



# Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

**8771**<sup>st</sup> meeting

Monday, 19 October 2020, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Nebenzia/Ms. Evstigneeva . . . . . (Russian Federation)

*Members:*

Belgium . . . . .	Mrs. Van Vlierberge
China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
Dominican Republic . . . . .	Mr. Singer Weisinger
Estonia . . . . .	Mr. Jürgenson
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Germany . . . . .	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia . . . . .	Mr. Syihab
Niger . . . . .	Mr. Aougi
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Mr. Brisbane
South Africa . . . . .	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Hunter
Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Dang

## Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2020/994)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Central African Republic**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2020/994)**

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2020/994, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ndiaye.

**Mr. Ndiaye** (*spoke in French*): Today, on the eve of the Council's deliberations on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), I am very pleased to be introducing the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2020/994). As members are aware, the presentation of this report is taking place at a crucial juncture for the men and women of the Central African Republic, who will be electing their President and deputies in a little over two months. This is a unique opportunity to leverage the democratic gains of the 2015 elections, consolidate constitutional order and pursue efforts to stabilize the country.

Twenty months after the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic between the Government and 14 armed groups, noteworthy progress has been achieved, particularly in the areas of political reform, the restoration of State authority and transitional justice. The peace agreement makes it possible to

provide a strategic framework for the promotion of an environment that enhances the physical protection of the population and better enables them to exercise their rights, especially their political and civic rights.

Since 2019, MINUSCA and the international partners of the Central African Republic have supported the efforts of stakeholders to draft an electoral code. Today the country has a computerized electoral roster, which was set up despite the health crisis and a number of technical, operational and security challenges. MINUSCA continues to work to ensure that all segments of Central African Republic society can participate in the elections in peace and a calm environment. In that spirit, we encourage refugee participation in the electoral process.

While taking note of the challenges that the Government faces, we continue to encourage the national authorities and neighbouring countries to pursue, with the help of the international community, efforts to create conditions conducive to the voluntary and dignified return of refugees and to ensure their full participation in the socioeconomic and political life of the country.

To date, the National Electoral Authority has an electoral roster of some 1,859,890 Central African Republic eligible voters in 16 prefectures around the country and 13 countries in the diaspora. I am pleased that the registration of women has reached 46 per cent. With the publication of the 14 October electoral list and the convening of the electoral body scheduled for 28 October, the Central African Republic is definitely on its way to holding successful elections, which requires the commitment of all actors and respect for the authority of the Constitutional Court, the sole arbiter of the elections.

We therefore urge all political actors, the media and other opinion leaders to refrain from disinformation campaigns and messages of stigmatization, which MINUSCA will document and present to the Council. Through concerted and coordinated efforts with the international community, MINUSCA is determined to facilitate three important elections. I invite the States Members of the United Nations to help the Central African Republic fill the financial gap. We are still short \$4 million for the basket fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme for the presidential and legislative elections, and some \$17.7 million for the

elections as a whole, including local elections planned for 2021.

Local elections will be critical for the development of local governance and the effective restoration of State authority, as well as the advent of decentralization and the restoration of the social contract between the State and the people it governs. They will make it possible for us to set in motion a gradual transfer of responsibilities back to the State.

The political situation remains tense. To date, there are 16 candidates for the presidency, including three women and the incumbent. The first electoral round is planned for 27 December. Some candidates have already cast doubt on the viability of the peace agreement and are even proposing to renegotiate it if elected. The main opposition coalition recently took over regional mechanisms in order to contest the legality of legislative reform adopting exemption provisions with respect to the electoral code.

However, those tensions have not jeopardized the possibility of holding elections in accordance with constitutional timelines. We must do more to encourage all candidates to adhere to a code of conduct to ensure peaceful elections and a peaceful electoral campaign in order to build confidence among all political actors and preserve the peace agreement.

I call on stakeholders to see the upcoming elections as an opportunity to consolidate the democratic process and politically transform the current crisis in the country with a view to reaching sustainable solutions. Through my good offices, I continue to encourage political dialogue in support of creating an environment conducive to the holding of inclusive, free, fair, transparent, credible and peaceful elections by engaging the international community, including the group of five plus, and Central African actors in Bangui. The coordinated and continuous support of international partners to stakeholders will be key to the success of the presidential and legislative elections.

The road to peace is slow and winding. Through a robust and deterrent posture, MINUSCA has been able to use force to open up a space for dialogue, which, together with the guarantors of the peace agreement, namely, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), has enabled voter registration to be brought back to life in the north-western region of the country. While significant, the progress in disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration, with 2,094 ex-combatants having been disarmed and demobilized, the establishment of two joint special security units, comprising 562 elements, in the west, and the redeployment of defence and security forces are reassuring in that they constitute the first steps towards the dissolution of armed groups, in accordance with the requirements of the peace agreement. We will need to accelerate the pace so as to better maximize the positive impact on the peace and security of the country.

MINUSCA continues to support the Government in implementing its strategy for the restoration of State authority, including by facilitating the deployment of local authorities and building their capacity. Recently, the presence these local authorities has enabled them to expand their role in the prevention of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the resolution of local conflicts, including those related to transhumance. The Mission's support in sequencing this deployment makes it possible to help with the gradual and sustainable return of local authorities so that they may serve the populations and provide the basic social services to which these populations are legitimately entitled.

I also welcome the establishment of the new European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic to support the country's security sector reform, which will strengthen the work of MINUSCA and such bilateral partners as France, Russia, the United States and China. We must encourage the Central African Government and all security sector reform partners to invest more and together in the democratic control and governance of the defence and security forces, which are factors of national cohesion.

We must continue to support the fight against impunity and for justice reform, the deployment of the criminal justice chain, the strengthening of judicial services and the demilitarization of the penitentiary system. In this regard, we must continue to provide technical and financial support to the Special Criminal Court. The Government's willingness to promote transitional justice also involves the operationalization of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation, which plays a critical role in national reconciliation by giving concrete expression to the legitimate aspiration of victims for justice, truth and reparation.

The predominance of elections and political activities should not overshadow the humanitarian

emergency in the country, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated the Central African Republic's socioeconomic vulnerabilities. The aim in this regard is to take into account the growing needs of the population and to provide the necessary support to humanitarian partners who provide vital assistance to more than 1.3 million people every month.

I condemn in the strongest possible terms attacks against humanitarian workers, which are all the more unacceptable as they have had the effect of aggravating the situation of people in need. In view of the increase in such attacks, MINUSCA will continue to take all measures necessary to protect not only civilians but also civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers. This is essential to promote the creation of conditions conducive to unhindered access to humanitarian assistance, including in the most remote areas. I appeal to the generosity of donors to continue funding the 2020 humanitarian response plan.

We must allow the people to express themselves through elections. Despite the fragility in some areas and the security situation, encouraging results have been achieved, thanks, *inter alia*, to the military operation launched by MINUSCA. One peacekeeper lost his life on 13 July. This crime will not go unpunished and will have to be investigated by the Central African justice system as soon as possible. I take this opportunity to pay the highest tribute to the peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace. Needs remain immense in the face of the security challenge, particularly in dealing with the danger of newly discovered landmines, particularly in the west of the country. With the signing of the integrated election security plan by the Prime Minister on 2 October, the Government and MINUSCA have adopted a harmonized approach to securing the electoral process throughout the country.

I wish to commend the foresight of the Security Council in giving MINUSCA a robust electoral mandate and adequate resources that will enable us to effectively assist in the presidential and legislative elections. It is now more than recommended that this same mandate be extended to the local elections, which have not been held in the Central African Republic since 1988. They are indispensable for grassroots democracy, local governance and the deployment of local authorities.

Despite the negative impact of the pandemic on our operations, MINUSCA has continued to implement its mandate. We currently have only four active cases in

the Mission — two civilian and two military — and evolving measures have been put in place to protect personnel and avoid transmission within our premises or to the population. On 30 September, all our personnel returned to duty. Indeed, MINUSCA is able to continue supporting the authorities in the fight against COVID-19, in particular through logistical and material assistance. Faced with the health crisis, we have also adapted the way we conduct our operation across the country.

I should like to conclude by thanking the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, the Prime Minister and all members of the Government for their efforts towards the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. I commend the contribution of the technical and financial partners of the Central African Republic. I welcome the high-quality work carried out by the group of five plus, the consultative framework that brings together, in addition to the United Nations, the United States, France, Russia, the European Union, the African Union and the World Bank.

The subregion's support has proven its effectiveness and complementarity with the Mission's actions. The forthcoming visit to the Central African Republic, from 27 to 30 October, of the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr. Smaïl Chergui; the ECCAS Chair, Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo; and the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, who invited the European Union to join the visit, is eagerly awaited. I would also like to take this opportunity to particularly thank the African Union and ECCAS for the continuous and assiduous monitoring of the implementation of the political agreement and for the excellent cooperation between these two institutions and the United Nations.

As I have said so many times, this imminent visit is welcome and very timely and will, I am sure, contribute to raising the awareness of all political and social actors of the need to create an environment of peace and serenity conducive to the smooth conduct of the presidential and legislative elections. I know that the people of the Central African Republic can, as in the past, count on the renewed unanimous support of the Security Council.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Chergui.

**Mr. Chergui** (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having scheduled this meeting to discuss a country that is dear to us, the Central African Republic.

As we are holding this meeting, the Central African Republic is entering a decisive phase for peace, stability and reconciliation, for which the mobilization of the international community has been remarkable. This was recently expressed during the virtual high-level ministerial meeting held on 1 October on the Central African Republic, on the margins of the seventy-fifth regular session of the General Assembly.

There have been some promising developments, and we hope that the people of the Central African Republic can take up the challenge of holding elections within the constitutional timelines and while implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

The progress in preparing for the elections is also significant. For example, since the adoption, on 23 September, of the law amending and complementing the new provisions of the electoral code, the National Electoral Authority has taken advantage of the additional time to reach voters on the ground and throughout the diaspora within a very limited time frame. We welcome the publication by the Authority of the electoral lists.

Almost 2 million voters, 97 per cent of the voting-age population, have already been registered. It can be said that the context seems favourable to the convening of the elections by 28 October by the Head of State, in accordance with the amending law.

Furthermore, we take note of the statement by the Government on the insurmountable obstacles facing refugees in terms of this election. We owe them an explanation for this, and attention must be given to the difficult circumstances that they face until they are able to return to their country.

With regard to the implementation of the political agreement, the African Union welcomes the joint mission organized by the facilitators and guarantors on 5 October in the north-west of the country. That mission helped to ease tensions in that part of the country and in the resumption of the suspended registration in the north-western communes, which will contribute to a more conducive environment for the holding of elections, in particular the deployment

of electoral operations in that area, to the benefit of the local population.

The African Union in particular welcomes the release of the two police officers who were taken hostage by the *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* movement and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the remaining hostage, who is still detained. The African Union also expects that the armed groups will continue to adopt a positive attitude to avert violence and tensions, because all efforts must be aimed more than ever towards implementing the peace agreement.

We have noted a significant decrease in the violence following the measures taken by MINUSCA and the Central African Armed Forces and the effective deployment of all State authorities across the national territory, with the support of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the initiative of the Government to adopt on 2 October, in coordination with the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, MINUSCA and the internal security forces, a security plan for the elections to ensure they are held peacefully and on schedule. As the elections approach, members of the opposition party and certain civil-society organizations have complained about a lack of consultation on subjects of concern that continue to fuel debate and disagreement, in particular refugee voting, the electoral timetable and the uptake of their functions by incoming members of the National Electoral Authority.

I would like to echo the words of my dear brother Mankeur and call on all the people of the Central African Republic to distance themselves from any appeal that risks jeopardizing the climate of peace, in particular, to steer clear of fake news and rumours; and to trust the Government and the international community, which is supporting the country during this extremely important period.

The African Union welcomes the latest developments on these issues, which yielded positive outcomes in building trust between the parties in the Central African Republic with the appointment on 14 October of 11 new members of the National Electoral Authority, who will take up their functions on 19 October. The African Union urges the Government and the Authority to expedite this process.



In that regard, we welcome the dialogue launched by President Faustin Archange Touadera and the efforts of the political class and civil society in the Central African Republic to maintain an ongoing dialogue, in accordance with the desire expressed by the Government to work with all stakeholders and with the support of the international community to maintain a climate of peace.

The holding of elections in accordance with the constitutional timelines and the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic must be a top priority for the Government and all political actors in the country since they are essential preconditions for the success of the national recovery and peacebuilding plan for the Central African Republic, which must be focused on social-impact projects.

With regard to what has been said about strengthening humanitarian assistance for those internally displaced by conflict and, now, the victims of the coronavirus disease pandemic, I believe that they deserve the strongest show of increased solidarity from the members of the Security Council.

We would also like to commend those countries of the subregion that have, either bilaterally or through ECCAS, continued to provide support for lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic. I also welcome the cooperation among various international organizations — the United Nations, the African Union, ECCAS and the European Union — and with other bilateral partners, which has made it possible to achieve progress through joint efforts in seeking a lasting solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic. I welcome the fact that in just a few days, I will meet once again in the Central African Republic with my friend Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the President of the ECCAS Commission; and, potentially, the Vice-President of the European Commission to support the Government and other Central African Republican stakeholders to assist the country on its path towards peace and development.

**The President** (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Chergui for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Vervaeke.

**Mr. Vervaeke**: I am honoured to brief this meeting on behalf of the European Union (EU) at such a critical time for the future of democracy and peace in the Central African Republic. The upcoming elections

provide a unique opportunity to firmly entrench the country on its democratic path. The past months have seen increased political tensions over the process. That was to be expected. However, it reminds us that only a transparent, credible, peaceful and inclusive electoral process that favours dialogue and consensus, respects the constitutional order and ensures acceptable quality standards can guarantee its credibility and set the basis for a brighter future for the people.

The next steps will be even more crucial following the recent modification of the electoral law. As has been said by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, we continue to encourage the participation of refugees in that process.

As the Council knows, the European Union is providing more than half the budget for the preparations of the elections, as well as expertise to strengthen the capacity of Central African institutions. All political stakeholders — the majority, the opposition and civil society — should act responsibly, and the authorities should double their efforts to ensure a credible electoral process in a constructive and open spirit and in close coordination with its partners and donors.

In such a febrile context, we witness disinformation campaigns in the media with concern. Government and political actors should do everything to ensure the transparency of the media. We are ready to work with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to document such campaigns.

I now turn to the peace and reconciliation process. Since the signature of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, important progress has been made. But we have also seen continued violations perpetrated by some armed groups. We welcome MINUSCA's actions in that respect. Dialogue among parties, the re-engagement of both sides — the Government and the armed groups — and the revitalization of the agreement, in particular relaunching the follow-up mechanisms, seem more necessary than ever. The agreement needs new impetus, but without compromising on its message — no impunity, meaning that those that violate it should pay the price. In that regard, we call on the guarantors, as well as the facilitators and the region, to redouble their efforts in support of the effective implementation and respect for the agreement.

The EU will continue to be one of the strongest supporters of the Central African authorities and population in their efforts towards peace, reconciliation, democracy and recovery. To that end, we are mobilizing all our efforts — political, humanitarian, cooperation development, security and crisis management, including, as was mentioned, through a new civilian Common Security and Defence Policy mission to contribute to security sector reform. All such efforts are to accompany the Central African Republic on the path of State-building, the rule of law and the realization of its economic opportunities — a path where civil society, women and young people need to be given a greater role.

In all those efforts, we are more than ever committed to closely cooperating with the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, as well as all partners involved, including in particular neighbours of the Central African Republic. On this occasion, I would like to pay tribute to the work of MINUSCA and of its leadership. The EU supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General to extend the MINUSCA mandate for another year.

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

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

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative Mr. Ndiaye, Mr. Chergui and Mr. Vervaeke for their briefings.

The Central African Republic still faces significant challenges. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with food insecurity but also the coronavirus disease pandemic, measles and malaria in particular. Violations of human rights and children's rights persist at alarming levels. Sexual and gender-based violence and violence against civilians, the security and defence forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) are unacceptable. France strongly condemns such violations and calls for the perpetrators to be prosecuted and tried.

We will not stop reiterating that respect for international humanitarian law is binding on all parties. Attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel must cease and humanitarian access must be guaranteed.

France once again stresses the need to ensure an inclusive, transparent and peaceful electoral process, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. The international partners clearly recalled such expectations at the meeting on 1 October, co-chaired by the Central African Republic, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, in which the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, participated together with the Secretary-General.

Despite the reform of the electoral code, which has shortened certain statutory timelines, preparations for the elections have been delayed, which is likely to undermine the standard of the entire process and its credibility and create tensions. Given that situation, dialogue among the various stakeholders is essential so as not to further fuel tensions in the country. The smooth conduct of the electoral process is currently the most urgent matter, but that must not cause us to lose sight of the long-term issues at stake, in particular the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Violations of the agreement are jeopardizing national reconciliation. The Security Council has demonstrated its resolve by sanctioning the leader of one of the armed groups that did not respect its commitments. We encourage all parties to redouble their efforts, in particular with regard to the deployment of joint security units, which will have an important role to play in protecting all Central Africans. Finally, support for the redeployment and professionalization of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the formation of a garrison army must remain a fundamental objective of the international community's support for the Central African authorities.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the United Nations, in particular the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; the African Union; and the Economic Community of Central African States, for their support for the Central African Republic. Their joint visit, which is planned for the end of the month, will be an important step in demonstrating that the mobilization in support of the Central African Republic remains strong at a pivotal moment in spite of the pandemic.

It is in that same spirit that France will submit a draft resolution to renew the mandate of MINUSCA, which expires on 15 November.

**Mr. Syihab** (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to thank the briefers, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mankeur Ndiaye, Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service; and later on, hopefully, when technology permits, Ambassador Smaïl Chergui, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. Following the United Nations high-level meeting earlier this month, their briefings are indeed crucial, even more so as we approach the mandate renewal of MINUSCA and the upcoming election in December.

Allow me to focus my comments on three points.

First, we need to ensure peace and stability in the Central African Republic during and beyond the elections. We welcome the Government's efforts to maintain the electoral deadline of 27 December and recognize its various challenges. The democratic process is anything but easy. It is a vast logistical undertaking that requires thorough planning to anticipate all challenges, especially amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its aftermath.

We continue to call on all stakeholders to continue to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic and provide ample space and sufficient trust for democracy to take place in the Central African Republic.

Beyond the elections, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in Bangui, remains the primary framework for sustaining peace in the country. National ownership is the key to success. The presence and ability of the Government to enforce it are indeed crucial. Technical and financial assistance is needed.

Secondly, we should never forget our commitment to saving the people of the Central African Republic. The most recent report (S/2020/994) shows that approximately 2.6 million people require humanitarian assistance; more than 2.3 million people are food-insecure; intercommunal tensions and attacks against civilians continue to impair the humanitarian situation; and the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the country's socioeconomic conditions. On top of that, attacks towards humanitarian workers persist. We call on partners and those who remain doubtful about peace being established in the Central African Republic to

step up and follow up their cries with real and tangible assistance to the country.

Thirdly, the role of MINUSCA is more important than ever. MINUSCA will be pertinent in creating an environment conducive to a peaceful electoral process. For MINUSCA to successfully carry out its mandate, attacks against it must stop. As the largest personnel contributor to MINUSCA in the Council, Indonesia will continue to make the safety, health and security of peacekeepers its top priority. At the same time, we reiterate our commitment to the professionalism of peacekeeping and to protecting civilians through community engagements.

Indonesia will work together with Council members and other relevant stakeholders in the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate. We should maintain the Security Council's unity in supporting the people of the Central African Republic and help them face the insurmountable obstacles mentioned by President Touadera at the high-level meeting.

As an elected member of the Security Council, Indonesia has followed closely the progress in the Central African Republic, including the Bangui peace agreement of February 2019. In the past two years, Indonesia has supported the establishment of a benchmark on the lifting of the arms embargo, as well as the three Council resolutions that ease the embargo in the Central African Republic. We also continue to support MINUSCA inside and outside the Council through our peacekeeping engagements and contribution. Indonesia is committed as a true partner for peace for the Central African Republic even beyond its time in the Council.

**Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia): I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting. I would also like to express my gratitude to the briefers for their valuable insights.

In particular, I would like to commend the actions of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which has shown great determination in implementing its mandate, despite the coronavirus disease pandemic. I was particularly impressed to hear that thanks to the efforts of MINUSCA, voter registration has taken place in several areas where it would have otherwise been obstructed by armed groups. The upcoming elections will be a crucial opportunity



to consolidate the country's democratic foundations for lasting peace.

The future Government of the Central African Republic will meet with high expectations from its people. Moreover, as half of all registered voters are women, it should be evident that the country can only benefit from the full and meaningful participation of women in political and peace processes.

Next, I would like to commend the work done to extend State authority and services in the country. The expansion of national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations and the appointment of new judges and magistrates are encouraging steps, as is the promulgation of the child-protection code, which criminalizes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces. Furthermore, we look forward to the operationalization of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation.

Alongside many positive developments, violence and the abuse of human rights in the Central African Republic continue. Distressingly, there has been a marked increase in attacks against humanitarian aid providers. Attacks on civilians and the abuse of human rights are direct violations of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and, as such, are unacceptable. The vast majority of these attacks have been attributed to signatory armed groups, in particular the *Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique* and *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation*. In that regard, we continue to support the call of the Secretary-General to take a firm and unequivocal stance regarding the application of sanctions under article 35 of the agreement. I would like to further recall that attacks against United Nations peacekeepers may amount to a war crime.

I would like to end my statement by stressing what many have already expressed here today: full implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the only path towards lasting peace in the Central African Republic.

**Mr. Aougi** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to make this statement on behalf of the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Tunisia (A3+1). We would like to thank Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Mr. Smaïl Chergui and Mr. Koen Vervaeke for their briefings.

The year 2020 represents a crucially important stage for the people of the Central African Republic, who will, in the general elections to be held in December after several years of crisis, exercise their right to choose their own leaders. The holding of the elections will constitute a major step towards the normalization of the security situation in the country and, in turn, contribute to positive momentum in the subregion. We therefore commend the efforts of the authorities of the Central African Republic, with the assistance of partners, in making progress in restoring State authority in some areas and in professionalizing and redeploying the security apparatus, territorial administration and judicial institutions, despite the significant difficulties the ground.

We commend the efforts deployed through the National Electoral Authority in registering a large number of voters, despite the many technical and logistical challenges, as well as the difficulty in reaching certain areas due to insecurity. We note that recent revisions to the electoral code do not allow for the registration of a considerable number of persons of voting age because they have been displaced to neighbouring countries.

The A3+1 welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women in helping to register women to voters and encouraging their full participation in the democratic process, as voters and candidates alike. Those efforts will undoubtedly help to attain the goal of a minimum of 30 per cent of elected offices being occupied by women.

In the light of those positive developments, it is vital that all political actors and armed groups refrain from hampering in any way the electoral process that is under way. We thus call on them to seize the opportunity presented by the reviving of the consultative framework in order to overcome any difficulties through dialogue and consensus.

We welcome the support of the United Nations Development Programme for the basket fund and the electoral assistance projects, and we encourage all partners of the Central African Republic and the international community to support the electoral process in order to avoid any possible problem in terms of the process or of respect for constitutional timelines.

We note with regret that the security situation remains precarious in the north-eastern part of the country, with ongoing attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and clashes among armed groups. We remain convinced that inclusive dialogue among the people of the Central African Republic is key in order to put an end to the crisis. We welcome also in that respect the initiatives undertaken by the authorities of the Central African Republic aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation at the local level, in cooperation with MINUSCA.

We join the Secretary-General's call on armed groups to halt their expansionist activities and to join the democratic process under way through mediation and reconciliation, and we also call for the speeding up of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process as a whole as well as security-sector reform, given the need to quickly fill the strategic gaps in the implementation of special mixed units.

The A3+1 commend the authorization by the African Union's Peace and Security Council of the deployment of the African Union military observation mission in Central African Republic in July. Those initiatives will no doubt bolster the country's security capacity.

We commend also the efforts of humanitarian workers, especially in helping women and children with a view to alleviating the inequalities exacerbated by the coronavirus disease crisis and to bringing a measure of comfort to that vulnerable segment. We call upon the donor community to provide greater support for their efforts in order to fill the \$272.4 million funding gap in the humanitarian response plan.

We commend the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, in their capacity as guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, in the quest for a way out of the crisis, and we call on non-signatory armed groups to commit to the political process as a whole and cease their acts of violence and intimidation throughout the territory.

We welcome also the efforts undertaken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA for his good offices and his support for the process of reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and we support MINUSCA's ongoing presence in the country through the renewal of its mandate for an additional year.

In conclusion, we welcome the holding on 1 October of the high-level meeting on the Central African Republic and echo the joint call on actors to engage in a political dialogue geared at credible and peaceful elections, with respect for constitutional timelines, and we reiterate our support for the Government and the people of Central African Republic in their quest to achieve peace and stability.

**Mr. Singer Weisinger** (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to thank the briefers for the information that they have shared with us.

The Dominican Republic welcomes the progress made in preparations for the general elections scheduled for 27 December, and we hope that the tensions and mistrust regarding the electoral calendar can be overcome. Also, despite the fact that approval of several draft laws by the National Assembly, in particular the revised electoral code, represent a positive sign, we regret that the draft did not include provisions that would have allowed refugees from the Central African Republic in neighbouring countries to vote.

We also believe that the inclusion of young people, women and refugees represents the basis for consolidating democracy in the Central African Republic. The upcoming elections represent a major opportunity to build peace, and that is why it is important to redouble efforts to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, transparent, just and inclusive elections.

We welcome the initiatives of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women to encourage the participation of women as both voters and candidates in the electoral process. We should like also to see young people be given opportunities for necessary representation in order for them to actively and equitably participate in the process. On the other hand, we deplore the fact that in spite of the efforts undertaken to improve strategic communication, disinformation campaigns in the media aimed at MINUSCA have continued.

As we have stated on previous occasions, in order to consolidate peace in the country, it is important to continue monitoring and complying with the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. On this point, we commend the

efforts of Special Representative Ndiaye, along with national stakeholders and international partners, to promote a constructive and inclusive political dialogue in order to preserve the agreement.

We also commend the enactment of the four laws adopted by the National Assembly, in line with the commitments made by the Government in the framework of the Political Agreement, as well as the promulgation of the two-part decentralization law, which establishes the legal framework for the local elections scheduled for the end of 2021.

We should like to express our concern at the security situation in the Central African Republic, where signatory armed groups continued to perpetrate acts of violence against civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeeping personnel. Those responsible for such acts must be brought to justice, and civilians must be protected.

The humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic is also a source of considerable concern. Currently more than half of the population requires humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian activities continue to be inadequately funded. It is necessary to support the Government of the Central African Republic by contributing to the humanitarian response plan in order to help the most vulnerable.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has exacerbated the vulnerabilities caused by the existing crisis in the country. In that respect, I encourage donor countries to increase their official development assistance and support for financial and innovative debt-relief programmes for the countries most affected by the pandemic and its devastating consequences.

Likewise, we should like to make an appeal so that a vaccine and other health technologies needed to tackle COVID-19 are made available in an equitable manner and that their global distribution is ensured. To that end, the role of the World Health Organization, donor countries and the private sector is vital and should be based on the principles of cooperation, solidarity and justice.

To conclude, we should like to acknowledge the work done by MINUSCA, the international community and the guarantors of the peace and reconciliation agreement for their efforts in seeking a lasting and sustainable peace in the Central African Republic.

**Mr. Heusgen** (Germany): I should like first to thank all the briefers.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has Germany's full support and, as my Indonesian colleague said in his intervention, it is more important than ever, and we look forward to the renewal of its mandate.

We very much regret, among other things, what the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic just mentioned — that is, the disinformation campaign against MINUSCA. We must fight that.

The elections are the most important date, as the three African States members of the Security Council, namely, the Niger, Tunisia and South Africa, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, have said. I should like to reiterate one point that was made by several other speakers, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General: the right of the refugee communities abroad to participate in the elections. Their rights must be respected.

I also welcome the fact that half of registered voters are women. We hope that women are also elected to serve on legislative bodies. The Central African Republic has had a woman president before. We would welcome another female president, as well as female and youth representatives elected to leadership positions in the Central African Republic.

After the election, we need to return to the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. That issue needs to remain at the top of the agenda, as Mr. Vervaeke said today. We need to relaunch, revitalize and give new impetus to the peace agreement. At the same time, we must ensure that those who have violated the peace agreement are held responsible.

On financial support, the European Union, as we learned, provides half of the funds for the electoral budget. The humanitarian response plan is very important. Germany is the second-largest donor of humanitarian aid, and we also participate in the United Nations Development Programme basket fund mentioned by Special Representative Ndiaye. We call on everyone to contribute to those funds, including actors that provide the Central African Republic with a great deal of arms.

In addition, we believe that it is very important to strengthen the Special Criminal Court in order to combat impunity for human rights and other violations, including sexual violence. As in all countries, there can be no reconciliation in the Central African Republic if we do not fight impunity.

Finally, we join our French colleague and others in condemning the attacks on the Blue Helmets and other humanitarian workers. As the Special Representative confirmed, if we are to create a favourable environment for humanitarian relief, MINUSCA needs to protect humanitarian workers.

**Mrs. Van Vlierberge** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank the briefers for their illuminating presentations.

Today, I would like to make three points.

First, with regard to the political situation and the elections, Belgium welcomes the measures taken to put the country on the path to elections, obstacles notwithstanding. Despite the delays, the timetable remains under control. We call on all actors concerned to refrain from any action or statement that could undermine this democratic exercise. Only a peaceful, transparent and inclusive process can guarantee the credibility of the elections. We welcome the almost equal representation of men and women on the registered voter lists. The European Union has made available significant financial assistance to support the electoral process.

But elections are only one step in the long-term goal of stabilizing the Central African Republic. The February 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the only way to anchor peace. Its implementation will also be the responsibility of the future Government. The people of Central Africa do not want more violence. The country's armed groups are signatories to the peace agreement and must honour their commitments. Perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice. Belgium is particularly concerned about violations involving children, and supports the work of Special Representative Gamba de Potgieter and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in that regard. Armed groups must also cease their predatory activities. There will be consequences for serious violations of the agreement.

There are some challenges to the implementation of the agreement. However, we welcome the ongoing meetings of the follow-up mechanisms for the agreement, which are taking place via video-teleconference due to the pandemic. We also see encouraging progress in the redeployment of State authority, as well as in legislative work.

Secondly, I would like to touch upon the fate of the people of the Central African Republic, who need peace and want to live in dignity and prosperity. The statistics remain alarming. More than half of the population is in need of humanitarian aid and more than 1 million people are displaced in the Central African Republic or in neighbouring countries. By raising the cost of living, the pandemic has exacerbated the situation. School closures are further exposing children to the risk of recruitment by armed groups. Moreover, it is unacceptable for humanitarian workers to so often be victims of violence and theft.

The people of the Central African Republic also thirst for justice. In that regard, Belgium supports the work of the Special Criminal Court and is prepared to second a Belgian magistrate. We also welcome the signing of decrees to launch the establishment of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation.

Thirdly, I note that MINUSCA is also facing significant challenges. The incidents of recent months demonstrate that its mandate to protect civilians is still relevant. Belgium therefore remains in favour of a robust mandate. MINUSCA's good offices and promotion of the peace process also play a crucial role in supporting the restoration of State authority and security sector reform. In that regard, good coordination among the country's partners is a critical factor. In our view, MINUSCA can help coordinate those efforts. Nevertheless, Belgium regrets the current disinformation campaign against MINUSCA in the country.

In the discussion on MINUSCA's mandate, we must defend the interests of the people of the Central African Republic. Belgium's support is also part of a broader European and United Nations effort, and Belgium will continue to actively support the people of the Central African Republic even after it no longer sits on the Security Council.

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers for their valuable insights. I was struck today, as ever,



by the consensus in their contributions, in terms of both their analyses and their prescriptions.

I wish to begin by paying tribute to the dedication and courage of all the men and women serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and to the memory of all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. We condemn, in particular, the deadly attacks against MINUSCA personnel in July, just as we condemn all attacks on all peacekeepers. I also reiterate our solidarity with the Government and the people of the Central African Republic in their pursuit of peace, stability and development.

As we have said time and again, the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the only viable framework for sustainable peace in the Central African Republic. The agreement must be protected, including through the Council's continued imposition of sanctions against violators. We call on all armed groups to end their violence against civilians. In particular, we condemn the scale of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls. Impunity for sexual assault and all human rights abuses must end.

Elections in the Central African Republic later this year offer a significant opportunity to consolidate constitutional order. All stakeholders have a role to play in supporting peaceful, inclusive and free elections. While we welcome the preparations made to hold elections on time in December, we regret that provisions have not been made to ensure the participation of all the people of the Central African Republic. All citizens, including internally displaced persons and refugees, deserve the right to be heard in both these and subsequent elections, .

We are trying to help. As announced by the United Kingdom's Minister for Africa at the Secretary-General's recent high-level event, the United Kingdom is contributing well over half a million dollars to the United Nations Development Programme elections fund to promote the participation of women, youth and underrepresented groups. We urge other partners to contribute to that fund.

As others have said today, the scale of the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic underlines just how vital it is that all stakeholders fulfil their responsibilities in the coming months. As we heard again today, humanitarian needs have been

exacerbated by coronavirus disease, with more than half the population now facing food insecurity. This year, the United Kingdom has committed approximately \$35 million to the humanitarian effort in the Central African Republic, including extra funding towards famine prevention and Ebola preparedness. We will continue to play our part, and we join Germany in calling on all others to do the same.

As we look ahead to the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate next month, highlighted by the representative of France, I want to voice the United Kingdom's support for maintaining a robust mandate, with the protection of civilians at its heart, alongside the provision of support for the peace agreement and the electoral process. A sustainable peace will not be won by MINUSCA alone, however, nor will peace be won through humanitarian support alone. The recommitment of all parties to full implementation of the peace agreement and to fair, inclusive and peaceful elections is the only way to assure long-term stability.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the Secretary-General for his most recent report on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2020/994). China also thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye, African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security Chergui and Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service Vervaeke, for their briefings.

At present, the situation in the Central African Republic is showing positive general trends. The Government of the Central African Republic is actively advancing the implementation of the peace agreement and has made positive progress in consolidating Government authority, security sector reform and socioeconomic development. China commends the people and the Government of the Central African Republic for their unstinting efforts in this regard.

At the same time, the Central African Republic is faced with daunting challenges in security, the humanitarian situation, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and, by the end of the year, is going to have a new round of presidential and national assembly elections. The international community should continue to follow the situation and lend its support. Having heard the statements made by colleagues before me, I would like to make the following points.

First, this year's election will be the first after the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and

Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. It is important for consolidating the peace process. The current Government overcame a multitude of difficulties and challenges and actively prepared for the election, registering close to 2 million voters, almost half of whom are women. I trust that all parties in the Central African Republic will continue to advance in the preparations of the elections in an orderly manner and see to it that the elections take place smoothly and as scheduled.

The participation of refugees has entailed many difficult complications, some of which are beyond the control of the country's Government. We respect the relevant decisions made by the country's National Electoral Authority. China has provided two batches of electoral aid materials to the Central African Republic and would like to work together with the international community to provide more assistance to the country for election preparation.

Secondly, at present, we are seeing violence among the armed groups in the country. A secure and stable environment is what the country needs. China calls on the armed groups to respond positively to the Secretary-General's global ceasefire initiative, immediately cease violence and effectively abide by the peace agreement.

This past July, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) suffered casualties in the western part of the country from landmines. China is concerned with this and appeals to all parties to increase coordination with MINUSCA and to implement resolution 2518 (2020) to ensure the safety of peacekeepers.

The Secretary-General points out in his report that the country's national defence and security forces and administrative authorities have been deployed to Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture for the first time since 2013. China welcomes this because it is significant for the consolidation of Government authorities and maintenance of social stability.

The international community should support the Central African Republic in strengthening capacity and security and in gradually taking up the responsibility of protecting its own people. In this regard, China reiterates that the Security Council should lift its arms embargo against the Central African Republic at an early date.

Thirdly, durable stability in the Central African Republic requires integrated measures and increased input in development. The international community should support the Government of the country in implementing its national recovery and peacebuilding plan, assisting the Central African Republic in strengthening its building of infrastructure, ensuring employment and improving people's livelihoods.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the local humanitarian situation and affected its socioeconomic development. The international community should lend its helping hand and assist the Central African Republic in effectively bringing the pandemic under control. The Council's timely adjustment of the sanctions against the relevant economic entities in the country is conducive to unlocking its own economic resources. The Government of the Central African Republic has recently voiced a specific request to the related Security Council sanctions committee, and the sanctions committee should make a positive general response.

In conclusion, China commends MINUSCA for the important role it played in maintaining stability and advancing the peace process in the Central African Republic. China supports the work of the Special Representative and that of MINUSCA and supports the Council in acting, in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendation, to renew MINUSCA's mandate for a year.

**Mr. Dang** (Viet Nam): I would like to thank the briefers for their insightful briefings.

The number one priority in the Central African Republic today is the elections, which are coming very soon. I think it is very important to maintain an environment conducive to the proper preparation and organization of successful elections. With that in mind, allow me to make the following points.

First, with regard to the political and security situation in the Central African Republic, our delegation takes note with encouragement the continued efforts of the Government to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We also note the commitments made by the Government to ensure national stability and a calm political environment despite ongoing tensions, including efforts aimed at preparing for the upcoming elections and the important work of the legislative branch and the National Electoral Authority.

However, we remain deeply troubled by the increased number of violations of the peace agreement in this reporting period. These violations, particularly by various armed groups, have led to serious concern over protection issues, with civilians being the targets of more than half of the violations recorded. This is not beneficial, especially when the country is in the final stages of the electoral process.

In this regard, Viet Nam would like to re-emphasize the vital importance of the full implementation of the peace agreement. We reiterate that the agreement is the one and only viable path towards sustainable peace and stability for the country. We therefore urge the agreement's signatories to refrain from any action that could further deteriorate the situation and to heed the Secretary-General call for a ceasefire. As the upcoming elections are pivotal to the political process, it is crucial that all parties engage in constructive political dialogue to build trust and create favourable conditions for long-term stability in the country.

Secondly, the situation in the Central African Republic requires continued support from the international community in all areas. Assistance, both technical and financial, is needed to help fill the funding gap for the organization of the upcoming elections, improve the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation, and most urgently, alleviate the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We call on the country's international partners to strengthen their generous support for the Central African Republic at this critical juncture.

Thirdly, we always attach great importance to the contribution of regional stakeholders, including the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), to consolidate peace and stability in the Central African Republic. We also welcome the cooperation among the AU, ECCAS, the United Nations and the European Union in assisting the Central African Republic in responding to the country's needs.

And last but not least, our delegation would like to reiterate its support for the work of the United Nations and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in the country. We would also like to highlight the importance of ensuring safety and security of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.

We take this opportunity to express our condolences to the people of the Central African Republic, MINUSCA and the families of those who lost their lives while trying to protect civilians on the ground. We call on the Government and MINUSCA to strengthen efforts and cooperation to combat violations against women and children as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/994).

**Mr. Hunter** (United States of America): I thank the Special Representative for his briefing today, and I also thank the briefers from the African Union and from the European Union.

The Central African Republic has faced significant difficulties in the past year. That includes challenges responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the arduous work of implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, as well as preparing for a free, fair and democratic election. However, as we said during the 1 October high-level meeting on the Central African Republic convened by the Secretary-General, the United States remains a strong partner, ready to support the country and to foster its potential. Today I will focus my remarks on the three challenges most directly affecting the Central African Republic's future.

First, on the implementation of the peace agreement, the United States calls on all political actors inside and outside the Government to respect the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. The peace accord was not signed with any one political party but by the sovereign Government of the Central African Republic. With the support and good offices of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the Government has made significant progress in fulfilling the peace agreement's commitments.

In that regard, we call on the Central African Republic's neighbours and other facilitator countries to acknowledge their responsibilities and work with the Government to put in place functioning border controls, re-establish legitimate commerce and stop the flow of weapons into the Central African Republic.

We also urge the Government to demonstrate its commitment to fighting impunity by expeditiously standing up and implementing justice mechanisms, including the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation and the Special Criminal Court. The United States will continue to help in those important

efforts through our assistance in developing the country's security and judicial institutions. All Central Africans deserve access to justice.

Secondly, I want to stress the importance of free, fair, inclusive and transparent elections in December. Those elections will be an opportunity for Central Africans to demonstrate the strength and resilience of their democratic institutions as they choose their Head of State and National Assembly representatives. We are encouraged by the United Nations efforts to ensure that women are both on the ballot and registered to vote. We encourage the Government to keep up that momentum to ensure the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in the elections. Local elections, which have not been held since 1988, will also be an important gauge of the success of the decentralization initiatives adopted by the National Assembly. While we were disappointed that voting for Central African refugees was not included in the amended electoral code, the United States will continue working with the Government and our international partners to ensure the success of the upcoming elections.

Thirdly, I will touch on the challenges that the Central African Republic is facing because of COVID-19. This pandemic has affected the country's economy, and further economic difficulties lay ahead. That is why the Trump Administration has provided more than \$13.6 million in COVID-related emergency assistance as part of nearly \$120 million in humanitarian assistance in 2020. We encourage others to join us and do more to support the country's struggle against this pandemic.

The United States recently concluded a four-week virtual monitoring and evaluation review of MINUSCA. The operational and security challenges in the Central African Republic are formidable by any measure. The scope of MINUSCA's mandate is daunting. In fact, a recent evaluation of MINUSCA by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network noted that MINUSCA has the most complex of all peacekeeping mandates. In that context, we urge that attention be paid to ensuring full staffing for MINUSCA leadership positions, particularly as we enter this critical election period.

Unfortunately, despite many efforts by the Mission to prevent it, we still see far too many instances of MINUSCA peacekeepers engaging in sexual exploitation and abuse. Those abuses are unacceptable. They destroy lives, they erode public trust in the

United Nations and they undermine the credibility of peacekeeping. MINUSCA had the highest number of allegations of all missions in 2019 and in 2020. We urge all troop- and police-contributing countries to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy and to swiftly and credibly address criminal allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations must increase its already strong efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including by repatriating individuals and units who commit such crimes, as mandated by resolution 2272 (2016).

We acknowledge MINUSCA's success in reducing overall violence in the Central African Republic and its multifaceted efforts of negotiation, good offices and kinetic action to reduce the threat of armed groups. The United States salutes MINUSCA's relentless focus on protecting civilians, the outstanding work of the Humanitarian Coordinator to make MINUSCA an agile and responsive partner for responding to needs on the ground, and the overall leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

In that highly demanding context, where the stakes are so high and mission effectiveness is so critical, we fully agree with the Secretary-General that MINUSCA's presence is key to maintaining peace and stability in the Central African Republic, and we note his recommendation for the Security Council to extend the mandate of MINUSCA for one year, until 15 November 2021.

We should all continue to do everything that we can to ensure a prosperous future for the people of the Central African Republic.

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

We thank our briefers today for the information provided.

It is encouraging to note that the Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 is functioning. It has already led to a reduction in the general level of armed violence in the country.

However, we are concerned that certain armed groups are not fulfilling their commitments, which seriously complicates the national reconciliation process and exacerbates the already difficult situation. All parties must strictly adhere to the provisions of the



Political Agreement and refrain from undermining the political situation in the country. Regional partners, including the guarantors of the agreement, also have an important role to play in supporting the peace efforts. We trust that the country's leadership will successfully overcome the challenges, including those related to the coronavirus disease pandemic, and continue to implement the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme for former combatants, as well as the formation and deployment of joint security units.

We are convinced that it is in the interests of the Central African Republic to hold peaceful, free and transparent presidential and parliamentary elections in accordance with the national legislation and the constitutional timeframes. We highly appreciate the efforts of President Touadera in de-escalate political tensions, including his initiative to hold a frank dialogue with national political actors and partners of the Central African Republic in preparation for the elections.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic remains a key element in ensuring security in the country. We trust that peacekeepers will provide the necessary technical and logistical support to Bangui during the electoral cycle.

At the request of the Government of the Central African Republic, the Russian Federation is helping to strengthen the capacity and training of national security agencies. The work of the Russian trainers was highly commended by the authorities in Bangui. In addition, we continue to provide military equipment

to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic. Armoured reconnaissance and patrol vehicles are currently being delivered to the country.

At the same time, we see that the rigorous sanctions regime does not allow Central Africans to effectively strengthen the capacity of their security institutions and combat rampant crime. The Security Council must ensure that sanctions are commensurate with the political context and do not hamper conflict resolution.

In addition, we consider it essential to pay close attention to Bangui's efforts, including its delisting requests, which will improve the engagement of the Central African people with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic.

We believe that resolving the problems facing the Central African Republic requires the concerted efforts of all actors in the country based on the principle of mutual respect, while taking the interests of all parties into account. We will continue to work closely with the Central African Republic in coordination with the country's leadership, its international partners and the African Union, as well as the United Nations, including the Security Council.

I resume my function as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*