceptable. The perpetrators of those heinous attacks must be held accountable. We call on the Central African Republic authorities to take immediate action against the attackers and bring them to justice.

The precarious security situation in the Central African Republic since the presidential elections held last month is a matter of serious concern. There has been a dangerous escalation on the ground with the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, armed groups opposed to President Touadera that have abandoned the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in early 2019, and launched attacks on the capital, Bangui, and other towns.

While the 2019 peace agreement and the road map remain the fundamental edifice to move ahead, we understand that key parts of the deal have not yet been implemented and rebel violence has continued across the country. The illegal taxing of local populations, the trafficking in gold and diamonds and the levying of additional taxes on those involved in the supply and production of minerals continue to generate significant revenue for the rebels.

The incessant violence has forced nearly 60,000 people to flee the country, compounding an already dire refugee crisis. Schools and training centres remain closed outside the capital, and pastoralists and farmers can no longer carry out their activities because of insecurity and fear. Reports of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement recruiting children for its work are deplorable. We remain concerned about the evolving humanitarian crisis due to attacks by the opposition groups, and we call on the opposition groups to lift the blockade on towns and allow the movement of essential supplies.

The holding of the second democratic elections on 27 December 2020 despite persisting challenges was, no doubt, an important milestone in the Central African Republic. We commend the Central African Republic authorities for conducting the elections, with the support of international and regional partners and Mission. However, the recent developments have the potential to derail the hard-earned progress made since 2019. We have seen similar post-electoral situations turning into a major crisis and affecting the larger region. Given the history of political instability and violence, the situation in the Central African Republic warrants immediate attention by the international community.

On 18 January, the Constitutional Court validated the results and endorsed the outcome of the elections. We call on all opposition groups, particularly signatories to the peace agreement, to cease hostilities immediately and join the Central African Republic authorities in finding a peaceful solution to the current crisis. It

is imperative for all stakeholders to respect the final verdict by Central African Republic's Constitutional Court and settle their disputes through a peaceful process.

We welcome the statement made by President Touadera underscoring the importance of reconciliation and that of willingness to work with the opposition. The authorities of the Central African Republic should also refrain from taking any action that would exacerbate existing tensions.

MINUSCA has been playing a critical role in supporting the Central African Republic security forces in repelling the attacks by opposition groups. While commending the role played by MINUSCA, we reiterate the importance of the Mission adhering to its mandate as per Security Council resolutions. We also want to underscore the importance of coordination among the security forces of the Central African Republic and the countries extending military support to those forces for coordination of their actions with MINUSCA.

India supports the ongoing efforts of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the two guarantors of the 2019 peace agreement, to defuse the crisis through negotiations. The countries having influence on the actors in the Central African Republic must also extend their support to the AU and ECCAS. The immediate and pressing priority is the early restoration of peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

Annex VI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

[Original: English and French]

I would first like to thank Madam Minister for being with us this morning. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his very enlightening briefing, and the three African countries members of the Security Council, along with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, for having scheduled this timely Security Council meeting.

I would like to pay tribute to the seven peacekeepers who have lost their lives since the start of the election period. I express my deepest condolences to their families. Ireland condemns in the strongest terms all attacks and violence against peacekeepers, and we call on the authorities of the Central African Republic to bring the perpetrators to justice.

These elections offer an opportunity for progress in the Central African Republic. We commend the democratic commitment of the people of that country and their determination to vote even in the face of violence and insecurity. That determination should inspire the authorities and all parties to engage sincerely in the electoral process and to do everything in their power to represent the will of the people of the Central African Republic.

The work of civil society, especially women and religious leaders, has been vital to facilitating the process, making it clear that inclusive processes are essential to building peace.

Ireland believes that all stakeholders must respect the decision of the Constitutional Court taken earlier this week. We call on all to address concerns and differences of opinion peacefully and through dialogue.

For this to progress, we ask the Government to engage with the opposition in an open manner and substantive dialogue. We welcome President Touadera's statement on the need for national reconciliation following the recent violence, and we look forward to seeing that underpinned by action. We urge the Government to continue to work with signatory groups that remain committed to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and to actively endeavour to bring others back to the discussion.

We are convinced that the Council needs to send a clear message that progress made on the implementation of the Political Agreement simply cannot be allowed to slide further back. We know that full involvement of all stakeholders across the Central African Republic is essential to securing peace, and that includes political, civil-society and opposition actors. Ireland also knows from our own experience just how challenging it can be to keep the lines of communication open, but we also know how absolutely vital they are to the establishment and maintenance of peace.

I also want to say that accountability matters. The cycle of impunity is inextricably linked to the cycle of conflict; whenever there is impunity, we need to break the link if there is to be hope for stability. We call on the authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of violence and human rights violations and abuses, including those against children and those involving sexual and gender-based violence, are fully held to account.

We continue to be gravely concerned by the ongoing and deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground in the Central African Republic. It is critical

that the Cameroon to Bangui road be made secure in order to allow the movement of goods into the country. Indeed, 60,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries just since December, with tens of thousands more, we understand, displaced internally. We call on all parties to ensure full, safe, immediate and unhindered humanitarian access, in accordance with international law and resolution 2552 (2020) and to respect humanitarian principles.

We salute the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in these extremely challenging circumstances. Put simply, it has been extraordinary. We all know that the Mission is being stretched beyond capacity. It is fundamental that the Mission have the resources necessary to deliver on its first priority of protecting civilians. Last week, we heard of the critical contribution of the Rwandan infantry and Sri Lankan aviation units from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, which allowed MINUSCA to react to the actions of armed groups. The Council must ensure that MINUSCA has the resources it needs to maintain its robust posture.

In conclusion, the instability in the Central African Republic is of grave concern. We all share that view, and significant efforts must now be made to resolve that situation peacefully. The elections represent an important opportunity. The Council, the authorities of the Central African Republic and all national and regional stakeholders must work together towards the peaceful and secure future that the people of the Central African Republic so deeply deserve.

Annex VII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Alicia Buenrostro Massieu**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico welcomes the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic this morning. We also thank Special Representative Mankeur Ndiaye for his briefing and acknowledge the vital work being done by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Mexico condemns in the strongest terms the attacks to which the Mission has been subjected, which have claimed the lives of seven peacekeepers since December and four this week, or in a little more than a week. Those acts targeting peacekeeping forces may constitute war crimes, and for that reason they must be investigated and punished by the competent authorities.

Mexico takes note of the ruling handed down last Monday by the Constitutional Court of the Central African Republic, which confirmed the results of the presidential elections. As that is the court of last instance on the issue, we invite all political actors in the Central African Republic to abide by those results and to focus on constructively building a new stage of national reconciliation, within the institutional framework and in accordance with the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. It is essential that the institutions and their processes be safeguarded in order to demonstrate that the institutional pathway can lead to results.

In that spirit, we commend President Touadera's call for reconciliation. We hope that it will be accompanied by concrete measures that will allow all actors with legitimate political interests to participate in the pacification and reconstruction of the country. Mexico deems it vital that women, youth and refugees play an important role in decision-making in order to build lasting peace. We believe that the work of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation can contribute to achieving that objective, so it is urgent that it be provided with the necessary means to begin operations.

The violence that we have witnessed in recent weeks runs counter to the interests of all the people of the Central African Republic. Since the elections, more than 120,000 people have had to flee their communities because of violence, with the resulting humanitarian consequences. The arrival of Central African Republic refugees in, mainly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and Cameroon increases the pressure on those countries and makes clear the potential for regional destabilization in connection with the situation in the Central African Republic.

We are especially concerned about the systematic abuses being committed against women and children, which include murder, mutilation, exploitation, sexual abuse and forced recruitment. They are unacceptable acts and must be sanctioned according to their severity.

Mexico believes that it is vital for the Council to call for the urgent coordination of the organs of the United Nations system so as to serve the people that need humanitarian assistance and ensure the protection of their rights. Humanitarian access must be unrestricted and sustained. Only in that way can we help to contain, to the extent possible, the devastating effects of the conflict on the civilian population.

Mexico believes that the Council must take into account the fragility of the political and security situation and take a unanimous and unequivocal stance in

favour of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, granting MINUSCA the means necessary to fulfil its mandate and protect its personnel. That is of vital importance.

In conclusion, we must work together to eliminate the economic incentives and arms flows that allow armed groups to continue threatening security and stability in the Central African Republic so long as they continue to profit from the illegal exploitation of mineral resources and have access to weapons through regional trafficking networks. In dialogue with neighbouring countries, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union, we must reflect on the best way to tackle those two scourges at their root.

I cannot conclude without extending our deep condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the struggle to continue supporting the Central African Republic.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Odd Inge Kvalheim

Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his insightful briefing. Many thanks go also to the three African countries members of the Security Council for keeping the situation in the Central African Republic high on our agenda by requesting this briefing. Let me also welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs Baipo Temon and thank her for her presence here with us today.

I would like to address three issues today: first, the political and security situation; secondly, the worsening humanitarian situation; and, thirdly, the issue of the capacities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Norway is deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the Central African Republic. The news on Monday of yet another two casualties, this time near Bangassou, brings the total number of Blue Helmets killed by enemy attacks since December to seven. That is completely unacceptable. We condemn in the strongest terms all attacks by armed groups against MINUSCA. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims, to MINUSCA and to the Governments and the people of Rwanda, Burundi, Gabon and Morocco.

As we just heard in the briefing, the Constitutional Court confirmed the election results. We call on all parties to now respect the Court's decision and to resolve any remaining disputes peacefully. Armed groups should immediately end hostilities, and an inclusive dialogue should be resumed.

Furthermore, women's full, equal and meaningful participation is essential to sustainable peace. We encourage the authorities of the Central African Republic to engage all parties, including the opposition, to find a way forward to reinvigorate the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We call on MINUSCA to continue to help create the necessary space for a resumption of dialogue.

We now encourage His Excellency President Touadera to step up efforts to show statesmanship and to be a President for all citizens of the country. If I may, Norway would be most interested in hearing more information from Madam Minister about President Touadera and the Government's vision for peace and democratic development in the country.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic is cause for great concern. According to recent reports, at least 100,000 people have fled their homes owing to violence. Since our discussions last week, the number of people fleeing to neighbouring countries has doubled, to nearly 60,000, and 58,000 more have been internally displaced within the Central African Republic — this in a country that already has some of the highest humanitarian needs per capita of any State in the world. We call on all parties to do everything in their power to protect civilians and uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law. We call also for safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance.

According to the independent expert on the Central African Republic of the Human Rights Council, armed groups continue to commit human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Those include obstruction of the election. In his latest report, the independent expert refers to widespread violence against civilians and the recruitment and use of children by the so-called Coalition

des patriotes pour le changement. Norway condemns those violations, particularly those affecting children. Persisting conflict-related sexual violence must also come to an end.

We also call for an immediate end to attacks against humanitarian workers. We urge the authorities of the Central African Republic to investigate and prosecute those crimes and call on MINUSCA to provide support. Accountability is fundamental to any sustainable peace process.

The recent reports of desertions by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the extreme violence of the past few weeks have rightly raised questions about MINUSCA's capacities. Norway stands ready to discuss, together with the other members of the Council, how MINUSCA can be further strengthened. The safety of peacekeepers is an absolute priority, and we need to ensure the right configuration for the Mission given the current circumstances.

Let me conclude by commending the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States to promote peace in the Central African Republic in close partnership with the United Nations and MINUSCA. Allow me also to express Norway's full support for Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye and MINUSCA, and our deep appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations in these very challenging conditions.

Annex IX**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mankeur Ndiaye for his briefing. Russia has consistently supported the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We are grateful to the countries contributing troops and police to the Mission, and we express our sincere condolences to the families of the peacekeepers killed in recent weeks, who hailed from Burundi, Rwanda, Gabon and Morocco. We are all charged with the task of proving that those sacrifices were not in vain.

I welcome the participation at today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon. Through her, we would like to congratulate President Faustin Archange Touadera and all the people of the Central African Republic on surmounting with dignity the hardship that accompanied the December elections, thereby demonstrating their desire for peace and stability in their country.

We are aware that Bangui officials want the Security Council to adopt a draft resolution on the current situation in the Central African Republic. The main elements of such a draft resolution would, inter alia, reaffirm the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the country, as well as acknowledge the importance of non-interference, good-neighbourliness and regional cooperation; remind the Central African authorities of their primary responsibility in protecting the population of the country; re-emphasize the importance of restoring State authority throughout the country; express concern about the deterioration of the politico-military situation and the threat of a violent change of Government; and condemn the attempted coup d'état by former President François Bozizé and the violations by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

The desired draft resolution would also condemn violence and attacks against peacekeepers and other foreign presences; acknowledge the need for enhanced security arrangements for MINUSCA peacekeepers and strengthened capabilities for the Mission, including its air component; welcome the activities of MINUSCA, the African Union Observer Mission in the Central African Republic and Bangui's international partners in building the capacity of the national defence and security forces; call on all political forces to respect the democratic process and the final results of the elections, as announced by the Constitutional Court, and resort exclusively to legitimate and democratic means of political competition; and lift the arms embargo on the country in order to enhance the authorities' capacity to protect the population and counter the insurgency. We recommend that Council colleagues give due consideration and take on board the ideas of the Central Africans, especially since many of them are in line with resolution 2552 (2020), adopted on 12 November 2020.

We condemn the destructive role in current events played by the former President of the Central African Republic, François Bozizé, who is on the Security Council's sanctions list, as well as by the leaders of illegal armed groups who have chosen to renege on their commitments under the political agreement and have engaged in armed confrontation. It appears to be time to consider sanctioning the leaders of groups that have relied on violence. At the same time, the priority for all of us naturally remains the advancement of the political process, in which the

international community, including Russia, regional and international players and United Nations peacekeepers, have made great investments.

The escalation of the situation from late December 2020 to January 2021 has clearly demonstrated that the sanctions regime for the Central African Republic should be adapted to meet the timely needs of the current phase; indeed, they should be based on the priority task of extending central authority throughout the country and putting down the insurgency. As recent events have shown, since these groups are actively supported by fighters and heavy weaponry from outside the country, they are often better manned and armed than the regular army.

In coordination with other partners and MINUSCA, Russia will continue to provide every possible support to the people and the authorities of the Central African Republic. Given the dynamics of the situation and the lessons of the worsening internal situation in the run-up to the elections, and taking into account the wishes of Bangui officials, it has been decided for the time being to leave the military instructors sent to the country at the end of December 2020. This is necessary in the interests of enhancing the training and effectiveness of the military and the law-enforcement agencies. The length of the instructors' stay will be decided on the basis of how the situation on the ground develops as well as on the views of the Government of the Central African Republic.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

At the outset, let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, for his comprehensive briefing, and reiterate our strong support for his efforts and for the fundamental role the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is playing in assisting the authorities and the people of Central African Republic in their quest to achieve lasting peace and stability.

We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by armed elements of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement since the beginning of their offensive last December 2020, during which several MINUSCA peacekeepers were killed, and several others were injured. We reaffirm our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the deceased peacekeepers as well as to Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Morocco, Rwanda and MINUSCA. We call on national authorities of the Central African Republic to swiftly investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of these heinous acts. Such attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes and should not go unpunished.

We are deeply perturbed by the volatile security situation in the Central African Republic and the continued destabilization efforts by these armed groups and spoilers throughout the country. We are equally disturbed by their recourse to violence to disrupt the electoral process and undermine the political and democratic transition in the Central African Republic.

Moreover, these growing rebel attacks are significantly exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the country, with nearly 60,000 people already fleeing violence. Likewise, the escalation of violence has disrupted aid delivery to nearly 2.8 million people in need of essential humanitarian assistance, which comprises 57 per cent of the population of the Central African Republic. The blockage of the main route from Cameroon has affected the supply of commodities to Bangui and other areas, further compounding the urgency of the situation. We express our deep concern about the illicit trafficking, trade, exploitation and smuggling of natural resources, illegal taxation and right-of-way taxes that continue to fund and supply armed groups, thereby further threatening the peace and stability in the Central African Republic. It is important that the Security Council send a strong message that calls on these armed groups to cease their attacks and all acts of violence and intimidation against civilians throughout the country.

While reiterating our full support for MINUSCA and our deep appreciation for the countries that have contributed troops and police, the A3+1 also underscores the crucial importance of strengthening the Mission by providing it with the necessary permanent capacities to fulfil its mandate, pursuant to resolution 2552 (2020). We further express our full support for efforts geared towards strengthening the defence and internal security forces of the Central African Republic to enable them to exert control over the territory.

Today's meeting takes place two days after the official validation of the election results by the country's Constitutional Court. While commending the authorities of the Central African Republic for holding these elections according to the constitutional timeline despite the destabilizing actions of the armed groups,

and while thanking MINUSCA and the regional partners for their assistance in this regard, we call on political actors in the Central African Republic to respect the results of the elections and to settle any post-electoral disputes peacefully in accordance with the country's laws and through its relevant institutions. At this juncture, it is crucial to place the supreme interest of the country and the people of the Central African Republic before any political differences.

The A3+1 is firmly convinced that the holding of these elections, the first to take place since the signing of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, is an important step towards a democratic transition and the stabilization process in the country. In this regard, we reiterate our strong conviction that elections remain the only legitimate means of attaining power, and we take this occasion to salute the citizens of the Central African Republic who demonstrated a real determination to exercise their right to vote, despite the many obstacles.

While reaffirming our continued solidarity and full support for the people of the Central African Republic in their efforts and legitimate aspirations to achieve lasting peace, stability and development, we reiterate our strong belief that achieving these objectives is possible only through relaunching the peace process. There is no alternative. In this regard, we remind all stakeholders of their commitments under the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and urge the signatory parties to fully honour their pledges, in particular with regard to the cessation of hostilities.

We call on the Government of the Central African Republic and all political actors to favour an inclusive, open, constructive and credible political dialogue to promote national stability. Free and fair elections are undoubtedly an important step towards peace and democracy, but they do not single-handedly hold the key to security and stability in the Central African Republic. The road to sustainable peace and security remains long; it requires initiating a genuine and deep reconciliation process to rebuild trust among communities, establish strong State institutions capable of exercising control over its territories and provide services to the country's people. It also requires addressing the root causes of violence and instability.

Moreover, it needs a strong commitment from the international community to assisting the Central African Republic in these significant endeavours. In this regard, we underscore the importance of standing with the Central African Republic and its people by providing the necessary political and financial support to help the country get out of the spiral of violence and ensure that there is no reversal of the progress made.

In conclusion, the A3+1 commends the efforts undertaken by the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), in their capacity as guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, in the search for a solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic. We also welcome the recent appointment by ECCAS of a mediator for the crisis. It is our hope that these regional and subregional efforts will help to advance the peace process in the country.

We also reaffirm our support for the leading role played by MINUSCA in promoting peace and security primarily through the implementation of the Political Agreement and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA for his unwavering commitment and tireless efforts in extending his good offices and support for the reconciliation process in the Central African Republic, as well as in all his actions geared towards the re-establishment of a peaceful and stable dynamic in the region.

Annex XI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Allen**

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his briefing today. I also want very much to welcome Foreign Minister Baïpo Témouon. I look forward to hearing her perspective and vision for how the country can be unified.

Let me start by saying that the United Kingdom commends the people of the Central African Republic for their determination in exercising their right to vote in the elections on 27 December, despite the intimidation and violence they faced. We firmly condemn this increase in armed-group violence over recent weeks and stress the need to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. We urge all parties to renew their commitment to the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and to the immediate cessation of violations of that agreement.

The United Kingdom also wants to thank the women and men of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for their perseverance in face of such adversity. We again express our deepest condolences to the families and the Governments of the seven peacekeepers whose lives have been lost since December. Any attack on United Nations peacekeepers sent by the Security Council to serve in communities that need them most — any such attack — is reprehensible. We call for those responsible to be brought to justice. Our support for the work of the Mission remains unwavering, and we stand ready to discuss strengthening the Mission so as to meet its operational needs.

Following the Constitutional Court's confirmation of the presidential election results, it is now incumbent upon all parties to respect the Court's ruling. We urge all parties to exercise restraint and abstain from declarations that may destabilize the situation. It is imperative that all political actors, whether they support the Government or the opposition, engage in peaceful and constructive dialogue on the way forward for the country, with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the guarantors of the 2019 Political Agreement. The needs of the Central African people, including the many thousands of persons displaced as a result of this latest wave of violence, must come first.

In conclusion, I would like to address the issue of the arms embargo. We have taken note of the points raised today. As others have highlighted, the arms embargo exists to prevent weapons from falling into the wrong hands and from fuelling armed-group violence. It is not intended to prevent the Government from obtaining the equipment necessary for defence and security sector reform; a number of standing exemptions exist for this very purpose. We believe it is important to maintain these measures, pending further progress on the key benchmarks set out by the Council in April 2019, in particular with regard to weapons management.

I welcomed earlier the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic, who I know is next on the speakers list. I would like to take this opportunity to address a question to her: given the standing exemptions in place for the security forces of the Central African Republic, the procedures for requesting new exemptions when required, and the fact that, to my knowledge, no requests from her Government for exemptions on weaponry have been rejected, could she set out clearly whether — and if so, how — the arms embargo is preventing the Government or its security partners from acting?

Annex XII**Statement by the Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations, Rodney Hunter**

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his briefing today.

The United States extends its deepest condolences to the families of the two Burundian peacekeepers killed on 25 December, the Rwandan peacekeeper killed on 13 January, the Burundian peacekeeper killed on 15 January and the Gabonese and Moroccan peacekeepers killed in an ambush on 18 January. We also express our deep condolences to the Cameroonian peacekeeper who died on 3 January. Each of these deaths is a terrible loss for the loved ones left behind, but taken collectively they are an outrage against all States Members of the United Nations and the entire United Nations system. Attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law, and they may meet the criteria for designation under United Nations sanctions. They must stop, and they must stop now.

The United States takes note of Monday's ruling by the Constitutional Court. The presidential elections were carried out in the face of significant disruptions, with numerous armed groups and political actors using violence to try to scuttle the democratic process. Now that the Constitutional Court has ruled on election challenges, we urge all parties to respect the Court's ruling and adhere to the democratic principles of good governance and equal treatment for all under the law. We further call on Central African political leaders to build an inclusive Government that represents and serves all Central Africans, thereby peacefully addressing any underlying sources of tension.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to carry out its mandate and protect innocent civilians across the country in recent weeks, particularly in Bangui, Bouar and Grimari. MINUSCA peacekeepers have repeatedly repelled armed group attacks, at great risk to their own personal safety, reflecting the very best of peacekeeping's potential to contribute to international peace and security. In doing so, MINUSCA has not only valiantly delivered on its mandate to protect civilians but also contributed to the Central African Republic's democratic process.

Again, we would note that the effort to protect civilians and support the peaceful conduct of elections resulted in the loss of seven United Nations peacekeepers in less than four weeks. Despite those efforts, we regret that in many cases armed groups' actions indeed hindered Central Africans' right to vote.

While recognizing MINUSCA's important role in the security response to armed group attacks, we must also acknowledge that we are dismayed by the Central African military's pattern of widespread desertions and defections. That was also the pattern in previous violence in 2013, but we would have hoped to see a change owing to significant investments in training, equipment and direct budgetary support by numerous friends of the Government of the Central African Republic.

We look forward to receiving the Government of the Central African Republic's assessment of what went wrong and call on the Office of the Inspector General of the Ministry of Defence to make recommendations for the future. We welcome the Central African Republic Government's invitation to the international community to be part of that assessment and commit the United States to playing an active role. All individuals responsible for human rights violations and abuses must be held accountable.

For the United States, we will be thinking carefully about how our support going forward needs to be calibrated to ensure better performance and assumption of responsibility on the part of the Central African Republic Government for basic administrative tasks, such as the payment of salaries and the resupply of forward operating bases.

We understand the Central African Government requested today's meeting to discuss the lifting, even temporarily, of the arms embargo. Based on recent reports of fighting and the performance of the Central African military — or the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic — the United States is concerned about the armed forces' ability to properly utilize and account for their weapons and equipment. We remind the Security Council that all requests to provide armaments have been approved, and there are no outstanding requests before the Sanctions Committee.

We also remain concerned about insufficient coordination by bilateral troops with MINUSCA peacekeepers and humanitarian actors. If the status quo continues, that poor coordination could severely hinder the delivery of life-saving assistance, it could undermine MINUSCA's ability to fully implement its Security Council-mandated tasks, including the protection of civilians, and it could place peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in grave danger.

We urge all actors on the ground in the Central African Republic to coordinate transparently by providing timely information to MINUSCA and other partners in Bangui to ensure the safety and security of all actors operating in this complicated theatre of operations.

We condemn attacks against humanitarian actors and the theft and destruction of equipment and other resources that enable humanitarian actors to meet urgent needs. We urge all parties to allow the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance now.

In their efforts, we urge the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union and the United Nations to call for a political dialogue and hold armed actors accountable. Clearly, the security situation in the Central African Republic deteriorated during the electoral period. We look forward to working closely with the United Nations and other members of the Council to come up with better solutions before the next Security Council meeting on this topic, to be held in February.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Nguyen Phuong Tra**

At the outset, I would like to welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, at today's meeting. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mankeur Ndiaye for his informative briefing.

The Central African Republic is now at a critical juncture that is of paramount importance to long-term peace and security in the country, as well as in the subregion. Our delegation takes note of the results of the elections on 27 December 2020, which were later confirmed by the Constitutional Court on 18 January 2021.

It is, however, distressing to see that the ongoing political process in the Central African Republic is overshadowed by violence aimed at obstructing elections and the right of people to determine their future. We are troubled by the volatile security situation in several parts of the country, including the capital, Bangui, which has been the target of attacks by armed elements on several occasions.

We join others in condemning the violations of the peace agreement by signatory armed groups, as well as attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers on the ground. We are concerned over the fact that violence in the past few weeks has displaced hundreds of thousands of people and made tens of thousands of others seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to Burundi, Gabon, Morocco, Rwanda, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the families of the peacekeepers who made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of peace. We wish to highlight the importance of ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers and remind parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Against that backdrop, Viet Nam would like to highlight the following points.

First, we urge all the parties concerned to settle electoral differences through dialogue and negotiation in order to rebuild trust. All disputes must be resolved in a peaceful manner, while fully adhering to the laws and the Constitution of the Central African Republic. We call on all political parties to give the first priority to the will of the Central African Republic people, who are longing for a sustained period of stability and development.

Secondly, our delegation would like to re-emphasize the pivotal role of the peace agreement. We believe that it is the only viable path towards ending the current crisis in the Central African Republic. We therefore urge the signatories to the agreement to refrain from any action that could further deteriorate the situation and to pave the way for constructive political dialogue.

Thirdly, continued support from the international community is indispensable. Viet Nam would like to pay tribute to the important assistance of all international and regional partners, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central Africa States and neighbouring countries.

We also would like to reiterate our strong support for the work of the United Nations, the Special Representative and MINUSCA in Central African Republic. In discharging its mandates in accordance with resolution 2552 (2020), MINUSCA has been providing exceptional support by mitigating security tensions during the electoral process and engaging with relevant stakeholders to promote dialogue.

In conclusion, Viet Nam will spare no effort in working together with other members of the Security Council to assist the Central African Republic and its people in fulfilling their aspirations for peace and stability.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic, Sylvie Valérie Baïpo Temon**

[Original: French]

At the outset, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Central African Republic and on my own behalf, I would like to convey to the Security Council my best wishes. I wish delegations health, happiness and peace, and a beautiful and happy 2021 New Year to all. May it be a year of success in our joint efforts to meet our many common challenges, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-10) pandemic and everything related to violent extremism, namely, armed groups, terrorism and mercenaries.

Allow me to take this opportunity to warmly and sincerely congratulate and thank the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Tarek Ladeb, for his presidency and the convening of this open meeting, which gives me an opportunity to present to the Council the political and security situation in my country, the Central African Republic.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the benevolent attention that the Central African Republic continues to receive from the international community, as well as my deep appreciation to all representatives who have responded to today's convocation as proof that they are keeping the Central African Republic close to their hearts, despite their many commitments and demands upon them.

Allow me also to reiterate the gratitude and confidence of the Central African people and Government to Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his sustained commitment to peace and development in the world, and especially for the consistent and multifaceted support for the Central African Republic.

The Central African Republic considered it important for the Security Council, as the executive organ of our international organization, to meet in order to share its position and decisions on recent events in the Central African Republic.

The Security Council, which is primarily responsible for matters of international peace and security, according to the Charter of the United Nations, bears the responsibility for the "maintenance of peace and security" and has specific powers to do so, such as decisions taken in the form of binding resolutions, international sanctions and/or military intervention.

The Central African Republic, one of the States Members of the United Nations, has been facing a month-long armed aggression, led by a rebellion called the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), regrouping former Séléka, former anti-Balaka, as well as foreign mercenaries, which, led by former President of the Republic François Bozizé Yangouvonda, is trying to destabilize the country through the use of force to gain access to power.

Given that serious threat to the civilian population and democratic institutions, we must note that my country, the Central African Republic, is deprived of the means to exercise its inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, as recognized by the Charter of the United Nations and its duty as recalled in all resolutions on the Central African Republic, in their fifth preambular paragraphs,

“that the [Central African Republic] authorities have the primary responsibility to protect all populations in the [Central African Republic] in particular from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and

recalling in this regard the importance of restoring state authority in all parts of the country”.

With regard those paragraphs of such resolutions, to mention only that one, which is binding, we must emphasize that the serious military-political crisis unleashed in December 2012 by the Séléka rebel coalition, which led to the change of a democratic regime by force, led the United Nations, and more specifically the Security Council, to decide, through the powers at its disposal, to impose an arms embargo on the Central African Republic. The intended and stated objective was to prevent the rival armed groups, which have protected entire regions of the country, and the national armed forces disorganized by the crisis from gaining access to weapons of war that could perpetuate the crisis and lead to a civil war with incalculable consequences.

While the initial objective was noble, we must recognize that the embargo has ended up totally weakening the State, which is therefore deprived of the means to ensure the protection of its population and the defence of its territorial integrity, to the benefit of the armed groups that continue to arm themselves and supply themselves with heavy weapons.

The embargo, although it has been subject to some reductions, which are insignificant with regard to the weapons available to those outside the law, continues to weigh on the Central African Republic, despite the return to constitutional legality in 2016, thanks to the resilience of the Central African people, with the support of the international community. The Central African Government remains deprived of its means of defence, and the non-Government forces, strengthened by the ongoing reforms, are weakening the Central African State.

We must recognize that the embargo, which was designed to be an effective collective measure to ward off threats, is at present ineffective, contrary and unfair by virtue of the principles and values defended by the United Nations, in particular in terms of equality and fundamental rights. Proof of that is that it has not been able to eliminate the threats to peace posed by armed groups, and neither has it been able to repress their acts of aggression.

By limiting the fundamental rights of the Central African Republic, we must recall the following. On the subject of breaches of discipline, from which no State is immune, through the accusations occasionally made against certain armed forces — premeditated murder, rape, blunders and so on — we cannot forget that a member of the military is still a weak human. With regard to the non-recognition of the numerous reforms undertaken since 30 March 2016, there have been institutional and structural reforms in the context of strengthening the rule of law and restoring the authority of the State throughout the entire territory by the democratically elected authorities.

While contributing to the proliferation of heavy weapons within armed groups, we must conclude that the powers of our organ responsible for maintaining peace and security were not designed to establish peace, something to which the people of the world in general and of the Central African Republic in particular aspire, but only to keep the peace. Keeping the peace presupposes having first found a solution to the conflict. Hence the absolute need to not coerce or sanction a sovereign and legitimate State, but rather the non-governmental forces, which are not legitimate.

Despite threats and destabilization attempts, the Central African Republic has remained steadfast in upholding its commitments, eager to maintain the evident momentum from safeguarding the democratic gains made to date and upholding respect for fundamental law.

The year 2020 was marked by a renewal of the social contract between the people of the Central African Republic and their leaders, including through the organization and holding of presidential and legislative elections. In that regard, the political situation was notable for the organization and holding of the joint elections on 27 December 2020.

Since the signing, on 6 February 2019, of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Central African Republic between the Government and 14 armed groups, we have made major strides following several negotiations and the support of the international community

The Central African Republic Government has shown itself to be of good faith, by implementing the central provisions of that Agreement, and determined to overcome the crisis, by establishing monitoring mechanisms for the Agreement; forming an inclusive Government with the completion of all political reforms, including the establishment of an inclusion committee comprising representatives of the signatory parties; establishing the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation; adopting laws on political parties and the status of the opposition; adopting the law on decentralization; adopting the law defining the pension regime agreed for former Presidents of the Republic; rolling out special mixed security units; beginning disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR); adopting the law on the General Regime on Conventional Weapons in the Central African Republic; adopting the law on administrative districts; and facilitating the return of refugees, the redeployment of administrative functions and the restoration of State authority throughout its entire territory.

When it comes to the electoral process, the Government mobilized the administration and other relevant stakeholders with the support of international community to ensure the presidential and legislative elections would be inclusive, free, credible, peaceful, transparent and calm and held in line with the constitutional time frame.

Despite that goodwill on the part of the Government and the decision of the Constitutional Court rejecting a proposed draft law in Parliament seeking to postpone the elections on grounds of force majeure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the security situation, opposition political parties jointly, as the Coalition de l'opposition démocratique 2020, stepped up political manoeuvring seeking to delay the electoral timeline and install an exceptional administration of political transition. Those political actors have been unwilling to respect the electoral process since its very beginning, seeking any means possible to hamper the successful holding of the elections, which would have been a sign of development in the Central African Republic and confirmed the definitive end to the country's crisis.

Thereafter, following the publication of the final list of candidates for the Constitutional Court and the invalidation of his presidential candidacy on the grounds of ineligibility under the Constitution, former President of the Republic and current president of the Coalition de l'opposition démocratique 2020 François Bozizé Yangouvonda, provoked hostilities through a rebel movement known as the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement.

After many contradictory statements rejecting the decision of the Constitutional Court, or accepting it out of spite, activists of its Convergence nationale — or Kwa na Kwa — political wing were asked to vote for the candidate of the Union pour le renouveau centrafricain political grouping of Anicet-Georges Dologuélé, another member of the Coalition de l'opposition démocratique 2020, who had signed a pact to withdraw, leaving an open field for the rebel movement.

With the support of the Coalition de l'opposition démocratique 2020, which constitutes its political wing, the rebel movement — comprising the most active of the armed groups from areas of violence — Ali Darassa's Union pour la paix centrafricaine, Mahamat Alkatim's Mouvement patriotique pour la centrafrique, Abass Sidiki's Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, Nourreldine Adam's Front populaire pour la renaissance de la centrafrique and the Anti-Balaka Ngaïsona and Mokom wings — decided to stop the electoral process, halt the deepening of democracy in the country, destabilize the institutions of the Republic, install an anti-democratic regime and make the country ungovernable.

By launching a wave of violence in several towns of the eastern, western, central northern and central southern areas, forcibly displacing victimized populations once again and preventing voters in those areas from discharging their civic duty on the day of the election, 27 December 2020, in violation of their fundamental rights inherent to human dignity and universally recognized, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose article 21 provides that “[e]veryone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives”.

Public authorities draw their legitimacy from their foundation on the will of the people; that will must be expressed through free and fair elections, held on a regular basis, with equal universal suffrage and the sanctity of the ballot guaranteed, either through secret ballot or by some other procedure that provides equivalent assurance of the freedom in which each vote is cast.

Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that all citizens have the right to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections that shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.

The Constitution of the Central African Republic of 30 March 2016 provides, in article 19, that national sovereignty belongs to the people, who exercise it through referendums or through their representatives. Every citizen has the right to vote.

Despite the continuation of such violence, people turned out in great numbers to vote, discharging their civic duties and exercising their rights.

The results of this first ballot led to the proclamation, on Monday, 18 January 2021, of definitive results by the Constitutional Court, confirming the re-election of the incumbent President, Professor Faustin Archange Touadera, with 53.16 per cent of validly cast ballots.

We therefore take this opportunity to welcome the inspiring example of democracy shared by the people of the Central African Republic, who showed courage in defying those who would oppose peace, and to thank the guarantors and facilitators — the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the European Union, and the Economic Community of Central African States — as well as the other facilitators for their tireless support in favour of the effective implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. While asking the Security Council not only strongly to condemn this rebel movement and its many political accomplices, but also to establish an international commission of inquiry to shed light on the mechanisms and actors involved in this plot, which sought to sow violence and insecurity and take power by force.

I am alarmed that, amid the pandemic and as our joint efforts to start down the path towards peace beginning to bear fruit, the armed groups continue to engage in increasing violence, human rights violations and violations of international

humanitarian law. repeated attacks by members of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement against peaceful populations in the Central African Republic, the defence and security forces, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel are unacceptable and not something we can simply stand by and watch.

The current situation is the result of disregard by certain armed groups for their commitments set out in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, their non-adherence to the DDRR process, their continuous violation of the terms of the Agreement to which they are signatories and the non-application of article 35 of the that Agreement, which provides for sanctions should violations occur.

In addition, we must also mention the imbalance in force strength between the peacekeepers and the armed groups, which has seen many soldiers of peace taken down by rebel bullets. We count, unfortunately, the death of seven brave men of peace in a period of less than three weeks. They lost their lives to bullets of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement rebel movement.

This imbalance is due to the fact that United Nations forces — although equipped with a robust mandate to ensure the security of the civilian population, which resolution 2552 (2020) expanded by delegating MINUSCA a role in the context of ensuring the security of the electoral process in the Central African Republic — lack weapons of matching sophistication or sufficient quantity as compared to those of the armed groups of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement rebel movement.

I sincerely congratulate and thank MINUSCA, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, for the bravery of its contingents on the ground, who devote the great effort required in providing support on the ground to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic as far as possible. We are also grateful for the determination of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, for discharging the responsibilities entrusted to the Mission.

I should like to urge MINUSCA to stand firm and remain steadfast in its efforts, and to report to the Security Council on the facts of the challenging reality MINUSCA continues to face on the ground.

The complexity of the situation and the increasing fragility of the security context mean that the electoral process under way is under threat due to the occupation of a portion of the national territory by armed groups and to repeated attacks against State institutions as well as humanitarian organizations.

The time has come to take bold decisions, like that of 5 December 2013, which sanctioned the national forces of the Central African Republic with an arms embargo, thereby stripping them, to the benefit of harmful actors, of their ultimate right and duty to defend the country's population and territory. I am pleased to recall that that duty has been recalled systematically by the Council in its resolutions.

Effective collective action is needed to genuinely eliminate threats to peace, deter acts of aggression, violent extremism, criminal acts committed against civilian populations, and exploitation of the country's natural resources. These must be in accordance with the principles of justice and law and commensurate with the alarming security and humanitarian situation the civilian population faces due to the proliferation of armed groups and the inability of the defence and security forces to protect the population against abuses of extreme cruelty.

To achieve that and no longer send a message encouraging impunity to armed groups, whose conduct is utterly shameless given their awareness of the limitations

of the national forces, we call for the total lifting of the arms embargo against the Central African Republic, in order to allow the democratically elected authorities to ensure the protection of the population and to defend our territorial integrity.

This request is entirely legitimate since it is incumbent on the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic to lead the way in upholding its sovereign duties. The equipment shortfall facing the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic must be filled to rebalance the balance of power with the armed groups, which hold heavy weapons, such as mortars, anti-aircraft weapons, anti-personnel mines, rocket launchers — the list is long.

Eager to strengthen the security of the electoral process, the Government has made it a priority objective to utilize, in the context of security sector reform, several bilateral and international commitments, pursuant to agreements with several friendly and brotherly countries, to whom we express our sincere thanks and appreciation, with the aim of rebuilding the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the internal security forces in a professional, republican, inclusive manner capable of ensuring the protection of people and property in order to face all forms of threats against the nation.

The Central African Republic has just made another major stride with the organization of the elections of 27 December 2020, despite the political and security situation, not to mention the obstacles that have arose throughout the electoral process. Progress has been achieved, including in the implementation of security sector reform and the national DDRR programme as well as the management of weapons and ammunition.

And there remain many challenges to overcome, including with regard to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic: resource mobilization is hampered by persistent hotbeds of tensions, the effective implementation of the DDRR programme, economic exploitation by certain armed groups, the implementation of the General Regime of Conventional Weapons, Ammunition and Components Law.

The Central African Republic continues to advocate with all its partners, in particular the United Nations and the Group of 5+ — comprising France, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the World Bank Group — so as to continue the work already under way in building peace and promoting a culture of dialogue and universal peace, the fruits of development.

I should like to conclude my remarks by reiterating to all friendly countries and Member States present here to support the plea of the Central African Republic for the complete lifting of the arms embargo so as to restore the operational capacity of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic alongside their brothers in arms; to end the policy of terror, national paralysis and national economic suffocation; and to rebuild trust among the people of the Central African Republic in the face of increasing violent extremism, cross-border criminal activity and other forms of unprecedented violence.

We trust the Council will not remain unmoved by this legitimate appeal, which is backed by national opinion, eager to see measures taken and avenues opened to rebuild trust among our people in the organizations meant to uphold their rights and protect them from violence or being forced to resort to such ends.

I sincerely hope that the international community will keep up the momentum of international solidarity backing the people and the Government of the Central African Republic and continue supporting their national recovery efforts.