



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

*Provisional*

## 9388

th meeting

Thursday, 27 July 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kariuki . . . . .	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Mr. Spasse
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. França Danese
	China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mrs. Sánchez Izquierdo
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon . . . . .	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
	Ghana . . . . .	Ms. Barnor
	Japan . . . . .	Mr. Hamamoto
	Malta . . . . .	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Abushahab
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

### The situation in the Central African Republic

Letter dated 18 May 2023 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to resolution 2648 (2022) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/360)

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

### **Adoption of the agenda.**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

**Letter dated 18 May 2023 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to resolution 2648 (2022) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/360)**

**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.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

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

Members of the Council have before them document S/2023/555, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/360, which contains the text of a letter dated 18 May 2023 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to resolution 2648 (2022) addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

#### *In favour:*

Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

#### *Against:*

None

#### *Abstaining:*

China, Russian Federation

**The President:** The draft resolution received 13 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions. The draft resolution has been adopted as resolution 2693 (2023).

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

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation abstained in the voting on the draft resolution prepared by France to extend the sanctions regime in respect of the Central African Republic. During work on this document, we clearly outlined our position that the Security Council must, at long last, respond to the repeated and absolutely justified requests of the Government of the Central African Republic to lift the arms embargo. This requirement is also broadly supported by society in the Central African Republic.

The arms embargo is hindering the efforts of Bangui to combat illegal armed formations. At the same time, it has no added value from the point of view of preventing the supply of arms to fighters, who have been acquiring these arms for the 10 years during which the sanctions regime has been in place, and maintaining those restrictions will have no impact on the problem.

On the basis of this objective fact, we proposed approaching this problem in a sober and rational way, calling for including in the draft resolution possible modalities for assistance that the international community could provide to the Central African Republic in its work to ensure the security of its borders and curb the smuggling of arms to fighters. We were guided by the idea that the Security Council should not only review its stand on the Central African Republic, in which the situation has significantly improved since 2013, when the sanctions regime through the United Nations was introduced, but also take the necessary decision to correct elements of this regime that are no longer effective, namely, first and foremost, the arms embargo measures. We are convinced that given the current state of affairs in the Central African Republic, the Security Council should have taken a decision to remove any form of sanctions on the efforts of a sovereign State to stabilize and ensure its national security.

We regret that our proposals to that effect were not incorporated into the document. Our fundamentally important amendments to the text's humanitarian elements — these amendments were based on agreed language — were also ignored. It is clear that the informal penholders in the negotiating

process — and a number of other members of the Security Council — were cynically guided above all by their own narrow mercantile interests in the Central African Republic and in Africa in general, ignoring the sovereign opinions of African States that are under United Nations sanctions.

It is no secret to anyone that sanctions regimes are used by some States as a lever to exert political pressure — they do that under the international umbrella of the United Nations. We do not believe that this approach is constructive, including when it comes to ensuring the effectiveness of the sanctions regimes themselves. Nevertheless, when adopting a final decision on the vote, we felt it was necessary to take into account the positions of the African members of the Security Council.

For our part, we will continue to support the Central African Republic bilaterally, including by improving the combat readiness of its armed forces, training service personnel and staff of the law-enforcement agencies, and providing humanitarian assistance. All of this is entirely in accordance with the applicable international legal norms and upon the request of Bangui.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I would like to thank the members of the Council for their engagement on this resolution and France for its leadership as penholder, especially through the extensive consultations.

The United States was pleased to vote in favour of the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic and the renewal of elements of the arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze.

We voted in favour of resolution 2693 (2023) because its measures are crucial to promoting peace and stability in the Central African Republic and broader region. Most importantly, this resolution will help keep dangerous weapons and resources from reaching armed groups. Today's renewal also ensures that the Panel of Experts will continue its oversight and reporting responsibilities, which inform the Council and the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic.

The United States acknowledges the call by the Central African Government to fully lift the arms embargo, but we remain concerned about the security situation in the country and the disregard that some

Council members and the Central African Republic authorities have for the sanctions regime's notification requirements, as noted in the final report of the Panel of Experts (see S/2023/360). Notably, nothing in this or in previous sanctions regimes has kept Central African security forces from receiving any weapons or training they requested.

The United States is committed to lifting sanctions when conditions permit, but that is not yet the case in the Central African Republic. Although the Government has made progress in achieving the key benchmarks on security sector reform, further efforts are needed to strengthen stockpile management and address cross-border arms and natural-resource smuggling. For those reasons, we are disappointed that the Council did not include in this resolution an annex of weapons that would have required notification to the Sanctions Committee. We are increasingly alarmed by reports that man-portable air defence systems have been transported through the Central African Republic into the Sudan by the Wagner Group. Oversight of those weapons remains important for monitoring the security situation in the Central African Republic and the broader region.

We are also very concerned about the threat that those weapons could pose to the safety and security of peacekeepers serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. I would like to highlight that, under the terms of today's resolution, Russia remains obligated to notify the Committee of all transfers of weapons and resources to its Wagner mercenaries in the Central African Republic. Any failure to do so would violate the terms of the sanctions regime.

**Ms. Barnor** (Ghana): Let me begin by welcoming the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Ghana commends the delegation of France for its tireless efforts in achieving a broad consensus on the just adopted sanctions resolution 2693 (2023), concerning the Central African Republic. We also acknowledge the positive of our African colleagues on the Security Council — Gabon and Mozambique — in support of our common African cause during negotiations on the resolution.

Despite our aspiration for a full lifting of the arms embargo throughout the entire territory of the Central

African Republic, we voted in favour of the resolution because we believe that it represents a significant step towards satisfying the Central African Republic's long-standing request for the complete removal of sanctions throughout its territory.

Today, the arms embargo no longer applies to the Government of the Central African Republic, and this resolution represents an encouraging response to ensure that the authorities of the Central African Republic are better equipped to curb the scourge of armed violence and destabilizing activities being carried out by armed groups, which undermine the stability of the country. We also believe that the removal of restrictions on the Forces armées centrafricaines and State civilian law enforcement institutions would permit the partners of the Central African Republic engaged in legitimate activities towards the restoration of peace and security in the country to do so without hindrance.

We encourage regional and other States to support the Central African Republic in that regard. Ghana's affirmative vote was in accordance with our long-held belief that sanctions on the Governments of sovereign countries should not exist in perpetuity, especially when the Government in question has continually demonstrated its commitment to meet the conditions for the lifting of sanctions in the face of considerable constraints.

The African Union and subregional organizations have also consistently called for lifting the arms embargo imposed on the Central African Republic so as to enable its armed forces to defend the country and protect its citizens. Those calls have been only partially heeded. Today we have met them in an important way.

Let me conclude by reiterating Ghana's strong support for the Central African Republic as it continues to implement its joint border management programmes, as well as security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We also encourage the country to continue developing its capacity for enhanced weapon- and ammunition-management practices that prevent arms from slipping into the hands of unauthorized armed groups. We express our strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic and recall the importance of the principles of non-interference, good neighbourliness and regional cooperation.

**Mr. Zhang Jun (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I would like to welcome the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Foreign Minister of the Central African Republic, to today's meeting.

Just now, the Council adopted resolution 2693 (2023), deciding that the Council's arms embargo and reporting requirements no longer apply to the Central African Republic's security forces, and on the basis of resolution 2648 (2022), adopted last July, the Council has further lifted the arms embargo on the country. That is of great practical significance to the Central African Republic for strengthening its security, capacity-building and maintaining peace and stability. China commends the work of all parties, especially France, as the penholder.

At the same time, today's resolution fails to fully meet the wish of the Central African Republic and the countries of the region for a complete lifting of sanctions, and the amendments proposed by China to that effect are not fully reflected in the text.

Accordingly, China had to abstain in the voting. The Council's arms embargo on the Central African Republic has already been in place for 10 years. With progress made on the security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, the arms embargo no longer meets the country's needs, given its situation, and impedes its efforts to enhance its security capacity and to maintain its national security and stability. The Government of the Central African Republic has repeatedly and forcefully called for the complete lifting of the arms embargo, which has received the active support of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the countries of the region.

We hope that the Council will continue to respect the concerns of the Central African Republic and take further actions in that regard. We also hope that all relevant countries will, through bilateral channels, help the Central African Republic boost its security capacity. In recent years, African countries have been eager to see the lifting of the Council's sanctions and arms embargoes, as they believe that such measures have had a negative impact on the enhancement of Africa's security capacity.

In August 2022, during its presidency of the Council, China pushed for the issuance of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2022/6), requesting the Council

to pay attention to Africa's concerns and to review, adjust and lift the sanctions regime in a timely manner in the light of the developments on the ground. The Council should implement the relevant requirements of the presidential statement and make timely adjustments to the unnecessary sanctions until they are completely lifted.

**Mr. França Danese (Brazil):** I welcome Her Excellency, Ms. Sylvie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

Brazil voted in favour of resolution 2693 (2023), renewing the sanctions regime on the Central African Republic. We believe that its gradual approach to lifting the arms embargo for the country's security forces strikes a good balance and respects the differing views initially presented during the negotiations.

We extend our sincere thanks to France, the penholder, for its hard work and leadership in driving the negotiation process forward. We also extend our gratitude to all Council members, in particular our dear African friends, the three African members of the Security Council, for their constructive engagement in achieving this outcome.

We note the progress made by the Central African Republic in adopting benchmarks of governance and good practices that could be key to overcoming the country's challenges. We encourage the Central African Republic to continue its efforts to stabilize and improve its security situation. Brazil reaffirms its commitment to peace, stability and development in the Central African Republic and assures all stakeholders of our full support in the Council and beyond.

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

Let me begin by joining others to thank France for their leadership on this resolution and the consultations they conducted to bring us this far. While the United Kingdom voted in favour of this text, we continue to see merit in the notification requirement as an important tool for monitoring the flow of weapons to armed groups in the Central African Republic. We remain concerned by the worsening political, humanitarian and security situation in the Central African Republic, including atrocities committed by the Wagner Group. Advancing peace and security remains the core objective of the Council. Progress on the peace agreement will remain

an important factor in future conversations on arms controls and their role in promoting peaceful resolutions to long-term violence.

The United Kingdom maintains that notification processes do not inhibit Governments from building the capabilities needed to provide security. However, we take note of the request from the Government of the Central African Republic and the calls from the region in that regard. The United Kingdom encourages the Government of the Central African Republic to redouble its efforts to implement the benchmarks agreed by the Council related to the reform of the security sector, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, and the management of weapons and ammunition. The people of the Central African Republic deserve no less.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

**Ms. Baipo Temon (Central African Republic)** (*spoke in French*): I would like to sincerely congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of July.

As it has done since 2013, the Central African Republic has come before the Council to avoid any surprises in finding out what fate the Council members have chosen for it concerning the arms embargo inflicted upon the country since 2013, following the violent attacks by the Séléka rebels. Today, 27 July 2023, after heated discussions and negotiations, the Security Council has rendered its verdict. The result of today's vote is unequivocal. By a vote of 13 in favour, with two abstentions, Council members have decided to adopt this resolution in order to maintain, or more specifically, to renew the arms embargo on the Central African Republic, while mentioning — in a brief line buried deep within the meticulously crafted paragraphs — that the text does not apply to government forces and requesting the good services of the Panel of Experts. I wish to thank in particular the two Council members that abstained in the voting, out of respect for the suffering of the people of the Central African Republic. The people of the Central African Republic regard those abstentions as a “no” to the prospect of leaving an entire people at the mercy of armed groups.



Allow me to speak on behalf of the Government of the Central African Republic, to thank all Council members for the time they have devoted to the Central African Republic file. A special acknowledgement goes to the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique — for their efforts throughout the negotiation process, and, once again, to the Russian Federation and China.

We are baffled by the confusing and vague text, which attempts to explain to lowly mortals that the embargo against government forces has been lifted, along with the notification requirement adopted in July 2022, while also attempting to justify maintaining the text imposing the embargo by stating that the text is being renewed so that it remains applicable to armed groups.

Allow me to reformulate the Council's words and to render, in language that mere mortals are able to understand — for the benefit of the national and international public — what the Council has just decided following intense negotiations. I am speaking directly to the people of the Central African people in particular, many of whom are listening to me today. We must understand that today, the Security Council has just said that there is no longer an arms embargo on government forces, which will henceforth have access to the equipment they need without having to notify the Council in advance, but the text itself, as renewed, is entitled "Arms embargo on the Central African Republic", thereby classifying the Central African Republic as an armed group.

The Government of the Central African Republic cannot accept this morally bankrupt and arbitrary verdict. I am not looking to reopen the debate, as the debate is finished. The die is cast. However, it is important for the Central African Republic to state, before the national and international public, and, in particular, to address the Council members and the people of the Central African Republic — who, as I said, are following the proceedings closely — that, to oversimplify the matter, the text reflects an ignorance of the country's reality. Or, if we want to understand it more objectively, in an informed manner, and reading between the lines, what we find here is a murky game on an international scale, in which the Central African Republic constitutes a crucial stake. I would appreciate it if the Council would allow the truth to be spoken plainly, as the resolution that has just been adopted constitutes a genuine affront to the Central African

Republic. The Central African Republic cannot be equated with armed groups.

The text should instead be entitled "embargo on armed groups that operate within the Central African Republic", and not "embargo on the Central African Republic". I repeat, the Central African Republic is not the same as the armed groups. Its Government is not armed groups. It is unacceptable and intolerable that the confusion due to the stability of the languages of Molière and Shakespeare be used to confuse a legitimate and sovereign State with armed groups that the Council is simply seeking to legitimize. If the Council's intention is to in no way legitimize illegality, how can it explain to the people of the Central African Republic that, after working on the question of the Central African Republic for 10 years, it is still struggling to come up with a text that punishes the murderous designs of armed groups? Why, after recognizing the efforts made by the Central African Republic, including with regard to its efforts on the benchmarks and terms of reference, is the resolution adopted today still entitled "arms embargo on the Central African Republic"? Once again, why is it not instead entitled "arms embargo on armed groups"?

The subtlety of the text, which would have us believe that the embargo no longer applies to government forces but rather to the Central African Republic, constitutes a setback in our efforts to date. It should be noted that the matter is one of dignity. By equating the Government of the Central African Republic with armed groups, the resolution undermines the dignity of the Central African Republic. It is therefore, as I said, unacceptable.

We gave the Council our trust, thinking that we would be afforded a modicum of respect for our fundamental, sovereign rights and dignity. Were we wrong to do so? That is the question I am posing today on behalf of the Government and people of the Central African Republic. Why is it that the Central African Republic's cry for help in distress when faced with the onslaught of foreign rebels did not receive the same response as Ukraine's outcry? Why, with regard to the Charter of the United Nations and human rights, has the response been different — unjust, discriminatory and defamatory? Why are some States willing to deliver weapons and ammunition, even in violation of instruments such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the

Convention on Cluster Munitions, while others must be sacrificed?

On the basis of what I have just said, the so-called lifting of the embargo on government forces while maintaining the embargo on the Central African Republic is not something that satisfies the Central African Republic. That sanction should serve as a wake-up call to the people of the Central African Republic and enable them to grasp the teaching of the late Nelson Mandela, who said that a country's strongest army is its people. The verdict should enable the world — Africa in particular, and specifically the Central African Republic — to understand that the body responsible for world peace no longer represents the values of peace it once upheld.

The incoherence of the text adopted today and the flagrant double standards that are characteristic of the two power blocs comprising the Council make it clear that the time has come for us to conceive of a new organization that is far more credible, in which our rights and the rights of all will be safeguarded equitably. In response to this provocation, this arbitrary text, allow me to conclude by stating quite simply that the Central African Republic called on the Council for help in a moment of urgent distress. We hope for the principle of humanity, which is often evoked, to be practiced, not just preached, and for the collective conscience to learn from this injustice, which, rather than fostering peace, is fostering insecurity and disorder in the Central African Republic and indeed throughout the world.

*The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.*