



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9156**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 19 October 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Biang. . . . . (Gabon)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Spasse
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Korbieh
India . . . . .	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Moran
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Olanda
Mexico . . . . .	Mr. Cisneros Chávez
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Ms. Jacobs
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2022/762)

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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/2022/762)**

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

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, 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, to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/762, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Ms. Rugwabiza.

**Ms. Rugwabiza** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to join the Council and the Secretary-General in reiterating my deepest condolences to the families of the Blue Helmets who have fallen victim to explosive devices, as well as to the Government and the people of Bangladesh. At the same time, I salute the memory of all peacekeepers who have sacrificed their lives in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to restore the country to peace and security.

I urge the Central African Government to lift the ban on night flights. Night flights are essential to the safety and security of peacekeepers, humanitarian actors and all other partners on the ground, as well as civilian

personnel and populations in need of humanitarian assistance. And I should highlight that the ban on night flights also deprives all of our pilots deployed in the Central African Republic of the minimum flying time they need to maintain their certificates, which they have all lost as a result of de facto disqualification.

I appreciate the privilege of sharing with the Council my observations on major developments that deserve members' attention, four months after our previous review of the situation in the Central African Republic (see S/PV.9074). We need a critical analysis of the progress made in the implementation of the strategic priorities of MINUSCA's multidimensional mandate in four areas — first, political and security dynamics; secondly, safeguarding the achievements that have been made in the implementation of MINUSCA's mandate; thirdly, the prospects for decentralizing the political and peace process; and fourthly, the extension of State authority for lasting political solutions to the root causes of the political and security-related conflict in the Central African Republic.

In terms of security, MINUSCA's support has been decisive. While taking the exact measure of the threats and risks, and always backed by our concept of operations without prejudice to the Government's primary responsibility, MINUSCA has indeed played a key role in protecting civilian populations and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid through a robust, preventive and proactive posture, in response to alerts received from communities. This posture is illustrated by our operations that have enabled us to pre-emptively deploy MINUSCA forces to the north-east of the Central African Republic to restore an environment conducive to the protection of civilians, humanitarian assistance, the advancement of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programme and the functioning of the territorial administration, and to cut off the armed groups' supply routes, accordingly. We will continue to support the redeployment of the internal defence and security forces in accordance with the policy of due diligence on human rights.

We note with concern, however, that the protection of the civilian population from abuse and physical violence continues to be challenged by persistent threats caused by the renewed activities of armed groups in the border localities of the western sector of the country, which are the most affected by landmines and explosive devices, from which our own force suffered casualties

earlier this month. Currently, our force is engaged in a joint operation with the national defence and security forces to address threats from armed groups, protect populations, facilitate humanitarian assistance and support the DDDR programme in the centre of the country. The resurgence of armed-group activity and the use of explosive devices in the north-western border areas of the country make it difficult or impossible to reach populations in critical and urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

This confirms that the absence of deliberate mass attacks against civilians during the reporting period does not preclude the return of such attacks until all parties to the conflict have renounced violence. Central African populations, particularly the most vulnerable, continue to pay the highest price for the conflict.

It will take more than MINUSCA's robust posture and the Government's security capacity to restore lasting security throughout the Central African Republic. It will also be necessary to create the conditions for a political resolution of the Central African crisis and for armed groups to renounce armed-offensive action and violence to assert their claims. It is in this regard that MINUSCA welcomes the development and launch of implementation of the shared timetable of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), under the effective coordination of the Prime Minister and Head of Government and the leadership and personal commitment of the Head of State, as well as the commitment of the guarantors and facilitators of the Political Agreement and that of Angola and Rwanda on behalf of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We now have no alternative but to seize the emerging opportunity to transcend the formality that has at times characterized the peace process in order to make it a perceptible reality that leads to tangible results. This is the ambition of the Government and the hope of the international partners that are committed to supporting the implementation of the Government's timetable. In this respect, I would like to point out the multiplier effect that the Government's implementation of this timetable is already generating: for example, to name just a few of the many developments, the President of the Republic's opening on 14 September 2022 of the dialogue with the leaders of 11 armed

groups with a view to their disbanding pursuant to the political commitments of the Political Agreement; the adjustment of capacities to respond to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration needs expressed by certain armed groups; the structural reforms relating to the establishment by decree dated 28 September 2022 of the committee for integrating former combatants; the resumption of inspections as part of efforts to strengthen monitoring of the defence and security forces; and the adoption of a code for marking arms and ammunition.

This is the time to recall the consensus established through the coordination meetings chaired by the Prime Minister on the primacy of the political component of the timetable for a lasting solution to the political and security crisis in the Central African Republic, whose costs and consequences for the civilian population are devastating. For this reason, we continue to encourage the Government to implement its strategy of re-engaging the armed groups bound by the Luanda road map to ensure the effectiveness of the ceasefire and the renunciation of violence and the completion of the talks already under way, with the support of the ICGLR representatives, Angola and Rwanda, in perfect harmony with the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, and of course with the continued support of MINUSCA working in coordination with international partners.

Since I took office in April 2022, I have met several times with the Central African population — from every generation and affiliation, from different religious and traditional backgrounds, with opinion leaders and representatives of different associations in the hinterland beyond Bangui — and the discussions I have had with these populations have struck me with the unanimity of the peoples' expectations and hopes: the return of peace and security for all citizens throughout the Central African Republic and the tangible decentralization of services and opportunities to be enjoyed by all populations, regardless of their location or community of origin. In other words, security and inclusion are at the heart of the population's expectations. These demands from and expectations of the Central African populations must be the mantra of all parties to the conflict and the mission to be fulfilled by all partners in the Central African Republic peace process.

The unanimous support of the Security Council is more necessary than ever to leave the parties no alternative but to fulfil their obligations under the joint road map and the Political Agreement. This is in the

interest of peace and stability, given the fragility of the security situation, which might still be subjected to a sudden change in direction. Consequently, any delay in the implementation of the political component of the joint road map is likely to compromise the gains made and expose the population to new risks of massive violence depending on how the balance of power shifts throughout the vast territory of the Central African Republic. This Governmental timetable for the implementation of the joint road map and the Political Agreement, if effectively and fully executed by the Central African Government, offers the political means to prevent the resurgence of violence. This is the time to call on all the regional and international partners of the Central African Republic and the guarantors and facilitators of the Peace Agreement to provide their support and contributions to the implementation of the timetable in a coordinated manner and in accordance with all their comparative advantages, under the effective coordination of the Prime Minister and the strategic direction of the President of the Republic.

The progress made in restoring the authority of the State, including the redeployment of the defence and security forces and civil servants, the strengthening of the judicial system and the promotion of transitional-justice mechanisms, such as the Special Criminal Court, is noteworthy and should be reinforced. In this regard, I would like to welcome the start of the first trial before the Special Criminal Court. I invite the Government to renew the Court's mandate and call on Council members and other States Members of the United Nations to increase their financial support and lend their expertise in the judicial investigations so as to favour the effective functioning of this Court, thereby helping to break the cycle of impunity, which is an absolutely essential step for the social reintegration of victims and national reconciliation.

With regard to human rights violations, in addition to the publication of periodic reports and the annual report mandated by the Council, we have established a framework for constructive dialogue and accountability, both with regard to the follow-up of documented violations and to the implementation of the recommendations made in the public reports of MINUSCA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. I also welcome the commitment of the Government of the Central African Republic, during the forty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, to invest more in the follow-up and

implementation of the recommendations of public reports and treaty organs. I reiterate our appeal to the Council and to the Member States to mobilize the necessary support to strengthen national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. In the same vein, I would like to note with satisfaction the high-level dialogue initiated by Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, during her visit to the Central African Republic in early October.

With regard to security sector reform, I welcome the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to move forward in its process of strengthening the institutional capacity of the security sector, which is essential to protect its population. MINUSCA will continue to support that national process, which requires the coordinated and transparent support of all partners in the Central African Republic. I would like to emphasize that those reform efforts are also in line with the priorities of the Luanda road map, contributing to the restoration of State authority and securing the borders.

The respect by the institutions, people, Government and opposition of the Constitutional Court's decision of 23 September annulling the decrees on the creation, functioning, composition and appointment of the members of the drafting committee for the constitution on the grounds that they were unconstitutional, as well as the withdrawal of said decrees by the Government, are to be commended. I salute the maturity of the political actors who continue to uphold the supremacy of the law, and I encourage both the Government and the people of the Central African Republic to fiercely preserve that institutional heritage, which is a guarantee of political stability and a symbol of democratic anchoring. On the other hand, I must call the Government's attention to the imperative need to put an end to the manipulation of information, the stigmatization of institutions and people, including public incitements to violence. The perpetrators and instigators must be held accountable for such actions, which threaten the fragile balance of a society in search of cohesion and are susceptible to manipulation due to their various flaws.

The calm observed in some parts of the country thanks to the redeployment of national defence and security forces and the proactive and preventive posture of MINUSCA enables freedom of movement and an increase in the return of displaced persons and refugees to areas recently freed from the grip of armed

groups. However, the humanitarian needs of the people living in those areas remain alarming and call for the continued mobilization of humanitarian partners.

It is also important to consolidate the security and political gains observed in some of those areas through the increased engagement of development partners. In particular, I call for the remobilization of partners to support sustainable efforts in the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants and the extension of State authority. Durable solutions for the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees into local communities, combined with those for the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants, will strengthen the new decentralization policy currently being developed and increase the contribution of local elections to the process of democratization through inclusion and national reconciliation. Elections have not been held since 1988, and they are a crucial step towards decentralized governance, the full restoration of State authority and greater legitimacy for local authorities among the people who have elected them.

In the light of the foregoing, hope for peace in the Central African Republic persists and is real. It requires ongoing political efforts aimed at renouncing violence as a means of resolving the political conflict in the Central African Republic, the continuation of the optimization of MINUSCA's mandate, the resumption of the inclusive dialogue with the democratic opposition and the support of the guarantors and facilitators of the peace process in the Central African Republic, as well as the continued backing of regional and international partners.

There is therefore room for hope. It calls for our collective efforts to mediate among the conflicting parties for the primacy of a political solution to the crisis. In parallel and as a complement to political action, the Mission's ability to dissuade all actors who want to find a solution through violent action in the Central African conflict will depend on the Council's effective and ongoing support by maintaining a robust and flexible mandate, as well as access to the necessary resources and capacities for its implementation.

To conclude my introductory remarks, I would like to commend the foresight of the Security Council, which has given MINUSCA a mandate commensurate with the challenges and concerns arising from the situation in the Central African Republic. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/762) bears

witness to the immeasurable contribution and the ever-critical contribution of MINUSCA's multidimensional mandate, on which the people, the host Government and the subregion depend in our collective quest for lasting political solutions to the crisis in the Central African Republic.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rugwabiza for her briefing.

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

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative for her briefing. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad. The Special Representative can count on France's full support.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to the personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and, specifically, the three peacekeepers killed on 3 October. France extends its condolences to Bangladesh and to the United Nations.

MINUSCA's commitment is remarkable. The resolute approach that the Special Representative has taken, has strengthened MINUSCA's territorial base. Wherever it is deployed, MINUSCA supports the forces of the Central African Republic in the fight against armed groups. France welcomes the improved coordination between MINUSCA and the country's armed forces, as well as the decrease in violations of the status-of-forces agreement. However, we are concerned about the maintenance of certain restrictions, particularly those imposed on night flights, which can have dramatic consequences, as we saw on 3 October.

France welcomes the increasing ownership of the peace process by the authorities of the Central African Republic. The establishment of a committee to monitor the implementation of the joint road map is evidence of that. It is essential that women participate in the process. The holding of the first trial of the Special Criminal Court is also an important step in that regard.

This progress is essential. Peace is in the hands of the people of the Central African Republic. We encourage the countries of the region, with the support of the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to continue their support for this encouraging momentum.



However, the peace process cannot move forward without respect for human rights and democracy. The information in the Secretary-General's report on the growing number of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Central African forces is disturbing. It shows, as if it were necessary, that the installation of the Wagner Group's mercenaries has contributed to a widespread practice of violence. We cannot tolerate the crimes committed by the Wagner Group's mercenaries, which are widely documented, some of which could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Respect for international humanitarian and human rights law is an essential condition for MINUSCA's continued operational support to the Central African forces. The Security Council will pay close attention to that.

France invites the Central African decision-makers to firmly commit themselves to democracy, respect for constitutional order, the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press. We are concerned about the growing polarization in the country caused by the draft revision of the Constitution, the drafting of which continues despite the recent decision of the Constitutional Court and the increasing incitement to violence and hate speech.

France will soon submit a draft resolution that would renew MINUSCA's mandate and maintain the reinforced troop ceiling.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile. MINUSCA needs the unanimous support of the Security Council to continue its action against the armed groups together with Central African forces and in support of the peace process. We hope to be able to count on the support of all Council members.

**Mr. Spasse** (Albania): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her insights and welcome the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic, as well as the presence of the representative of Rwanda.

In our effort to revitalize the peace process and address the volatile security situation in Central Africa, I would like to share the following five points.

First, Albania is encouraged by the Government's efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Political

Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic through the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region joint road map and with defined time frames. We welcome the follow-up meetings for measuring progress, as agreed during the strategic review meeting held on 4 June in Bangui, as well as the meetings with representatives of armed groups to chart a course for their dissolution. However, we believe the peace process should be more inclusive and open to other social groups, mainly women, whose current participation is very limited.

Secondly, we are very concerned about the security situation, which shows an increase in breaches of the Political Agreement, with the consequent deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. Albania strongly condemns the continued human rights violations and abuses, including conflicting-related sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups, national forces and Wagner Group mercenaries during their operations, as well the recruitment and use as proxies of demobilized fighters, which have led to reprisals against the population and the targeting of communities. Those practices must stop. They run the risk of reversing the progress made in the framework of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

Thirdly, Albania also echoes the call of the Secretary-General for the ongoing support of development and financial partners in order to sustain reintegration initiatives. That provides the fundamental basis for long-term reconciliation and peace efforts, along with the continued efforts to advance justice for victims of serious crimes through the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission.

Fourthly, the use of explosives by armed groups is equally deplorable, posing life-threatening risks to civilians, humanitarian partners and peacekeepers, who provide life-saving assistance. Albania expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the three fallen peacekeepers who paid the ultimate price on 3 October, as well as to Bangladesh. We expect the Government to honour its commitment by thoroughly investigating the tragic event and subsequently prosecuting those involved in it.

That unacceptable attack comes at a moment when progress is being made in tackling the targeted disinformation campaigns against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in

the Central African Republic and in reducing violations of the status-of-forces agreement. That agreement should be fully respected, and the unrestrained movement of the Mission's supply chain and personnel must be guaranteed.

Lastly, Albania applauds the completion of the electoral mapping exercise. We expect the swift adoption of the legislation critical for local elections. Nevertheless, we stress our discontent about the limitations of democratic space and freedom of expression within the constitutional reform debate. We reiterate the need for every effort to be focused on finding solutions to the real problems affecting people's daily lives, including the rise of commodity prices and the persistent fuel shortages.

**Ms. Moran** (Ireland): I want to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic and the representative of Rwanda to this meeting. We look forward to hearing from them.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing, which was very helpful. I want to acknowledge the progress that has taken place under her leadership. She has our full support. Ireland fully supports the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and its work.

I would also like to extend Ireland's sincere condolences to the families of the peacekeepers who lost their lives on 3 October after a MINUSCA patrol hit an ordnance device. Explosive ordnance is a worrying threat in the Central African Republic, affecting civilian lives frequently. The work of MINUSCA and the national defence and security forces in countering that threat is vital.

We welcome progress in the political situation, including the timeline to accelerate the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The engagement of the Government with representatives of armed groups is vital. We encourage all parties to continue to communicate. We appeal to all signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic to commit fully to the agreement.

The renewed impetus towards the peace process shown by the Government is encouraging. Ireland knows from experience that this work can be challenging, but it

is vital. Regional partners such as Angola, Rwanda, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States have been and will continue to be invaluable in supporting the peace process.

Progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is encouraging. It is important that this process take place in accordance with the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. The recruitment by national defence forces and other security personnel of demobilized former members of armed groups as proxies is extremely worrisome and must cease. The use of proxies inflames intercommunity tensions and risks reversing hard-won gains. The actions of mercenaries, including the Wagner Group, in the Central African Republic is of deep concern.

We welcome the Government's commitment to hold elections in 2023, separate from any potential constitutional referendum. Those elections must be free and fair, with women engaged at every stage — as voters, as candidates and as elected officials.

The humanitarian situation is of deep concern and has been exacerbated by violence and the challenging economic situation. The levels of protection and humanitarian needs are staggering. Humanitarian personnel are saving the lives of Central African civilians, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances, and they must never be the targets of violence.

We are deeply concerned regarding the deteriorating human rights situation in the country. We note that armed groups have responsibility for 44 per cent of documented abuses. However, State agents were responsible for 45 per cent of documented violations and abuses during the reporting period. Any and all violations of human rights by State agents is unacceptable. Civilians must be able to trust the State forces.

We welcome the investigations and the commencement of war crimes and crimes against humanity trials by the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic. The recent commencement of the trial of Mahamat Said Abdel Kani, a former Séléka commander, at the International Criminal Court should also serve as a reminder to all parties that severe crimes must not go unpunished.

We are concerned about further allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeepers in the Central African Republic. We welcome the recent visit of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and encourage continued efforts to improve prevention and to hold perpetrators accountable.

We welcome the decrease in violations of the status-of-forces agreement. However, they remain a concern. Challenges to the freedom of movement of the Mission, including continued restrictions on night flights, make it difficult for MINUSCA to fulfil its mandate. I echo the Secretary-General in urging the Government to uphold its commitment to taking appropriate measures to prevent status-of-forces violations.

I would once again like to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Mission for their excellent work in the Central African Republic.

**Mr. Geng Shuang** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her briefing. I welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic and the representative of Rwanda at this meeting.

Currently, the political and security situation in Central Africa is generally improving, and the peace process is moving ahead. At the same time, there still remain many difficulties and challenges. The international community should increase its support in the following areas.

First, we should accelerate the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The Government of the Central African Republic has been actively implementing the outcomes of the republican dialogue, demonstrating a positive attitude in the dialogue with armed groups, promoting comprehensive disarmament and striving to revitalize the peace process. China welcomes that.

We appreciate the positive role played by Rwanda, Angola and other countries of the region, and we support the efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to strengthen communication and coordination with the Government of the Central African Republic and jointly implement the peace agreement road map in the light of the priorities and needs of the country. In providing assistance to the Central African Republic peace process, the international community

should respect the sovereignty and ownership of the Central African Republic and support its people in independently choosing a development path that suits their national conditions.

Secondly, we should strengthen security capacity-building. In recent years, with the active deployment of security forces by the Central African Government, the security situation throughout the country has continued to improve and the scope of the activities of armed groups has continued to shrink. Facts have shown that only by establishing a professional, efficient and strong security sector can we effectively deal with the security threats. President Touadera recently issued a national security policy and security sector reform strategy. International partners and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should provide constructive support for the implementation of that policy and strategy, help the country to strengthen its capacity to independently maintain stability and respect its right to engage in security cooperation. Security Council sanctions still have an impact on the security capabilities of the Central African Republic and should therefore be completely lifted.

Thirdly, we should enhance efforts to build peace. The Central African Republic faces financial constraints, energy and food shortages and a grave economic and livelihood situation. Sixty per cent of the country's population needs humanitarian assistance. Local elections and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process also require considerable financial resources. The current peace in the country is hard-won, and the support of the international community cannot diminish. The relevant countries and international organizations should resume aid as soon as possible to help the Central African Republic address its economic and humanitarian difficulties. The international community should increase investment in the development of the Central African Republic, help enhance its endogenous development momentum, turn resource advantages into development benefits and break the vicious cycle of poverty-induced chaos and chaos-induced relapse into poverty.

Under the leadership of Special Representative Rugwabiza, MINUSCA has strengthened communication and coordination with the Government of the Central African Republic and proactively responded to security threats. The implementation of the status-of-forces agreement has continued to improve,



and the Mission has made progress in discharging its duties. The relevant practices are worth replicating elsewhere. China will continue to support the work of the Mission and the Special Representative, and we hope that they will play a greater role in promoting the peace process in the Central African Republic.

**Mr. Cisneros Chávez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too thank Special Representative Valentine Rugwabiza for her briefing. I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic and the representative of Rwanda.

Mexico welcomes the progress made in recent months towards the revitalization of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. At the same time, we express our support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and its important work. We deeply regret the recent deaths of three Bangladeshi peacekeepers. I will focus my statement on three issues.

First, with regard to the peace process, we acknowledge the work of the Central African authorities to establish the priorities, the timetable and the follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the Luanda joint road map. We urge them to open up more space for women's participation in those efforts.

We reiterate that justice is essential to national reconciliation. The work of the Special Criminal Court and the International Criminal Court in that area is encouraging. Mexico echoes the call for the mandate of the Special Criminal Court to be renewed. At the same time, we call on the authorities to expedite the full operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission.

Secondly, the activities of armed groups remains the main threat to the stability of the country and is a risk for the whole region. We therefore strongly condemn the attacks against civilians, who are the main victims of those groups.

We recognize the importance of the agreement reached for the disbandment of 11 armed groups signatories to the Political Agreement. We urge regional actors, which were instrumental in bringing about that new dynamic, to exert their influence over the remaining armed groups in order to achieve their permanent demobilization. As the Special Representative pointed out, members of those groups need to be provided with

the right conditions for their peaceful and sustainable reintegration in order to prevent them from taking up arms again.

Armed groups are the primary reason for the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation. It is simply unacceptable that, in a country with the wealth of natural resources that the Central African Republic has, more than 60 per cent of the country's population is in need of humanitarian assistance. International solidarity is crucial to addressing that grave situation, but only peace will provide a comprehensive solution to that problem.

Furthermore, we reiterate our call to neighbouring countries and regional organizations to step up the fight against illicit flows of arms, which fuel the conflict and are used in attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and national security forces. In that regard, we welcome the marking and weapons collection campaign of the National Commission to Combat the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The support of United Nations agencies is important for that campaign to achieve its objectives.

Thirdly, Mexico calls on the national authorities to demonstrate their leadership in order to address the many pending challenges and advance towards a lasting peace. We urge them to conduct themselves responsibly in the current delicate situation so that Government action can build consensus and hope among the population. Initiatives that foster political polarization should be avoided at all costs because that will only exacerbate instability.

We recognize that the national authorities bear the primary responsibility for the protection of the civilian population. We therefore urge them to respect and guarantee the human rights of Central Africans and to investigate and prosecute all cases of human rights abuses and violations. MINUSCA can support the authorities in that task.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the 2023 local elections will be a unique opportunity to strengthen governance and move towards the political inclusion of all components of Central African society. We are confident that the political actors will cooperate to make the elections an exemplary exercise that will pave the way for a prosperous and peaceful future after almost 10 years of armed conflict.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her efforts at the head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which have created more favourable conditions in the Mission's dialogue with the Government. They have also resulted in an improved, more proactive approach to tackling issues on the ground, especially in the area of security. We believe that renewed emphasis on strategic communications could contribute further to that improving trend. My delegation welcomes Her Excellency Ms. Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans abroad of the Central African Republic, to today's meeting. We also welcome the participation of the delegation of Rwanda.

The developments we have seen are particularly welcome at a time when challenging circumstances persist. The human cost of restoring security and ensuring State control over the territory of the Central African Republic continues to increase and spares neither the local population nor United Nations peacekeepers. Brazil would like to once again take this opportunity to pay tribute to all victims of the attacks that occurred near Kouï on 3 October. Despite the difficulties in the security and the humanitarian fields caused by the current shortage of fuel, we must keep up with the work to bring the fighting to an end. The first and most effective measure in that direction is to expedite the follow-up process to the republican dialogue. We commend the authorities of the Central African Republic for setting up a committee to implement the dialogue's recommendations and encourage the swift completion of its work. In addition, Brazil echoes the reiterated calls of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission for ensuring that the peace process is inclusive. If we are to find a durable solution it will be essential to bring all stakeholders to the table, including opposition parties and women.

Another point we want to underscore is the key role played by the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We encourage the Central African authorities to persevere in their work in that area. We hope that the collaboration between the Government and MINUSCA to put in place violence reduction programmes in local

communities will continue to have a positive impact on the DDR efforts generally. My delegation believes that it is equally important to strengthen the rule of law, especially in the light of the various reports on human rights and international humanitarian law violations that are committed in the context of ongoing clashes between the Forces armées centrafricaines and armed groups, including the recruitment of child soldiers. In that regard, we would like to show support for the efforts of the local authorities since April to deliver justice, in particular through the work of the Special Criminal Court, and for the action by MINUSCA to assist in the operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparations and Reconciliation Commission.

My last point concerns the contribution of regional organizations to the peace process in the Central African Republic. We reiterate our full support for the renewed engagement of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region in favour of the implementation of the September 2021 road map. We hope that the monitoring mechanisms led by Angola and Rwanda will be successful in enabling further international support to the implementation of the peace agreement. Brazil remains committed to collaborating with other Council members to support the fulfilment of MINUSCA's mandate.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): First let me welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic and the representative of Rwanda. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her briefing, which was quite comprehensive. Her report highlights the essential role the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) plays in protecting civilians and providing stability in the Central African Republic.

I would also like to convey the deep appreciation of the United States to the Mission's leadership, its peacekeepers and the troop- and police-contributing countries for the sacrifices they make each and every day in pursuit of peace in the Central African Republic. Tragically, three Bangladeshi peacekeepers made the ultimate sacrifice earlier this month. They were killed by an explosive device while on patrol. While we do not yet know who is responsible for laying the device that took their lives and gravely wounded another, their deaths were even more tragic because evacuation options were limited by the Central African authorities' restrictions on the Mission's evacuation procedures.

If MINUSCA had been able to swiftly evacuate the peacekeepers by air, rather than by a nine-hour journey overland, they might still be with us today. In that regard, the United States joins calls for a rigorous investigation that identifies and brings to justice those responsible. We also call on the Government of the Central African Republic to adhere to the status of forces agreement and lift its restrictions on MINUSCA's movement. As we approach MINUSCA's mandate renewal, we must ensure that it has all the tools necessary to protect the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

The flow of illicit arms negatively affects regional security as well as the safety and security of civilians and peacekeepers. As this tragic incident demonstrates, the current sanctions measures will remain critical until the Central African Republic and the States of the region can address cross-border smuggling and diversions to armed groups. We are also concerned about reports from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic that anti-personnel landmines continue to be found in the country. We urge all actors to immediately halt the use of landmines, especially as part of strategies to control illicit mining.

Despite those challenges, MINUSCA's robust and proactive posture protects civilians, helps push armed groups to disarm and return to the peace process, and safeguards communities, allowing displaced civilians to return home. We commend the enhanced cooperation between the Mission and the Central African armed forces. Joint operations are a way to further professionalize the Central African security forces and support a durable restoration of State authority.

With that said, the military alone cannot bring peace to the Central African Republic. A stable, prosperous State can emerge only through an inclusive political dialogue, the full implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the expansion of State authority and justice for victims. Similarly, we stress the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in those processes. Integrating women, youth and minority voices into all levels of decision-making ensures that peace processes are effective and sustainable.

We are encouraged by the Central African Republic's initiative to advance the peace process, specifically through the leadership of Prime Minister Moloua, but the Central African Republic cannot do

it alone. Constructive engagement by partners lends further support to the peace process and overall regional stability. Unfortunately, some entities continue to destabilize and exploit the Central African Republic. The Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, whose forces are referred to as "other security personnel" in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/762), perpetrated numerous incidents of human rights abuses during the reporting period, often in the presence of national defence forces. Independent investigations continue to corroborate those reports and note that Wagner Group forces are rearming ex-combatants, creating proxy militias outside the Government's authority and stealing the country's mineral wealth. Those egregious activities exacerbate violence, restrict the development of the Central African Republic and undermine regional stability. The Central African people deserve better.

The United States remains a steadfast partner of MINUSCA and looks forward to working with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza, the Central African people and Government and the members of the Council in order to bring peace to the Central African Republic.

**Mrs. Alhefeiti** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Ms. Rugwabiza for her valuable and detailed briefing and welcome the participation of Her Excellency Sylvie Valérie Baïpo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic, and of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda in today's meeting.

The Central African Republic is facing many issues that require the sustained attention of the Security Council. At a time when the country is preparing to hold local elections, it is facing constant armed attacks and experiencing damage caused by floods and the exacerbation of difficult humanitarian and economic situations. In the context of the upcoming discussions on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which remains critical to the country's security, we believe it is important to take all those issues into account. We hope the Council will send a clear message to the people of the Central African Republic: that we will stay by their side and support them in their plight and in their quest for achieving security and stability.

We all agree that the primary goal is to protect innocent civilians. Accordingly, we regret the continued activities of armed groups that target civilians and affect women and children in particular. Armed groups also seek to spread hate speech among communities, which in turn fuels intercommunal violence, especially in rural and remote areas. As such, it is important to work towards de-escalation and address those challenges in a sustainable manner, through ceasefire and continued dialogue between the Government and armed groups. We are aware that it is not an easy endeavour, but it remains essential. Moreover, building on the gains made thus far in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration also remains key to preventing the re-recruitment of ex-combatants. We appreciate the good offices of MINUSCA in supporting the efforts made in that regard.

We hope that the presidential endorsement of the new national security policy and the draft national security sector reform strategy will contribute to strengthening the country's security capabilities. We emphasize the importance of strengthening regional and international support for the Central African Republic, especially in building its institutions and extending its authority throughout the country.

On the political front, and as the relevant stakeholders in the Central African Republic seek to reach consensus on the necessary political and security arrangements, it is important for that endeavour to remain nationally led and owned, especially as the country prepares for local elections. We reaffirm that the commitment to revitalizing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic through the Luanda road map remains essential for the advancement of the political process. That also requires continued regional and international support to the country in its quest to ensure security and stability for its people. We must also emphasize here the need to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the relevant discussions. That also requires providing protection for women in order to enable them to play their role in various areas.

In conclusion, we appreciate the efforts of the peacekeeping forces and their courage in the face of the risks to which they are subjected. The United Arab Emirates regrets the continued targeting of peacekeepers and humanitarian actors, which we continue to condemn in Council meetings. Addressing those attacks requires taking measures to protect them

so that they can carry out their vital role, especially in terms of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need. We reaffirm our support for the tireless efforts of the Special Representative and the work she is doing with her team in support of the Central African Republic.

**Ms. Juul (Norway):** I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her very valuable insights and welcome the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to today's meeting.

Let me turn directly to the tragic loss of three brave peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) earlier this month. Their names were Jasim, Sharif and Jahangir, and they were 31, 26 and 26 years old, respectively. They left dependants and family behind. We pay our deepest respects to the fallen and convey our heartfelt condolences to their loved ones.

In concert with the relevant and major troop-contributing country, Bangladesh, we want to share two recommendations.

First, there must be accountability. The Central African Republic authorities and MINUSCA must coordinate their investigations as closely as possible, so that the perpetrators can be apprehended without delay and charges can be pressed against them. In the interest of the credibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the investigation, MINUSCA must remain closely involved during the entire process.

Secondly, the existing operating procedure for evacuation should be re-evaluated and made more effective and prompt. The missions must be provided with adequate resources and capabilities to be able to always ensure swift evacuation in case of attacks and injuries to peacekeepers.

Turning now to the political situation, we recognize some positive progress. The strategic review meeting of the political process, held on 4 June, was an encouraging step. And as the Central African Republic continues to build on that and prepare for its first local elections in 34 years, inclusivity should be high on the agenda. We know that including women, civil society, and other groups in decision-making is a master key to lasting, peaceful solutions — and successful elections. Both in



daily life and during the elections, it will be important for the Government and MINUSCA to ensure that all groups are heard and that no one feels threatened.

We are worried about the proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence, as well as the use of manipulation, misinformation and disinformation in traditional media and on social networks. It is especially concerning that armed groups are threatening women to intimidate and dissuade them from exercising their right to participate in the electoral process. That could further erode trust and hinder the reconciliation process.

We remain concerned about the security situation in the Central African Republic. Over the past years, we have seen the addition of elements of the Wagner Group to the security space. It is clear that the use of unreliable mercenaries cannot bring lasting peace and security. The only realistic solution is a negotiated peace through inclusive dialogue, with all affected parties. We have also seen a worsening human rights situation, including conflict-related sexual violence. The number of reported violations of international humanitarian law has also increased — and that must stop. We are also worried about the continuing grave violations and abuses of international law against children. We urge all the parties to the conflict to release all children from within their ranks.

On the positive side, we note the new national action plan to combat trafficking in children, which must be swiftly implemented with the support of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her leadership and her efforts to build a trust-based relationship between MINUSCA and the host Government. We hope it can help achieve progress in all the areas mentioned, which will also be central to MINUSCA's upcoming mandate renewal. She can count on our support.

**Ms. Jacobs** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her briefing, and I also welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic and the representative of Rwanda in this meeting. I would like to make three points in response to what we have heard today.

First, the United Kingdom welcomes the progress made on the political track, including steps to implement

the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and preparations to hold local elections in January 2023. We strongly encourage the Central African Republic authorities, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), to build on political progress and ensure meaningful engagement with civil society, including women.

Secondly, freedom of movement is fundamental to MINUSCA's work. We welcome the recent reduction in the number of violations of the status of forces agreement, and, more widely, the positive relationship that the Special Representative has established with the Central African Republic authorities. We very much hope that trend will continue. We also encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to work in partnership with the United Nations Mine Action Service to tackle landmines and improvised explosive devices with more urgency. Explosive devices are a grave threat to civilian populations and their access to humanitarian assistance, as well as to the safety and security of peacekeepers. I join others in expressing deep concern about the attack on 3 October in which three Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed and one injured, and offer sincere condolences to their families and to Bangladesh.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom is alarmed by the dramatic increase in the number of human rights violations and abuses reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/762). The violence in the Central African Republic, including conflict-related sexual violence, continues to take a distressing toll on the population. It compounds an already acute humanitarian situation and risks undermining progress on reconciliation. The targeting of civilians, not only by armed groups but also by national forces and the Russian mercenary Wagner Group, continue to play a destabilizing role in the country and will not help long-term peace, as others today have also emphasized. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic to conduct full and timely investigations into allegations of human rights violations and abuses to ensure that all perpetrators are held accountable.

Finally, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend MINUSCA's mandate. It is vital that the Security Council support MINUSCA's crucial efforts to help the Government of the Central African Republic to build lasting peace. The Special

Representative of the Secretary-General and her team have our full support.

**Mr. Raguttahalli** (India): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her update on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the recent developments in the country. I welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic at today's meeting, as well as that of the Permanent Representative of Rwanda.

I would like to begin by expressing condolences to the families of the three peacekeepers from Bangladesh who lost their lives earlier this month. We strongly condemn the attack. We also hope for the swift recovery of the injured peacekeeper and other injured civilians. We are deeply concerned about the use of explosive ordnance targeting peacekeepers and we look forward to an update following investigations into the incident.

The overall political developments in the Central African Republic are indicative of a move towards stability. The national authorities have adopted a timeline of priority activities to accelerate the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic through the joint road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The Government has demonstrated political will by continuing to engage with the representatives of armed groups. The larger region, through regular monitoring of the joint road map, continues to play an important role by providing the necessary support, which must continue.

We welcome the establishment of a committee to follow up on the recommendations of the republican dialogue and offer strategic guidance to the presidency. We reiterate the significance of that process and underline the importance of making it as inclusive as possible. We also commend the increase in the deployment of public officials throughout the prefectures and efforts to gradually extend State authority. We welcome President Touadera's endorsement of a new national security policy and a national strategy for security-sector reform emphasizing governance, accountability and the coordination of actors in the security sector.

We commend the steady progress made towards the holding of local elections with the conclusion of the electoral mapping by the National Electoral Authority of the Central African Republic. In line with the commitment expressed by the Government to holding

local elections in 2023, it will be important to ensure that the necessary legislation is passed in a timely way to enable other formalities to follow. We underline the importance of the international community's support for those efforts and the need to provide the necessary support for the elections to be held as planned.

Despite the progress being made, the security situation remains volatile. Armed groups maintain their relentless attacks on civilians, national forces and MINUSCA peacekeepers. They continue to dominate mining sites and to tax the civilian population illegally. Security violations of the peace agreement by armed groups have again increased in the past four months, and we unequivocally condemn those violations and attacks. It is important to be vigilant and ensure support for the Government so that the political gains made are not undermined by armed groups' unlawful activities. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme must see further success, for which sustained financial and developmental support by partners will be necessary.

We are concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, which has been aggravated by violence, rising commodity prices, fuel shortages and recent severe flooding. The displaced communities, including those taking refuge in neighbouring countries, continue to suffer. We urge for the scaling up of humanitarian response efforts to expeditiously meet the needs of those who are displaced and vulnerable.

The implementation of the status of forces agreement needs continued attention, particularly in relation to the movement of peacekeepers. Both the Mission leadership and the Government should take further steps to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. We also call for swift action on the part of all stakeholders for the expeditious implementation of the provisions of resolution 2589 (2021) in order to bring the culprits to justice and establish accountability for crimes against United Nations peacekeepers. In that regard, we have taken note of the 28 ongoing investigations by the national judicial authorities into attacks on peacekeepers.

In conclusion, the Central African Republic needs our collective attention as it navigates a tenuous journey in its pursuit of peace. The worsening economic and fiscal situation, compounded by the global rise in prices and shortages of essential goods, is bound to

make that task more challenging in the days to come. For its part, India will continue to support the Central African Republic and its people in their quest for peace, stability and economic development.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to start by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her briefing. We also welcome the participation in today's meeting of Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, and the Permanent Representative of Rwanda.

The situation in the Central African Republic, according to our assessments, is relatively stable and is generally under the Government's control. The country is working to consolidate the State presence, strengthen administrative structures, continue security-sector reform, implement the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programme for former combatants, develop the judicial system and prepare for local elections.

Meanwhile, in some parts of the country, Government forces are still being confronted by a number of illegal armed groups. We are convinced that the unnecessary bloodshed must stop and the militant leaders must reject violent methods of struggle and begin a full-fledged dialogue with Bangui, because there is no alternative to a political and diplomatic settlement in the Central African Republic.

We continue to view the full implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic — the Khartoum agreement — and the Luanda road map as the basis for achieving stability. We must stress that, despite everything, the Central African authorities are ready for an inclusive dialogue to overcome the security issues, and the September meeting in the capital of the Central African Republic was an important confirmation of that.

We also note that the coordination mechanism, launched on the initiative of the Central African Republic, continues its work together with the United Nations. That platform enables the monitoring of progress on the political track and the coordination of the efforts of Bangui and the international community.

We welcome the active involvement of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

and the Economic Community of Central African States in promoting a political settlement and the important role played by the African Union.

We welcome the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). MINUSCA is an important factor in ensuring security in the country and a key element in countering armed groups and protecting civilians.

We are convinced that full implementation of the mandate of the peacekeeping Mission is possible only if there is a trusting dialogue on and mutual understanding of the deployment with the authorities of the country.

We thank the military personnel of the troop-contributing countries, who risk their lives on a daily basis in discharging their duties. We also extend our condolences to the families and loved ones of the Bangladeshi peacekeepers who lost their lives on 3 October and to the Government of that country.

Long-term stabilization and the advancement of the political process are impossible without providing support to the Central African Republic to enhance the fighting capacity of the armed forces and law enforcement. They bear the primary responsibility for defending and protecting their country and its civilians. We support and assist Bangui in that area.

We note that there is a need for further modifications of the sanctions regime applicable to the Central African Republic. We believe that the arms embargo should be fully lifted. African representatives — both the three African members of the Security Council and the African Union, as well as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region — are in favour of that. The Central Africans themselves have repeatedly spoken about that.

In conclusion, we would like to comment once again on the statements made today by some colleagues regarding the cooperation between Russia and Central Africa.

Our position on that issue is well known to all. We have voiced it on many occasions during Security Council meetings. Military instructors were sent to work in that country at the request of the Government of the Central African Republic, in accordance with international law and with the knowledge of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic.

That cooperation is providing significant results in training the country's armed forces and stabilizing the situation in the country.

As for States' choice of partners in a given area, that is the sovereign prerogative of national authorities, as is the investigation of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

As a diplomat, I understand the national interests of France in Africa and the emotions that push its representatives to make statements similar to what we heard today. But I do not understand what France is expecting to obtain by constantly repeating the same disinformation, which sounds especially cynical given France's historic involvement in the region and the accusations of crimes levied against the French military, in particular in the Central African Republic. Africans know and remember that very well.

I can say only one thing with certainty. While such statements are endorsed by well-known supporters in the Security Council, they do not help stabilize the situation in the Central African Republic in any way.

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

I welcome at this meeting today the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic, Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon. I also welcome to this meeting the Permanent Representative of Rwanda. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her enlightening briefing.

I must recall that I am making this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Kenya, Ghana and my own country, Gabon.

We would first like to express our sincere condolences to the Government of Bangladesh and to the families of the three peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) following their deaths on 3 October. We also wish a speedy recovery to the wounded.

We condemn all attacks against MINUSCA personnel, denounce the increasing use of explosive devices in the Central African Republic by armed

groups and recall that attacks on United Nations peacekeepers may constitute war crimes. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA to conduct investigations and ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are brought to justice.

The Central African Republic has made enormous progress and is resolutely continuing its march towards the lasting stabilization of the country. The support of the international community remains crucial, given the political, security and humanitarian challenges that stand in its way.

At the political level, we welcome the strategic review meeting held last June, which made it possible to define the modalities and timeline for the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic through the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region's joint road map. The participation of national and international partners gave greater legitimacy to its work.

The A3 also welcomes the meetings of the coordination body for the follow-up of the process for mutualizing the Luanda joint road map and the Political Agreement, which were held in September and October in Bangui. That regular monitoring of the implementation of the peace agreement demonstrates the commitment of the Central African authorities to resolving the political crisis in the country.

We underscore the clear will to involve the greatest number of participants — political actors, civil society, men, women, young people and signatory armed groups — in the effective implementation of the peace agreement in order to sustain the peace efforts initiated by the Government and supported by the international community.

In that regard, the A3 welcomes the active role of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in revitalizing the peace process in the Central African Republic.

We are convinced that military action alone will not be sufficient to pull the country out of crisis. The existence of a political space for dialogue is essential for the establishment of lasting peace. We welcome the establishment of the follow-up committee for the recommendations resulting from the republican dialogue and the Bangui Forum. That body, which plays a major role in the implementation of those



recommendations, is undoubtedly helping to establish a climate of trust among all stakeholders.

We note with interest the progress in the area of human rights, in particular the conduct of criminal hearings in the Bangui and Bouar Courts of Appeal and the Special Criminal Court. We also welcome MINUSCA's support for the Commission for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation.

We take note of the Constitutional Court's decision on 23 September to invalidate the decrees establishing the committee responsible for drafting a new constitution for the Central African Republic and those ratifying the appointment of the members of the committee. We welcome the Government's decision to respect those decisions.

The completion of the electoral mapping exercise and the review of the integrated security plan for the upcoming local elections underscore the clear commitment of the authorities of the Central African Republic to ensuring credible elections. Nevertheless, the substantial financial and technical support of the international community remains a major factor in the holding of a peaceful, transparent and democratic electoral process.

On the security front, the A3 encourages the authorities of the Central African Republic to continue its efforts to combat armed groups. The commitment and gains on the ground made by the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) are commendable. However, it is essential that the support of the international community to restore State authority throughout the country be accompanied by the implementation of quick-impact community-development projects capable of improving the living conditions of the population and breaking the cycle of dependency.

As we noted at the beginning of our remarks, armed groups continue to undermine the security of the people of the Central African Republic by sowing chaos, regularly attacking civilians and, recently, using explosive devices, particularly in the centre and west of the country. We salute the work of MINUSCA, whose concrete action is evident to the population. MINUSCA is undeniably contributing to the protection of civilians and to the stabilization of the country, in particular through its robust posture and its rapid intervention forces. We remain convinced of the need to strengthen MINUSCA's operational capacity with more human resources and equipment commensurate with the new

threats on the ground. We also note that training and capacity-building activities for the defence and security forces need to be strengthened, particularly in the area of demining.

As long as the supply of natural resources meets the demand of buyers, the blood of the innocent people of the Central African Republic will continue to flow. It is time to put an end to that cycle of violence and to write a new page in the country's history. Ensuring certification and the traceability of minerals and securing borders are prerequisites in the fight against armed groups. The Central African Republic cannot meet those challenges without the support of its partners. We particularly encourage cooperation between the Central African Republic and its neighbours to counter illicit cross-border networks.

Civilians are the primary victims of the illicit trafficking in minerals in the Central African Republic, whereas they should be the primary beneficiaries. It is essential to eliminate sources of financing for armed groups that profit from the illicit trafficking in natural resources in the Central African Republic. Addressing their financing is critical, as reiterated at the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government, held in Malabo in May.

We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programme — the surrender of more than 4,500 of the target 7,000 combatants. We call on all rebel groups to join the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic unconditionally and to take part in the DDRR programme. Peace in the Central African Republic requires continued financial support from the international community for the DDRR process. It is crucial that the Government authorities have the financial means to offer alternatives to ex-combatants.

We commend the efforts of the Security Council that have led to a significant lifting of the arms embargo. We welcome the many measures taken by the Central African Government to strengthen its arms- and ammunition-management system in a particularly difficult economic context. We particularly welcome the launch, on 29 July, of a weapons-marking and awareness campaign by the National Commission to Combat the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

It is up to all of us to support the FACA, because, as we know, MINUSCA has an ad hoc mandate and will eventually withdraw from the country. The FACA should have the human, material and technical capacities to ensure the sovereign mission of securing the territory and protecting the population. The renewal of MINUSCA's mandate must be considered in the light of the changing security context and the legitimate expectations of the Government authorities.

The humanitarian crisis is becoming more complex due to the effects of climate change, attacks by armed groups and the rise of violent extremism. That combination of factors fuels the poverty and inequality inherent in the recurring socioeconomic crises in the Central African Republic. Since June 2022, floods in the Central African Republic have affected more than 85,000 people, destroying infrastructure and crops and displacing thousands. We call on the international community to continue to support the funding of the humanitarian response plan in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Central African Republic and reiterate our support to Special Representative Rugwabiza and her team for their tireless efforts on the ground.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

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

**Ms. Baïpo Temon** (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by extending my warm greetings. That is in response to those extended to me by the participants in this meeting. I would like to thank them for their statements, for the time they have devoted to my country, for their encouragement and for the expression of their justified and unjustified concerns.

I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council in this month of October and to thank you for the statement you delivered on behalf of the African countries on the Council, commonly known as the A3, but also to thank you for having convened, during your presidency, debates on important issues for Africa, in particular on the subject of armed groups and their financing.

We are meeting today in the mythical Chamber of the Security Council, where the great decisions of the world on issues of peace and security are taken — a Chamber that has become very familiar to the Central African Republic as it has found itself at the centre of discussions because of its chronic instability, a Chamber where my country is either appreciated or depreciated, depending on its prospects.

We are meeting today to discuss the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2022/762). Before sharing with the Council my country's position on this report, I would like first to take this opportunity to salute the tireless efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres for the sake of global peace, and in particular the efforts made to restore peace in the Central African Republic.

I would also like, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, to express my deepest condolences to the people and the families of the Bangladeshi Blue Helmets who lost their lives recently.

I would also like to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's comprehensive briefing and overview. I encourage her to continue her task to realize the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to bring safety to the people by stepping up efforts to create an environment conducive, as she said, to the work of the Central African authorities and once and for all destroy the lethal capacities of the forces of evil.

We are pleased to note from the report that the efforts of the Central African Government are gradually beginning to bear fruit. That was rightly pointed out. The political process for peace in the Central African Republic remains a priority for the Government. The subregional initiative of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Luanda road map, adopted on 16 September 2021, has revitalized the political process for peace in the Central African Republic, endorsed in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in February 2019. Attempts by armed groups to destabilize the country were thwarted by the acceleration of the political process for peace in the Central African, particularly by the setting out of a common timetable of actions to be carried out for each component of the political process, such as the engagement of armed

groups, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, security sector reform, the securing of borders and the restoration of State authority throughout the country. There were also the meeting with representatives of armed groups, who acted on the urgent need to move towards disbanding armed groups that had made the clear choice to put down their weapons and thereby embrace peace; the establishment of a committee to follow up on the recommendations of the republican dialogue; respect for democratic principles that enable the Republic's institutions to act freely; and the ongoing efforts to hold municipal elections by 2023, for which the Central African Republic is calling, through me, for the Council's concrete support in order to hold them.

On the security front, we can note significant achievements, such as the restoration of State authority over a large part of the country, even if there are still attempts by the enemies of peace, who continue to commit atrocities and crimes. Despite all the difficulties, the Government is committed to continuing its efforts to ensure the security of its population. It is also worth noting the reduction in the number of displaced persons from 644,000 to 500,000 — a key fact that allows us to assess the population's assessment of the security situation in the country. I would also note that there has also been a reduction in disinformation campaigns. The Central African Government will continue to work on its campaigns against disinformation and hate. The Central African Government also calls on its partners to be consistent and truthful, and not give false reports to their capitals in their wish to actively contribute to damaging the image of the Central African Republic, and therefore the efforts of the Government. Denigration does not make a person great.

On the economic and financial front, the Government is not relaxing its efforts. Everything is being done to overcome the challenges that we all share, such as the current inflationary pressures due to the scarcity of basic commodities, the impact of the coronavirus disease and the shortage of fuel, which is not specific to the Central African Republic, as well as the challenges that are specific to the Central African Republic, in particular the illicit exploitation of the country's natural resources by armed groups and the controls and restrictions on financial support due to a system designed to leave the State in a situation of dependence and dishonour.

Let me now point out the inconsistencies in the report. The wealth of information in the report also lies in a magnificent balance among correct, incorrect and some unfair elements, thereby raising questions about the common objective set in 2013, when the peacekeeping operation was established. I would like to start by refuting the violations of the freedom of movement of MINUSCA troops through interference with free movement and the continued restrictions on night flights. There is no ongoing search or seizure of MINUSCA equipment. There is simply a request to respect the procedures of, and notifications to, the Central African authorities. Freedom of movement with regard to equipment and personnel must be exercised in respect of the sovereignty of the Central African Republic and the worrisome security situation in the country. Are we to understand that we have no right to respond when unauthorized equipment arrives in the Central African Republic through MINUSCA contingents? Are we to understand that we should remain mere spectators on Central African soil and that the fine phrase that it is the primary responsibility of the Central African authorities to ensure the security of its territory and its population are empty words? Are we to understand that we have to accept irregular entry routes into Central African territory and not react when weapons that are not marked as United Nations weapons are found in vehicles, and that we are not allowed to know in advance the list of countries that are being asked to provide reinforcements? Should we be happy to be surprised?

Are we also to understand that enforcing a national regulation, because of power failures at our airport, means the continued restriction of night flights, especially as the relevant services have suggested sitting down to better understand and find a possible arrangement for all stakeholders regarding the matter? Do we have to accept that in the Central African Republic everything is a matter of exemption at the whim of one party or another? How are we going to build the rule of law together if the rules have to be tailored by need and the deals of the multilateral and bilateral arenas are intertwined by design?

Just as the Central African authorities are being asked to respect the agreement on the status of MINUSCA personnel, the Central African Government is asking for its sovereignty to be respected. There is a very apt phrase from the late Nelson Mandela that says "to deny people their fundamental rights is to challenge

their very humanity". It is therefore important to be fair in the collective quest in which we are engaged by not tolerating violations. That attitude jeopardizes the efforts to strengthen the fabric of the Central African Republic.

Allow me also to respond to what was said, particularly regarding the flow of illicit arms, which the Central African Government has been condemning for months, even years. I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify the confusion surrounding the latest incident, which resulted in the deaths of three Blue Helmets from the Bangladesh contingent and one injured. That crime was caused by the placement of mines by armed groups. A vehicle on patrol hit an explosive device. The three victims were killed instantly, and the wounded person was brought back to the capital within hours of the incident, not within nine days, as was said. That is yet another incident that supports the appeal of the Government of the Central African Republic. We need to work together, putting aside the political issues surrounding the reason for the population's vulnerability — the human rights violations due to the ongoing violence by armed groups. We must also work on the funding and supply sources of armed groups. Let us not use the vulnerable situation of the Central African Republic for an unfair and discriminatory process. In paying tribute to the Blue Helmets who lost their lives on Central African soil, I would ask Council members to also pay tribute to my Central African brothers and sisters who lost their lives and who continue to fall, as well as, not to recall a sad event, the young *Lumière*, a 16-year-old girl, who, already forgotten, died due to the proven violation of a peacekeeping vehicle.

Let us work together to restore peace in the Central African Republic. Let us work together to find rapid solutions to the plight of a population that is aware of being a victim because of its geographical and strategic position and the immense wealth of its subsoil.

On the subject of violations, it is important that the voice of the Central African Republic be heard. We must get out of the pattern whereby the violations of some are tolerated and those of others are used as tools. We must absolutely avoid losing the meaning of human rights by promoting a world where some people have rights over others.

I once again call on the Security Council to consider the realities of war. It does not matter how one describes

one's executioner, whether they are terrorists, jihadists, armed groups or individuals. Jihadist, armed group or otherwise, a criminal is a criminal. Certainly, there are similarities and dissimilarities among people, but in the Central African Republic, there are human beings who aspire not to peace, because we do not believe it to be a peace that conveys dignity, but to stability — the stability that has allowed others to have conditions favourable to building their countries and to bringing peace to their populations. We too could be capable of that, if we could stop diverting our attention — the attention of an entire people — from what is essential. It is not a question of polarization or of politicizing everything. Politics is not about speaking for the people, but about putting people at the heart of our actions.

I would like to call for there being no confusion between the need for the international community to support a people in distress and the need for a mission that is consistent with the principles and values of the United Nations Charter. This meeting is an opportunity for us to thank the multilateral and bilateral partners who are assisting the Central African Republic in its plan to emerge from the crisis and recover. I again thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and encourage her to continue the efforts that have been initiated and work towards a Mission that is more adapted to the Central African context so that the peace that is so sought after at the international level is finally established, and stability in the Central African Republic is maintained.

We must use time for our benefit, because the longer the violence continues the more it becomes entrenched. Social networks have become the place for hate messaging and defamation. Council members should believe me in this: all actors in the Central African Republic are confronted with this phenomenon. Looking through one window would be biased and would only reflect a desire to corner the Government, in which case it would have to be explained to us in what capacity and for what purpose.

Violence breeds violence. This is why it is now more than ever time to fight collectively against the forces of evil, to fight against the causes of the Central African crisis. These causes are the armed groups. It is not necessary to dwell on the consequences. We do not extinguish a flame from the tip, but at its source.

Instead of dwelling on counting crimes, let us focus on being more concrete. Looking for scapegoats today



because we are unable to neutralize the real criminals known and listed in the sanctions list since 2013 will not make us more effective or achieve our goal, which is the return to permanent peace. On the contrary, it would force us to review the purpose of the mandate of the groups of experts. Indeed, we are talking about freezing assets, but it is not from the Central African Republic that those on the Sanctions Committee list are funded. We are talking about travel bans, but the leaders of the armed groups are moving around in full view of the international community. We are talking about the Kimberley Process in areas controlled by the State, but illegal exploitation does not stop in areas occupied by rebels. We are talking about a draft resolution that extends the embargo on the Central African Republic and a text that does not apply to regular forces. Council members will agree with me that seeking to fill a list based on a blatant instrumentalization of the subject of human rights to meet geostrategic and geopolitical challenges and imposing it on the Central African Republic is fraught with ambiguity. It is necessary to review the text to gain coherence, credibility and effectiveness.

As I have said, let us stop working on the consequences of a conflict that has lasted too long because of our procrastination. Let us work responsibly, in solidarity and pragmatically on the causes, ceasing to sell dreams to a people tired of so much injustice, discrimination and so many crimes for decades.

The fragile situation of the Central African Republic does not date from 2020, nor from 2021; 2020-2021 is the date of when the Central African Republic appealed for support in the bilateral framework. The fragile situation dates back to a period when the country was scarred by an aggression of its territory and population by armed groups called Séléka in 2013 and Coalition des patriotes pour le changement in 2020. For this reason, I recommend that the upcoming renewal of the mandate of MINUSCA take into account the recommendations adopted in this very forum by resolution 2086 (2013), more precisely on 21 January 2013, which states, in its paragraph 3, that the Security Council:

“[r]eiterates its commitment to continue to improve its consideration and reflection of early peacebuilding tasks in the mandates and composition of peacekeeping operations, and in this regard, stresses the necessity for the Secretariat to plan early peacebuilding tasks in phases with clear objectives...”

In resolution 2086 (2013), paragraph 4, the Security Council

“[s]tresse[d] the importance of grasping the challenges of peacebuilding from the inception of a peacekeeping mission through Integrated Strategic Assessment and Planning processes, so as to ensure coherence between, and integration of, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development to achieve an effective response to post-conflict situation from the outset...”

In resolution 2086 (2013), paragraph 7, the Council

“[r]ecognizes that the mandate of each peacekeeping mission is specific to the needs and situation of the country concerned...”

I have made the foregoing several reminders in the hope that the voice of the patient will be heard by the doctors who comprise the Security Council, so that a diagnosis may be made that does not result in further serious harm to the patient.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

**Mr. Gatete** (Rwanda): Let me start by congratulating Gabon on its presidency of the Security Council for this month of October 2022 and the way it is comprehensively covering issues on the African continent. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza, for her comprehensive briefing this morning. I thank the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic for her statement.

Rwanda pays tribute to the Bangladeshi peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving the United Nations. The lives lost are a reminder that the question of the safety and security of peacekeepers should be viewed from a mission perspective. Justice for the crimes committed against peacekeepers should be given the weight it deserves.

Rwanda commends the Government of the Central African Republic under His Excellency President Touadera and welcomes the commitment demonstrated to implement the joint road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) facilitated by Rwanda and Angola. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our partnership with the authorities of the Central African Republic to build sustainable peace. We call on partners and the

international community to support the Central African Republic to sustain and scale up the gains achieved so far.

Although challenges still exist, good progress has been recorded on several fronts, including implementing the aforementioned ICGLR joint road map, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) programme, and the extension of the State presence across the Central African Republic. In this regard, Rwanda appreciates the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in facilitating this achievement in partnership with the authorities of the Central African Republic.

As the largest troop- and police-contributor to MINUSCA and as a bilateral partner of the Central African Republic, Rwanda attests that bilateral military intervention can complement the work of the United Nations to restore peace and create a suitable environment for the peace process. Troops deployed under the bilateral arrangement between Rwanda and the Central African Republic are mandated to work in partnership with Government forces within pre-identified areas of operation and in coordination with MINUSCA forces.

We appreciate the efforts of the Government in fighting misinformation and disinformation on peacekeepers and bilateral forces. The international community must assist the Central African Republic in fighting misinformation targeting the Government, peacekeepers and bilateral partners. When misinformation spreads, the public loses trust in the Government and the United Nations Mission.

Sustainable peace can be attained only through the constructive participation of the people of the Central African Republic. We must allow them to develop their home-grown solutions organically. In that regard, peace operations and bilateral support create space and time for the peace process and the establishment of the State and democratic institutions. In that respect, we welcome the progress made thus far. Rwanda will continue to cooperate with the Government of the Central African Republic and other partners, including

regional and subregional partners, in support of Central African Republic home-grown solutions suitable to the local context.

Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) are crucial aspects necessary to ensure lasting peace. The uncontrolled proliferation of arms threatens peace and security in the Central African Republic. We are encouraged by the cooperation between the national authorities and MINUSCA in that regard, which resulted in a collection of 255 weapons, 11,738 rounds of ammunition, 12 grenades, 22 rockets and 13 rocket launchers. DDRR is a long-term undertaking that requires sustained funding. In that regard, we urge partners to support the Central African Republic in implementing the DDRR programme and the capacity-building associated with the process.

DDRR needs to be accompanied by security sector reform to transform security and justice institutions, to create a secure and stable environment and to enable economic development. Security sector reform programmes should be resourced and Central African Republic-supported to allow economic growth as the country moves in that direction.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/762) highlights positive progress in extending State authority presence in the Central African Republic. We believe that the State authorities will enhance confidence-building and essential service delivery to people, which is an integral part of the peacebuilding process.

Finally, complementarity in peace operations has proven to make a positive difference. Although under different arrangements, deployments of bilateral forces in the Central African Republic played a reinforcement role at the time of need. We hope that MINUSCA, the authorities of the Central African Republic and other partners will capitalize on that momentum to build sustainable peace.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.*