



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8728th meeting

Thursday, 20 February 2020, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium)

Members:

China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Niger	Mr. Abarry
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
Tunisia	Mr. Ben Sliman
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Clay
United States of America	Mr. Barkin
Viet Nam	Mr. Dinh

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2020/124)

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20-04502 (E)



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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2020/124)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Matias Bertino Matondo, African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic; His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations; and His Excellency Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Matondo is joining via video-teleconference from Khartoum.

Since we have four briefers today — an unusually high number — I would ask for their cooperation in trying to keep the briefings within reasonable time limits. We will try to cover all the briefings in 30 minutes, so I would like to ask each brifer to be as concise as possible.

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/2020/124, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ndiaye.

Mr. Ndiaye (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to present to the Council, in the early part of this year,

the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2020/124).

As the Council is aware, this year is an important turning point for the men and women of the Central African Republic, who, starting in December 2020, will be going to the polls to elect their leaders.

However, before speaking about the electoral process, I would like to share with the Council a brief analysis of the main political, economic and security developments that have taken place in recent months in the Central African Republic.

On 6 February, the country commemorated the first anniversary of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed by the Government and 14 armed groups. That commemoration was an opportunity to look back on the progress and address challenges in implementing the peace agreement.

Among the notable strides made, I should like to first stress that the inclusive Government that emerged from the peace agreement remains valid and operational and that the signatory parties have reaffirmed their commitment to it, notwithstanding, of course, numerous difficulties. I also note the significant decrease in violence against the civilian population; the gradual and continuous extension of State authority, including the appointment of all prefects in all 16 prefectures of the country; and the ongoing deployment of the Central African Armed Forces and the internal security forces, including in areas where they were previously absent. The disarmament process has not been launched in the west of the country. Similarly, progress has also been made in the establishment of the special mixed security units, as provided for by the peace agreement. On 16 December, the first recruits of the special mixed security units completed their training in Bouar and are awaiting deployment. However, many logistical and political challenges remain to be addressed before they are operationalized.

We can also commend the progress made in the fight against impunity and the promotion of transitional justice. Despite some structural challenges in the judicial and penitentiary administrations, jurisdictions are continuing their work, with the technical and logistical support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Development Programme, by holding

criminal sessions more or less regularly. I welcome the conviction on 7 February of 28 persons involved in the violence committed in Bangassou in 2017, including in the killing of Blue Helmets. For its part, the Special Criminal Court is pursuing its judicial investigations into cases of serious human rights violations and examining cases in relation to the 2019 civilian massacres in the Paoua region by members of the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation armed group.

Furthermore, the key draft laws envisaged in the peace agreement are now in Parliament, including the bills on the status of former Presidents, the bill on political parties and opposition and the bill to establish the commission on truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation. Once adopted — hopefully in the coming weeks — those laws should contribute to creating a peaceful political environment and provide armed groups with political alternatives for their demands. The commission on truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation should provide the long-awaited reconciliation framework that will allow the victims of the crisis to have their voices heard and receive reparations for harm done.

While the victims are waiting for reparations, the Central African people, scarred by years of conflict, hope to enjoy the dividends of peace as soon as possible. That is why I wish to commend the macroeconomic progress observed in the Central African Republic in 2019, the promising growth prospects for 2020 and the progress made in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. We hope that such economic impact and peace dividends will make it possible to increase the population's access to basic public services throughout the country and thereby promote a gradual improvement in the daily lives of the Central African population.

(spoke in English)

As we all know, a peace agreement is not yet peace. It is a step forward in a long process that is sometimes fraught with pitfalls. Despite significant advances in the implementation of the peace agreement, several challenges remain. Those include persistent violations of the peace agreement by some armed groups, which have continued over the past year to occupy administrative buildings, collect illegal taxes and expand their areas of influence. Despite improvement in the overall security situation of the country, there remain pockets of instability, related mainly to clashes

between armed groups competing for territory and resources. Those clashes pose serious threats to the protection of civilians and have also led to rising intercommunal tensions in locations like Birao, Bria and Alindao. Those security developments in the north remain sources of major concerns. The inter-ethnic clashes in Birao between Runga members of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ), mainly Kara, have further weakened the security and humanitarian situation in that part of the country.

(spoke in French)

In response to those worrying developments, MINUSCA has had to adopt a robust posture to curb the attempts to invade the town of Birao made by the FPRC and to take measures to protect the civilian population, in line with its mandate. Even as I speak, mediation efforts are under way for a cessation of hostilities between the warring parties. I strongly condemn the FPRC and the MLCJ for the resumption of fighting, in flagrant violation of the peace agreement. I would also like to condemn the public call for violence against MINUSCA, launched by the FPRC in Ndélé, where the population was rallied to invade the MINUSCA camp. That is all the more unacceptable as it uses women and children as human shields to besiege the MINUSCA camp and obstruct its operations. I also denounce the illegal expansion of the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique into the extreme south-east of the country, Haut-Mbomou and some localities in the west. MINUSCA recently launched a military operation to halt that expansion and will spare no effort to stop the violence and protect civilians. I urge the Council, for its part, to consider strong measures against all those who continue to impede the implementation of the peace agreement.

Such bleak news from the ground has not diminished MINUSCA's determination to implement the mandate that the Council conferred upon it. Together with the guarantors and facilitators of the peace agreement, as well as other international partners, we continue to take all necessary steps to, in particular, protect civilians, support the parties in the implementation of the peace agreement and support the preparation of the presidential and legislative elections of 2020-2021 — an important step in the strengthening of the country's democratic institutions and the rule of law.

As those elections approach, new political dynamics have emerged, notably with the return of former Presidents Bozizé and Djotodia from exile. Both have stated and reaffirmed their desire to contribute to peace, stability and the holding of peaceful elections, which is to be welcomed. Allow me to commend President Faustin Archange Touadera for his spirit of openness and for engaging in consultations with the former Heads of State and Prime Ministers in order to ensure a peaceful political environment.

It is also essential to ensure the inclusiveness of those elections by allowing refugees to vote and increasing the participation of women as candidates and voters. Moreover, the establishment of the framework for consultation with political parties of all stripes, civil society and public authorities, which held its first meeting on 17 February, is to be welcomed as it augurs well for the consensual management of the electoral process.

However, the elections can be held only if the international community lends all its technical, logistical and financial support. Despite the mobilization of nearly half of the resources necessary for the holding of the elections within the constitutional time frame, it is urgent that all pledged funds be disbursed as soon as possible and that the resources that are lacking be mobilized. I urgently appeal to all Central African Republic's partners to honour their commitments and provide the unpaid contributions, and I request the support of the Council to that end. In that regard, I would like to thank the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission for the renewed support of his institution for the stabilization of the country, as he further demonstrated during his visit to Bangui last week. I have no doubt that his calls will bolster my calls for financing for the elections.

In conclusion, allow me to pay tribute to the countries of the region that have rallied to revitalize their cooperation with the Central African Republic, thereby contributing to the stabilization and peace efforts in the Central African Republic. I also commend the determination and political will of the Government to mobilize all the active forces to ensure the full success of the implementation of the peace agreement and the holding of the forthcoming elections, which will open a new chapter in the history of the country. I know that the men and women of the Central African

Republic will also always be able to count on the goodwill and support of the Security Council.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

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

As of today it has been 12 months since the Government of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in Bangui. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/124) gives a clear picture of the accomplishments in the implementation of the peace process, as well as of the remaining challenges.

I will focus on those areas in which the European Union sees the greatest need for all stakeholders now to act with resolve. Let me mention what we see as positive developments.

First, this is the only one among the many earlier agreements signed in the Central African Republic that is holding. This is not a minor achievement, it needs to be consolidated, and confidence in the agreement needs to be maintained and strengthened. This will best be done through its effective implementation. This result is largely owing to the determination of President Touadera and his Government to maintain a courageous and conciliatory posture.

We welcome the appeasing approach adopted in dealing with the former Presidents' return to the country. They have to become part of the process. We also commend the Government for pursuing the dialogue with other stakeholders, including former high-level officials, armed groups and the region. Holding bilateral joint commissions with neighbours of the Central African Republic helps to build confidence and solidify peace.

We also see progress in setting up the special mixed security units, which benefit from significant EU support. We are witnessing the first encouraging signs of State authority returning to some regions, and as the deployment of the national Armed Forces is progressing, we should ensure that the process receives the necessary support in order to be sustainable and credible. By now, all stakeholders should realize

that, despite its imperfections, the Bangui agreement remains the only joint and viable framework for peace, whereby everyone — signatories, facilitators, civil society, political actors, and partners of the country — has a role to play in making it work.

(spoke in French)

Let me also talk today about the next steps and the challenges that we must face. One year after the signing of the agreement, several armed groups continue to fail to uphold their commitments. The violence that erupted on Sunday in Birao between two armed groups was unfortunately not an isolated incident. It was a planned operation carried out to undermine the peace agreement. At the end of the day, the local populations are the main victims and the work of the humanitarian actors is prevented.

Nothing justifies that violence. The European Union urges the parties to honour their word. We also call on the Government and the guarantors and the facilitators of the Bangui agreement to act and to seriously consider imposing sanctions against those responsible for those acts. This intolerable situation must end. The violence is also the result of a culture of impunity that has gone on for far too long. The fight against impunity must be pursued and centred on justice. That is one of the key provisions of the agreement, which is critical to supporting the population.

In addition, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process must be stepped up and carried out simultaneously with the establishment of the special mixed security units. In that regard, the specific criteria for demobilization, disarmament, verification and training must be followed to the letter. Unfortunately, we note that some armed groups are not meeting those criteria, although they are well defined. Instead of committing to their obligations, several leaders are trying to renegotiate the terms. Once again, we urge the guarantors and facilitators of the agreement to take the appropriate measures necessary.

(spoke in English)

That brings me to the role of the European Union. We stand by our commitment to working with the Government and the people of the Central African Republic and all other stakeholders. Our commitment is also clearly attested by the European Union's significant support for the upcoming elections. The EU will shoulder roughly half of the estimated budget

and plans to deploy electoral experts. We hope that other donors will follow our example, and we echo the appeal made earlier by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in that respect. Elections are essential to consolidating democracy and democratic institutions. Postponement is not an option. Political leaders must show responsibility by contributing to a peaceful, transparent and inclusive electoral process.

Likewise, the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for security and logistics remains of critical importance. The constitutional calendar needs to be respected.

The EU is deploying a civilian mission — the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic — to support reform and deployment of the internal security forces. The EU Advisory Mission will complement the valued work done by our European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA). The EUTM-RCA continues to work in full transparency, coordination and cohesion with MINUSCA and others.

I will just add final word to reiterate our commitment to a solid partnership with the United Nations and the African Union, as shown by, among other things, our joint trilateral high-level mission to the Central African Republic. I would like to stress that the recent campaigns of manipulation and disinformation against international partners in the country, notably against MINUSCA, are a matter of serious concern to us. I want to reiterate our full support for the work of the Mission and praise the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is here today.

The Central African Republic has the potential to turn into a success story for the Council and, most important, for the people of the country itself, but that will require that we remain united, engaged and mobilized.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Matondo.

Mr. Matondo *(spoke in French)*: Allow me, in my capacity as African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic, to express my deep gratitude for this opportunity to address the members of the Security Council, who are once again demonstrating their continued interest in issues relating to peace

and security in the Central African Republic and the subregion of Central Africa.

In February, we welcomed with guarded optimism the first anniversary of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Twelve months after the signing of the agreement, there was neither pomp or circumstance at the ceremony held in Bangui, which was attended by the signatory parties, members of the Government and its institutions, the guarantors and facilitators of the agreement, and former Heads of State of the Central African Republic — all of whom came to witness that historic moment to express their commitment to achieving peace and national reconciliation.

After a year since the agreement's implementation, I am pleased to deliver the following statement by recalling the progress made and the many challenges that remain to be met under the peace agreement.

With regard to progress vis-à-vis the Government, it is important to highlight the establishment of various entities for the implementation and monitoring of the agreement, the formation of an inclusive Government, the opening of permanent dialogue with the armed groups, the implementation of specific security measures relative to the launching of the special mixed security units in the west, the drafting of several bills envisaged by the agreement and their transmission to the National Assembly for adoption, the gradual return of State authority throughout the entire country, the launch of preparations for the electoral process, including updating the country's electoral map, the launch of several social impact projects under the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, and the gradual modernization of the Central African Armed Forces and the internal security forces.

With regard to the progress made concerning the armed groups, it is a matter of renouncing their desire to divide up the territory of the Central African Republic, their recognition of State authority and its institutions, the adherence of certain groups to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the operationalization of the special mixed security units, and vacating the administrative buildings held by certain armed groups.

Generally speaking, with the signing and implementation of the agreement, we note an improvement in the security situation, a decrease in the level of violence and an uptick in the free movement of

goods and people. However, many challenges remain because the majority of armed groups have not yet laid down their weapons and continue to occupy territories and exploit natural resources to the detriment of the State. Moreover, certain armed groups that are signatories to the agreement continue to be involved in clashes in an effort to exert control over areas in the interior of the country. That is the case of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) in Vakaga, in north-eastern Central African Republic. Clashes between the armed groups in the north-east have devolved into intercommunal conflict, which, although complex, urgently needs to be resolved.

Overall, although progress has been made over the past year, much remains to be done in connection with the linked legislative and presidential elections in 2020 and 2021. In that regard, signatories to the agreement must fully honour their commitments in order to create conditions conducive to the holding of elections. Over the past year since the agreement was signed, the signatories were strongly urged to uphold their commitments. Those who attended the event to commemorate the first anniversary of the signing of the agreement called for the sanctions under article 35 to be applied and demanded that we be firm with any parties that breach the agreement. In that regard, we welcome the convergence of views and unanimity of the international community, which, on the first anniversary of the agreement, took the opportunity to reaffirm its willingness to assist the Central African Republic in ensuring that elections take place within constitutional deadlines, and its readiness to mobilize financial resources and the technical wherewithal to attain that objective.

The security situation remains of concern, in particular given the clashes between the FPRC and the MLCJ to gain control of Birao. In the second week of February, the forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, working together with the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, repulsed FPRC combatants who had entered Birao. Although the situation in Birao is under control, tensions remain high in the north-east of the country, including in Bria and Ndélé. Those areas require considerable attention from facilitators, guarantors

and the various partners working for peace in the Central African Republic.

In addition, we acknowledge the serious humanitarian situation in the three areas of Birao, Ndélé and Bria. Despite all the difficulties, which are a source of concern with regard to creating the right conditions for the holding of free and credible elections, efforts continue for the implementation of all aspects of the peace agreement, which is the best political framework for stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic. It is for that reason that the National Assembly opened an extraordinary session yesterday, 19 February, to review and adopt the draft texts envisioned in the peace agreement that relate to the status of former Heads of State, the charter of political parties, the status of the opposition, the commission on truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation and the municipalities code, among others.

The seventh session of the Executive Monitoring Committee of the agreement, scheduled for 28 February, will certainly not only help us to assess the Committee's functioning, but also and above all show us all remaining challenges in the implementation of the agreement. We underscore the role that the countries of the subregion must play to help stabilize the situation in the Central African Republic, in particular since the conflict could very easily spill over to the rest of Central Africa.

It is important to underscore the very active cooperation and coordination among the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union, as highlighted by the African Union Commission Chairperson, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres during the opening ceremony of the thirty-third ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held a few days ago in Addis Ababa. Such cooperation has been an integrating and catalysing factor for the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and must be welcomed and maintained. Similarly, the harmonization of positions among the other parties to the peace and reconstruction process in the Central African Republic remains a considerable challenge.

I have provided a brief overview of the situation in the Central African Republic and the efforts of the African Union. The situation deserves the attention

of the Council, in particular with regard to concerns about improving the security situation, securing the electoral process, funding the elections, ensuring that parties honour their commitments, enforcing the sanctions regime, holding elections in line with constitutional deadlines, launching social projects as peace dividends and mechanisms for the uptake and reorientation of former combatants of armed groups into more useful social activities.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Hilale.

Mr. Hilale (*spoke in French*): As Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I am very pleased to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, for his detailed briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic and to warmly thank him and his entire team for their hospitality and support during our visit to Bangui from 11 to 14 February.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Lieutenant General Balla Keïta, head of the military component of the Mission. I believe that today's meeting of the Security Council will be the last with him in that capacity. He has conducted and completed his mission with energy, devotion and professionalism. That is what I heard when I was in Bangui. I would like him to know that we are very grateful because the mission in Bangui is not the easiest.

A detailed report of that visit was transmitted to you, Mr. President, earlier today. I will therefore limit my statement to three points.

The first concerns the elections. The upcoming presidential, legislative and local elections, scheduled to begin in December, will be crucial for the future of the country. All of those with whom I spoke during my visit — including the President of the Central African Republic, the Prime Minister, Cabinet members and the representatives of the institutions of the Central African Republic and of civil society — expressed to me their unanimous and firm commitment to the holding of free, transparent, credible and inclusive elections, within constitutional deadlines. However,

the organization and success of those elections will depend on several factors.

First, the funding of the elections is managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which estimates that \$41.8 million will be required. To date, we are still \$20 million short. I thank the European Union, which has pledged \$17 million, as well as UNDP and the Government of the Central African Republic, which have each provided \$2 million. Preparations for the elections must respect the timetable set by the Constitutional Court. They have begun, but funds are urgently needed. I therefore plan to continue my work with our partners in the Central African Republic in an effort to underscore the importance of disbursing funds as soon as possible. I am pleased to announce that the Kingdom of Morocco plans to help fund the elections, as it did in 2015. Its total contribution will be announced shortly.

Secondly, during my various meetings, I stressed the importance of inclusive elections, encouraging the Government to ensure the participation of internally displaced persons and refugees. That call was well received by all my interlocutors, who, without exception, committed to that goal. That goal also applies to women and young people, who are not sufficiently aware of the importance of that process, as reflected by the low registration rate of that segment of the population. That is why mobilization efforts are so important.

Thirdly, MINUSCA has finalized a security plan for the elections, which has been submitted to the national authorities. The post-electoral period will be key and require close monitoring if we are to consolidate the gains achieved.

My second point concerns the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which is advancing steadily, despite the many provisions that have yet to be implemented. Indeed, all stakeholders are aware that there is no alternative to the agreement. As highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, important legislation set forth in the agreement, such as those relating to political parties, decentralization and the status of former Heads of State, has been finalized and will be adopted shortly. In addition, the justice sector policy for the period 2020-2024 has been adopted.

The growing ethnic polarization, particularly among the armed groups, fuelled by the use of hate rhetoric disseminated through social networks, radio and the written press, is a source of concern and a contributing factor to the volatility of the security situation. In recognition of that problem, MINUSCA is working closely with the Government to defuse what I might call a time bomb, so to speak, and calls for calm and strict compliance with the peace agreement. In my capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I have raised this question with State authorities at the highest level, who have assured me of their commitment to that effort.

I take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Central African civil society, in particular youth and women's representatives. Their thirst for peace and their commitment deserve recognition. The same is true of the forum of women parliamentarians. I was quite moved by the courage of those elected women, ready to risk it all in the face of the numerous roadblocks erected by the armed groups, in order to carry out their mandates. One parliamentarian in particular made a deep impression when she assured me that she was prepared to travel by motorcycle to her constituency more than 600 kilometres from Bangui, braving every danger in order to raise awareness of the importance of participating in the upcoming elections.

My third point concerns the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. As highlighted this morning, over the past year significant progress has been made in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, with the enhanced support of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, as well as that of MINUSCA, the United Nations country team and the bilateral partners of the Central African Republic.

We have focused on the rule of law, given its importance for the people. In that regard, we welcome the verdict of the Bangui Court of Appeal, condemning the Bangassou militiamen for their abuses against the civilian population and, more specifically, United Nations Blue Helmets. Two leaders have been given a life sentence of forced labour. The verdict demonstrates the progress made in strengthening the entire criminal justice system in the Central African Republic.

The Special Criminal Court is pursuing its investigations with the aim of starting trials in early 2021, but is also facing difficulties with recruitment

and funding. That progress should encourage us to maintain our political, financial and institutional support for the Special Criminal Court and the judicial system as a whole. In that regard, the bill creating the commission on truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation has also been finalized. We must ensure that it prohibits impunity for serious human rights violations.

Finally, I take this opportunity to commend the exemplary work of the Peacebuilding Fund in the Central African Republic. During my visits, I was able to see first-hand the positive impact of the projects financed by the Fund in the Central African Republic. On my latest visit, I was impressed by the clearly evident role the Fund plays as a catalyst in the country. Its investments in transhumance projects, support for mixed units and the participation of young people in political life will encourage other donors, which have contributed up to 100 times the amount initially disbursed by the Fund.

In conclusion, allow me to share some observations with the Security Council.

First, the upcoming elections will be a historic moment and an opportunity to achieve sustained peace in that country. It would be a pity if we cannot ensure adequate conditions because of a funding shortfall, which could jeopardize the efforts and sacrifices of the United Nations and the significant investments made by the international community thus far in the Central African Republic. I therefore join my friend, Mr. Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in appealing to all countries and partners of the Central African Republic to contribute in order to meet the country's budgetary needs as soon as possible.

Secondly, MINUSCA needs the firm support of the Security Council and human and financial resources for the implementation of resolution 2499 (2019), in order to be able to continue to secure the country and support the Government both for the elections and for the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan.

Thirdly, the monitoring mechanisms put in place for both the political agreement and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan are very complex and are exerting heavy pressure on the Government, whose capacities are limited. It would therefore be

advisable to reflect on how to simplify the monitoring processes and further optimize the coordination of partners upstream in order to more effectively and efficiently support the Government's efforts.

Fourthly, the exemplary partnership between the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States symbolizes the potential of the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly the African Union. As such, it should serve as a model. Partnership with international financial organizations is also crucial and will ultimately make it possible to implement many structural projects.

Finally, I would like to send a message of hope and an appeal for continued mobilization in support of the Central African Republic. The international community has indeed done a great deal for the country. Although the people are not sufficiently enjoying the dividends of peace, the foundations have been laid for a return to stability, provided that the current level of support can be maintained. I am confident that the Security Council will continue to give full attention and political support to that country. The Central African people, who have suffered so greatly, now legitimately aspire to stability, peace, development and, above all, a better life.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Hilale for his briefing.

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

Mr. Abarry (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to very sincerely thank all the briefers: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the African Union Special Representative and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations. I also want to thank the Ambassador of Morocco, who has just given an excellent briefing on the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of South Africa, Tunisia, the Niger and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Today's meeting takes place only a few weeks after the Council's adoption, on 31 January, of resolution 2507 (2020), renewing the sanctions regime imposed on the Central African Republic, followed by the presentation, on the same day, of the final report of

the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic (see S/2019/930), in the context of a briefing by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, which I have the honour of chairing.

The situation in the Central African Republic continues to improve, as reflected by the various briefings that we have just heard. We therefore warmly welcome the observance, on 6 February, of the first anniversary of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, as well as all the progress made by the Government in implementing the Agreement, which has led to a reduction in violence and human rights violations. We continue to encourage the Government and the people of the Central African Republic to fully implement the Political Agreement in order to bring the country out of the cycle of conflict.

We are convinced that dialogue among Central Africans is the key to ending the crisis over any other support that the countries of the region and the international community can provide. We therefore welcome the fact that the Central African authorities have taken significant steps to promote peace and reconciliation at the local and national level. The recent finalization of the procedures to establish the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation is also commendable. Once set up, that mechanism will undoubtedly help the Central African people to deliver justice so as to be able to maintain peace.

We note the return to Bangui of former Presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia, and we hope that their presence in the country will contribute and give impetus to the ongoing national reconciliation process, in particular regarding the effective implementation of the peace agreement. We commend President Touadera for having convened a meeting with the former Presidents with a view to promoting peace and reconciliation.

On behalf of the three African members of the Council and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I wish to express our support for the Government in its ongoing efforts to restore State authority throughout the territory. Those efforts focus on the effective restoration of national institutions throughout the country, including the defence and security forces,

the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups and the consolidation of democracy.

In that context, we wish to stress the importance of providing the Central African defence and security forces with adequate capacity to carry out their constitutional mandate. It is crucial for the country to make significant progress in the context of the benchmarks set by the Security Council in April 2019 with a view to completely lifting the arms embargo ultimately, as desired by the Central African authorities.

We commend the Government, the National Electoral Authority, MINUSCA and donors for having begun preparations for the presidential, legislative and local elections scheduled for 2020 and 2021 in order to strengthen peace and democracy in the country. We call on the international community to provide the necessary support to the Government to ensure the holding of peaceful and credible elections within the constitutional time frame.

We also welcome the strong and ongoing commitment of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, as guarantors of the Political Agreement, to ensuring the effective implementation of the Agreement by all parties.

We reaffirm our support for the leading role of MINUSCA in promoting peace, security and development, particularly through the implementation of the peace agreement. The importance of that role was jointly reiterated by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the United Nations in the joint communiqué issued on 6 February at the commemoration of the first anniversary of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. At that event, the three organizations reiterated the need for dialogue among all the actors concerned, stressing in particular the following points: stopping all attacks against civilians, United Nations staff and humanitarian workers and establishing a judicial framework for the prosecution of all those who commit violations of the Political Agreement or human rights, as well as criminal acts.

In that regard, we call on the armed groups to exercise restraint and to use the dispute settlement mechanisms provided for in the Political Agreement to resolve their differences. We urge non-signatory armed groups to engage in all political processes, in particular with regard to the cessation of hostilities and all acts of violence and intimidation throughout the country.

At the same time, we welcome the progress made in prosecuting those involved in the killing of civilians and peacekeepers so that they are held accountable for their acts before the court.

In conclusion, the three African members of the Council and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in line with the approach of the African Union, will continue to support the aspirations of the Central African

Government and people to achieve peace, stability and the foundations for sustainable development in the country.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.