



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9074th meeting

Wednesday, 22 June 2022, 10.10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Dautllari (Albania)

Members:

Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Tenkorang
India	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Shaheen
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/449)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2022/491)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/449)

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2022/491)

The President: 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: Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; and Ms. Lina Ekomo, President of the Network for Women's Leadership in the Central African Republic.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/449, which contains the text of a letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2022/491, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Ms. Rugwabiza.

Ms. Rugwabiza (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by expressing on behalf of the Secretary-General my gratitude for the Security Council's continued interest and attention to the developments, challenges and progress relating to the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which prompted this meeting. In the three months covered by the report (S/2022/491) submitted for the Council's consideration, and since I took office, I have been particularly engaged, together with MINUSCA, in strengthening relations of trust with the Central African Government and remobilizing

organizations and States in the region, as well as international partners, for the revitalization of the political process and the repositioning of the MINUSCA force. In that regard, there are three strategic axes that underpin the efforts of the Mission and deserve the Council's attention.

There is no need to highlight the de facto inaction into which the political process has plunged, despite the importance that we all ascribe to it. That strategic priority, based on our mandate, justifies all the efforts that I have undertaken to remobilize the region in the 10 weeks since I took office, together with the Government of the Central African Republic and in close cooperation with Angola and Rwanda, mandated by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). I am pleased to be able to say that under the leadership of the Central African Government and the auspices of Angola and Rwanda, with MINUSCA's support, those efforts culminated in a strategic review meeting on the political process held in Bangui on 4 June. The meeting could well make 4 June both a reference date and a critical turning point, and it should, as it involved high-level participation, including the presence of the Head of State, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola and Rwanda, the guarantors and facilitators of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 and international partners, for a participatory assessment of the progress and major challenges in the implementation of the joint road map. Along with all partners, I would like to note the following.

First, the strategic review meeting met all the goals it was tasked with, in particular the remobilization of the region, with the effective presence of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola and Rwanda on behalf of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the participation of ECCAS and the African Union.

Secondly, there is national ownership of the political process by the relevant Government ministers of the Central African Republic under the strategic direction of President Touadera, with a delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the key ministries that are responsible for triggering the synergy required for the implementation of the components of the joint road map that fall under the scope of their respective authorities, and under the effective coordination of the

Prime Minister and Head of Government and the direct oversight of the President.

Thirdly, we saw a convergence of views on the importance of continuing efforts to harmonize the political commitments previously undertaken separately under the auspices of the guarantors of the 6 February agreement and within the framework of the joint road map, which should now be part of a single platform, with full synergy, that can bring together the representatives of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Angola and Rwanda, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and MINUSCA.

Fourthly, the necessary conditions have been created for the re-engagement of the international partners, who all share the Government's view with regard to the uniqueness of the political process articulated around the Political Agreement, which the joint road map seeks to revitalize around six key components.

Fifthly, the Central African authorities took a sovereign decision to establish a permanent platform for the strategic review of the political process, which will be convened on a quarterly basis as of 4 June.

In view of those encouraging developments in the collective efforts to revitalize the political process through a revival of regional dynamics, I would like to request Council members' unanimous support in carrying out the plan to monitor the strategic review of 4 June. This is the moment to underscore and commend the decision taken by the President, with the Council of Ministers, to be personally and directly involved in the political commitments with armed group leaders and to conduct inclusive and sectoral strategic reviews of the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and of security-sector reform and reconciliation within the framework of the thematic commissions that will be established for that purpose around the six components of the joint road map.

However, the hope that all the participants in the strategic review have of reviving the peace process does not detract from their strong desire to see the Government implement the 217 recommendations of the republican dialogue in order to promote the expansion of the democratic space and a conducive political atmosphere. I therefore encourage the Government to expedite the implementation of the recommendations of the republican dialogue, which falls under the sixth component of the joint road map for peace in the Central

African Republic relating to the political process. I intend to continue to support the Government's efforts in that respect, to call on partners for their contributions and to request the Security Council's political support, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2605 (2021), which calls for assistance to be provided to the Central African authorities in the completion of a fully inclusive republican dialogue as a prelude to peaceful and inclusive local elections.

Finally, I would like to express the widely shared concern about the persistent violations of the ceasefire by all the parties to the conflict, whose operations and belligerent acts have continued, thereby exposing civilians to violence. The cessation of hostilities throughout the country's territory remains both an immediate goal and a gauge of the credibility of the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic. We must remain focused on that and encourage the adoption of consensus measures aimed at discouraging the parties who do not respect their commitments under the joint road map, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the peace agreement, without prejudice to the ongoing restoration of State authority and its exercise of its sovereign powers to protect its territorial integrity.

We continue to hear about the legitimate fears of the civilian population in the Central African Republic, who are still enduring the harmful effects of the persistent violations of the ceasefire, with growing threats to their lives, property and activities, particularly in the northern, central and eastern regions of the Central African Republic. Considering the damaging consequences of these adverse activities for the people's security and property and for humanitarian assistance, an accurate assessment of the still fragile progress being made in rebuilding the national defence and security forces, and given MINUSCA's mandate and the additional resources that the Council has placed at its disposal, MINUSCA has readjusted its concept of operations to prioritize a preventive approach centred on the civilian populations, who deserve to live in peace and security and free from fear, regardless of where they live within the vast territory of the Central African Republic.

I am pleased that this readjustment of our concept of operations was decisive in its positive impact on the populations of Boyo, Mingala and Polubu, who expressed their satisfaction with MINUSCA's robust and proactive posture in cooperation with the national defence and security forces. I intend to continue to

mobilize MINUSCA's resources and work with local populations and community leaders to take these preventive measures to support the Central African authorities in removing credible threats of violence on civilian populations rather than reacting when the violence has already occurred. This is the objective to be achieved in perfect coordination with the defence and security forces, which we will continue to support in compliance with the policy of due diligence in terms of human rights, as required by the mandate assigned by the Security Council.

Beyond the protection of civilians and access to humanitarian aid, the effectiveness of such a posture by MINUSCA is all the more necessary as it is a prerequisite for the creation and maintenance of a security environment conducive to the peace process, including respect for the ceasefire, the full restoration of State authority and services, the continuation of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation in a climate of trust, and the implementation of durable solutions for the voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons with a view to their participation in local elections that are credible, peaceful and inclusive in all the territorial communities of the Central African Republic.

In that regard, and despite the fuel crisis that affects us, MINUSCA is planning for the immediate implementation of operations in response to the new posture of armed groups that are taking advantage of the crisis context to reposition themselves tactically. Accordingly, I call on the members of the Council to mobilize all Member States, be they source or transit States, to guarantee MINUSCA's fuel supplies, for the continuity and completeness of our operations, which remain essential to the security and stability of the Central African Republic.

To remain consistent, MINUSCA aims to maintain this posture and increase its support and cooperation with the Government. We are conscious, however, that the ultimate solution to the Central African Republic's security problem lies in rebuilding the capacities required for an efficient professional defence and security force that can ensure the sustainability of efforts to secure and stabilize the Central African Republic. This is a collective effort that requires the support of the Security Council and of all partners, as well as the creation by the Government of conditions favourable for the concerted and coordinated re-engagement of all its bilateral and multilateral partners in the process

of implementing the national strategy for security sector reform, including the national defence plan. In this regard, MINUSCA maintains a constructive and frank dialogue with the Government on respecting human rights.

The reports compiled and finalized by MINUSCA will be published after consultation with the Government, in accordance with the established procedure. We remain committed to working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist the Government in adopting preventive measures and mobilizing appropriate technical assistance, as well as in efforts to combat impunity and rehabilitate victims of human rights violations.

In the same vein, MINUSCA notes with the same concern the persistence of stigmatization and public incitement to violence against leaders of the democratic opposition or against certain partners of the Central African Republic. History and the recent past in the Central African Republic, as in the Central African region as a whole, show that this type of message can quickly be translated into acts of violence with unpredictable and uncontrollable consequences. They are also likely to undermine living together, weaken the national reconciliation process and slow down the efforts undertaken. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the Central African Government to respond appropriately by taking all necessary measures to prevent, repress and put an end to such reprehensible acts.

I would like to conclude by welcoming the strengthening of confidence-building measures between MINUSCA and the Central African Government, which have allowed and seen the reduction of status-of-forces-agreement violations, the strengthening of our cooperation, and a new impetus to the peace process. It is only with such confidence that MINUSCA and the Central African Republic will be able to derive greater benefit from the full strength of MINUSCA's multidimensional mandate through its operational effectiveness in the service of peace, security and stability, towards lasting political solutions to the Central African crisis.

The President: I thank Ms. Rugwabiza for her briefing.

I give the floor to Ms. Ekomo.

Ms. Ekomo (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to address this august gathering. First of all, I would

like to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity given to civil society to make its voice heard.

My country, the Central African Republic, is in bad shape because a real culture of criminal violence has taken hold. The population is caught between the rebellion, the national army, mercenaries and militias that sow terror and death. Massive killings target the populations of the hinterlands, particularly certain ethnic groups.

Armed groups of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement have killed people and burned homes. The national army, along with its allies and the regime's militias, called sharks, do the same. The sharks use the State media and social networks to openly issue death threats and threats of physical abuse against opposition leaders and the population at large. They kidnap and murder their victims as well as the relatives of their targets.

The deployment of the regime's allies in the provinces was welcomed by the population, who saw in it the hope of end being put to the activities of armed groups transformed into criminal thugs who have subjected women, children and men of all ages to all kinds of violence. But very quickly, this hope turned into a serious concern. Young men are systematically executed, thereby bring grief to many families.

Faced with this situation of massive human rights violations and regular attacks on the aforementioned civilian populations, civil society notes that the collaboration of the United Nations and its partners with our country on the peace process is proceeding as if the Central African Republic were a normal State. Civil society is indignant at the denial of the extremely dangerous sociopolitical and security situation that prevails in the country. In the name of this civil society, I launch this cry of indignation for the many innocent victims — women and children tied up and slaughtered with their family members, and young people caught in their small businesses, on mining sites, in their fields, hunting or fishing, murdered after humiliating treatment by death squads. I condemn those massacres, and I beg the Council not to minimize the risks. The danger is there and will very quickly plunge the country into chaos unless robust and concrete measures are taken urgently to help the people of the Central African Republic.

Last March, civil society participated in the republican dialogue in hope of being able to contribute

to easing sociopolitical tensions. However, the non-inclusive nature of that dialogue did not foster substantive discussions about the country's real problems through exchanges of differing views. But civil society took that opportunity to denounce the deterioration of the social, political and security context and to propose some solutions.

Unfortunately, at the conclusion of that republican dialogue, the political message that prevailed, as it still does today, is the regime's determination to revise the Constitution with a view to extending the presidential term. The republican dialogue was therefore a missed opportunity to be able to bring together all the people of the Central African Republic.

Today there is no dialogue between Governments, opposition parties and civil society. It just does not exist. It is violence and terror, maintained by the regime and the armed opposition, that prevail. All opposition politicians, their close relatives, supporters and collaborators, as well as civil-society actors, are under threat and reduced to silence. What that means is that civil society cannot play its opposition role freely. Several actors have left the country for their safety.

At the social level, all indicators are in the red. Poverty has set in in the provinces, fields are no longer being cultivated, and, as the Council is aware, more than half of the population of the Central African Republic is facing food insecurity. Access to primary health care is difficult. Schools are not operating in several regions. Humanitarian assistance is scarce in those areas impacted by armed violence.

We regularly receive distress calls from women in the hinterlands, but we cannot convey their messages, because all requests to meet with the national authorities have been ignored.

The National Assembly largely supports the current political regime. Scandals involving corruption and vote-buying of deputies have become a commonplace practice, including as concerns the revision of the Constitution. The Parliament is not playing its proper role to protect the interests of the people.

All those political, socioeconomic and security factors are combining to plunge my country back into chaos, despite the existence of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and despite the many efforts undertaken by the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic

Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners that support peace efforts in the Central African Republic. In fact, most peace initiatives exclude civil society in its entirety, including women and young people, who make up the majority of the population.

The exclusively political approach focused on the national authorities has shown its limits, and we must all acknowledge the difficulties facing the peace process in the Central African Republic. Some signatory armed groups have withdrawn from the peace agreement and have resumed hostilities, sowing fear in the hinterlands.

In addition, the non-inclusive nature of initiatives is a real handicap in moving towards an effective peace. Since the beginning of the peace initiative in the Central African Republic, the practice has been that civil-society actors and women in particular are consulted only for long-distance exchanges or by missions visiting the country. Civil society cannot continue to be excluded from substantive discussions, negotiating tables and high-level meetings that address issues that impact their lives and those of their children, their communities and their country.

With a view to revitalizing the peace process, I would urge the Security Council to consider the Central African Republic as a country in an emergency situation for which emergency measures must be taken. Among those measures, it would be important to challenge the national authorities on the mode of governance, which is characterized by widespread violence against the people, political opposition actors and civil-society leaders. I would urge it also to remind armed groups of the need to respect the commitments they have undertaken by signing the peace agreement and to be able to implement the sanctions imposed by the Security Council. In addition, I urge it to create a framework for consultation between the active forces of the nation and the rulers on the crisis situation in the Central African Republic. That would be an emergency consultation among the people of Central African Republic, on that country's territory, and with observers from the United Nations and the African Union. That initiative would enable the people of the country themselves to find solutions in a democratic manner and to block the way to ramped-up attempts to seize power by force.

It would also be important to give civil society access to such a framework for consultation and offer an opportunity for women to play a leading role in the

interests of the people. Civil society's contributions must be taken into account, and it should be called upon to participate in the peace process and in initiatives supported by our partners in the context of that peace process.

The President: I thank Ms. Ekomo for her 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 members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms. Lina Ekomo for their briefings.

We wish to congratulate the Special Representative on her appointment and to wish her every success at the head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). She can count on the full support of France. I welcome in particular her approach aimed at shoring up MINUSCA's territorial coverage to assist the Central African Republic forces and to push back armed groups, which continue to commit crimes, in particular against women, children and medical and humanitarian staff.

That robust posture is part of the mandate of MINUSCA. I would like to thank its troops and staff, who often risk their lives. Here I wish to convey my condolences to Morocco following the deaths last week of two of its Blue Helmets.

At the same time, some conditions need to be met in order to enable the Central African Republic to be stabilized.

First, concerning the peace process, the second follow-up meeting on the Luanda road map, held on 4 June in Bangui, was an important step, with the participation of the President of the Central African Republic and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Angola and Rwanda. That mobilization must continue and be translated into the progress stipulated by the road map. There needs to be a ceasefire respected by all parties, a dialogue between the Government and armed groups, and a unique

disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process conducted in full transparency jointly with the region and MINUSCA.

France resolutely encourages the authorities of the Central African Republic to put an end to the exclusively military option and return to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 by taking full ownership of the measures provided for in that road map.

The second priority is the rule of law. I welcome the adoption, on 27 May, by the parliamentarians of the Central African Republic of a law abolishing the death penalty. France calls on decision-makers in the Central African Republic to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, which constitutes an essential condition for MINUSCA's joint operations with Central African forces, as well as their continued logistical support. The Security Council will follow up that point with extreme vigilance.

France is concerned by the alarming reports regarding the conduct of the Central African forces. It is clear that Wagner Group mercenaries are not only applying brutal methods, which have been widely documented, but are also instilling them in their Central African partners. Any changes to the arms embargo must therefore be considered against that backdrop. I wish to recall, first and foremost, that the Central African authorities can legally obtain the equipment they need, and that no notification or request for authorization has ever been refused by the Council. The regime in place is one of control, not prohibition.

We encourage the progress made by the Central African Republic; however, we believe that it has not yet been able to provide sufficient guarantees in terms of the peace process, arms control and the professionalism of its armed forces, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General regarding the application of benchmarks (S/2022/489).

Finally, with regard to the political situation, France has taken note of the holding of a republican dialogue, in which some of the country's active forces were not able to participate. Only inclusive consultations and consensus surrounding the rules of the democratic process will enable the Central African Republic to advance towards peace and reconciliation.

France calls on all political and security actors in the Central African Republic to set their differences

aside in order to address the suffering of the population, which faces an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that has been aggravated by fuel shortages and price increases caused by the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Kenya, Ghana and my own country, Gabon (A3).

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We would also like to thank Ms. Lina Ekomo for her briefing.

The recent history of the Central African Republic has been marked by great political and security upheaval. Repeatedly torn apart by the violence perpetrated by armed groups and the often-conflicting postures taken by external Powers, the Central African Republic has endured a long period of grave instability. Today, however, the prospects for lasting peace are visible on the horizon, even though the country continues to be plagued in a number of areas by the activities of armed groups.

Given its particular interest in the situation, the A3 is keen to once again underscore the need for the Council to continue supporting the democratically elected Central African authorities. Our efforts must be further ramped up in order to find long-term solutions and build on the political, security and humanitarian gains already made.

In that regard, we would like to make the following observations.

On the political front, the convening of the national dialogue in March, in line with the joint road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, reflects the resolve of the Government of the Central African Republic to respect the commitments undertaken in 2019. The obvious enthusiasm of the population at those meetings is also a testament to the genuine desire of the people of the Central African Republic to turn the page on political instability. The Council is therefore duty-bound to support the hopes and efforts of the Central African people in their quest for peace.

Consequently, maintaining the Security Council's consensus on providing multidimensional support to the Central African Republic, including in the financial, material, economic and political spheres, must be a priority. We also call for awareness-raising among all Central African stakeholders — political actors, members of civil society, women, men, young people and armed groups signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic — concerning the need to prioritize dialogue and mutual understanding in order to make progress on the peace efforts launched by the Government with the support of the international community.

The recommendations emanating from the national dialogue must be implemented by all parties so as to guarantee a lasting political solution that is led by the Central African people for the Central African people.

The A3 also welcomes the adoption by the National Assembly of a law abolishing the death penalty and prohibiting the use of torture, which clearly demonstrates the will of the Central African authorities to combat human rights violations. We hope that will enable any shortcomings in that area to be addressed and bolster interest in the national reconciliation process, in a context in which the perpetrators of war crimes are currently being prosecuted and tried in the Central African Republic.

The A3 is encouraged by all measures taken by the Central African authorities to organize local elections in 2023 in a peaceful and inclusive political environment. MINUSCA's support to that end should be welcomed. The training of women and young people on electoral matters, which was initiated by the United Nations force, could indeed allow for the greater involvement of those strata of society in the first local elections to be held in over 30 years.

We wish to recall that, in such a fragile security environment, it is crucial to provide appropriate financing to the National Electoral Authority. Therefore, we believe there is an urgent need to see the pledges made by the international community in November 2021 come to fruition in order to finance the elections in the Central African Republic.

To conclude on the political front, the A3 commends the personal engagement of Special Representative Rugwabiza with the Central African people. We encourage her to continue advocating with the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African

States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in order to revitalize the peace process in the Central African Republic. The role of regional organizations in ensuring lasting stability in the country is also absolutely crucial.

The A3 recalls that the Central African Republic has been subjected to several successful and attempted coups d'états. Such political crises are often used by disruptive forces to justify violence and other abuses, which causes the civilian population immense suffering. The question of security is therefore an essential one that we must help to resolve. The gains made in the security sphere in recent months have led to significant progress being made on the ground, which has been characterized by a reduction in the number of violations of the Political Agreement and the extension of State authority throughout the country.

However, it is regrettable that attacks targeting civilians persist and that the criminal activities of armed groups are becoming increasingly frequent in certain parts of the country. We are very concerned by the recurring massacres of civilians. The A3 condemns the use of anti-personnel mines and other explosive weapons against civilians by armed groups, which spreads terror through the centre and west of the country in particular.

In the light of the violence and the complex, multidimensional security crisis that has been aggravated by the coronavirus disease pandemic and the current global economic situation, the Council must take resolute action, which must focus primarily on the sources and supply chains of rebel groups, who, astonishingly, seem to have free access to weapons — and increasingly sophisticated ones at that.

It is no secret to anyone, let alone Council members, that the illegal exploitation of raw materials remains a principal source of financing for those groups. It is therefore urgent to ensure that stricter monitoring mechanisms be put in place regarding the extraction and destination of such materials. The A3 also underscores the importance of punishing all persons and entities involved in the illicit trade in resources who supply armed group networks through that trade. It is vital to cut all of the armed groups' sources of supply.

Secondly, our action should be focused on building the capacity of the Forces armées centrafricaines and supporting the democratically elected Central African authorities as part of the protection of civilians.

We reaffirm the ad hoc nature of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The Mission will not stay in the Central African Republic forever. The State's authority must be re-established throughout the country by well-trained and -equipped Central African forces. That is why we echo the statement of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Government of the Central African Republic concerning the importance of lifting the arms embargo on the Central African Republic and of the country's commitment to strengthening its weapons and ammunition management system. We also underscore the need for international support for the Government of the Central African Republic as it takes steps to ensure effective control and management of the weapons in its possession and that it fully meets all benchmarks. The Central African Republic has demonstrated its firm willingness to meet the benchmarks set.

Establishing security conditions that can lead to a long-term reduction in the presence of armed groups in the Central African Republic requires the international community's ongoing financial support in implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Improving the programme means supporting it with economic opportunities for former combatants, and the launch of quick-impact projects constitutes progress in that regard.

According to the humanitarian response plan, 3.1 million people are in a precarious situation. We are concerned about the increasing number of refugees and displaced persons who need urgent humanitarian assistance. In that regard, the A3 welcomed the Regional Ministerial Conference on Central African Refugees held on 27 April in Yaoundé, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the objective of finding concrete solutions to the issue of forced displacement caused by the crisis in the Central African Republic. The meeting was a demonstration of regional solidarity and of the involvement of neighbouring countries in finding a solution to the crisis. We call for honouring financial pledges to ensure the implementation of the humanitarian response plan. The continuing humanitarian distress caused by the activities of armed groups is being exacerbated by the devastating impact of climate change, which is also a source of insecurity in the country and the region.

In conclusion, we thank Special Representative Valentine Rugwabiza and her team at MINUSCA, the humanitarian personnel and our partners in the ICGLR, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Central African Republic for their unfailing efforts and support on the ground.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): My delegation would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Valentine Rugwabiza for her briefing and to wish her the best of luck in her new job. I also thank Ms. Lina Ekomo for her briefing. We welcome the delegation of the Central African Republic to today's meeting.

The tasks before Ms. Rugwabiza are challenging, as are the conditions in which the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic is doing its work. We welcome the Panel's final report and express our sincere appreciation for its members' effort to provide input to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic in a very tight time frame, due to repeated delays in their appointments. It is our hope that they can adhere to reasonable timelines in future. With regard to the most recent developments on the ground, my delegation would like to raise some points that have a direct impact on the peace process.

First, Brazil recognizes that the holding of the republican dialogue is a relevant step in reaching sustainable peace. In that regard, we take this opportunity to reiterate the calls of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to ensure that this exercise, and its follow-up, is inclusive. No durable solution can be found without bringing all stakeholders to the table, including women.

Secondly, we would like to underscore the key role played by the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and encourage the Central African authorities to persevere in their work in that area. In order to complement those DDR activities, the Government has also been working with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to put in place violence reduction programmes in local communities. We commend that partnership.

Thirdly, we believe it is crucial to strengthen the rule of law, especially in the light of the various reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including the recruitment of child soldiers. That is a matter of great concern to us that we hope the recommendations of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict will help to address. We would also like to show support, first to the efforts of the local authorities to deliver justice, particularly through the opening in April of the first trial of the Special Criminal Court, and secondly to the work of MINUSCA in helping to operationalize the Truth, Justice, Reparations and Reconciliation Commission.

My fourth and last point relates to the contribution of regional organizations to the peace process in the Central African Republic. In that regard, it is particularly encouraging to see the renewed engagement of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region in favour of the implementation of its September 2021 joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic. We thank the Special Representative for her active participation in that process and hope that the technical support provided by Angola and Rwanda, as well as the monitoring mechanisms agreed, will bear fruit.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome the agreement reached by the Central African Republic and Cameroon to work together on border demarcation. That is a step forward in improving both security and living standards for the local population.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her first briefing to the Council. I also listened closely to the briefing by Ms. Lina Ekomo.

The political and security situation in the Central African Republic is improving. The Government is committed to national development and reconstruction. In March it convened a republican dialogue in which all parties focused on peace, security, democracy, the rule of law, economic and social development and foreign policy and made more than 200 suggestions, making it a major milestone in the peace process in the Central African Republic. All the parties should take the opportunity that the dialogue presents to implement its outcomes and consolidate the foundations of peace and development. China welcomed the Government's holding of a strategic review meeting, together with representatives of the countries of the region, in support of the efforts of regional organizations to facilitate

the implementation of the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic based on the country's actual needs and to advance the political process in the right direction.

The general situation in the Central African Republic remains stable, but armed groups are active in some areas, threatening stability and the safety of civilians.

The Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should actively discharge its mandate and help the Government of the Central African Republic address risks and protect civilians. At the same time, MINUSCA cannot be deployed indefinitely. Therefore, helping the Central African Republic in security capacity-building is the key approach to addressing the root causes of conflict. The right of the Government of the Central African Republic to conduct its own external security cooperation must be upheld. Currently, the Central African Republic is beginning the gradual process of post-conflict reconstruction.

As it discharges its mandate, MINUSCA needs to focus on helping the Government of the Central African Republic to restore State authority, improve security institution-building, support disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and promote local development, among other things, in order to increase a public sense of progress and eradicate the root causes of the conflict.

The economy and livelihoods are key to ensuring peace and stability in the country. Recently, the Central African Republic has been faced with a serious increase in financial challenges. There is a shortage of crude oil, water and electricity. The prices of imported goods have increased, and the problem of food security is significant. Those issues have led to grave consequences that affect people's lives and the implementation of the MINUSCA mandate.

Countries and international organizations should resume financial aid to the Central African Republic as soon as possible and ensure adequate humanitarian funding in order to alleviate its humanitarian situation. There is a need to increase investment in food security, infrastructure, education, health, vocational training and other areas in order to help the Central African Republic eradicate poverty, improve livelihoods and transform its potential energy advantages into

development advantages, while eliminating the causes of conflicts.

China thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his contribution to the peace and stability of the Central African Republic over the past three years and welcomes Ms. Rugwabiza in her new role as his successor. Since assuming that role, she has facilitated communication between MINUSCA and the Government of the Central African Republic. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and the Diaspora has also established a coordination mechanism with MINUSCA. Better communication between the Mission and its host country helps the Mission establish a conducive environment in which it can discharge its mandate. We hope that Special Representative Rugwabiza will continue to listen to the opinions voiced by the host country, focus on the core mandate conferred upon the Mission by the Security Council, make its peacekeeping operations more effective and contribute to peace and stability in the Central African Republic. China will continue to support her work.

In conclusion, I reiterate China's position on the lifting of the arms embargo on the Central African Republic. In her letter of 8 June to the President of the Council, the Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic, Ms Baipo Temon, noted that the arms embargo is having a significant impact on the maintenance of the national security of the Central African Republic and emphasized that her Government has made great efforts to implement the relevant Council resolutions in order to facilitate the lifting of the arms embargo. China hopes that the Council will listen to the Central African Republic's appeal and lift the embargo as soon as possible in order to help it address security challenges and maintain national stability.

Ms. Shaheen (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her first briefing before the Security Council since assuming her post. We reiterate our support for her endeavours and the efforts of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We also listened to Ms. Lina Ekomo's briefing, and we welcome the participation of the representative of the Central African Republic in this meeting.

Despite the continuing difficult circumstances and challenges in the Central African Republic, it has recently seen developments that we hope will pave the way towards achieving peace and stability in the country.

At the political level, the strategic review of the political process held in Bangui on 4 June, under the auspices of His Excellency President Faustin Touadera, was an important step towards revitalizing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic through the Luanda road map. We appreciate the continued cooperation with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other relevant regional and international actors to achieve those goals. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for engaging with all stakeholders to help move the political process forward.

We also note the recommendations emanating from the republican dialogue. We emphasize the importance of ensuring inclusiveness in all peacebuilding efforts, including through the meaningful participation of women. In that regard, we appreciate President Touadera's recent appointment of five women among the 12 members of the consultative framework on the elections.

With regard to the alarming security situation, which has been exacerbated by the continuing activities of armed groups, we stress that committing fully to the ceasefire and reaching a political solution remain key to establishing stability in the Central African Republic.

At the same time, however, there is a need to assign the highest priority to the protection of civilians, with a particular focus on the protection of women and children from sexual violence. According to the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/272) on conflict-related sexual violence, that issue constitutes one of the grave challenges that must be addressed. With regard to the protection of children, we welcome the signing in April of the national action plan to combat trafficking in children.

In that context, we would like to express our concern about the continued threat for both civilians and peacekeepers posed by explosive ordnance. We appreciate the ongoing cooperation between MINUSCA and the Mine Action Service to overcome that challenge, including by training and deploying specialized units,

as well as raising awareness among the population concerning the safe disposal of explosive ordnance.

With regard to the serious security risks posed by misinformation and disinformation, we appreciate MINUSCA's efforts to implement a strategy to address that issue. We also commend MINUSCA for helping the Central African Republic to achieve stability.

We express our sincere condolences to the Kingdom of Morocco and to the families of the peacekeepers who recently passed away in the line of duty.

We would also like to emphasize the need to address the continuing deterioration of humanitarian and economic conditions, which have been exacerbated by high commodity prices. According to the World Food Programme, 3 million people in the Central African Republic are in need of humanitarian assistance, while more than half of the country's population suffers from food insecurity.

That situation has been exacerbated by the fact that the country continues to grapple with the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease pandemic and other public health challenges. In that regard, we underline the importance of continued efforts to protect humanitarian workers, and we commend the efforts of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility for facilitating access to the vaccine.

In conclusion, we stress the importance of the international community's continued support for the Central African Republic in order for it to achieve the peace it has long awaited and for stability and prosperity to be established in the region.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her briefing and once again wishing her every success in her important mission. I also thank the civil society briefer, Ms. Lina Ekomo, for her insights. I also welcome the representative of the Central African Republic at today's meeting.

In the past four months, the significant political developments in the Central African Republic have been demonstrative of the resolve and commitment of the leadership towards the peace process. The holding of the republican dialogue with the participation of the majority of the opposition has opened up the democratic space for dialogue and participation. We reiterate the importance of that process and the need to make

it as inclusive as possible. Such a process will enable taking on board the collective aspirations of the people and, in turn, securing lasting peace and development in the country. We also welcome the meeting of the strategic review concerning the political process, held earlier this month, and underscore the importance of its follow-up.

State authority and the rule of law have also strengthened, the presence of State officials has increased, security forces have been deployed across the country and Parliament has adopted important legislation as well. Positive steps have been taken to address impunity in the Central African Republic, including crimes against civilians and peacekeepers. One such development is the first trial of the Special Criminal Court, held recently. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region road map has also seen forward movement with the active involvement of neighbours, particularly on internally displaced persons and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

We know that local elections have been postponed due to paucity of funds. The importance of putting democratic institutions in place cannot be overemphasized. We hope that the hurdles to the holding of local elections will be overcome soon. To that end, we appreciate the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in providing support to the National Electoral Authority in order to promote participation and the training of officials.

The security situation has remained fragile, although the number of violations of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic has decreased. The activities of armed groups are negatively affecting the lives of ordinary civilians, particularly women and children. We strongly condemn the attacks by armed groups and others on civilians. The discovery of anti-personnel landmines and the increase in the use of improvised explosive devices by armed groups are worrisome signs. We reiterate our call for all opposition groups and armed-group signatories to the peace agreement to end hostilities and join the Central African Republic authorities in finding a peaceful solution.

We note the constructive engagement between MINUSCA and the Government of the Central African Republic. We welcome the establishment of a new

coordination structure to oversee the implementation of status-of-forces agreement and security coordination. We hope that such mechanisms will help to resolve outstanding issues and ensure adequate coordination on the ground. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic to ensure that the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers is not compromised in any manner. We also expect MINUSCA to prioritize the mandate tasks in line with the requirements of the Central African Republic. We reiterate that peacekeeping missions must consistently evaluate the performance of all its components — uniformed, civilian and mission leadership.

The humanitarian situation needs our collective and sustained focus. We have consistently drawn attention to the twin burden of rising prices and falling supplies of petroleum and food grains on developing countries. In the light of our error in the case of vaccines for the coronavirus disease, we cannot again disregard the principles of equity, affordability and accessibility of essential commodities for the needy. We hope that the international community will extend support to the humanitarian response plan, which remains poorly funded.

The Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic recently reported that the official exports of rough diamonds from western regions in nine Kimberly-Process-compliant zones doubled in 2021. That positive development underscores the potential of the resource-rich Central African Republic to expand its formal trade in commodities for its development.

In conclusion, the Central African Republic is on a positive trajectory. The need now is to press ahead and capitalize on the gains made so far. To that end, we support the initiatives of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. India will continue to support the Central African Republic and its people in their pursuit of peace, stability and economic development.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): Allow me to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her first briefing to the Security Council on the Central African Republic. I also thank Ms. Ekomo for her insightful remarks and all her work to support women's leadership in the Central African Republic.

Norway commends the Central African Republic authorities for organizing the republican dialogue in March. We hope that its conclusions and recommendations will be used to renew the impetus

for advancing an even more inclusive peace process. The core of that process must be the 2019 peace agreement — and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) road map remains essential for its implementation. The Government, the opposition and armed groups all share the responsibility of getting the peace process back on track.

We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her personal commitment to the peace agreement and for her efforts to engage the authorities in the region, and we are encouraged by the renewed engagement in the region, particularly by Angola and Rwanda and the 4 June meeting in Bangui. It is important that the ICGLR, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union remain actively involved.

For the peace and reconciliation process to be successful, it is crucial that it be as inclusive as possible. All segments of society should be engaged, including the political opposition, the armed groups that have renounced violence and civil society.

The full, equal and meaningful participation of women is fundamental to building peace in the Central African Republic. Local elections, underpinned by a credible political process, provide a unique opportunity to extend the democratic space and build peace. We call on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to provide logistical support for the preparations for those local elections and to promote local dialogue and reconciliation.

Norway is concerned about the proposal to change the Constitution to allow for a third presidential term.

Norway urges all parties to the armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We strongly condemn the reports of relentless gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence, grave violations against children and the targeting of humanitarian workers. We also condemn the reported targeting of ethnic or religious minorities, such as the Fulani and Muslims, including the use of anti-balaka militias as proxy forces. Protection from such violations must remain a key priority for the Council.

Furthermore, in the latest quarterly report of MINUSCA's Human Rights Division, it is shocking to

see that actions by “other security personnel”, which refers to the Russian Wagner Group, resulted in the highest number of victims of human rights violations and abuses during the reporting period, followed by the Forces armées centrafricaines. We call on the Central African Republic authorities to investigate all incidents and hold perpetrators accountable.

Norway welcomes the final report (see S/2021/569) of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic. We hope that all members of the Council will come together to ensure that next year’s Panel of Experts will be able to do its work from the start with a complete team.

We are encouraged by reports of improved relations between the Central African Republic authorities and the United Nations — not least thanks to the efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza. We hope that this positive momentum will continue and will improve the fate of the Central African people.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her informative briefing. My delegation wants to start by congratulating her on a productive beginning to her tenure at the helm of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and to commend her for the leadership she is demonstrating. I also want to particularly thank Ms. Lina Ekomo for her very brave and compelling briefing today. It is important that we get ground truth from activists like her, and we thank her for appearing today.

In the light of the briefings we just heard, my remarks today will address three themes — first, the contributions of MINUSCA towards peace and security in the Central African Republic; secondly, the need for continuing steps towards a political solution to the country’s conflict; and lastly, the continued human rights abuses and threat to regional stability from Kremlin-backed Wagner Group forces.

First, thanks to the daily work of peacekeepers and the commitment of their contributing countries, MINUSCA has continued to make critical contributions to protecting civilians and supporting the implementation of the 2019 peace agreement. As the Secretary-General’s report (S/2022/491) notes, MINUSCA’s increasingly robust posture, coupled with

joint operations with security forces of the Central African Republic, has successfully ousted several armed groups and safeguarded towns.

My delegation also applauds Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza’s initiative in addressing the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse through enhanced training and accountability mechanisms. We remain concerned, however, about the fact that Central African armed forces, which in many cases in our assessment were probably directed by the Wagner Group, perpetrated 23 violations of MINUSCA’s status-of-forces agreement over the past four months. And like others, we further condemn the disinformation campaigns targeting MINUSCA, which impede mandate implementation and put peacekeepers’ lives in danger.

The second point I would like to make is that there is no military-only solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic. The only way forward is through full implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement and sustained State authority across the country that is responsive to the needs of Central Africans and to the issue of justice for victims. To that end, I echo Ms. Lina Ekomo’s call for the Government of the Central African Republic to continue to advance the peace process, and I commend the leadership of Rwanda and Angola in supporting it through the regional road map

The recent progress on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, such as the demobilization of more than 700 former members of the Lord’s Resistance Army, constitutes encouraging steps. All actors in the country must respect formal disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation processes, which are as fundamental to the success of the 2019 peace agreement as its other core tenets, including honouring President Touadera’s ceasefire and strengthening relations between the Central African Republic and its neighbours.

My third and final point is about upholding accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses. Like others, we celebrate the progress of the Special Criminal Court, which recently opened its first trial. That is an important milestone in ensuring truth and accountability for those afflicted by conflict. Unfortunately, one of the worst offenders of human rights abuses is the Wagner Group, whose forces, which are referred to as “other security personnel” in the Secretary-General’s report, perpetrated 42 incidents

of human rights abuses during the reporting period, affecting 165 victims, often in the presence of national defence forces. Independent investigations corroborate that account, including a recent Human Rights Watch report that confirmed that the Wagner Group has “summarily executed, tortured, and beaten civilians” across the country since 2019.

We call on the Russian Government and the Government of the Central African Republic, through its special commission of inquiry, to investigate all allegations transparently and hold accountable those responsible for those heinous acts. We are deeply concerned about reports that the Wagner Group’s forces have detained and killed peacebuilders and former combatants who willingly participated in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The Wagner Group’s assassination of Zakaria Demane in February shocked many Central Africans. As the Secretary-General’s report highlights, the Wagner Group’s forces have rearmed ex-combatants, creating their own unaccountable proxy militias, and have interfered with MINUSCA’s operations, hindering the peacekeepers’ ability to implement mandated tasks. The illicit extraction of the Central African Republic’s mineral wealth remains a key driver of the Wagner Group’s activities, in addition to those of non-State armed groups and other actors. Promoting the responsible management of natural resources and combating related corruption are critical to peace and prosperity in the country.

In conclusion, we once again call on all actors in the Central African Republic to lay down their weapons. The people of the Central African Republic deserve a political solution that will end their suffering.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ndiaye, for his leadership over the past three years. I also welcome Special Representative Valentine Rugwabiza. I thank her for her very relevant briefing and for the excellent work she has already done in such a short time in carrying out her new functions. She can count on Ireland’s full support. I would also like to thank Ms. Lina Ekomo for her very enlightening and courageous statement.

Ireland is extremely concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic. We welcome the republican dialogue, which is an important step in the peace process. The fact that many of the

recommendations are aligned with the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is particularly encouraging. We support the Secretary-General’s call to the Government to convey that spirit of dialogue to all the opposition parties and armed groups that are signatories to the Political Agreement and have renounced violence. We welcome the stocktaking conference on the road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the initiative of the Special Representative and regional partners, including Angola, as well as President Touadera’s support for the process. We hope that will give the road map and the implementation of the Political Agreement new momentum. In that regard, we also welcome the commitment to holding quarterly follow-up meetings.

We are disappointed by the postponement of local elections, despite the people’s wishes. We encourage the authorities to prioritize the preparation for those elections, which are scheduled for January 2023, including the full, fair and meaningful participation of women as voters, candidates and elected officials. Their safety must be guaranteed.

(*spoke in English*)

An urgent end to human rights abuses and violations, and accountability for the atrocities that have been committed, is necessary for a lasting peace. Continued incidents of conflict-related sexual violence are simply unacceptable. We welcome the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to investigate conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique, and encourage continued efforts on the issue. Ending impunity is key to ending violations.

We are deeply concerned about the allegations of abuses of civilians by the national security forces and other security personnel, particularly the Wagner Group, along with those committed by armed groups. Recent reports of civilian casualties caused by attacks on mines along the border between the Central African Republic and the Sudan are of particular concern. We urge the Government of the Central African Republic to systematically investigate all allegations of human rights violations and abuses and international humanitarian law violations and to prosecute the perpetrators regardless of nationality or affiliation. We

commend the launching of the first trial of the Special Criminal Court, as well as the first criminal sessions in the Bangui Court of Appeal since February 2020. The work of those courts as accountability mechanisms will help contribute to the fight against impunity in the Central African Republic. We welcome the National Assembly's enactment of a law abolishing the death penalty.

The effects of the worsening economic and fiscal situation on civilians, particularly the most vulnerable, are deeply worrying. A staggering 3.1 million people in the Central African Republic — 63 per cent of the population — are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. We condemn the continuing attacks on humanitarian actors and obstructions to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the strongest possible terms. The suffering of civilians is exacerbated when aid is unable to reach them. Ireland was appalled by the recent killing of a Médecins Sans Frontières staff member in Ouham prefecture. We reiterate our call for an independent investigation to be carried out and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Status-of-forces-agreement violations endanger United Nations personnel, undermine mandate implementation and place the protection of civilians in jeopardy. MINUSCA's dedicated uniformed and civilian personnel continue to make a valuable contribution to peace in the Central African Republic, and their work deserves to and must be supported.

Ireland calls on the Government and all the parties to facilitate all United Nations operations. We welcome the coordination structure put in place by Foreign Minister Baipo Temon, and we encourage all parties to continue to engage constructively with MINUSCA.

Sanctions are an important tool to support the restoration of peace and security in the Central African Republic. I reiterate Ireland's support for the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) and again call for an end to delays in the appointment of the final expert to the Committee's Panel of Experts.

The path to peace requires will and effort wherever and whenever that challenge is undertaken. I urge all parties to capitalize on the renewed vigour to implement the ICGLR road map and the Political Agreement in order to create the future the people of the Central African Republic so much desire and deserve.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I would like to welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza to her role and wish her every success in it. We are also grateful to her and to Ms. Ekomo for their powerful testimony. Let me also welcome the participation of the representative of the Central African Republic in this meeting.

I would make four points in response to what we have heard today.

First, with regard to the political situation, the United Kingdom welcomes progress on the republican dialogue process, as well as continued regional efforts on the Luanda joint road map initiative in support of the Political Agreement. The cessation of violence and an inclusive credible process that includes civil society and opposition groups, remains the key to long-term success. We urge all parties to respect the ceasefire as a key step towards peace.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian and human rights situation, the United Kingdom welcomes the National Assembly's 30 May decision to abolish the death penalty, which represents a positive step towards improving human rights. However, we are gravely concerned by continuing violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights by all parties to the conflict. Indiscriminate killings of unarmed civilians by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the Russian mercenary group, the Wagner Group, which continues to play a destabilizing role in the country, have not stopped. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic to fully coordinate all security actors operating in the country, ensure they abide by applicable international humanitarian and human rights law and make certain that all perpetrators of violations or abuses are held to account.

The ripple effects of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine are having a profound impact on the Central African Republic. Food and fuel shortages are hampering the humanitarian response and impeding the operations of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). To help ease the impact, we call on the Government of Cameroon to allow the export of fuel and other humanitarian items from Douala to meet urgent humanitarian needs.

Thirdly, with regard to obstructions to MINUSCA's operations, the increase in violations of the status-of-

forces agreement, including with the involvement so-called other security personnel, is unacceptable. We urge the Government of the Central African Republic to abide by the status-of-forces agreement and share the outcome of its investigation into the attack by presidential guard forces on a United Nations bus on 1 November 2021.

Finally, the United Kingdom once again emphasizes that the arms embargo exists to prevent weapons falling into the hands of armed groups and fuelling violence. It does not exist to prevent the Government from obtaining the equipment it needs for defence and security sector reform. Indeed, to date, the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) has approved all exemption requests submitted under the framework of the arms embargo. We welcome any progress the Government has made with regard to meeting the Security Council's benchmarks, and we look forward to the Panel of Experts reporting on this in future.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Valentine Rugwabiza, whom I wish every success in her new assignment, as well as Ms. Ekomo, the representative of civil society, for their briefings. I also welcome the delegation from the Central African Republic this morning.

Having listened to the briefings, among which various achievements and pending challenges for the stabilization of the Central African Republic were enumerated, I would like to focus on four specific issues. First, Mexico appreciates the progress that has been made in terms of coordination between the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the national authorities. We also welcome the efforts of the new Special Representative and the Central African Government to create a new dynamic that will enable the Mission to carry out its mandate and effectively support the State in key tasks for bringing peace to the country, in particular the protection of the civilian population.

We consider that the establishment of the coordination mechanism in relation to implementing the status-of-forces agreement should serve to guarantee the free movement of MINUSCA and facilitate communication between the Mission and the authorities. Mexico reiterates that violations of the agreement are

unacceptable, as they limit the effectiveness of the Mission and put its personnel at risk.

Secondly, we have listened to the position of the Central African Government and the subregional bodies on the arms embargo, and we express our openness to discussing alternatives that would allow us to respond effectively to illicit arms trafficking. As long as arms are widely available, some actors will prefer the path of violence to political dialogue. We are also concerned about the detection of anti-personnel mines, a sign that the flow of weapons into the Central African Republic is continuing and diversifying, with increasingly lethal and indiscriminate effects on the civilian population. We believe that the cooperation of the international community remains necessary for the authorities to equip themselves with a weapons and ammunition management system that meets security standards commensurate with the challenge.

We welcome the support provided by MINUSCA and United Nations agencies to that end, and we urge the authorities to redouble their efforts in this regard. We call for progress in the full operationalization of the National Commission to Combat the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. It would also be advisable to take advantage of the cooperation and assistance mechanisms provided for in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Thirdly, Mexico welcomes the regional mobilization to facilitate the republican dialogue and revitalize the Political Agreement, particularly through the Luanda road map. We believe that the region can play an important role in opening channels of communication with the groups linked to the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement to bring them back to the negotiating table. Regional support is also key to the implementation and monitoring of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. We therefore urge the Central African Republic's regional partners to get active in ensuring funding for this programme beyond 2023. In this context, Mexico calls for regional initiatives to be coordinated with the existing implementation and monitoring bodies of the Political Agreement in order to avoid duplication and achieve optimal results.

Fourthly, the military response is insufficient to putting an end to the violence. In addition to political

dialogue, providing justice must play a central role in ensuring that those guilty of atrocities are punished and that the victims of the conflict obtain reparations. The opening of the first trial of the Special Criminal Court and the first session of the Bangui Court of Appeal represent considerable progress in that area.

Mexico believes that the much-needed national reconciliation requires effective and efficient transitional justice mechanisms that would break the cycle of violence.

Finally, Mexico welcomes the elimination of the death penalty in the Central African Republic. The death penalty is an irreparable breach of human rights, and that is why we must work towards its universal abolition.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for briefing the Security Council and congratulate her again on her appointment to that post. We listened closely to Ms. Lina Ekomo and also welcome the representative of the Central African Republic to this meeting.

We believe that the situation in the Central African Republic is relatively stable and largely under the control of Government forces. Work is under way in the country to ensure the presence of the State and to strengthen administrative structures. The Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic — the Khartoum agreement — of 2019 remains the basis for achieving stability and security in the Central African Republic. We advocate the parties upholding the ceasefire announced in October 2021 by President Touadera.

We welcome the holding in Bangui of another round of the republican dialogue, which adds organically to the Khartoum agreement. We urge those groups that are not on board with the peace process to stop the unnecessary bloodshed and to engage in genuine dialogue with the authorities. We are convinced that there is no option other than to settle the situation in the country through political and diplomatic means.

An important stage in further improving the security situation in the country is the launch, on the initiative of the Government of the Central African Republic, of the coordination mechanism, with the participation of the United Nations. Its first meeting took place in Bangui on 14 April.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) must play an important role in providing security in the country, given the functions conferred upon peacekeepers, which involve, inter alia, encountering illegal armed formations in the protection of civilians.

We are pleased to note the positive changes in the interaction between MINUSCA and Bangui. We have unfailingly underscored that constructive relations between a mission and host-country authorities are a prerequisite for the success of the work of peacekeepers. It is also important for the Blue Helmets to focus on their main tasks, which include assisting the reconciliation process, restoring State presence in the various regions of the country and protecting civilians.

Russia is consistently trying to achieve an easing of the current arms embargo against the Central African Republic until its full lifting. Similar positions in the Security Council have been put forward by African representatives and representatives of the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The most important thing is that the people of the Central African Republic themselves constantly discuss that issue, because those weapons are required by the country's security forces to fight illegal armed formations, which, as we all can see, have regular channels for the supply of arms. On the whole, we are convinced that a sanctions regime should not hamper the efforts of the Government to counter armed groups; right now it is definitely doing so.

From our side, we have been consistently assisting Bangui to strengthen the military capabilities of its official security structures. Having informed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, we have provided to the Central African Republic several batches of military-grade equipment. Russian instructors are working successfully there at the invitation of the legitimate authorities of the country.

Russia strictly complies with the restrictions imposed on it by the Security Council regarding the Central African Republic. We underscore that the choice of partner in any specific area, in particular in the area of security, is the prerogative of national authorities. We furthermore do not deem it appropriate that there

is a reference in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/491) to the events in Ukraine as the cause of the food and energy crisis in the Central African Republic.

The negative trends of recent years in those areas are linked primarily to blunders and systematic mistakes in the macroeconomic, energy and food policies of Western States. Undoubtedly the coronavirus disease pandemic also played a part, disrupting food supply chains. Furthermore, the situation has deteriorated significantly because of the imposition in February and March of illegal unilateral restrictions against Russia.

In the context of discussing the socioeconomic situation in the Central African Republic, we are concerned by the freezing of direct budget support from external donors. That situation runs the real risk of exacerbating the situation in the country and threatens the achievements made over recent years in the area of national reconciliation.

We would like to touch upon a number of statements made by some Security Council colleagues who are using absolutely any opportunity to talk about Russia. In that regard, I should like to underscore that in recent years, the Central African Republic has managed to make significant progress in the area of stabilizing the country and helping it to emerge from an ongoing cycle of instability. That is a clear fact. The progress made is such that the issue of lifting the arms embargo is now more pertinent than ever. That request is made not just by the Central African Republic; it is also supported by the countries in the region, the African Union and others. As the three African States that are members of the Security Council noted, the African countries stand in solidarity with Bangui.

The main role in achieving those results, of course, was played by the inhabitants of the country themselves. The leadership of the Central African Republic has also shown determination and consistency. Moreover, an important role was played by the assistance from the United Nations and bilateral partners. Russian assistance also made a significant contribution, and our friends in Bangui recognized that. That is the main point.

Many problems remain to be tackled, and we are prepared to cooperate in that respect.

Against that backdrop, the smear campaign, in particular as contained in the statement made by the United States, shows what Washington's focus and

main attention is on, and it is not the Central African Republic. It is not on the settlement of the situation in the country. It is not on improving the situation there, and that is very saddening. Many people throughout the world still expect the United States to have a responsible policy, but, unfortunately, we just do not see this at all.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Albania.

I thank the Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Valentine Rugwabiza, for her briefing and wish her all the best in assuming her duties. We welcome Ms. Lina Ekomo and deeply appreciate her presentation, and also welcome to this meeting the representative of the Central African Republic.

I will now turn to three main issues. First, concerning the political situation, we take note of the republican dialogue held last March. That was a step in the right direction that will require further inclusivity, guaranteeing the structured participation of representatives from civil society and the opposition. The 217 ensuing recommendations were encouraging, as they reinforced the commitments made on key provisions of the 2015 Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation and of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We also note the postponement until January 2023 of the local elections scheduled for September 2022, owing, among other things, to a lack of funding. We join the call of the Secretary-General to mobilize the necessary financial means.

Secondly, with regard to the dire security situation, despite a slight decrease in security violations concerning the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, we are alarmed by the spike in activities by armed groups and by the national forces' recruitment of anti-balaka and dissident Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique combatants as proxies.

Furthermore, the attacks against the Fulani community, as well as the repeated human rights violations and sexual violence committed by the armed forces, the national defence forces and mercenaries, namely, the Wagner Group, are appalling to witness, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Albania commends the launching of the first trial of the Special

Criminal Court, as well as the adoption by the National Assembly of the law abolishing the death penalty.

With regard to the arms embargo, we encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to meet all benchmarks on its way towards establishing full compliance and the reform of its security sector. It is important for the authorities to have full control over the tracking of weapons.

Thirdly, all of those challenges demand genuine political will, which calls for a renewed commitment to the Political Agreement through the joint road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Albania calls on the national authorities to continue their engagement with armed groups under the road map for the participation of the remaining 3,000 estimated combatants in the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Finally, Albania is concerned about the ongoing violations of the status-of-forces agreement, which obstruct the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) on the ground, as well as security incidents involving United Nations personnel.

We express our deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the two peacekeepers killed last week, as well as to the Moroccan authorities. Albania welcomes the 27 ongoing investigations by national judicial authorities into attacks against peacekeepers and stresses the need to ensure their safety.

We fully support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MINUSCA in tackling those challenges. As Ms. Ekomo implied, we must take care of the people of the Central African Republic, who also face food insecurity on top of the discouraging humanitarian crisis.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Nzessioue (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I speak today on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans abroad of the Central African Republic, who could not attend this important meeting in person, for which she requests the understanding of the Security Council.

The Minister reiterates her personal gratitude, as well as that of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, for the steadfast interest that the Security Council has shown in the Central African Republic. She deeply regrets that her request to speak via video-teleconference — a method that was so popular at the height of the coronavirus disease pandemic and that seems to be applied on a discretionary basis — was rejected. Since exceptions to rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures are tolerated for some meetings, it seems, as a matter of observation, that not all States Members of the United Nations are treated equally. The Minister deplores the Council's practice of refusing to allow the participation of Central African officials while favouring statements by non-governmental organizations financed by the United Nations itself and thereby adopting an ad hoc approach.

Nonetheless, I would like to insist on the notion of equity — a value that must be promoted unwaveringly so that the Charter of the United Nations remain the benchmark for the preservation of world peace in a complex geopolitical context that has not adapted itself to the evolution of the world.

It is difficult for me to make a plea about the injustice of the sanctions imposed on the Central African Republic, which deprive an entire people of all its means of defence at a time when the world is observing an avalanche of arms distribution spread across a conflict zone and a media campaign calling for respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. My country has repeatedly invoked those principles for years. It is therefore difficult for me to plead my country's cause today, because any statement that could be made in the name of the values proclaimed by the Charter would be in vain, simply because we are not treated in the same way under that Charter.

Are Council members aware that my country, the Central African Republic, holds the record for the highest number of peacekeeping missions on African soil? We have hosted a total of 13 missions, from the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements to the Central African Economic and Monetary Community Multinational Force, as well as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Peace Consolidation Mission in the Central African Republic, the Regional Cooperation Initiative

for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic and, most recently, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Are Council members aware that my country, the Central African Republic, since its independence in 1960 and the establishment of multiparty politics and democracy in 1991, has experienced only three democratic elections? The third and most recent of those elections were held in 2020 and 2021, and their results were preserved thanks to the determined resilience of a population tired of conflicts and manipulative attempts to seize power by force and violence.

Are Council members aware that my country, the Central African Republic — more precisely, the Central African territory — has endured, and continues to endure, the weight of a turbulent history marked by the epidemics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Arab and subsequently the European slave trades and the oppression and servitude of colonization in the past, and now the tyranny and terror of armed groups? Ours is a country that has been plagued by violence and violations of human rights, as well as violations of its territorial integrity, for centuries.

Given that history, which has been marked by widespread violence and violations, the Central African Republic is making every effort to emerge from a bygone era, continuing its quest for goodwill to help it rise from the ashes of the tyranny imposed by other men.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all those souls who lost their lives while serving the cause of bringing stability to the Central African Republic. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to all those well-intentioned parties that have contributed their experience and resources to bring peace to the Central African Republic, in particular the international community through United Nations peacekeeping operations such as MINUSCA, as well as regional and subregional organizations of the African continent such as the African Union, ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

Progress has notably been achieved through the revitalization of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in February 2019, and consequently through

the political process for peace through the joint road map of the ICGLR. I cannot neglect to mention the Central African Republic's technical, financial and bilateral partners.

Numerous challenges still face the Central African Republic; however, our priority remains the achievement of stability by neutralizing the armed groups that spread terror and continue to carry out deadly attacks against the peaceful civilian population. The Central African Republic would like to reassure Member States that it is fully aware of its duties and responsibilities when it comes to protecting its population and its territory. Nevertheless, we must question the imbalance of forces on the ground, where men in uniform without appropriate equipment face heavily armed enemies due to the immoral and counterproductive arms embargo.

The Central African Republic would also like to reassure Member States of the many efforts it has made, which have nevertheless been undermined by misinformation. For the Council's information, I would like to share some of the advances that can be found detailed in the country report made available by the Central African Republic, including the implementation of a law adopted on 7 August 2020 on a general regime of conventional arms and their parts, components and ammunition, as well as the establishment by decree of a coordinating committee for the management of arms and ammunition on 6 February 2021.

On 24 September 2021, the Government commenced operations to address the entire weapons life cycle — visits, joint functional verification, marking, tracing, the eventual placement and the destruction of weapons deemed to be obsolete, according to technical standards.

The Central African Republic today has the right equipment and the human and technical capacity, along with the support of partners. Anti-landmine operations by the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are conducted in line with resolution 2127 (2013), on the Central African Republic, and are based on reference goals set for that purpose.

The mobilization of security sector reform coordination mechanisms, in which the main international actors participate, support the defence and security forces of the Central African Republic, with a view to providing collective support to the

Government of the Central African Republic, in line with the reference goals.

The Central African Republic has requested the expertise of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in conducting an independent and impartial assessment, which would evaluate progress in the area of weapons and ammunition management and the nature of the various challenges that hamper progress. The assessment will enable the reference base to be updated. The reference base was established during the previous assessment that was conducted by UNIDIR in September 2017 and will supply the information needed to assist security sectors in defining a road map to facilitate meeting the reference goals.

With regard to mining, between 2020 and 2021, with the support of partners — including the United States Agency for International Development and the European Union's project on strengthening governance in the artisanal diamond and gold mining sectors in the Central African Republic — along with the participation of MINUSCA, the National Follow-Up Committee on the Kimberley Process in the Central African Republic conducted several missions to ensure that those areas are under the full control of the Central African Government, that there is no rebel activity and that the security situation enables the free movement of goods and persons. The decision to resume reconstruction in the Central African Republic will be taken following an assessment undertaken by experts now being deployed to the subprefectures of Abba, Sosso-Nakombo, Bouar and Baoro.

In the area of justice and the fight against impunity, the Special Criminal Court, which is gradually becoming operational, commenced trial proceedings this year. Hearings are continuing, including criminal hearings. A communication and consultation framework for the Special Prosecutor of the Special Criminal Court and the Ministry of Justice is now being finalized. It will help to address challenges in executing warrants and determine appropriate measures to be taken to facilitate the prosecution of those who have been served with arrest warrants, be they politicians or military personnel.

The bodies in charge of oversight and accountability in the judicial system and the army are working hard to identify shortcomings and to establish responsibility when a member of the military or a politician has

been served with an arrest warrant. The Commission for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation is now operational.

Lastly, on 4 June a joint strategic review meeting for the peace process in the Central African Republic was held in Bangui. The meeting brought together with the Government of the Central African Republic all partners engaged in the process, including the Foreign Ministers of Angola and Rwanda, the guarantors, facilitators and technical and financial partners of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, as well as diplomats accredited to the Central African Republic.

On the basis of a review of the Government's efforts on the six components, the meeting enabled remaining challenges, prospects for the future and other considerations to be assessed through a series of technical workshops. At the meeting, partners of the Central African Republic reaffirmed their support and the commitment of the subregion to the process, through representatives of the subregion appointed at the Summit of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region.

Furthermore, the President and Head of State of the Central African Republic, Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, reaffirmed his commitment to the political process for peace in the country and for various sectors of the Government taking ownership of the political process, through the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic, known as the Luanda road map, which completes and strengthens a process that was started as part of the peace agreement. Technical workshops were organized following the high-level strategic review, which will be held quarterly.

Despite the considerable progress that has been made and recognized by the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic, challenges remain. Concerning weapons and ammunition management and existing procedures, we must identify areas that require capacity-building and submit recommendations on finding political and programmatic responses to develop a proper weapons and ammunition framework. That will deepen knowledge and dialogue among States and regional organizations, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations that specialize in good practices and lessons learned, as well as in the ways and means of strengthening national and regional approaches to weapons and ammunition management.

I take this opportunity to welcome and encourage 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, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for the excellent work that she has done in so little time and for her briefing today. I would not only like to encourage her, but also to reiterate my willingness and readiness to support the mandate of the Mission she is charged with the difficult task of heading.

Despite the efforts made by MINUSCA, it continues to face certain challenges on the ground due to the complex nature of the situation. That is why the armed forces of the Central African Republic should rightfully be at the forefront so as to be able to conduct its sovereign mission despite the paltry resources it has to fight the armed groups.

I would like to conclude by urging all partners of the Central African Republic — those that wish to help restore peace and stability in the country, in particular, France, Russia, the United States, China, Angola, Rwanda, Morocco, the United Nations, the European Union and so on — to continue their efforts to build

peace and promote a culture of dialogue and universal peace, which is the key to development.

Before the next open debate on the working methods of the Security Council and in line with paragraphs 78 and 79 of presidential note S/2017/507, I would like to submit for the Council's consideration an issue relating to the penholder through the subsidiarity principle. To better address priorities and situations in Africa, in particular concerning the Central African Republic and the subregion, in general, would it not be advisable for the penholder to be one of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Kenya — or the country concerned?

I hope that the update on the situation in my country was of interest to Council members and that they have a better understanding of the positions and postures that we have adopted.

The President: 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 12.10 p.m.