



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8646th meeting

Friday, 25 October 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Matjila	(South Africa)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Moriko
	Dominican Republic	Ms. Morrison González
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany	Mr. Heusgen
	Indonesia	Mr. Soemirat
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2019/822)

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19-33571 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2019/822)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security; and Mr. Stefano Tomat, Director for Integrated Approach for Security and Peace, European Union External Action Service.

Mr. Chergui and Mr. Tomat are joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Addis Ababa and Brussels, respectively.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/822, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ndiaye.

Mr. Ndiaye (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to take the floor this morning to present the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2019/822) in the run-up to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which, as the Council is aware, will expire in a few days' time.

First, let us for a moment turn our thoughts to the Blue Helmets — 10 military officers and one police officer — and the three civilian staff members who lost their lives this year in the line of duty in the Central

African Republic. Their contribution in the service of peace in that country, at the cost of their own lives, will never be forgotten.

Over the past year, MINUSCA has worked to implement the complex, multifaceted mandate that the Security Council entrusted to it in its resolution 2448 (2018), of December 2018, paying, as always, particular attention to the protection of civilians, the restoration of State authority, the promotion of human rights and justice, and good offices in the context of the peace process.

As the Council is aware, 2019 began with hope for a new era for the people of the Central African Republic through the Khartoum negotiations conducted under the auspices of the African Union (AU) and with the support of the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which led to the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic on 6 February in Bangui. Beyond the implementation of our mandate, support for the implementation of the agreement has involved a great deal of effort on the part of MINUSCA, working hand in hand with the Government and with the guarantors, the African Union and ECCAS.

Since my most recent briefing to the Council in June (see S/PV.8558), the process of implementing the agreement has seen progress and faced challenges, which I would very briefly like to share with the Council so as to inform its deliberations on the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate.

Concerning the progress made, the monitoring mechanisms that exist at the national and local levels are now largely operational. These mechanisms have helped to avert or contain crises at the level of the prefectures and sub-prefectures. In Bossangoa, for instance, the meetings of the prefectural implementation committee allowed for Muslim residents to return to the town, and they can now move around freely for the first time since the tragic events of 2013. The first joint security unit, one of the key elements of the agreement's implementation, was officially launched by the President, Faustin Archange Touadera, in Bouar, in the north-western part of the country, on 16 October. The Government plans to launch similar units in the north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the country as soon as possible, which will help to keep the armed groups engaged in the peace agreement.

National disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts have also continued in recent months, bringing to 583 the number of fighters who have been disarmed and demobilized since December 2018. But the reluctance of the *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* (3R) armed group to participate in this process represents a major challenge that delayed the launch of the first joint security unit. I am pleased, however, that the robust posture adopted by MINUSCA has helped to slow the repeated violations of the agreement by 3R and helped to compel its leader, Sidiki, to be more cooperative.

Additional progress has been made in the area of justice and reconciliation. National consultations on the law on the creation of the future justice, reconciliation and reparations commission, launched on 6 June, are continuing in several cities in the country with the support of MINUSCA. These participative consultations are also contributing to the process of national reconciliation. The inclusive commission that was established to analyse the causes of the conflict and to propose judicial measures is continuing to gather information across the country and is supposed to present its report next month. However, these two institutions alone will not be able to bring full justice to the many victims of the conflict in the Central African Republic. That is why MINUSCA is continuing its tireless support of the activities of the Special Criminal Court and to capacity-building for ordinary Central African courts and the criminal justice chain in its totality.

I would also like to underscore the work done by MINUSCA, with the support of UN-Women and the Peacebuilding Fund, to promote awareness of the peace agreement across the country among civil society, including women, young people and religious leaders. This should automatically allow for better national ownership of the peace agreement.

Progress has also been made in the development sphere, where the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan has seen significant headway with the disbursement of nearly \$2.4 billion on 1 October, bringing the financial delivery rate to 67 per cent. Four hundred projects in various socioeconomic sectors are under way, with the chief objective of tangibly improving the living conditions of the Central African people.

All that progress has been made possible by the commitment of the Government, supported by MINUSCA, and of guarantors and other partners. Restoring State authority remains a collective priority. Thus far, prefects have been designated in all the country's 16 prefectures, as have 66 of the 71 sub-prefects, and the number of officials deployed in the field has more than doubled as compared to 2015. In addition, 1,346 members of the Central African Armed Forces have been deployed across the national territory, including in Kaga Bandoro, Bria and Birao, and 1,050 police officers and gendarmes have been deployed in 15 prefectures, some of whom are co-located with MINUSCA. Those redeployments, together with the encouraging progress made in reforming the Central African security apparatus, have, as the members know, led the Council to ease the embargo and sanctions regime on the Central African Republic.

We all know that, despite this progress, important challenges remain, which, let us admit, seriously hamper our collective efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continue, although the number of incidents, attacks against civilians, sexual violence, restrictions on the freedom of movement and kidnappings has been halved over the past year. I remain particularly concerned by the tense situation prevailing in the north-east of the country since July. Several serious incidents sporadically opposed members of the *Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice* to members of the *Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique* in July, September and October. The clashes between the two armed groups, which signed the peace agreement, have produced dozens of victims, mainly among combatants, and one civilian victim. However, the number of displaced persons is now considerable, more than 10,000, which is having a significant socioeconomic, health and security impact, particularly in Birao near the border with the Sudan.

MINUSCA, the African Union and the ECCAS, in support of the Government, have mobilized to stop the violence and prevent the conflict, which has already taken on a regrettable ethnic character, from leading to direct intercommunal clashes and spreading throughout Vakaga prefecture, with an impact at the regional level.

I am also concerned about other challenges that threaten our efforts, including the risks of violence in connection with population movements, which will soon begin with the arrival of the dry season, the persistence

of illegal taxation, the radicalization of some actors' political discourse and, to a lesser extent, delays in the adoption of certain bills provided for in the peace agreement, including those on decentralization and the status of former Heads of State. I take this opportunity to reiterate the outcomes of the high-level meeting on the Central African Republic held on the margins of the General Assembly on 26 September, as well as of the tripartite United Nations-AU-European Union (EU) visit to Bangui from 4 to 7 October. I also urge the signatories to redouble their efforts to implement all the commitments made under the peace agreement. In accordance with its mandate, MINUSCA will continue to lend the signatories all its political and technical support, but it will also not hesitate to assume all its responsibilities, as demonstrated in Operation Anvil in the west, and adopt a robust stance against those who threaten the civilian population.

The context in which MINUSCA will be discharging its next mandate will be dominated not only by continued support for the implementation of the peace agreement of 6 February but also by the preparation of the 2020 and 2021 presidential and legislative elections. I would like to point out that resolution 2448 (2018) could not foresee the extent of the logistical and technical means required for the implementation of the peace agreement, which was signed almost two months after the resolution was adopted. Therefore, in addition to MINUSCA's good offices and the many tasks that will be assigned to it, it is essential that the Mission be provided with a mandate and adequate resources to support the implementation of the peace agreement, as the only path to lasting peace in the Central African Republic.

Similarly, the elections in 2020 and 2021, like those in 2015 and 2016, will mobilize a great deal of energy and effort from the international community, as they will enable the consolidation of democratic achievements in the Central African Republic. The electoral calendar published by the national electoral authority provides for voter registration from January 2020, a first round of coupled presidential and legislative elections on 27 December 2020 and a second round, if necessary, on 14 February 2021. Local elections, which have not been held since 1988, are scheduled for 21 November 2021. They should help to address the root causes of the Central African crisis and strengthen democratic governance and decentralization.

I am pleased that the Central African authorities have already begun preparations for the elections. A

new electoral code was adopted in July by the National Assembly and promulgated on 20 August by the country's President. The Government has disbursed just over \$2 million for the financing of electoral operations, in addition to the \$17 million pledged by the European Union and the \$2 million pledged by the United Nations Development Programme, out of a total budget of approximately \$41.8 million. Preparations are also under way for electoral mapping, a prerequisite for voter registration.

However, despite those encouraging steps, the holding of elections on the scheduled dates remains threatened by insufficient technical, financial and human resources. The lack of financial resources, the absence of an appropriate logistical mandate for MINUSCA and the persistence of insecurity in various places raise concerns among part of the Central African political class about the feasibility of countrywide elections within the deadlines provided for in the Constitution. Indeed, a serious delay in holding the next elections could create a vacuum at the highest echelon of the State and lead to another political transition that some political actors are strongly calling for but which would, I am convinced, be harmful to the consolidation of democracy, stability and peace in the Central African Republic. It is important that the international community band together to ensure that the elections take place according to the planned timetable, in a free, inclusive and fair manner throughout the country.

Accordingly, I request the Security Council, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report, to endow MINUSCA with an appropriate mandate so that the Mission can provide the necessary technical, logistical, security and operational support for the conduct of the elections within constitutional deadlines. I also appeal to the generosity of all partners and friends of the Central African Republic to make contributions as soon as possible, as funds are lacking to start the process.

(spoke in English)

Finally, allow me to conclude with a strong appeal to the countries in the region, whose contribution to the stability of the Central African Republic remains crucial. The recent crisis in the north-east of the country has shown again how essential it is for the region to support the Central African Republic in its efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability. In that regard, I commend the Governments of the Central

African Republic, Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo for the revival of their respective joint commissions. I encourage sustained efforts aimed at launching similar joint commissions with Chad and the Sudan. I also welcome President Paul Kagame's State visit to the Central African Republic last week, which will enable the country to strengthen ties with Rwanda. The Central African Republic needs all its partners and friends in order to transform the dream of peace, prosperity and development of millions of Central Africans into a lasting reality. I know they can also count on the unanimous and generous support of the Security Council.

The President: I thank Mr. Ndiaye for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chergui.

Mr. Chergui: First of all, allow me to reiterate to you, Mr. President, my dear brother Ambassador Matjila, my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and your excellent leadership of the work of the Council this month. At the African Union we greatly appreciate the importance given to Africa's priorities under your presidency, particularly through the strategic partnership between the African Union and the United Nations. In that respect, I welcomed the successful thirteenth annual United Nations-African Union joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council that was held in Addis Ababa earlier this week. I want to say once again what an honour and pleasure it was to welcome the Council here in Addis Ababa. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Central African Republic and specifically on the joint visit to Bangui of the African Union, United Nations and European Union from 4 to 7 October.

(spoke in French)

The situation in the Central African Republic has generally seen a significant decrease in violence throughout the country, an undeniable and tangible result of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. In that context, we welcome the progress that has been made in setting up the implementation and monitoring mechanism's structures, which are now operational, including the executive follow-up committee for the Agreement, which is chaired by the Prime Minister of the Central African Republic and the African Union's

Special Representative in Bangui, whose work is proceeding normally. We should also highlight the establishment of the committee's technical secretariat, the national implementation committee, the prefectural implementation committees, the technical security committees, and the inclusive commission, which began work on 28 May.

The Government's presence is gradually being re-established in areas that the central authorities were previously unable to access. As a result, all 16 prefectures and 66 of the 71 planned sub-prefectures are already in place on the ground, and the defence and security forces are in the process of being deployed throughout the national territory. In addition, the formation of the joint security units began on 16 October in Bouar in the north-west of the country in the presence of President Touadera, members of the Government and representatives of the international community. I also want to commend the Central African Government for its efforts, including the finalization of the electoral code, which has been approved by the Constitutional Court. We expect that other legislative texts will be adopted soon, particularly those related to decentralization, the status of former Heads of State, and political parties.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to the countries of the region that have continued to support the implementation of the Agreement and provide assistance to the Central African Republic, particularly through the meetings of the Central African Republic-Cameroon and Central African Republic-Congo mixed commissions, and soon those of the Central African Republic-Chad and Central African Republic-Sudan mixed commissions. On the humanitarian front, the situation is encouraging. Between January and September the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees facilitated the voluntary return of more than 357,000 refugees and displaced persons to their respective regions. The need for humanitarian assistance has therefore been significantly reduced, and according to humanitarian reports some 30,000 people will return to their regions in 2020.

Despite the improved security situation, we have unfortunately seen several cases of violations of the Agreement, including in Paoua on 21 May and in September and in Birao in October, which resulted in considerable loss of life and which we have firmly and collectively condemned. Those clashes have in no way

slowed the implementation of the Agreement, and the African Union continues to encourage the Government and stakeholders to maintain the existing dialogue framework while stressing the importance of promoting a climate of trust, especially in view of the elections scheduled for 2020 and 2021.

That was the context for my joint visit to Bangui from 4 to 7 October with my friend Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, our second visit to the Central African Republic, following the one in April. At the end of our consultations with President Touadera and the actors involved, we called for scrupulous respect for their commitments regarding the implementation of the peace agreement. We also clarified grey areas, reaffirmed our common commitment to ensuring strict respect for electoral deadlines and urged the Central African Republic's partners to mobilize to ensure the creation of the necessary conditions for that. To that end, we are once again counting on the members of the Council to provide the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) with the mandate it will need to ensure its support during the process. I would like to conclude by making some recommendations.

First, it is important to welcome the convergence of the positions and coherence of the actions of the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union and — if I may assume it — the entire international community in all of our interactions with the stakeholders of the Central African Republic and the international community in general. It is therefore imperative that we collectively continue to support the implementation of the Agreement, which remains the frame of reference for the country's return to stability. Let me be very clear that there can be no plan B.

Secondly, I welcome the commitment of the Central African Republic's neighbours and the Economic Community of Central African States to that effort and urge them to continue to support the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, the start on 16 October of the formation of joint security units in the western part of the Central African Republic is a major development and a clear achievement. It is now time to launch the units planned

for the country's other regions in order to consolidate reconciliation and inclusiveness.

Fourthly, while the African Union is deploying military observers who are responsible for supervising the joint security units, I am counting on MINUSCA's usual collaboration and assistance in supplying the logistical support, particularly in terms of accommodation and transport, that is needed to ensure the success of this operation.

Fifthly, while, as I mentioned, there has been progress on the humanitarian front, the situation remains precarious and requires the international community's sustained attention if we are to respond to the expectations of both the humanitarian observers and people in vulnerable situations. I want to stress the importance of focusing particularly on the situation of women and children in the Central African Republic and to solemnly and firmly reiterate our common policy of zero tolerance for all forms of sexual violence and the exploitation of children.

Finally, I would like to stress once again that there can be no alternative to holding general elections in 2020 and 2021, and we have emphasized to all the stakeholders in the Central African Republic that every possible effort will be made to ensure that they are held on time. I therefore call for the Council to support us by bringing all of its influence to bear to ensure that all the stakeholders concerned will respect the deadlines and contribute positively to the effective organization of the elections.

The President: I thank Mr. Chergui for his briefing and his kind words addressed to me. I also thank the African Union Peace and Security Council for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to my colleagues on the Security Council during our fourth informal meeting and the thirteenth joint consultative meeting of the Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tomat.

Mr. Tomat: I am honoured to brief the Security Council on behalf of the European Union (EU).

We note the progress made in the implementation of the peace agreement since it was signed in Bangui. We have also identified important areas for action and are concerned at some challenges in terms of the security commitments of certain parties. In terms of progress, it is important to underline that the agreement is the sole

collective road map. The momentum it generated needs to be maintained and strengthened. All actors should implement it in good faith.

The Government of the Central African Republic, under the leadership of the President and the Prime Minister, continues to deliver on its commitments. They deliver despite challenges and the difficulties of the process. State authority is slowly being restored. The Central African Armed Forces and internal security forces are being deployed. The first batch of special mixed security units has been established in the west. The Security Council has recognized the progress achieved in security sector reform, which led to the easing of the arms embargo. We see this as a most welcome move. We are also pleased to see that neighbouring countries are actively contributing to creating a positive climate for the implementation of the peace agreement. This needs to be further encouraged.

In certain areas, we look to the Government to take further action with greater determination. Such issues include transitional justice, which is an essential element of reconciliation and the fight against impunity. We also encourage the authorities to make progress, in parallel, on such issues as decentralization, the status of former Heads of State and the law on political parties. Government action could also be more cohesive by fully associating members of armed groups with the peace agreement and integrating them into its implementation. Taken together, these measures, along with the broad awareness-raising about the peace agreement, would send a clear signal to the wider population that the political tide has definitively turned to the better. If the people of the Central African Republic are to benefit from the peace agreement, we also need to do more with respect to including civil society, political parties, the military and women in the peace process.

Let us now consider some challenges. Even if we have seen improvements in terms of security, the overall security situation remains fragile. Several armed groups continue attacks against civilians and against each other. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) process is essential and should be accelerated. The peace agreement provides for all the necessary mechanisms to respond to violations. The guarantors of the agreement should not shy away from using the provisions of article 35 thereof to engage non-compliant armed groups. In particular, we support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African

Republic (MINUSCA) in its recent robust responses. MINUSCA's assertiveness sends a positive signal to the civilian victims of the conflict, particularly in the face of the recent arrests of members of some armed groups.

In this context, I would also like to take a moment to offer my sincere condolences, on behalf of the European Union and myself, to both MINUSCA and the families of those brave soldiers who recently lost their lives in a tragic accident.

The special mixed security units are part of the security set-up. As mentioned by previous speakers, the first such unit was recently launched in Bouar, which is very good news. The launch of the first unit will have a significant impact. Several groups are now asking to join. Their members see a concrete and immediate opportunity to be reintegrated and return to normal life. Like our partners in Government, the African Union and the United Nations, we want to see more such units deployed. Demobilization, disarmament, vetting and training of combatants identified for participating in these units are critical steps for their establishment.

A few weeks ago, the European Union, the African Union and the United Nations successfully conducted a trilateral joint high-level mission to the country, which I had the pleasure of accompanying. It was encouraging to see that all three organizations agreed on the principles for the special mixed security units to work successfully. The European Union will continue funding such units under these conditions. Our initial contribution of €3.4 million since May is already with the African Union in support of special mixed security unit members.

The European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA) has trained Central African Armed Forces trainers in charge of training the special mixed security units. We are also funding AU military observers, who will monitor the deployment and activities of the special mixed security units. We stand ready to mobilize further support for the next phases. For that, MINUSCA's mandate must foresee the capacity to support the special mixed security units. Putting these units in place is clearly important. At the same time, this operation should not divert attention from the DDRR process and ongoing security sector reform.

Previous speakers mentioned the critical juncture we are facing with the elections in 2020 and 2021. Only a peaceful, inclusive and transparent process

will help consolidate the country's democratic record. The constitutional calendar should be respected. Postponement is not an option, and we hope political parties will act responsibly. The EU is ready to provide financial and technical support, and we encourage other partners to join our efforts. Most important will be MINUSCA's support for the whole electoral process in terms of security and logistics. We request that MINUSCA's mandate be explicitly amended to that effect.

I should like to add some final words to update the Council on other aspects of EU support to the Central African Republic. The EU Training Mission I just mentioned is leading the defence sector reform, providing strategic advice and operational training. To date, the EU Training Mission has trained five battalions of the national armed forces. On 16 October, more than 1,000 recruits graduated from this training. Altogether, 4,000 members of the armed forces staff of all grades and ranks have benefitted from EUTM-RCA operational training. Another 1,500 have completed courses in such military areas as human resources, logistics, planning and information technology.

The EUTM-RCA will continue to work hand in hand with MINUSCA and other players, in full transparency. We would like to see MINUSCA's mandate include provisions relating to its support for members of the Central African Armed Forces personnel trained by EUTM-RCA. In parallel, we are supporting the strengthening and countrywide deployment of the internal security forces. Following President Touadera's request, the EU is currently planning the deployment of a European advisory mission to the Central African Republic to further support the internal security forces.

All instruments combined, the EU has mobilized, since 2014, an envelope of €850 million. We have taken measures to accelerate and, where needed, realign our programmes so that the population can rapidly benefit from peace dividends.

I should like to share just three figures relating to the Bêkou trust fund, in terms of health care alone. Over the last reporting period, 1.7 million medical consultations were given, helping people, including more than 80,000 children and pregnant women, to recover. Around 170,000 births were assisted by skilled birth attendants. Similar figures can be seen in the areas of primary education, animal health, microfinance and textiles.

Thousands of small farmers and their groups have been equipped and helped to access the local markets.

A few months ago, Ms. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, went on an official visit to the Central African Republic. Both she and the President Touadera confirmed our shared commitment to working together for the ultimate benefit of the people of the Central African Republic. We know that the situation remains complex and fragile, with humanitarian problems and structural weaknesses. We will continue to work with our partners in the Government and in civil society, the African Union, the United Nations and the countries of the region. We will remain fully engaged in the Central African Republic in order to support our friend and partner at this important juncture.

The President: I thank Mr. Tomat for his briefing.

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

Mr. Moriko (Côte d'Ivoire) (spoke in French): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council: South Africa, Equatorial Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

The three African members of the Council welcome Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central Africa (MINUSCA), and thank him for his briefing on the sociopolitical, security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of MINUSCA. Our thanks also go to Mr. Smâil Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, and Mr. Stefano Tomat, Director for Integrated Approach for Security and Peace of the European Union External Action Service.

The three African members of the Council welcome the tangible progress made by the Central African authorities in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, signed on 6 February between the Central African Government and armed groups, including the operationalization of several mechanisms for its implementation and monitoring the agreement. The fulfilment of this essential requirement for the gradual restoration of State authority throughout the national territory, as well as for the provision of basic social services and improved

living conditions for the population, constitutes a genuine source of hope for the return of lasting peace, security and stability in the Central African Republic.

While welcoming the constructive engagement of the signatories, in particular President Faustin-Archange Touadera and his Government, the three African members of the Council welcome the decisive support of the agreement's guarantors and facilitators, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). We also acknowledge the important role played by the United Nations through MINUSCA and the support of bilateral and multilateral partners, without which the encouraging progress we have seen so far would not have been possible.

Despite this progress, the Central African Republic is still facing numerous challenges, particularly violence against civilians and clashes between armed groups that are signatories to the peace agreement for control over natural resources. The events that took place in Paoua on 21 May and in Birao on 1 September are a clear example of this. Moreover, the feeling of mistrust surrounding the peace agreement, particularly among the political opposition, is a source of concern in the light of preparations for the presidential, legislative and local elections scheduled for 2020 and 2021. These elections are crucial and indispensable in achieving peace and political stability in the country.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to strengthen the protection of civilians, find appropriate responses to humanitarian challenges and strengthen peace and development initiatives, with a particular focus on the major projects currently being implemented. These include support for the process of restoring State authority through joint security operations conducted by MINUSCA and the Forces armées centrafricaines and the operationalization of special mixed security units with a view to protecting civilians, which is urgently required. We welcome the launch of activities in Bouar on 16 October in that regard. The implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme for ex-combatants and reform of the security sector also require special attention.

The three African members of the Council believe that all stakeholders must work together to make up for the delays in implementing some of the key political and security provisions of the peace agreement. In this respect, we welcome the meeting of the signatories of the peace agreement held in Bangui on 23 and 24 August,

in the presence of the guarantors and facilitators, notably the African Union and MINUSCA, in order to take stock of progress made and develop common approaches to overcome the challenges to implementing the agreement.

Local peace and reconciliation initiatives across the country that support the peace agreement should also be commended and encouraged. Supporting these initiatives with the appropriate means will contribute to creating and maintaining an environment conducive to reconciliation and lasting peace. To this end, the three African members of the Council encourage the involvement of civil society, particularly women and youth, in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/2019/822. We hope that the outcome of the consultations among the population launched in June will lead to the establishment of an effective truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation commission that responds to the needs of victims of the violence, in the spirit of the peace agreement.

The unwavering commitment of the international community to the security dimension will undoubtedly contribute to the stabilization of the situation on the ground. Resolution 2488 (2019), which we welcome and support, reflects that commitment perfectly. It authorizes the easing of the arms embargo on the Central African Government, thereby enabling it to acquire the resources necessary to accelerate the restoration of State authority throughout the national territory. The three African members of the Council therefore intend to play an active role in the implementation of the resolution and the mechanisms to resolve the conflict in order to accompany the Central African people on their quest for peace and stability. We take this opportunity to recall that the support of the countries of the region is essential. That is why we welcome the fact that the Central African authorities have relaunched the bilateral commissions with Chad, Cameroon, the Congo and the Sudan, with a view to addressing cross-border issues.

Preserving the gains made in the context of the peace agreement depends without a doubt on the successful holding of the upcoming elections in 2020 and 2021 in a peaceful social climate. All Central African sociopolitical actors must contribute to creating that atmosphere.

MINUSCA's contribution to peace efforts in the Central African Republic should be commended, but it must continue to play its full part in this endeavour

and utilize the range of tools at its disposal. In this regard, the three African members of the Council share the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the scope of MINUSCA's electoral support mandate. We hope that this issue will be taken into account when MINUSCA's mandate is renewed next month.

In conclusion, South Africa, Equatorial Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire call once again on subregional, regional and international organizations, particularly ECCAS, the African Union and the United Nations, as well as partners of the Central African Republic, to maintain their support for the country so that it can return to peace and stability. We reiterate our support for MINUSCA and the efforts of President Faustin-Archange Touadera, whose commitment and leadership will undoubtedly contribute to the return of lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Cohen (United States): I would like to start by thanking our briefers today. We offer Special Representative Ndiaye our condolences following the loss of four Senegalese peacekeepers in the helicopter accident last month.

I will make five brief points.

First, the United States is deeply concerned that some armed groups continue to violate the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic with impunity. We call for all signatory parties to commit to fully implementing the peace agreement.

Secondly, we would like to highlight the fact that the top priority task of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is the protection of civilians. There is no contradiction between protecting civilians and using MINUSCA's good offices to support the

success of the peace agreement. In fact, we believe that these two efforts are mutually reinforcing.

Thirdly, we must break the cycle of violence in the Central African Republic by ensuring high standards for vetting, disarmament, demobilization and training for former combatants who choose to enter the mixed brigades or participate in other disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Vetting should complement the work of the Special Criminal Court, which the United States supports, to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes and atrocities, in keeping with the Bangui Forum.

Fourthly, during the recent trip of the Security Council sanctions committee to Bangui, it was clear that the Government of the Central African Republic now has sufficient arms to supply its troops but still needs to develop defence institutions to provide their troops with logistical support and salaries when deployed in the field. We hope that the Government of the Central African Republic can make more progress on the arms embargo benchmarks so that its military can be counted on to defend the borders and protect Central Africans.

Finally, the United States would like to recognize the attention paid in the Secretary-General's report of 15 October (S/2019/822) to performance optimization, particularly the new short-loop casualty evacuation process and actions taken in response to violence in Alindao. Such efforts make peacekeeping safer by simultaneously protecting the lives of both peacekeepers and civilians.

The United States will continue to press for improved peacekeeping performance reporting in MINUSCA and in all peacekeeping operations according to the standards set in the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and in resolution 2436 (2018).

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.