



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

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Thursday, 20 June 2019, 3 p.m.
New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait)

Members:

Belgium	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Ms. Morrison González
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
France	Mr. Delattre
Germany	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Peru	Mr. Duclos
Poland	Mr. Zawieja
Russian Federation	Mr. Repkin
South Africa	Ms. Tshabalala
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mr. Hunter

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic
(S/2019/498)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2019/498)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): 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; and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service.

Mr. Matondo and Mr. Vervaeke are joining this meeting via video tele-conference from Bangui and Brussels, respectively.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/498, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ndiaye.

Mr. Ndiaye (*spoke in French*): Following the publication of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic, and pursuant to resolution 2448 (2018), I am pleased to inform the Security Council about recent developments on the ground and in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

It cannot be repeated enough: the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic on 6 February gave rise to many hopes, both in the country and the region as well as within the international community, including that there would be a definitive end to the long and violent crisis that the Central African Republic has been experiencing for decades. Since the signing of the agreement, the Government and partners of the Central African Republic have redoubled their efforts to implement it. A new, more inclusive, Government was established on 22 March following the Addis Ababa consultations. The international community, under the auspices of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union, met in Bangui on 17 April within the framework of the International Support Group on the Central African Republic in order to reactivate regional and international actors.

On 31 May, a joint high-level mission made up of the Government of the Central African Republic, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and MINUSCA was deployed to the field to demand that the leader of the *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* group cooperate with judicial authorities with a view to arresting those responsible for the 21 May massacres, dismantling all their bases and immediately integrating their elements into the national programme on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation. A second joint mission visited Kouï on 18 June, in the subprefecture of Paoua, the group's stronghold. At the end of the mission, the head of that armed group committed to beginning the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of its elements on 29 June, in order to enable the establishment of the agreement of the first *Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité* in the west of the country. He also committed to continuing to cooperate with the judicial investigations into the massacres.

I would also like to inform the Council that, following those events, and in addition to our good offices, the Mission launched a military operation, thereby bringing additional pressure to bear to strengthen the protection of civilians, prevent further attacks or reprisals on civilians and stop all movements of armed elements in the area of Paoua. Those joint efforts, conducted under our mandate and in accordance with the peace agreement, resulted in the arrest of three members of the group suspected of having participated in the massacres on 21 May.

As the incidents in Ouham-Pendé demonstrate, the situation remains fragile. Every week, 50 to 70 violations of the peace agreement are reported, committed mainly by armed groups against civilians. Violence against civilians, illegal taxation, the obstruction of the deployment of State authority and the occupation of public buildings continue and are a source of deep frustration for the people of the Central African Republic.

Against that backdrop, MINUSCA continues to implement the multidimensional mandate the Council entrusted it with, while using its good offices to urge the parties to scrupulously implement the commitments made under the peace agreement and support them. Despite the immense challenges, we continue to work with the Government, the guarantors and other facilitators and partners to provide the parties with all the political and logistical support necessary for the success of the agreement. We support all the structures provided for under the agreement, including the various monitoring mechanisms established at the local and national levels, the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, the inclusive commission that is responsible for addressing justice related to the conflict, and the future truth, justice, reconciliation and reparations commission, whose consultations President Touadera launched on 6 June.

We are also mobilizing to carry out an awareness-raising campaign to inform local actors about the peace agreement and solicit their cooperation in its implementation. MINUSCA also continues to support local peace and reconciliation committees throughout all the country's prefectures. But the success of the agreement will depend above all on the commitment of the parties to put an end to all forms of violence and promote dialogue to resolve all forms of disputes, as provided for in the agreement.

In order to maintain a level of trust in the agreement, armed groups must comply with the security arrangements to which they committed themselves on 6 February. In that regard, yesterday's announcement by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, which is the main armed group, that it would dismantle all illegal barriers is an encouraging sign that I hope will be followed by concrete action.

The full implementation of the security provisions under the peace agreement, including the establishment of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, which

should contribute to reducing transhumance-related violence, will be a crucial step in restoring security and redeploying State authority. Rapid progress in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation is also needed to ensure lasting improvements in security and stabilization.

I am pleased to report that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations conducted in May and June resulted in the demobilization of 90 combatants from the Révolution et justice Movement, under the command of Armel Ningatoloum Sayo, which had already begun to disarm in December 2018. MINUSCA is working with the Government, guarantors and other partners to launch the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for other groups in the coming months, which will enable the rapid establishment, training and deployment of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité.

We also continue to support security sector reform. I commend the Government's efforts to make the defence and security forces more representative of the population, more professional and more effective. In line with that triple objective, the Government recently completed a national recruitment campaign for the Central African Armed Forces. A similar recruitment campaign for the police and gendarmerie will take place in all prefectures in the coming months.

Central Africans expect a lot from peace. They want to be able to go about their activities safely and have access to clean water, health care, education, employment and justice. It is therefore necessary to create the conditions conducive to economic recovery that creates employment opportunities for young people, in order to avoid the future creation of armed groups. The Mission and the United Nations system are therefore working together closely to ensure that security, development and peacebuilding efforts are coordinated to create the necessary synergies for sustainable peace.

The dire humanitarian situation continues to hamper the prospects for lasting peace, as people are unable to meet their basic needs. Approximately 2.9 million people, half of whom are children, are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, while 2.1 million people face food insecurity. It is essential that the peace agreement contribute to creating the conditions for better access to humanitarian aid and that development activities be launched in already

stable areas. Adequate support must also be provided to the 622,000 displaced persons and the 590,000 Central African refugees registered in neighbouring countries. Our 2019 humanitarian response plan, which requires just over \$430 million, is only 28 per cent funded, which is grossly inadequate. I appeal to the generosity of donors to help those many vulnerable people.

(spoke in English)

The successful implementation of the peace agreement will also depend upon its ability to address the many human rights violations that have characterized the crisis and whose victims demand redress. In that regard, I am glad to stress that the national consultations for the creation of the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission will allow Central Africans to contribute their views on how best to ensure redress for victims of abuse, the application of justice for those involved in grave crimes, and the path towards national reconciliation. Progress towards national reconciliation and the integration of armed groups into State forces and society will be critical for allowing elections to take place in 2020 and 2021, as planned.

(spoke in French)

In that regard, the Constitutional Court declared certain articles of the electoral code, recently adopted by the National Assembly, to be unconstitutional. The Assembly will soon be called upon to sit in extraordinary session in order to adopt the text revised by the Court, failing which the country could face a serious institutional deadlock. A delay in the adoption of the electoral code could lead to a delay in the preparations for the elections. However, the elections are a crucial step in strengthening democracy in the Central African Republic. Everything must therefore be done to ensure that the elections, the preparations for which will require substantial international financial, technical and operational support, take place within the deadlines set by the Central African Constitution.

Similarly, for elections to take place in peaceful conditions, all actors involved must henceforth exercise restraint and wisdom. I have noted the establishment of a political platform composed of 20 opposition political parties and four civil society organizations that are strongly opposed to the peace agreement. I hope that this opposition to the agreement will not lead to the rejection of the peace process, but rather to constructive proposals for the development of the country.

MINUSCA will always be able to count on the support of the Security Council and that of all Member States of the international community so as to ensure the success of its mandate.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Matondo.

Mr. Matondo *(spoke in French)*: First of all, in my capacity as Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Central African Republic and Central Africa, I would like to highlight what an honour it is to be able to review the situation in the Central African Republic four months after the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

The political dialogue process led by the African Union through the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was completed at the end of 2018, paving the way for talks in Khartoum between the Government of the Central African Republic and the armed groups. The talks began on 25 January and ended on 5 February this year with an agreement between the Government and the 14 armed groups. An initial signing ceremony of the agreement concluded between the parties took place on 5 February in Khartoum, followed by a formal signing ceremony by the parties on 6 February in Bangui. Against that backdrop, the topic it is my honour to address in the Security Council today is the status of the implementation of the agreement, in particular with regard to the progress achieved, the difficulties encountered, the actions taken by the guarantors and the facilitators, the main challenges and recommendations.

With regard to the progress made as of 20 June, much more has been achieved by the Government. To date, four months after the signing of the agreement, I would note at the political level, for information purposes, the appointment of a Prime Minister, Mr. Firmin Ngrebada, on 25 February, and the formation of an inclusive Government, on 22 March, after the rejection of a first Government deemed less inclusive by the parties to the agreement.

In terms of monitoring the agreement, I would note the adoption of all the regulatory texts setting up the monitoring implementation mechanism as well as the structures provided for by the agreement and the operationalization of the structures for the

implementation and monitoring mechanism, including the Executive Monitoring Committee, which has already held three meetings, the Technical Secretariat to support the Executive Monitoring Committee, and the National Implementation Committee, the Prefectural Implementation Committee and the Technical Security Committee, which are currently being set up. As part of the transitional security arrangements, the regulatory texts for the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité have been adopted, and they are in the process of being stood up. With regard to reconciliation and transitional justice, an inclusive commission has begun its work, and the national popular consultation in preparation for the establishment of the truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation commission was launched on 6 June, with work is ongoing.

In terms of security, since the signing of the agreement, there has been an overall decrease in tension and in the number of clashes between armed groups and the Central African Armed Forces, supported by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), despite a few regrettable cases of assassination, rape and theft of livestock, especially in the west, north and east of the country.

As for the difficulties encountered, while the Government can be pleased with the efforts made to honour commitments, the armed groups for their part are not really enthusiastic. The update on the implementation of the agreement made by the Executive Monitoring Committee during its three working meetings indicated that the results remain far from what was hoped for or expected. Indeed, cases of violations of non-compliance with the implementation of the agreement continue to occur on the ground, and mostly involve violations and abuses against civilian populations and humanitarian workers, sexual violence against women and girls, obstruction of the free movement of persons and goods, the erection of barriers and the collection of illegal taxes, a failure to return public buildings and military camps and the theft of livestock.

The most serious, and intolerable, violation of the agreement took place on 21 and 22 May in the communes of Koundjili, Bohong and Lemouna, in the prefecture of Ouham-Pendé, where more than 40 people were massacred by members of the Mouvement pour le retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, supposedly in retaliation after several Peul herders were killed during

an incident of cattle raiding. It should be pointed out that the massacre seriously undermined the peace agreement, to the extent where it gave certain elements of the media and parties to the agreement an opportunity to further disparage it.

Despite the strong pressure on the Government and the guarantors and facilitators to the agreement to confront the perpetrators of the massacre directly, thus far they have shown wisdom in using the crisis-resolution mechanism provided for in the agreement. Furthermore, the training and deployment of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité could serve to rein in once and for all the causes of the recurring conflict between herders and farmers in certain regions of the country. It is also worth noting that, in the light of the upcoming elections, some people could exploit this most unfortunate event by politicizing it.

As for the steps taken by the guarantors and facilitators to the agreement, we would like to highlight the consultations convened by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission from 18 to 20 March, with a view to finding a solution to the crisis following the formation of the first inclusive Government on 3 March. The tripartite African Union-European Union-United Nations deployed a mission from 14 to 18 April to evaluate the agreement and advocate for inviting all political forces across the nation to join and support the agreement. A second meeting of the International Support Group for the Central African Republic was held on 17 April, with a view to harmonizing the interventions of the various actors and mobilizing resources in support of the agreement.

The actions of the guarantors and facilitators following the tragedy on 21 and 22 May included three joint missions made up by the Government, the guarantors, including the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, and facilitators, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, to visit the areas in question and gain insight into the events, support and comfort the population and alleviate tensions.

They also met with the leader of the Mouvement pour le retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, Mr. Sidiki Abass, to hear his version of the facts and to communicate the requirements of the Government and the guarantors to the agreement. The main demands conveyed to him following the massacre in Paoua were that he arrest

and indict the perpetrators of the massacre, as well as those who absconded from the competent authorities, so that they might be tried and punished in accordance with the law; that he dismantle all barriers and military bases associated with the group; that he enrol individual combatants in the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme; and that he cooperate fully with the competent authorities and the agreement guarantors to combat impunity.

The Mouvement pour le retour, réclamation et réhabilitation has recently shown its willingness to cooperate by identifying three perpetrators of the tragedy in Paoua, but we are still awaiting news on the whereabouts of other suspects. The second joint meeting of the Government, the guarantors and the facilitator with Mr. Abass was held on 18 June in Bocaranga, just two days ago, during which he affirmed his adherence to the peace process; his commitment to the implementation of the agreement, especially with regard to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all of the group's elements as from 29 June; his active participation in the formation of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité and his commitment to search for all alleged perpetrators of the May 21 massacre and hand them over to the competent authorities.

Similar efforts are being made by the guarantors and facilitators with regard to the other leaders of armed groups — including Ali Darassa of the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique on 12 June — to remind them of the need to respect their commitments in the framework of the implementation of the agreement. We should nevertheless note the constructive attitude of certain armed groups, such as the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, which is committed to removing all its illegal barriers and releasing the buildings it continues to occupy illegally in the areas under its control.

One of the main challenges we face includes combating unemployment and poverty through the implementation of an intensive, large-scale programme aimed at former members of armed groups, youth and local communities for the construction and rehabilitation of priority infrastructure throughout the national territory of the Central African Republic. There are also the challenges of mobilizing sufficient resources required to operationalize the mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of structures relating to the peace agreement; creating conditions conducive to the effective implementation of the agreement,

especially with regard to DDR and the setting up of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité; fostering a climate of peace and national solidarity among all Central Africans; preventing the emergence of new armed and political groups hostile to peace and stability within the country; and, finally, establishing favourable conditions for the holding of the upcoming elections, while taking into consideration time constraints and others related to limited material resources.

Against that backdrop, and taking into account the progress made as well as the difficulties encountered by the guarantors and facilitators, including the main challenges to implementation, we would like to make the following recommendations to the Security Council: to appeal to the international community regarding the need to mobilize the necessary resources for the reconstruction of the Central African Republic and the implementation of labour-intensive development projects; to encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to maintain the same spirit of openness and dialogue with armed groups and all stakeholders in Central African society; to maintain the framework of dialogue with armed groups by, among other things, exerting political pressure on them to respect their commitments; and to ensure all the necessary conditions for the swift initiation of the national DDR programme and the formation of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité.

We also recommend that the Council further mobilize resources for the effective operationalization of the agreement's implementation and monitoring mechanism for preparations for the forthcoming elections; intensify efforts to popularize the agreement among the armed groups of all political forces active in the Central African Republic so that they appropriate and fully adhere to its letter and spirit; urge all such forces to refrain from committing acts that are detrimental to social cohesion and national reconciliation; reinforce the mechanisms for transitional justice and the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission in order to put up a firm fight against all forms of impunity; and help the subregion become more involved in the quest for a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic, in particular by reactivating bilateral mixed commissions.

Our final recommendation is that the Council lead the call for the strengthening of humanitarian assistance in the fight against malnutrition and for the reintegration of displaced persons and refugees.

We commend the countries of the subregion that have kindly included the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic on their agendas. I would also like to reiterate my thanks to the United Nations for its contribution and cooperation with the African Union in the peace and stabilization process in the Central African Republic. Finally, I take this opportunity to commend all partners of the Central African Republic for their readiness and assistance in the implementation of the agreement and development projects in the country.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Vervaeke.

Mr. Vervaeke: I am honoured to brief the Security Council on behalf of the European Union (EU). I recognize the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, and the Special Representative of the African Union, Mr. Matias Matondo.

Five months after the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was signed in Bangui, we are now at a crucial moment. Let me pay tribute to all those who contributed to achieving the agreement, in particular African Union Commissioner Smail Chergui. We remain deeply convinced that the agreement provides a real chance for a better future in the Central African Republic — if it is implemented by all sides in good faith, with a real sense of responsibility. The buy-in of the population and the support of the region will also be critical elements.

The Government has so far delivered on several counts. A largely inclusive Government has been put in place, and now all armed groups are represented in the Government. The different follow-up mechanisms have been established. We wish to congratulate President Touadera and the Prime Minister on their leadership and sense of compromise.

A governmental seminar is scheduled to take place in the next few days with the support of partners, including the European Union, to reinforce governmental cohesion and team spirit with a view to strengthening internal confidence. We will also be providing support to the Technical Secretariat of the follow-up monitoring mechanism, and soon start providing parallel support to the armed groups to reinforce their ownership of the

agreement and coach them to help them deliver on their own engagements.

Let me say a few words on the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, a critical element of the peace agreement as a temporary security measure. A legal basis for the units has now been prepared and initial funding via the Peacebuilding Fund has been secured. The European Union has also made an initial contribution of €3.4 million to finance the African Union support to the unit; we will consider further support once they are deployed. In addition, the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic is ready to conduct a train-the-trainers course for designated Central African Armed Forces trainers once they are identified. What we now need is a clear process and chain of command placed under State authority.

Manning lists for the units, however, are still incomplete, both on the part of the Government and the armed groups, which is delaying their deployment. The establishment and deployment of the first units is now envisaged for October, after a two-month training that will have to start in July. We must act with urgency. It is also important that the Central African Armed Forces fully own the process. Additional efforts are urgently needed to fill the confidence gap. Otherwise, progress will be impossible.

As mentioned by previous speakers, five months after its signing, regrettably, the peace agreement continues to be violated, notably by armed groups. We remain deeply concerned about the slow progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as certain groups' lack of compliance and acts of violence. Violence is irresponsible and inadmissible, notably by parties to a peace agreement.

Events like the recent attack in Paoua run counter to the peace agreement and cannot go unanswered. They undermine our collective efforts and credibility, and further weaken the trust generated by the peace agreement. The parties, guarantors and facilitators must use all their tools to respond to and prevent violations, including early-warning mechanisms, enhanced dialogue, appropriate follow-up mechanisms and a clear strategy on addressing violations. The peace agreement provides for all such measures, including sanctions, and they must be fully exploited to preserve the credibility of the process and, finally, to achieve real and sustainable peace. In that context, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) must continue to actively engage non-compliant armed groups — through pressure and use of force, if necessary.

That brings me to the issue of justice, which plays a crucial role in the peace agreement. The people of the Central African Republic clearly expect justice to be delivered impartially and speedily. Those who are responsible for committing crimes and serious violations must be brought to justice. We look forward to the putting in place of transitional justice. The European Union has contributed technical and financial support to ongoing consultations. We will soon be ready to consider financing for the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission, the setting up of which is becoming increasingly urgent.

The region also has a role to play in the success of peace process. In that regard, we welcome the recent bilateral Cameroon-Central African Republic mixed commission on cooperation as a positive development. We encourage the strengthening of relations with all of the neighbours of the Central African Republic, in particular Chad.

The Central African Republic will hold elections in 18 months' time. Those elections are part of the peace agreement and are a crucial step to consolidating the country's gains, including its democratic achievements. Holding timely, credible and legitimate elections is key to the peace process, as it ensures greater inclusivity. Elections and electoral competition also bring about tension. As such, all political actors should act responsibly. Calling for violence and using hate speech should be considered a violation of the peace agreement.

We are ready to support the elections and call on all partners to the Central African Republic to mobilize their support. MINUSCA's mandate should be adapted to reflect the Mission's necessary role in the peace agreement's implementation and in support of the upcoming elections. The European Union will continue to coordinate and cooperate fully with the African Union and the United Nations through its integrated multidimensional approach. I was recently privileged to represent the European Union on a joint mission, together with Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Commissioner Smaïl Chergui. Projecting together the coherent and complementary support of our institutions for the peace agreement sent a powerful message.

Finally, I would like to update the Council on the European Union's support of the Central African Republic. I already mentioned the European Union Military Training Mission. Apart from training and advising the national forces, we will soon start training new recruits in Camp Kassai and in Bouar. The Training Mission also provides strategic advice to the presidency, the Defence Ministry, the headquarters of the Central African Armed Forces, the Interior Ministry and the Directors-General of the gendarmerie and the police, in accordance with its mandate. Our substantial support for mediation and the implementation of the peace agreement will continue.

On the development front, I inform the Council that the European Union, together with its member States, has mobilized over €850 million to support the population since the beginning of the crisis. We will provide an additional €60 million for the specific purpose of adapting activities to support the peace agreement by operating in new geographic areas, such as the east. Governance, justice, the rule of law and support for democratic institutions will remain core considerations of all of our actions and engagement.

On the humanitarian side, as the Special Representative highlighted earlier as a critical issue, the European Union remains fully committed, particularly with regard to increasing access to remote areas and communities.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains complex and fragile. A protracted humanitarian crisis will exacerbate structural weaknesses. It is therefore essential to continue to focus on structural reforms, especially in the security and governance sector, and to stay actively engaged in finding a long-term solution.

For its part, the European Union will continue to work with its partners in the Government and civil society, with the African Union and the United Nations and with the region. High Representative Federica Mogherini is planning to visit the Central African Republic in July as a testament to the European Union's exceptional support for the people of the Central African Republic and the peace process.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Vervaeke for his briefing.

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which

encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to warmly thank Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic; Mr. Matias Bertino Matondo, African Union Special Representative; and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European Union External Action Service, for their very enlightening briefings. In particular, I would like to welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye, who is here in the Chamber for the first time. I commend his efforts since he assumed his post and pledge France's full support in helping him carry out his important tasks.

The signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, on 6 February in Bangui, created genuine prospects for emerging from the crisis and achieving lasting peace in the Central African Republic. We are therefore fully committed to its implementation and welcome the first measures taken by the Central African authorities, under the direction of President Touadera, for the agreement to be translated into action. I would mention in particular the formation of a new inclusive Government, the work undertaken to expedite the operationalization of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, the establishment of structures for monitoring the implementation of the agreement, including the first meetings of the executive monitoring committee, and the revival this past May of the joint commission between the Central African Republic and Cameroon.

Nonetheless, we remain alarmed by the continued violence by armed groups, which continue to recruit children into their ranks and violate the arms embargo to re-arm themselves. The humanitarian consequences are horrific, primarily impacting the most vulnerable populations: internally displaced persons, children and women. The recent violence perpetrated by the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group in the Paoua region, which claimed the lives of more than 50 civilians, is unacceptable. It constitutes a serious violation of the peace agreement, and we strongly condemn it, as we do

some armed groups' targeting of humanitarian workers, who at times pay with their lives for their commitment.

We have taken note of the reaction of the leaders of Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group following the attack in late May to put an end to such acts. We expect them to locate the individuals responsible within their ranks and deliver them without delay to justice to answer for their crimes.

We also welcome the response of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in adopting a firm and robust posture towards the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group, thereby safeguarding the peace agreement. That posture is indispensable and must continue to be deployed towards armed groups. In that regard, too, MINUSCA can count on our full support.

Against that backdrop, we believe that the priority in implementing the peace agreement must be to stop the violence perpetrated by armed groups, disarm and demobilize them and to gradually re-establish State authority throughout the territory. The Central African Government, for its part, must also continue its communication efforts on the peace agreement, embark upon the process towards the adoption of a law on decentralization and make progress in the establishment of the truth, justice, reconciliation and reparations commission. Those are ways to ensure greater involvement by the people, especially women and young people, in implementing the agreement, to make local Government closer to the population and to respond to the demands of the Central African population for justice, which also entails the continuation of its work by the Special Criminal Court and the strengthening of the national judicial system.

For the implementation of the peace agreement to succeed, the international community's full and coordinated engagement in support of it, both politically and financially, is indispensable. In that regard, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the countries of the region, as guarantors of the peace agreement, have a crucial role to play. We therefore encourage the African Union and ECCAS to continue their efforts, together with the United Nations and the countries of the region.

For its part, France is and will remain fully committed to supporting the implementation of a peace agreement. France has thus far — and this is not an exhaustive list — provided €10 million in budgetary

support to strengthen public administration in the Central African Republic, and we are continuing to train 200 national public servants. On the security front, we are providing complementary training for between 850 and 950 members of the Central African Armed Forces trained by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA). In terms of rehabilitation, we are funding quick-impact projects totalling €28 million for the development of economic activities and the integration of the population.

Beyond our bilateral commitment, I would also like to welcome the commitment of the European Union, which is the leading development partner of the Central African Republic. The EUTM-RCA, of which France will take command on 1 July, remains the point of reference in the training of Central African Armed Forces. It has trained and qualified more than 3,000 Central African soldiers and began training another 1,000. It will contribute to the establishment of the garrison army model with the redeployment of Central Africa Armed Forces contingents in Bouar.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to reaffirm France's full support for MINUSCA. As we all know, MINUSCA operates in a difficult environment, but it plays a vital role in stabilizing the Central African Republic. It plays a crucial role in the implementation of the peace agreement. In that regard, I would refer to the establishment and deployment of Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, which must help improve security across the country and restore State authority. That is why we will continue to ensure that MINUSCA has the necessary means to fulfil its mission.

I would like to pay tribute here to troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment in the Central African Republic and to commend all the efforts undertaken by MINUSCA to increase its mobility, improve its operational performance where shortcomings had been identified and continue the work undertaken to prevent cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that they do not go unpunished.

Finally, with the elections of 2020 and 2021 on the horizon, which must anchor the Central African Republic in democracy, we believe that MINUSCA should be able to play a supporting role to the conduct of the elections, in support of the Central African authorities. The recommendations that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will make

in that regard will therefore be considered with the greatest attention. We call on all Central African actors to assume their responsibilities to ensure that the preparations for the elections can take place in a calm and constructive environment.

The peace agreement can and must mark a new beginning for the Central African Republic, which is why it is essential for the Security Council and the international community to remain mobilized and united in supporting the Central African Republic and MINUSCA.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Ndiaye for his briefing. The United States looks forward to a collaborative and productive relationship with him, and we appreciate the seriousness with which he has taken up his new role to implement the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to its fullest.

I thank Director Vervaeke for his briefing today and for the European Union's important work in the Central African Republic. To Special Representative Matondo, I say that we appreciate the African Union's efforts, alongside those of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and MINUSCA, to pursue accountability and prevent reprisals following the May massacres in Lemouna and Koundjili. The United States condemns those horrific, premeditated attacks, which were flagrant violations of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, of 6 February.

We take note of and appreciate the role of the Government of the Central African Republic, MINUSCA, the African Union and ECCAS in securing the handover of the three suspects and stopping the spread of violence. We call on the Retour, réclamation et rehabilitation armed group that conducted the attacks to hand over additional perpetrators, dismantle its bases and barriers in the area of the attack and demobilize and disarm immediately. The peace agreement is the Central African Republic's best prospect for ending violence and achieving lasting peace and security. There must be accountability for violations of the agreement.

Despite those troubling attacks, there has been noteworthy progress since February. We welcome the momentum in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) process, including the receipt of many armed groups' lists of

candidates for DDRR and the work of MINUSCA's first mobile demobilization team with the Revolution et justice-Sayo armed group in Bouar. That work, including proper vetting for former armed-group members, is essential because Central Africans will trust their national military and mixed brigades to protect them only when they are confident that those soldiers are indeed committed to protecting, and not targeting, civilians.

Central African Republic citizens told us in clear terms during the 2015 Bangui Forum that justice and accountability are high priorities. They are also priorities for the United States. We commend the signatories to the agreement for acknowledging the need for justice and accountability and for their work to establish the inclusive commission. We urge all parties to fully support and cooperate with the Special Criminal Court.

The United States is watching the situation in the Central African Republic and the progress towards implementation of the peace agreement closely. We are committed both to ensuring that the signatories to the peace agreement keep their word and to applying consequences both through United States domestic authorities and the Security Council for individuals and groups undermining the agreement. We hope that we will not need to resort to such mechanisms. Instead, we urge the parties to the agreement and all partners to work to advance the many signs of hope for the Central African Republic. That means participating fully in the executive follow-up committee, holding the individuals or groups that have violated the terms of the peace agreement accountable and pursuing justice for those responsible for mass atrocities.

We look forward to continuing to work with the United Nations, the African Union, ECCAS and other partners in pursuit of the faithful implementation of the peace agreement and the lasting peace and security that the signatories can bring to the people of the Central African Republic as a result.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers. I thought their briefings today were particularly insightful and clear.

While it is good to hear that security has broadly improved in some areas over the past six months, I would like to start by offering my condolences to the families of those killed in the attacks by members of the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group near

Paoua on 21 May. That kind of violence, perpetrated by members of armed groups that are signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, demonstrates a flagrant disregard for the integrity of the peace process. The United Kingdom fully supports the peace process in the Central African Republic, just as we supported the African Union-led peace agreement on which it is founded. I again congratulate the African Union on its leadership and ongoing work. It is vital that we all send our clear and unambiguous backing for the peace agreement and the peace process. With coordinated and sustained international support, especially from the region, the Central African Republic can achieve long-lasting peace and stability. We call on all the armed groups to cease all forms of violence and engage in the implementation of the peace agreement.

We also reiterate the Secretary-General's call to reinforce local peace and reconciliation committees, which offer agency to women, members of civil society, religious leaders and young people. As we know from many of the conflicts discussed in this Chamber, an inclusive peace agreement is more likely to be a sustainable one. It is vital that the Central African people feel ownership of the peace agreement and its implementation. We need to see a better understanding of the peace process take shape, taking into account the views and needs of Central Africans.

There can be no peace without justice. I am afraid that incitements to violence, including on religious and ethnic grounds, and attacks on civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers will continue if the perpetrators are not held to account. Again, as we have seen in so many conflicts, accountability is vital if the people of the Central African Republic are to see peace and stability in their country. The United Kingdom recognizes the efforts by the Government of the Central African Republic, together with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Development Programme, to bring some of the perpetrators of serious crimes to account. In particular, we welcome the progress made in establishing the Special Criminal Court and initiating the first investigations. We note that the Court is conducting a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of its mandate. But more has to be done, and we urge the Central African Republic to work with the international community to expedite progress on

transitional justice, which is an essential component of peace and stability.

More than one in four Central Africans are displaced and half of the population is in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. The United Kingdom is committed to supporting the humanitarian effort in the Central African Republic and since 2014 has provided more than \$140 million in funding in that regard. In 2018, however, only 36 per cent of the humanitarian response plan was funded. A stable, secure and peaceful Central African Republic continues to be in all of our interests and we encourage all Member States to help fill the gap.

The United Kingdom fully supports the work of MINUSCA and is committed to working with the Security Council in support of MINUSCA's stabilization mandate. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that there should be a renewed focus on the peace process, with MINUSCA's participation, and that more responsibility should be taken by the guarantors and facilitators of the peace agreement. Enhanced United Nations political engagement will support political, peacebuilding and security efforts in the Central African Republic. Today I want to pay tribute to all the work done by MINUSCA and send our thanks, via the Special Representative, to those who represent the Council in blue on the ground. However, we should also be communicating clearly with the people of the Central African Republic in order to show them and help them understand how much MINUSCA is delivering for them.

In conclusion, the international community and the Government of the Central African Republic are making progress towards implementing key elements of the peace agreement. But there is much at stake. We must continue to focus on building peace and stability and creating the conditions for safe and credible elections in 2020, which will help us achieve the long-term protection and prosperity that the people of the Central African Republic deserve.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's warm congratulations to Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye on his appointment as 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 (MINUSCA). I thank him for the excellent

quality of his briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic and assure him of Côte d'Ivoire's full support in fulfilling his duties. We would also like to thank Mr. Matias Bertino Matondo, African Union Special Representative, and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service, for their in-depth briefings. Lastly, we welcome the participation of Ambassador Ambroisine Kpongo, Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

The signing on 6 February of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic represents a genuine source of hope for the Central African people and the international community. It can be seen as a prelude to the restoration of lasting peace, security and stability in our brother country, despite the multiple challenges that are the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report (S/2019/498).

Among the challenges to be met, we note the reluctance of armed groups to translate commitments to which they freely subscribed into concrete action, a reluctance that is demonstrated by, among other things, the continuation of illegal activities contrary to the spirit of the peace agreement across a large part of the national territory, including all kinds of trafficking, the levy of illegal taxes, the creation of obstacles to the restoration of State institutions and violence against civilians. In that regard, my delegation condemns the recent violence perpetrated by armed groups in the north-west of the country, as well as the attacks on schools, hospitals, humanitarian personnel and the joint patrols of MINUSCA and the Central African Armed Forces. In its capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire notes that those serious acts correspond perfectly to the designation criteria for persons or armed groups to be sanctioned, in accordance with the relevant provisions of resolution 2399 (2018).

However worrying they may be, these challenges should not overshadow the significant progress that has been made in operationalizing the peace agreement, including the creation of mechanisms to promote the implementation of its relevant provisions. We were pleased to see the establishment of monitoring and implementation mechanisms at the national and regional levels, the inauguration on 15 May of the executive follow-up committee, the establishment

of a legal framework for the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité and the recent deployment of the Central African Armed Forces in Kaga Bandoro.

Côte d'Ivoire believes that protecting civilians is an absolute priority. We therefore encourage the Government and the signatories to the peace agreement to continue their efforts to implement the provisions relating to the Constitution and the operationalization of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité as quickly as possible. That should also include implementing the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme and restoring State authority throughout the national territory.

Besides this, in view of the persistent challenges, it is urgent that the international community, the friends of the Central African Republic and the facilitators and guarantors of the peace agreement, that is, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, combine their efforts to achieve the full implementation of the agreement. In that regard, we commend the joint mission to Bangui in April of the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations aimed at generating international support for the peace agreement.

Subregional cooperation should also play an active role in all initiatives to restore peace and stability to the Central African Republic, through mechanisms such as the mixed commissions for cooperation among the States of the region. The mixed commissions have the advantage of serving as appropriate frameworks for developing joint solutions to common political, security and humanitarian challenges. My delegation welcomed the relaunch on 6 May of the mixed commission for cooperation between Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

We want to emphasize the importance of national ownership, an inclusive peace process and accountability in the process of emerging from the crisis, and we therefore commend the creation of local peace and reconciliation committees. We also encourage the involvement of civil society, including women and young people, in the process, in line with the recommendations of the International Support Group on the Central African Republic. In that regard, my delegation is pleased with the start of public consultations aimed at establishing the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission, as provided for in the peace agreement.

Preserving the achievements of the peace agreement undoubtedly depends on the holding of peaceful elections in 2020 and 2021. All Central African political and social actors should contribute to fostering a peaceful atmosphere, without which free, transparent and inclusive elections are impossible.

We commend MINUSCA on its important participation in the Central African Republic peace efforts, and it should continue to play an active role with the range of tools at its disposal. In that regard, we concur with the concerns of the Government of the Central African Republic and its international partners about the limited scope of MINUSCA's mandate for electoral support, and we will be interested to see the Secretary-General's recommendations on that issue.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate Côte d'Ivoire's full support for MINUSCA and for President Touadera, whose commendable efforts, leadership and determined personal commitment should contribute to the return of lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

Ms. Tshabalala (South Africa): We thank Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, and Mr. Matias Matondo, African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic, for their briefings on the situation in the Central African Republic.

I would like to raise three key issues in response to the briefings today, regarding political developments, the negative activities of some armed groups and the role of the region and the international community in the Central African Republic.

At the outset, we reiterate our support for the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and welcome the progress that has been registered since its signing four months ago. We fully support the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, especially the role played by the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In that regard, South Africa commends the cooperation between Ambassador Mr. Smaïl Chergui, the African Union Commissioner

for Peace and Security, Special Representative Ndiaye and Ambassador Adolphe Nahayo of ECCAS on initiating consultations among the signatories to the political agreement in order to resolve the political stalemate and avert the nascent political agreement's potential collapse. We reject any external interference or attempts by anyone to fight their own regional issues by using Africa as a playing field at the expense of African lives.

We are encouraged by the national efforts aimed at promoting peace, including the adoption of the electoral code establishing the legal framework for the elections in 2020 and 2021, the signing of a peace deal in Bria by six armed groups and the creation of 26 peace and reconciliation committees in various prefectures. We are also encouraged by the progress registered within the inter-ministerial committee for the follow-up of the sanctions regime in the Central African Republic, whereby the Government has elaborated a work plan for monitoring and following up the implementation of the benchmarks, demonstrating its political will with regard to progressively easing the sanctions regime.

It is our considered view that if fully implemented, the political agreement will assist the Government of the Central African Republic in focusing on its quest for economic and social recovery by addressing the existing gaps in the State's authority and, most fundamentally, the capacity of the security sector to protect the people of the Central African Republic, the country and its borders.

South Africa notes that the military confrontations that characterized the peak of the transhumance period in late 2018 subsided during the period under review. However, some armed groups continued activities that violate the provisions of the political agreement, including attacks on civilians, peacekeepers, United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers, and that continues to be a concern for my delegation. We commend the efforts of MINUSCA and the Central African Armed Forces in addressing the threat posed by those groups, which have improved the security situation in some areas. We also recognize the role of women as essential agents of peace in the broader nationwide reconciliation efforts. We call on all signatories to refrain from acts that jeopardize the spirit and letter of the political agreement and to commit to the political process as a whole.

Continued cooperation and coordination between the AU, ECCAS, the United Nations, the European Union and all other bilateral and multilateral partners within the International Support Group of the Central African Republic remain important for the country's security and development. That cooperation is critical to ensuring the successful implementation of the political agreement and the Central African Republic's national recovery and peacebuilding plan. We commend the critical role that MINUSCA has played in bringing peace, stability and development to the Central African Republic. South Africa supports MINUSCA's continued presence in the country and underscores the importance of strengthening the Mission's resources so that it can discharge its mandate effectively.

The prevailing situation in the Central African Republic provides the United Nations with a significant opportunity to align and synchronize its peacekeeping with the peacebuilding activities of the European External Action Service peacebuilding activities. In that regard, there should be greater involvement and prioritization of development and recovery activities on the part of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. In that context, we want to thank the configuration's Chair, Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco, for his good work in helping the Central African Republic authorities to address their challenges. The Security Council should also address the ongoing illegal exploitation and trade of the Central African Republic's natural resources.

We are of the firm view that it is imperative for the international community, through the United Nations, the AU, ECCAS and international partners, to continue to maintain solidarity with the people of the Central African Republic and provide it with the political, financial and other support it needs to ensure that there is no reversal of the gains made so far. We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's next report on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of MINUSCA, especially his recommendations on the scope of MINUSCA's electoral mandate.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank Mr. Matias Bertino Matondo, African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic, Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, and Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye,

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the information they have provided on the current situation in the Central African Republic. I am also glad to see the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic, Ambassador Kpongo, here today.

Equatorial Guinea is very pleased that during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/498) not only did the signatories commit to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed on 6 February in Bangui between the Government of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups, but progress was also made in implementing the agreement. An inclusive Government was created in which leaders of armed groups were appointed to key advisory positions that are crucial to the presidency, the Prime Minister's Cabinet and prefectures and sub-prefectures.

In Equatorial Guinea we feel the problems that are affecting our Central African brothers as if they were our own, which is why we particularly welcome the recent positive and promising advances in the country following the signing of the agreement. Equatorial Guinea is ready to assist the Central African Republic during this process. While there are reasons to be optimistic that this agreement will be different, it is still important to consolidate it with secure governmental measures that focus on peace, security, justice, economic recovery, good governance, social cohesion and humanitarian action.

Where our brother people of Central Africa are concerned, one thing is certain, that justice is an essential component of the peace process. That is why we commend the Government, which, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), has promoted the creation of 26 peace and reconciliation committees in various cities around the country, such as Bangassou, Bouar and Bria, to name only a few. Their objective is to promote peace processes at the local level and to support the national reconciliation campaign, as provided for in the agreement, since it is important to ensure that the population is a legitimate actor in the full implementation of the peace process rather than continuing to be merely a witness to it.

We welcome the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to improve bilateral relations between the Central African Republic and its neighbours, including my own country, and we call on

all the countries of the region to further strengthen and support their brother country by helping it to launch commercial strategies that will promote its development in various areas. However, we regret that advances such as these are being diminished by the arbitrary violence being inflicted by some armed groups, such as the incident of 21 May in which combatants from Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation killed 42 people, mostly civilians, in several villages near the city of Paoua. Equatorial Guinea firmly condemns those attacks and hopes that the perpetrators will not go unpunished. We therefore commend the launch of inclusive consultations on establishing the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission, in accordance with the requests of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation. The humanitarian situation remains fragile, owing to general insecurity, a weak Government presence and poor infrastructure, which make it difficult for civilians and humanitarian workers to carry out their normal activities.

Before I conclude, I would like to express Equatorial Guinea's congratulations to President Faustin Touadera of the Central African Republic on his leadership and firm commitment to the peace agreement. We continue to urge the armed groups to comply with their commitments. Lastly, we welcome the important contribution made by the African Union and ECCAS as the guarantors of the political agreement, as well as the support of MINUSCA and the other United Nations agencies and other international actors that are contributing to the Central African process.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): I would first like to thank our briefers: the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mr. Matondo and Mr. Vervaeke for their very comprehensive and enlightening briefings. And perhaps I should start by saying how strongly we support MINUSCA and the Special Representative's work, which are indispensable and much appreciated.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2019/498) and its observations. To name only a few, they include, first, the importance of the full commitment of all parties to the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed on 6 February, and the important role of the African Union and the region; secondly, deep

concerns about the ongoing violence and the disastrous humanitarian situation, and the condemnation of the attacks on civilians and humanitarian aid workers; and thirdly, the concrete steps taken by the Government of the Central African Republic in implementing the peace accord.

The peace agreement signed on 6 February is a light at the end of the tunnel. At the same time, it is also true that the situation in the Central African Republic, in terms of political developments, security and the humanitarian situation, continues to be very fragile. The peace agreement has not yet changed those fundamentals, and that is why we call on all actors in the Central African Republic, the region and the international community to help the Central African Republic in producing peace dividends quickly. To a great extent the success of the peace agreement will depend on that.

Germany remains committed to the issue, especially through its humanitarian efforts — we are the second-largest contributor in humanitarian terms — and its contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund. Like South Africa, we believe that the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund can play an important role in bringing sustainable peace to the Central African Republic.

We fully support the peace agreement and the political process and believe that they can bring peace to the Central African Republic. We commend all the parties involved at the national level, but also the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the whole region for their work in this process. It is important that all parties honour their obligations. The key is mustering the political will to cease fighting and engage in genuine and honest political dialogue. At the same time, the follow-up and monitoring mechanisms and the formation of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité will also be vital. We therefore call on all signatories and the international community to remain committed. Creating visible peace dividends is now absolutely crucial. The African Union and the Central African Republic's neighbours now have particular opportunities and also responsibilities. In particular, we welcome the holding of the first cooperation commission between the Central African Republic and Cameroon since 2010. We also very much encourage local peace initiatives and young people and women's active participation and inclusion

in them. We are encouraged by MINUSCA's efforts to promote intercommunal dialogue and de-escalation at the local level.

At the same time, we welcome the Government of the Central African Republic's efforts to push implementation of the peace accord ahead with concrete measures, such as consultations on the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission. We encourage the authorities to actively pursue the formation of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, along with disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation efforts and the vetting of former combatants. Questions of accountability will be crucial to the peace process. We should also strengthen communication efforts to educate the population about the next steps of the implementation of the peace agreement.

I will now say a few words about the situation on the ground. Despite some positive developments following the peace agreement, we remain very concerned about the ongoing violence and attacks on civilians, such as the attacks by the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation movement in Paoua in May. We strongly condemn those killings, and especially the attacks committed by rebel groups that were signatories to the peace agreement. We call on the authorities of the Central African Republic, supported by MINUSCA, to investigate rebel attacks and hold perpetrators accountable. Monitoring mechanisms will remain key to effective implementation, and bolstering the national justice system and the Special Criminal Court will be crucial to ending impunity and ensuring sustainable peace and institutional trust.

Before I conclude, I have a few final comments to make on the humanitarian situation, which unfortunately remains disastrous and of great concern to us, especially for internally displaced persons and refugees. A quarter of the population is displaced. Women and children, as is so often the case, are suffering the most. The international community must do more. Right now, the funding for the humanitarian response plan is only at approximately 30 per cent. We strongly condemn the violence against humanitarian aid workers and call on all parties to respect their status and protection against attacks.

In conclusion, we reiterate MINUSCA's important role in protecting civilians, especially women,

facilitating the delivery of basic services and monitoring human rights violations.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Ndiaye, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic; Mr. Matondo, African Union Special Representative; and Mr. Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa at the European Union External Action Service, for their briefings.

On 6 February, the parties to the conflict in the Central African Republic signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which represents an important, indeed historic opportunity for the peace process in the country. Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the agreement during the past four months. China appreciates the firm political will that President Touadera has shown in leading the peace process and the measures he has taken to implement the agreement, including the establishment of the follow-up monitoring mechanisms at the national and prefectural levels. The 26 peace and reconciliation committees established with the help of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) have helped to effectively enhance mutual trust among the signatories to the agreement and to prevent and mitigate conflicts.

At the same time, the Central African Republic is still facing challenges on the security, political, humanitarian and other fronts. China is concerned about the violence that some armed groups continue to perpetrate and urges all the parties to keep the overall interests of the country and the people in mind, abide by their commitments under the agreement and cease actions that threaten the safety and security of civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. China supports the countries of the region and regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, in bringing influence to bear on the situation. We encourage the parties in the Central African Republic to continue their political dialogue, jointly promote the implementation of the agreement and fully participate in the follow-up monitoring mechanisms.

MINUSCA has played an important role in promoting peace and stability in the country. China supports Special Representative Ndiaye and MINUSCA in actively performing their duties. We

expect MINUSCA to continue to help the Government of the Central African Republic enhance its governance capacity, promote security-sector reform and implement the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

Long-term stability in the Central African Republic cannot be achieved without the continuing support of the United Nations, the African Union, countries of the region and international partners. All parties should provide assistance tailored to the needs and situation on the ground and on a basis of respect for the ownership of the Government of the Central African Republic. The Central African Republic will hold presidential and legislative elections at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, which will be a crucial step for the country in moving towards peace. The United Nations should enhance its communication and coordination with the Government of the Central African Republic, assist it with its preparations for the elections and continue to create conditions conducive to a resolution of the issues in the Central African Republic as soon as possible.

Mrs. Van Vlierberge (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would first to thank the briefers for their informative and detailed briefings. Today I would like to emphasize three issues — the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, national ownership and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

We welcome the political agreement and support the political process, which is the only acceptable solution to the crisis in the country. Central Africans have had enough of the violence, and that message must be heard by the leaders of the armed groups, which are signatories to the agreement and must respect their commitments. That means ending the violence and the cycle of retaliation that led to the recent massacre in Paoua, which we firmly condemn. Those responsible must be brought to justice. The armed groups must also cease their predatory activities and human rights violations, such as the recruitment of children, and the movements of unauthorized troops, and they must realize that serious violations of the agreement will not be without consequences.

We welcome the establishment of the prefectural implementation committees and the technical security committees, which are encouraging signs of the

commitment of the parties. The operationalization of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité is a major challenge. Given the magnitude of that endeavour, it is fortunate that the European Union can provide financial support without any delay.

With regard to national ownership, the Central African authorities naturally have a role to play in the implementation of the agreement. Belgium welcomed the launch on 15 June of the national implementation committee. The national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is crucial in assisting with the dissolution of armed groups. The lack of access to health services, education, economic development opportunities and justice, and above all security, jeopardize ownership of the peace agreement by the Central Africans, especially those living outside the capital. Fortunately, the Central African Republic does not have to face those challenges alone. It can count on the support of the international community, including the European Union. It should also rely on the guarantors of the political agreement, such as the countries of the region, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union. We encourage President Touadera to use his contacts to forge strong partnerships with neighbouring countries, including by re-activating the mixed commissions.

With respect to justice, we believe that the fight against impunity is not at odds with the implementation of the political agreement. The fact is that the quest for justice is part and parcel of the reconciliation process.

Lastly, it must be recognized that MINUSCA is also facing major challenges. The very serious incidents that have occurred in the past few months have shown that its mandate for the protection of civilians is painfully relevant. Apart from overseeing the deployment of the Central African Armed Forces, MINUSCA must now also supervise the deployment of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité. We believe that it will be important to consider enhancing logistical deployment support for MINUSCA. MINUSCA also has a crucial role to play in exercising its good offices and providing support for the peace process, the expansion of State authority and security-sector reform. Good cooperation among all partners of the Central African Republic is key to success, and we believe that MINUSCA can contribute to that unity. The approaching elections are another factor that must be taken into account in the peace process. We call on the political leaders of the Central African Republic to refrain from reviving tensions

among communities for electoral purposes. We believe that MINUSCA will have a major support role to play in the organization of the elections.

In conclusion, I would like to commend Special Representative Ndiaye for his energetic approach to his work. I can assure him of Belgium's full support.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, and the briefers for their valuable briefings. We would particularly like to welcome Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, the newly appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, and to wish him every success in his work.

We want to begin by underscoring the commitment and efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic in implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, which shows that Central Africans are determined to put an end to more than five years of conflict. We are encouraged by the recent progress made in the political arena, such as the formation of an inclusive Government, the establishment of monitoring and implementation mechanisms and the signing of reconciliation agreements at the intercommunal level. Nonetheless, we reiterate that the peace agreement's true impact will be in its full implementation. Its results must lead to tangible improvements in the country's security and socioeconomic development, as well as in the serious humanitarian situation. We would like to mention some aspects that we believe should be prioritized in that context.

First, on the political front, it is essential to ensure as soon as possible that the relevant authorities can complete the drafting of an electoral code that provides the guarantees and legal framework for preparing and holding the presidential, legislative, regional and municipal elections in 2020 and 2021. It is also vital that the Government of the Central African Republic work for gradual decentralization, which has the potential to promote the country's development, starting with the involvement of communities that have been marginalized by the conflict. We also reiterate the importance of implementing a gender parity law, which is an effective way to ensure that Central African women can play a key role, together with young people, in determining the kind of society they wish to build.

Secondly, with regard to security, we are concerned about the fact that the signatory armed groups continue

to violate various provisions of the agreement, and we believe that the Government should consider possible measures to counter such conduct. We consider it particularly important to address the difficulties of redeploying the national defence and internal security forces throughout the territory of the Central African Republic, since they are needed to tackle the ongoing violence against the civilian population, illegal taxation and the obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian aid. We want to commend President Touadera's establishment of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité and to emphasize the importance of continuing to work to accelerate the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

Thirdly, with respect to development, it is vital to work to provide basic social services and establish infrastructure across the national territory. The peace agreement places particular emphasis on recovery and development programmes to complement the political and security reforms. We welcome the efforts made to align the implementation of the agreement with the national recovery and peacebuilding plan. At the same time, we consider it essential to work towards establishing the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission, which by ensuring access to justice and accountability will make it possible to assist victims of sexual violence and address the issue of the recruitment of children by armed groups, among other things.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the participation of the African Union, the various subregional and regional bodies, neighbouring countries and the United Nations in seeking to overcome the crisis in the Central African Republic and reach a solution to it. We hope that the recent peace agreement will be the first step in the joint effort to achieve sustainable peace in that country.

Mr. Repkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic. We listened with interest to all of today's briefers and their assessments of the situation in the country.

We agree that the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed on 6 February, is an important starting point towards the eventual resolution of the situation in the country. The Government and armed groups should

take advantage of that window of opportunity, and the international community should render them every assistance. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has an important role to play in this context. We realize that the Blue Helmets' task is not an easy one, given the size of the country, the logistical problems and the fragile security situation. The Mission can of course count on our support.

We see signs of progress in the efforts to overcome the crisis and move towards national reconciliation. The most important thing right now is to make the process as inclusive as possible, ensure a balanced approach and take the interests of all stakeholders in the Central African issue into account. We support President Touadera's efforts aimed at conducting a political dialogue, carrying out speedy reforms of the security sector, improving the capacity of the armed forces and expanding State institutions throughout the country. We agree that it is important to combat impunity, but the approach to that should be a carefully ordered one and subordinate to the goal of national reconciliation. The issues of transitional justice and amnesties should be addressed at the national level. Support mechanisms must not undermine the progress towards a settlement.

Another important issue is the implementation of the idea of forming so-called Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité for ensuring security in the areas controlled by armed groups. We believe that realizing initiative will make a significant contribution to the reintegration of combatants and generally benefit national reconciliation. We hope that MINUSCA will provide the necessary assistance in that regard.

We are ready to actively participate in the work of the multilevel monitoring mechanisms to follow up on the implementation of the Political Agreement. We intend to support the work of the provincial peace and reconciliation committees and the technical security committees in using peace volunteers and civil-society representatives to raise awareness among the inhabitants of the Central African Republic's northern and north-eastern provinces regarding the content, implementation and impact of the peace agreement.

Russia is making a significant contribution to strengthening the combat capacity of the Central African Republic's security forces. At the request of the country's leadership, we are providing Bangui with free military and technical assistance. In 2018, with the

permission of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, the Russian Ministry of Defence sent small arms and ammunition to the Central African army. Preparations are currently under way for a second shipment of military material. With the Committee's knowledge, Russian instructors have been officially dispatched to Bangui to assist in training Central African military personnel. On 27 April in Berengo the seventh graduation of the Central African Armed Forces, a 318-strong marine amphibious battalion, was attended by the country's leadership and representatives of the diplomatic corps. The number of national armed force troops trained by Russian instructors now totals 2,236, 126 of them officers, and the Central African Republic's leadership has repeatedly praised their combat readiness.

During their time in the Central African Republic, Russian specialists have been carrying out a number of measures aimed at normalizing the humanitarian and social situation of the population, creating conditions conducive to establishing an interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue. Three hospitals have been set up in the cities of Bria, Ouadda and Mbaiki, with each treating 300 patients a month and providing humanitarian assistance to all in need. We organized a humanitarian convoy of more than 15 trucks from Khartoum to Bangui through remote and inaccessible areas of the Central African Republic. Russian representatives have visited the Muslim enclave near the main mosque in Bangui several times to distribute humanitarian assistance to low-income families and help with funerals. In the cities of Berengo and Bria we have provided assistance for rebuilding prayer houses. We have organized more than 10 round tables on peacebuilding issues in the Central African Republic and conducted joint football training for athletes from Christian and Muslim communities. We will continue to provide comprehensive assistance to the Central African Republic and work actively to establish lasting peace in the country. We are ready to coordinate our efforts with all who are involved in seeking to normalize the situation without hidden agendas.

Ms. Morrison González (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the briefers for their presentations today and for their efforts in support of peace and security in the Central African Republic.

The Dominican Republic commends the Government and the armed groups for overcoming their differences in order to achieve the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and for joining their efforts, together with civil society, to take concrete steps in the initial phase of implementing the Political Agreement, as evidenced by the formation of an inclusive Government. We commend the representatives of the communities for conducting intercommunal dialogues and concluding intercommunal reconciliation agreements aimed at ending hostilities, promoting peaceful dialogue and ensuring freedom of movement. We would also like to acknowledge the steps taken to implement the agreement and the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission, the African Union, the European Union and the Government of the Central African Republic to mobilize international support for the political agreement.

We welcome the adoption of the electoral code, which constitutes the legal framework for the presidential, legislative, regional and municipal elections to be held in 2020 and 2021. We hope that the code will be enacted, and we welcome the Constitutional Court's readiness to comply with the parity law, which provides for a minimum representation of 35 per cent of women in State and private institutions during a 10-year transition period. In that spirit, we hope to see a similar minimum representation level set for young people in recognition of their potential to transform societies.

We are concerned about the security situation in the country, where some armed groups that are signatories to the agreement have been committing acts of violence with a view to winning new concessions in the peace process. We urge them to cease all destabilizing actions and to surrender their weapons, as laid down in the peace agreement, and further urge them to submit the remaining lists of their combatants so that they can be considered for the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme.

We deplore the prevailing dire humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, where we continue to see unacceptable obstacles to humanitarian access and violations of human rights. We call on all the parties to the conflict to guarantee full, security, sustainable and unhindered humanitarian access to the United Nations and its humanitarian partners, including child protection advocates, in order to enable

humanitarian assistance to be provided to the affected populations as quickly as possible.

We commend the efforts of the Government and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to facilitate consultations on the legislative framework of the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission, which is so important to transitional justice. We also want to highlight the establishment of the legal framework of the *Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité*, composed of members of the national defence and security forces and eligible members of the demobilized and disarmed armed groups, whose deployment is necessary for the reduction of violence in the Central African Republic.

Despite the challenging realities facing the Central African Republic, the current political landscape also represents a unique opportunity. We therefore urge all political actors to put aside their differences and see this moment of transition as an opportunity to face the country's current challenges together. Consultations must continue through intercommunal dialogue and reconciliation at the local level, based on the provisions of the national agreement, in order to provide Central Africans with the stability and lasting peace they all deserve.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge and support the role played by MINUSCA, the African Union and all the actors that are working hand in hand with the Central African Republic in order to achieve lasting peace and stability.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): I would first like to join others in thanking the briefers for their updates. As this is the first time that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye has briefed the Council, I want to welcome him and offer him the full support of my delegation. I will focus my comments on three pertinent points.

First, the international community should increase its support for the Central African Republic. We join the Secretary-General in welcoming the important progress that has been made in the initial four months since the February signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We note from the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/498) the progress made by the Government in a number of areas, ranging from facilitating the conditions for the sustainable return of internally displaced persons to the

launching of popular consultations on the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission. We also note President Touadera's leadership in his commitment to dialogue and willingness to seek compromise in the pursuit of peace. It should serve as a source of encouragement for the international community, as it testifies to the fact that its partnership and support has borne fruit. We can use that momentum to further support the Central African Republic.

Despite a number of encouraging developments and progress following the peace agreement, we remain deeply concerned about various violations of the agreement by some armed groups. We strongly believe that they must be seriously addressed in order not to jeopardize the implementation of the peace agreement, which is still in its infancy.

Secondly, the Council should support the work of regional and subregional organizations in the region. In that regard, we recognize the important efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States and other regional and subregional organizations such as the European Union. We also welcome the efforts of the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and the United Nations, through the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, in garnering international support for the peace agreement. The fact is that partnership is key. We encourage regional organizations and the United Nations, as well as other stakeholders, to continue their collaboration, and call for the international community to provide its support. We also recognize the role of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in providing a bird's-eye view of the region and liaising with neighbouring Governments. To that end, we welcome Special Representative Fall's report to the Council earlier this month (S/2019/430) on the overview of the situation in the region.

Thirdly, after hearing the updates from the briefers, we believe it is clear that the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is more important than ever. The Mission's work is crucial to security-sector reform in the country, and its work on justice and the rule of law provide the necessary technical support for investigations by local authorities. Those are two important tools in enabling the Government to protect its people. In order to enhance MINUSCA's effectiveness, peacekeepers should also be able to win the hearts and minds of the locals and

protect civilians. To that end, we once again emphasize the importance of training and capacity-building for peacekeepers, including enabling them to use the tools of mediation, negotiation and community engagement.

For its part, Indonesia currently contributes 214 military personnel to MINUSCA, including an engineering company that we have deployed since 2013. We are also increasing our contribution by providing 140 police officers in a formed police unit. We should preserve the momentum sparked by the peace agreement, support its implementation and continue to monitor its progress. Let this peace agreement be the last and ultimate agreement that will serve as a bridge to peace.

Mr. Zawieja (Poland): I would like to begin by thanking our briefers for their comprehensive briefings today.

Poland appreciates the progress made so far in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We fully support all the efforts of the Central African Republic authorities, which are a testament to their leadership and sense of responsibility.

We nevertheless remain seriously concerned about the persistent violence against the civilian population and other significant violations of the agreement by armed groups, including illegal taxation and obstructing the deployment of State institutions. Poland strongly condemns attacks on the people of the Central African Republic, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. We call on all armed groups to immediately cease the violence against civilians, honour their obligations and ensure the full implementation of the agreement. We also call for the continued constructive engagement of stakeholders in the region, notably the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, as well as the Central African Republic's neighbours.

A peace agreement is critically important, but the process will not be complete without the holding of credible and inclusive elections in late 2020 and early 2021. Poland commends the Government of the Central African Republic for initiating preparations for the elections, and we call on the National Assembly to swiftly finalize its work on the electoral code, including respect for the gender parity law, as decided by the Constitutional Court. The inclusivity of the process, especially for women and young people, will contribute

significantly to the success of the initiative and the normalization of the situation in the longer term.

The reconciliation process should be conducted in parallel with the strengthening and deployment of the State's authority throughout the country, as well as the delivery of basic services. We call on the legislative institutions of the Central African Republic to accelerate their work on necessary political reforms, including the laws on decentralization and on the status of former Heads of State, as well as the bill on political parties. It will be impossible to promote peace without a functioning justice system. Poland welcomes the launch of consultations for the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission. However, the transitional justice process and the fight against impunity must be significantly accelerated if the basic aspirations of Central African society are to be met. Poland supports the plans to reinforce local peace and reconciliation committees as part of broader nationwide reconciliation efforts to overcome intercommunal tensions, and welcomes the fact that women play such an important role in those processes.

The redeployment of the national security forces remains a key component in the restoration of State authority. We appreciate the work being done by the European Union Training Mission to enhance the capacities of the Central African Armed Forces. At the same time, the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to the redeployment of the security forces of the Central African Republic remains indispensable. The Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité are also an essential element of the peace agreement as one of its confidence-building measures, but they cannot succeed without the prior vetting of combatants, comprehensive disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and training processes and the establishment of a clear chain of command.

In conclusion, the political agreement should be not just a promise of normalization for the people of the Central African Republic but also an actual platform for dialogue among the authorities, armed groups and civil society, with a view to preventing further conflict, de-escalating tensions and building trust. Poland calls on all the stakeholders on the ground, as well as regional and international partners, to work constructively together for a better future for the people of the Central African Republic. We commend

the important work being done by MINUSCA, the European Union Training Mission and other partners in the Central African Republic. I would like to assure Mr. Ndiaye and his team of our full support.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

At the outset we would very much like to thank our briefers, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Mr. Matias Bertino Matondo and Mr. Koen Vervaeke. I will focus my statement on three basic issues.

The first is the political developments and the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The most important development since the last official meeting of the Security Council in February to discuss the situation in the Central African Republic (S/PV.8467) was the signing of the political agreement between the Government and 14 armed groups. Like all the previous speakers, I would like to say how much we welcomed the signing of the agreement on 6 February. The most important stage has gone beyond the mere signing of the Agreement, which has now been in place for more than four months, and represents the full commitment of the signatories to implementing all of its provisions. We would like to say how pleased we are that the 14 armed groups have sat down together with the Government to engage in dialogue and have begun talks following the signing of the Agreement.

We welcome the steps that President Touadera of the Central African Republic has taken to ensure that the Muslim community also shares ministerial positions and participates in the decision-making process. We also support his decision to engage women in forming the Government and call for those positive steps to continue in the future. We would like to pay tribute to another initiative of President Touadera, who joined the Muslim community during Eid Al-Fitr prayers in one of the mosques of the country's capital of Bangui. We urge all citizens of the Central African Republic to work together to promote peaceful coexistence between the various components of the society and to address the problem of hate speech so as to ensure that everyone can enjoy peace and security.

We welcome the steps taken by the Government to implement the main provisions of the political agreement, such as establishing technical committees in various regions and governorates, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), in order to bring together local authorities, civil society and representatives of armed groups in the quest to settle differences and prevent the outbreak of conflict. The National Assembly enacted the electoral law for 2020 and 2021 and a draft budget and timeline for the elections unanimously. We hope the elections will be held as scheduled without any delays.

The Government has also taken measures to foster cooperation with regional and international organizations such as the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, embodied in the visit to the Central African Republic in April of Mr. Smaïl Chergui, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, with the aim of mobilizing regional and international support for the political agreement.

Secondly, on the security situation, acts of violence against civilians in the Central African Republic still constitute a great challenge to the Government. Despite the signing of the agreement and the political progress that has been achieved, as well as the decline in violence in some areas, the security situation remains fragile in others. Looting and the illegal taxation of civilians persist. In that regard, we are very concerned about the repeated violations and aggressions by armed groups against United Nations staff, members of MINUSCA and humanitarian workers. We strongly condemn the attacks by the anti-balaka and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation groups on civilians, as well as other military groups, the latest of which was an attack by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation in May near the city of Paoua that killed 39 civilians, including one child. If such attacks continue they will undermine all the efforts put into reaching the political agreement and hinder the implementation of its main provisions. We urge the Government to take immediate steps to ensure that the perpetrators of acts of violence and crimes against civilians are held accountable and brought to justice with a view to maintaining security, establishing peace and ending impunity.

Thirdly, we deplore the very critical humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic. Millions of people, by some estimates half of the country's population, are still in dire need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The number of people who need assistance

and protection and suffer from food insecurity continues to rise, and it is very worrying that many of those who need assistance are children.

Before concluding, I would like to affirm that the only path to a resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic is a political dialogue among all the stakeholders. It was dialogue that produced the political progress that culminated on 6 February with the signing of the political agreement. If the dialogue can succeed in leading to a sustained consensus among all the country's political stakeholders, it will have a positive impact on the humanitarian, economic and development situations, as well as ensuring the return of internally displaced persons to their regions and of refugees from neighbouring countries.

We would like to express our appreciation for Mr. Ndiaye's efforts in the past few months since he took office as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, and for the efforts of all the Mission's personnel.

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

I give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2019/498). I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for his comprehensive presentation of the first report issued since the signing in Bangui on 6 February by the Government and 14 armed groups of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. I also want to thank all the other speakers for their informative and enlightening briefings and statements. My delegation supports them in every way.

We see from the report that security challenges and the protection of civilians continue to be a source of serious concern, although we had hoped that with the leaders of armed groups participating in political life, the situation would improve significantly. Unfortunately, the Paoua massacres have brought us back to sad reality. The Government's considerable efforts to implement the peace agreement are sufficient proof of its willingness to respect the commitments it outlines. The signatories have an obligation to respect what they have freely signed, which includes ceasing all acts of violence against the civilian population and others such as the levying of illegal taxes and the illicit exploitation of natural resources. However, as with any peace agreement, we need time to implement and effectively enforce it and for everyone to truly own it. I welcome the leading role of the guarantors of the agreement in being ready to intervene as soon as the need arises.

The humanitarian situation remains alarming, owing to the abuses suffered by the populations in areas where armed groups continue to operate despite MINUSCA's continuing security efforts. The facts described in this report illustrate how precarious the situation in my country is and suggest that the road to a lasting peace will be a long one. But with the support provided to MINUSCA and the Government by the international community and bilateral and international partners, the Central African people will be able to hope for a peaceful future. We are pleased with the comments in that regard in the report, and this is the right place to acknowledge the leadership of the Special Representative, who has spared no effort since taking office to advocate with countries and international institutions in order to mobilize and support the efforts under way, with a view to the upcoming elections. I wish the Council every success in its consultations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): 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 5.05 p.m.