



Security Council

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Letter dated 26 October 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ireland and Mexico, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, would like to share the summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on the situation in the Central African Republic (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fergal **Mythen**

Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

(Signed) Juan Ramón **de la Fuente Ramírez**

Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

(Signed) Barbara **Woodward**

Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations



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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic, held on 26 August 2022

On 26 August 2022, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic. The Group was briefed by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Lizbeth Cullity, accompanied by colleagues from MINUSCA and the United Nations country team. The meeting concluded with an overview of key recommendations provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Questions from Council members

Members of the Security Council had several questions about women in politics and complying with the parity law. In particular, they were interested in knowing whether there had been any lessons learned from previous efforts, which had resulted in a modest increase in women's representation in the legislative assembly following the most recent elections, and whether the United Nations was ready to improve on that in upcoming opportunities, such as local elections scheduled for January 2023, constitutional and legislative reform, and the efforts to revitalize the peace process, including in follow-up to the republican dialogue. One member referred to the statement of a representative of women's organizations, who had recently told the Council that the inclusion of women in peace initiatives continued to be tokenistic, and others asked about the inclusion of young women and women from minority groups in those processes. Questions about conflict-related sexual violence were focused on the engagement of the United Nations with the Government's special adviser on the matter, with especially vulnerable categories, such as the internally displaced population, and with armed groups, including foreign security personnel. Other Council members asked about justice and impunity, on topics ranging from the status and functioning of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission to whether the increase in sexual violence would be accompanied by a higher number of convictions. Council members also wanted to know whether the stronger language on conflict-related sexual violence that had been reflected in the mandate of MINUSCA in recent years had been helpful for the mission. Several Council members asked about the economic empowerment of women and their inclusion in humanitarian efforts, including food security. One Council member argued that the most impactful intervention to protect women's rights was to support and cooperate with the Government of the Central African Republic in neutralizing the armed groups. Finally, others asked for more gender analysis in the periodic reports of the United Nations to the Council.

Main points raised in the meeting

- The women's rights situation in the Central African Republic calls for greater mobilization and concrete investments from all. The emphasis on women and peace and security in previous decisions of the Security Council has helped to

generate some progress on this front, and ensuring that women and peace and security remains a core priority of the mandate of MINUSCA is essential.

- Women remain underrepresented in the peace process, with few women in the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreement. Women were also underrepresented in the national republican dialogue held in March 2022 (only 17 per cent of 450 participants), but the coming months should offer opportunities to increase women's involvement, including through the follow-up mechanisms of the dialogue. The United Nations is supporting the Government in revitalizing the peace process, after several armed groups broke off from it and attempted a coup against the Government in early 2021.
- Women participate at higher rates in community violence reduction initiatives and conflict management initiatives supported by the Mission at the local level, whether through networks of mediators or in local peace and reconciliation committees, in which over one third of participants are women on average. The Mission ensures that fifty per cent of participants in community violence reduction projects are women.
- While the percentage of women appointed to the cabinet is 25 per cent, the percentage of women elected to parliament and local prefectures is only 12 per cent (up from 8 per cent of parliamentary seats in the previous elections). The elections revealed that severe barriers to women's participation remain. Women candidates and voters were attacked, blackmailed and threatened by active armed groups, and the United Nations set up situation rooms in 16 regions and a hotline in 14 different prefectures for women to report incidents and provided both legal and psychosocial support to women candidates.
- The United Nations will continue to lobby for the Government to sign the decree that would help to enforce the parity law, and more advocacy is needed to move this process forward. This would include the establishment of an observatory to monitor and ensure compliance with the quota on nominative and elective functions, such as by mandating that at least 35 per cent of candidates in every party list are women.
- Local elections tentatively scheduled for January 2023 will be the first in 37 years at that level. Among other initiatives, the United Nations is supporting the provision of birth certificates to tens of thousands of women and girls, undertaking awareness-raising efforts and supporting leadership training for potential women candidates. More resources are needed to revitalize the situation rooms and emergency hotline, among other measures to ensure women's participation and protection.
- Women's participation in public life is also contingent upon greater investments in their health, education and rights in general, including their sexual and reproductive autonomy and the capacity to decide over their own bodies.
- Conflict-related sexual violence remains a concern, and armed groups are the main perpetrators, although State forces are also accused of conflict-related sexual violence. Women and girls are attacked during daily livelihood activities, going to school, and in displacement camps and mining sites. The United Nations verified incidents against 379 women and 321 girls in 2021, double the number in 2020. In the first months of 2022, the United Nations has verified 163 cases so far, including 44 girls. Twenty-three per cent of these cases are attributed to State actors.
- The areas most affected by conflict-related sexual violence correspond to those where armed groups are strongest, and engagement with them is a crucial part of the mandate of the Mission. The United Nations has engaged in dialogue with

three of these armed groups, including on marriage practices within the armed group, child marriage, issues of consent, command and control, and discipline. Earlier in August, for example, the United Nations trained 120 anti-balaka elements on conflict-related sexual violence and internal discipline within the group.

- In September 2021, the Government appointed a minister counsellor as presidential advisor on conflict-related sexual violence and established, by decree in November 2021, a strategic committee dedicated to addressing that issue. In July 2022, the Government also adopted a national action plan against sexual and gender-based violence and is seeking funding of nearly \$1 million for its activities.
- There were three convictions in 2020 of perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, following the provision of technical and financial support by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. After allegations of widespread sexual violence in Bakouma during the occupation of this region by armed groups until April 2022, national authorities opened new investigations, and there are 77 cases making their way through the judicial system.
- In 2020, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) concerning the Central African Republic listed two individuals who, according to the narrative summaries of the listings, had committed acts of conflict-related sexual violence, but they were not listed under this criterion. In its report of June 2022, the sanctions committee's panel of expert announced its intention to focus its investigations on conflict-related sexual violence with a view to proposing names for the sanctions list.
- Five of the 11 commissioners of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission are women, including the President, but the Commission is not yet fully operational.
- The convergence of the restrictions imposed as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the insecurity due to the presence of armed groups has aggravated women's access to food security and livelihoods, underscoring the importance of reinforcing women's economic empowerment initiatives, including through dialogue with the World Bank. Support by the Peacebuilding Fund is seen as one of the most effective ways of ensuring women's economic inclusion in economic recovery initiatives, and participants called for greater investments in this area.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made by UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group.¹

In the upcoming negotiations on the Central African Republic in the Security Council, the Council should retain the references to women and peace and security in its resolution [2605 \(2021\)](#) and consider the following language in operational paragraphs:

- Urges the Central African Republic authorities to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, including survivors of sexual and gender-

¹ These recommendations are suggestions from United Nations participants in the meeting, such as the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, or from the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, and not recommendations of the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council members.

based violence, throughout the implementation of the recommendations of the republican dialogue, the ongoing strategic review processes of the peace process, and at all levels of the transitional justice process, including in the work of the Special Criminal Court and the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission.

- Urges the Central African Republic authorities to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the local elections, as well as to create a safe environment for women's participation, and requests MINUSCA to provide support.
- Urges the Central African Republic authorities to create a safe and enabling environment fostering women's rights and participation, and requests MINUSCA to assist, including by monitoring and reporting on threats and violence against women leaders, peacebuilders and human right defenders engaged in the political process.
- Welcomes the appointment by the President of a special adviser on conflict-related sexual violence and urges the Central African Republic authorities to integrate efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence into the implementation of the joint road map for peace and transitional justice institutions.
- Requests MINUSCA to continue to engage and consult regularly and meaningfully with women's civil society.
- Requests MINUSCA to ensure that its efforts to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons are undertaken in a gender-responsive manner in collaboration with women's civil society.
- Requests MINUSCA to strengthen its engagement with the conflict parties, especially armed groups, on international humanitarian law and women's protection against gender-based violence, and expresses support for the deployment of women's protection advisers in the Mission's field offices.
- Requests concerned United Nations entities involved in protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual and gender-based violence prevention, mitigation and response to strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, including data collection, reporting, and quality and timely response to identified cases.

In the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) concerning the Central African Republic, Council members should consider the listing of individuals under the stand-alone designation criterion related to sexual and gender-based violence and ensure the timely appointment of relevant experts to the panel of experts. In addition, the Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group and other Council members should:

- Advocate, with Central African Republic authorities, the operationalization of the National Parity Observatory and the establishment of gender-responsive legal frameworks, such as the decree on the implementation of the parity law and a revision of the law on political parties and the electoral code.
- Increase funding for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, the socioeconomic reintegration of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and their access to justice.
- Provide flexible funding to women's rights organizations and local women's peacebuilding initiatives.
- Provide sustainable support to the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children.

- Partner with the Government to allocate greater resources to implementing the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and encouraged Security Council members to follow up on the important issues raised at the meeting.
