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Seventy-ninth year

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New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Hyunwoo Cho (Republic of Korea)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia	Ms. Jurečko
Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2024/473)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2024/473)

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.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, to participate in this meeting.

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/2024/473, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Ms. Rugwabiza.

Ms. Rugwabiza: I would like to congratulate South Korea on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June, and I take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting.

I am honoured to present the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2024/473). I will first underscore some achievements of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in delivering its mandate in support of the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. I will then elaborate on the extension of MINUSCA's footprint to additional localities in Haut-Mbomou prefecture, in south-eastern Central African Republic, paving the way for the extension and restoration of civilian and security-related State authority in that

region. Lastly, I will share with the Council some of the operational challenges faced by the Mission during the reporting period.

On 17 April, the Central African Republic National Border Management Commission held its inaugural plenary session and has since been actively implementing its 10-year action plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development. The limited to non-existent State presence in the border areas has historically provided fertile ground for cross-border insecurity in the Central African Republic. The restoration of State authority and border management control constitute priority pillars of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic to anchor the security of the border areas as the bedrock for the full restoration and consolidation of durable security in the Central African Republic. Yesterday, in Bangui, the joint sessions of the ad hoc border commission and the permanent joint commission on cross-border security between the Republic of Cameroon and the Central African Republic commenced their deliberations, demonstrating the political resolve of both Governments to address border security, transhumance issues, illegal trafficking and common border issues through the revitalization of existing cross-border cooperation mechanisms.

Past and recurrent political and security crises in the Central African Republic have had a negative impact on transhumance, turning a secular practice into one of the main triggers of attacks against civilians. The recent killing of 16 civilians in Limé village in Ouham-Pendé prefecture following a land conflict involving local farmers and cattle owners was a stark reminder of the urgency to reverse the dynamics of violence and reposition livestock farming and transhumance as factors of peaceful coexistence, stabilization and economic development. On 13 May, the President of the Republic and Head of State presided over the first high-level national conference on peaceful and prosperous transhumance. The conference, which was facilitated by MINUSCA, agreed on the following decisions: to update the legal and institutional framework on transhumance corridors, support local conflict prevention mechanisms and leverage existing cross-border mechanisms to manage cross-border transhumance. The implementation of those decisions from the high-level conference will significantly improve transhumance management, which, it should

be recalled, is a pillar of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.

The preparations for local elections have gained momentum, with the adoption of the revised electoral code by the National Assembly on 28 May and recent financial contributions to the United Nations Development Programme's basket fund. As previously stated, local elections are a key provision of the Political Agreement. The Mission will continue to provide the mandated multifaceted support for preparations for local elections, including through awareness-raising activities to mobilize broad participation, in particular the full and safe participation of women. We welcome the contributions made by some members. We appreciate the ongoing mobilization efforts by the President of the Peacebuilding Commission configuration on the Central African Republic, and we encourage all members to extend support to the Central African Republic's municipal elections, which were last held 36 years ago.

The security situation remains challenging in the border areas. The Haut-Mbomou prefecture, in south-eastern Central African Republic, witnessed an intensification of violence against civilians amid an escalation of the conflict and retaliation attacks between elements of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic armed group and Azande Ani Kpi Gbe self-defence group. As members of the Council will recall, the Mission first expanded its footprint to the locality of Mboki in Haut-Mbomou and supported the deployment of the national armed forces in 2023, which, in turn, enabled the demobilization, disarmament and repatriation of former combatants of the Lord's Resistance Army and their dependants to Uganda. Following the deterioration of the security situation early this year, MINUSCA further expanded its force footprint in the prefecture to prevent a further outbreak of violence. In parallel, the Mission mobilized its limited engineering and logistical capabilities to improve ground access to Haut-Mbomou prefecture, an area that is larger than Switzerland and almost the size of Sierra Leone and inaccessible to ground transportation during the long rainy seasons in the Central African Republic. The expansion of its footprint has enabled the Mission to extend the implementation of its mandated priority tasks in the prefecture, notably the protection of civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance delivery and paved the way for the extension of State authority in civilian and security

matters, through the ongoing rehabilitation of the Bangassou-Obo-Bambouti axis.

Within a very short time, working closely with national and local authorities, local communities and humanitarian partners, the Mission has been making tangible and transformative progress on the security, humanitarian and peacebuilding fronts in Haut-Mbomou. Turning now to another border area, in Am Dafok, at the border with the Sudan, on 6 April MINUSCA facilitated the deployment of national defence forces to support the extension of the Central African Republic's State authority.

Notwithstanding the progress made in MINUSCA's mandate implementation during the reporting period, I am deeply concerned by the continuous misinformation and disinformation campaigns against the Mission, with an increase in hostile content targeting MINUSCA. That further complicates the already challenging context in which the Mission operates. I call on the Government to hold accountable individuals, including public servants, identified channelling and echoing such campaigns, which pose a significant threat to the safety and security of our peacekeepers while constraining the Mission's ability to optimally implement tasks mandated by the Council and requested by the national authorities of the Central African Republic. I am also preoccupied by the slow progress in the release of Mission equipment seized by national customs, despite the Mission's repeated engagements with relevant Government institutions.

I would like to conclude my statement by sincerely thanking members of the Council for their consistent support for MINUSCA over the years. To sustain and consolidate the gains achieved by the Mission will require their continued support and continued investments by the Government of the Central African Republic to build the capabilities of its national institutions, including security institutions, to enable them to fulfil the Government's primary responsibility of protecting its population and the sovereignty of its national territory.

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

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative for her briefing and to reiterate France's full support. I also welcome

the presence among us of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

France welcomes the efforts deployed by the Central African Government to implement the peace process and its decentralization. The holding of the first local elections since 1988 is a step in the right direction. France encourages the Central African authorities to guarantee the exercise of civil and political rights for all citizens. The right conditions must now be established for the holding of free, transparent and inclusive elections. France hopes that the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled for 2025, will meet those conditions.

France remains concerned by the weak security situation, particularly in border areas. Weapons and combatants continue to circulate, fuelling the activities of armed groups. The porous nature of the borders, particularly with the Sudan and South Sudan, constitutes a threat to the stability not only of the Central African Republic but of the region as a whole. The cooperation of the Central African authorities with neighbouring States, together with regional organizations, must be encouraged. The Council must continue to take action to combat arms trafficking coming from neighbouring countries and the infiltration of foreign fighters into armed groups. In that regard, France will work with all Council members to renew the sanctions regime in July.

France welcomes the role played by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), together with the Central African authorities, in promoting stability in the country. The Mission provides essential support to the Central African authorities in fighting armed groups. That includes logistical support for the Central African armed forces, a strengthened presence in key areas and support for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. It is essential that MINUSCA be able to pursue its efforts towards strengthening the State throughout the territory. In that regard, France calls for an end to all obstacles to the implementation of its Mission, including the use of its uncrewed aerial vehicles. We also condemn the disinformation campaigns directed against the Mission in recent months.

France welcomes the publication of the annual report on the human rights situation in the Central African Republic. We also welcome the close cooperation by the Central African authorities with

the United Nations teams in that regard. We condemn the violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, which increased by 47 per cent as compared to last year. A significant proportion of those violations are committed by armed groups and Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group. Those violations include conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and forced marriage, as well as serious violations of children's rights. They must not go unpunished.

The humanitarian situation remains precarious. The risk of deterioration is real with the increase in the number of refugees and asylum-seekers linked to the conflict in the Sudan. It is therefore essential that humanitarian aid meet the country's needs.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. I welcome the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

While the Central African Republic's efforts, supported by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), have led to a gradual stabilization of the country and increased security for the civilian population, it is imperative that the Council remain actively seized of the matter. In that regard we would like to address the following issues.

First, regarding political progress and the peace agreement, Switzerland welcomes the measures taken by the Government of the Central African Republic to strengthen the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. Efforts to decentralize the peace process, in particular the engagement with prefectural implementation mechanisms, are essential for involving the population outside Bangui in the peace efforts. In that context, the organization of local elections in October — an integral part of the Agreement — will be crucial to enhance national reconciliation. We encourage the authorities to ensure an inclusive, transparent and peaceful process and to support the full participation of women as candidates and voters.

Secondly, respect for human rights and the rule of law constitute essential pillars of a peaceful society. We welcome the collaboration between the Central African Republic and MINUSCA in preparing the report on the human rights situation in the country. The constructive

dialogue between the Mission and the country is commendable, and we encourage the Central African Republic to implement its commitments under the national human rights policy. In particular, we call on the Central African authorities to maintain an open and respectful civic space and to respect the independence of judicial institutions. In that respect, we welcome the progress made to combat impunity, notably through the operationalization of the majority of national jurisdictions, including beyond Bangui. The efforts of the Special Criminal Court in addressing war crimes and crimes against humanity, and in particular the reopening of hearings into the intercommunal violence in Ndélé, are commendable.

Thirdly, while the overall security and humanitarian situation is improving, pockets of instability persist in some parts of the country. The violence perpetrated by armed groups around mining sites, transhumance corridors and border areas between the Sudan and South Sudan compounds the suffering of civilians. It is crucial that efforts to combat those violations continue. We are particularly concerned about the intensification of the activities of the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe group in the south-east of the country and by the integration of some of its members into the national security forces, sometimes without appropriate vetting. In that respect, the professionalization of the security forces and the effective reform of the security sector are urgently needed.

Finally, Switzerland welcomes the stabilization of the humanitarian situation, which has enabled several thousand displaced people to return to their home regions. While emergency humanitarian needs are decreasing, it is now crucial that all the Central African Republic's partners remain committed and turn their support to sustainable development. In that respect, we welcome the holding of the national conference for peaceful and prosperous transhumance, which demonstrates a genuine commitment to reducing intercommunal violence and generating a source of prosperity for the entire region.

Switzerland reiterates its commitment to support the Central African Republic in its efforts to achieve lasting peace and inclusive development. We call on all actors to redouble their cooperative efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and support the country on the path to peace and prosperity.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Special Representative Rugwabiza for her briefing. I welcome the presence of Her Excellency Foreign Minister Baipo Temon of the Central African Republic.

For sustainable peace and stability in the Central African Republic, we must continue to promote political reconciliation and socioeconomic reintegration in remote areas. We welcome the Government's continued commitment to fully implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, with its strong ownership.

I would like to highlight three points regarding the ongoing State-building efforts by the Central African Republic, in partnership with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

First, pursuing a political solution through inclusive engagement with all stakeholders remains key. The recent high-level national conference on reducing seasonal transhumance-related violence is indeed one such initiative for addressing an increasing problem. The proposed strategies must be followed by concrete actions based on a whole-of-society approach. It is also encouraging that the Government is continuing the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process for armed groups. That process must be demonstrably transparent and credible through the use of appropriate vetting, especially with regard to reintegration into the national forces.

Secondly, the peace process must decentralize further in order to put local stakeholders in the driver's seat for addressing the challenges they face, including intercommunal tensions. The presence of elected local leaders is key for local governance reform to build resilient communities. The forthcoming local elections, to be held this year, must therefore be fair, open, inclusive and credible, and should be an opportunity for both men and women to participate in that process for the betterment of their social welfare. Healing deep divisions in the country demands a credible election process in which diverse voices, including those of women, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants, are duly heard in a fair and inclusive manner.

Finally, the rule of law must prevail throughout the country, and the fight against impunity should be reinforced. We welcome progress in institution-building, including through the Special Criminal Court and the

expansion of the judicial service into areas far from the capital.

We remain deeply concerned about cycles of violence around mining sites and continued human rights violations and abuses committed by armed groups, State actors and other security personnel. The judicial system must be well utilized if it is to play an effective role in long-term reconciliation and stability, backed by the ongoing efforts to extend the State's authority. The Central African Republic's borders remain porous, which poses a serious challenge. The recent launch of the Government's border management policy is a welcome development and should be supported by regional and international cooperation.

Japan remains committed to working with international partners towards peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I too thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her remarks and welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic in the Chamber today.

Malta strongly supports the recent important initiatives undertaken by the Central African Republic authorities, together with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We acknowledge the recommendations of the high-level national conference on peaceful transhumance and for enhanced protection of women against gender-based violence. These represent landmark efforts in addressing persistent issues and the root causes of conflict. The broad participation of stakeholders from Chad and the Central African Republic and the adoption of a road map, signify compelling strides towards addressing fundamental issues for the region's long-term stability.

Malta also welcomes the renewed momentum that the authorities have imparted towards the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, including the launch of the national border management commission's activities.

We appreciate the joint efforts of MINUSCA and the Central African Republic authorities for the decentralization of the peace process, including engagements with prefectural implementation mechanisms. That is also in line with the new priorities set out in the mandate.

Developments to organize the first local elections in the Central African Republic since 1988 are also positive. We recall the importance for elections to take place in a free and secure public space where inclusive dialogue that instils trust is ensured.

Accountability, as well as an open and safe political space, are key for peace and security. In that vein, we express our concern about the arrest and detention of political opponents, the charges against them and subsequent provisions. While hate speech and defamation need to be addressed, we note the concerns raised about the independence of the judicial system.

On the regional front, the Central African Republic remains significantly affected by the deteriorating conflict in the Sudan. Spillovers are becoming increasingly difficult to manage. Refugees are arriving amid an already dire humanitarian situation, and interlinkages between armed groups and militias, along with recruitment, risk progress towards stabilization.

The security situation remains concerning — not only in the Vakaga prefecture. Recent dynamics in the south-east are also alarming. Inter-ethnic violence needs to be defused, not reinvigorated. The disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration processes require proper vetting in order to ensure that they do not transform into the recruitment of proxies. Those developments could inextricably affect trust towards the national army and its path towards professionalization and the protection of the civilian population.

We raise concerns about the reported training and integration of armed combatants of the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe into the national defence forces, and we strongly condemn their recent violent acts. We are troubled by the continued use, by several signatories, of sexual violence as a tactic to terrorize and displace communities. We stress, in the strongest possible terms, that the trafficking of women and girls is deplorable.

We are also deeply concerned that grave violations against children are on the rise. We applaud the recent organization of a workshop to validate the handover protocol for the transfer and protection of children associated with armed groups. That will enable children apprehended by security forces to be handed over directly to governmental child protection services and partners.

In welcoming the recent release of the annual human rights report in accordance with resolution 2709 (2023), we are confident that further strides are being made to

promote and protect human rights in the Central African Republic. The European Union and its member States remain key partners of the Central African Republic, mobilizing more than €900 million since 2014, to cover areas ranging from political and security matters to humanitarian and development cooperation.

To conclude, we express our support for the Central African Republic authorities' dedication to ensuring peace and security and economic and social development. We join collective efforts that will ensure long-term and inclusive reconciliation for all the people of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): I would like to thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her comprehensive briefing today. I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Her Excellency Ms. Baipo Temon, to this meeting.

Slovenia wishes to express its full support to United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and its work. We also pay tribute to the troop- and police-contributing countries.

Despite the stabilization dividend brought about in part by the multi-year commitment of the United Nations to the country, the Central African Republic continues to face many challenges. In that regard, I would like to make the following three points.

First, we strongly support the renewed commitment of the Government of the Central African Republic to the full implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Luanda road map. Its pledge of \$4.5 million dollars for the organization of local elections shows increased national ownership and is to be commended. The European Union, one of the main partners of the Central African Republic, will also contribute \$2.5 million dollars to the United Nations basket fund established to support the electoral process, and we invite the international community to follow suit. We urge the Central African Republic to ensure that the electoral process is inclusive, transparent and credible. The full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and youth in electoral and other political processes must be guaranteed, as must an open civic space and respect for human rights, including freedom of expression. Credible elections, combined with other decentralization measures, will help to ensure stability and further extend State authority across the country.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the persistently high levels of violence in the country, especially in the border regions. We call on all remaining armed groups, especially the *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* and *Azande Ani Kpi Gbe*, to immediately cease their activities and return to the peace process. The possibility of a spillover of violence across the region is highly concerning. The uninterrupted flow of weapons, explosives and fighters across borders only aggravates the conflict. In this regard, we call on all States Members of the United Nations to comply with the arms embargo and other sanctions measures. We also commend border management initiatives by the Central African Republic and encourage other countries in the region to increase their cooperation.

We strongly support the proactive role of MINUSCA in reinforcing exposed localities and establishing temporary operational bases in order to protect local communities at risk and ensure unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. However, in order to do so, MINUSCA must enjoy unimpeded humanitarian access and freedom of movement throughout the country. All restrictions preventing the uninterrupted use of unmanned aerial systems by MINUSCA should be lifted.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are a key component of the peace process. To be effective, they need to be completed without delay. Any member of an armed group who wants to be included in such a programme should have an opportunity to do so. Furthermore, we advise against the recruitment of members of armed groups into the national defence forces without proper vetting procedures in order to ensure accountability and prevent further human rights abuses.

Finally, we express our appreciation to MINUSCA for the timely presentation of the annual human rights report and to the Central African Republic for its meaningful participation in the process. We call for the full implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. However, we share the concern expressed in the report about continued violations and abuses of human rights, grave violations of children's rights, conflict-related sexual violence and violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by all sides to the conflict. Further efforts must be made to stop them and hold all perpetrators to account.

The issuance of an international arrest warrant against former President Bozizé by the Special Criminal Court for crimes against humanity is a welcome sign that

there will be no impunity for violators of human rights. We wish to see all perpetrators of international crimes in the Central African Republic brought to justice.

In conclusion, Slovenia will continue to support the Central African Republic and its people on the way towards lasting peace, sustainable development and political stability.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her informative briefing, which illustrates the critical role that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) plays in supporting peace and security in the Central African Republic. Let me also welcome Minister Baipo Temon to this meeting.

First, I would like to underscore the United States' deep appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, mission leadership, MINUSCA staff and troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment to peace in the Central African Republic. We also greatly appreciate the Secretariat's issuing this week the annual report on the human rights situation in the Central African Republic, which will provide timely information in advance of the Security Council's deliberations on MINUSCA's mandate later in the year. It is clear that MINUSCA is a partner to the Central African Republic and is delivering on its promise to support a lasting peace.

In addition to conducting regular patrols with the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) to ensure the protection of civilians, MINUSCA has partnered with the Government of the Central African Republic to host a conference on transhumance and held multiple workshops to support the Ministry of Justice in implementing its national human rights policy. MINUSCA engineers rehabilitated the Bossembelé–Bossangoa road and the Bouar airfield runway, creating economic opportunities and supporting the extension of State authority.

MINUSCA is committed to providing logistical support and technical expertise as the Government of the Central African Republic's plans for local and regional elections in October, a key step toward decentralization. The United States encourages the Government of the Central African Republic to redouble its efforts to ensure that the elections are free, fair and inclusive.

The common theme here is partnership. The Mission delivers unique expertise and capabilities consistent with its mandate and in partnership with the Government of the Central African Republic that help make life safer and more secure for the people of the Central African Republic. These areas of partnership underscore the fact that there is no military-only solution to the Central African Republic's challenges. Continued progress along the Central African Republic's peace process is critical to long-term stability and development.

We hear Foreign Minister Baipo Temon's concerns. However, the arms embargo on armed groups remains an integral component of the Central African Republic's progress towards peace. Lifting it would facilitate the proliferation of additional and deadlier weapons and further destabilize the Central African Republic. Importantly, the embargo only affects armed groups, not the Government.

Of course, a meaningful partnership involves two-way collaboration and mutual respect. To fully implement its mandate, MINUSCA must be able to operate free of obstruction. Unfortunately, it has not been able to do so. The Government of the Central African Republic's decision to block Mission patrols and restrict MINUSCA's unmanned aerial systems and night flights severely undermines the Mission's ability to protect civilians, identify and clear explosive ordnance and partner with FACA to extend State authority. For months, Council members have called upon the Government to allow MINUSCA to operate its equipment — equipment that is necessary to keep peacekeepers safe. And yet the Government continues to ignore these basic requests — requests the Council should not need to make. Members of the United Nations, all of us, pay upwards of \$25 million dollars annually for drones that are currently grounded or stuck in customs. And peacekeepers have paid with their lives. If the Government of the Central African Republic is committed to MINUSCA's success, peacekeeper safety and pursuing peace and stability, it must allow MINUSCA to do its job.

While the United States respects the Central African Republic's sovereignty and its right to choose its security partners, it is clear that not all partners are equally committed to creating the conditions for lasting peace. Some so-called partners have demonstrated through their actions a preference for exploiting the country's natural resources and

perpetuating conflict for their own material gain, under the guise of providing security.

The Kremlin-backed Wagner Group has perpetrated numerous human rights abuses in the Central African Republic and elsewhere. It is clear that the Wagner Group's primary objectives are to exploit the country and foster dependency to ensure its continued presence. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/473) notes, the Wagner Group intercepted MINUSCA equipment from the Beloko customs facility in March. That is right — a permanent member of the Security Council seized United Nations equipment bound for a United Nations peacekeeping mission. That cannot stand. We appreciate the United Nations Secretariat reporting on that grave event and urge the Secretariat to avoid using euphemisms to refer to the Wagner Group when documenting abuses for which it knows Wagner Group forces are responsible. Without accountability, the Central African Republic will not be able to achieve the peace necessary to unlock the country's vast potential.

Let us also acknowledge that disinformation generated by Russia and laundered to appear organic specifically targets the Mission, aims to reduce its efficacy and puts peacekeepers and civilians at risk. That is intolerable.

The United States calls upon all armed actors to lay down their weapons and choose dialogue. MINUSCA is a critical partner of the Central African Republic, and it deserves the full cooperation and true partnership of the Central African Republic Government and members of the Security Council so that it can deliver on its promise.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council plus (A3+), namely Algeria, Guyana, Sierra Leone and my own country, Mozambique.

We express our profound gratitude to Her Excellency Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), for her important briefing to the Council on the situation in the Central African Republic. We extend our thanks to MINUSCA personnel and the United Nations country team for their unwavering dedication. We are appreciative of the troops and police deployed on the ground. We wish to welcome the presence in this Chamber of Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie

Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic.

The A3+ recognizes the Central African Republic's ongoing multidimensional challenges. In that context, the support of the international community in restoring and consolidating peace, security and development in the country is of paramount importance. We commend the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We welcome the convening of the Executive Monitoring Committee of the Political Agreement, leading to the high-level national conference on transhumance and the launch of the National Border Management Commission. Those and other actions provide a solid basis for a comprehensive approach focusing on the main drivers of the conflict in the Central African Republic.

The A3+ congratulates the Government of the Central African Republic for the progress made thus far in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme, supported by MINUSCA. We urge all armed group members to voluntarily join the ongoing programme. We value the Government's training programmes for public servants on the peace process, in particular at the provincial level in the context of decentralization and with the inclusion of women. Education for peace and a culture of peace are a valuable investment for the present and the future of the country. We encourage establishing a transparent and credible vetting process for recruiting individuals from armed groups into the national defence and security forces.

The A3+ is concerned by the volatile security situation, especially along borders, where armed clashes and control over mining resources and transhumance corridors persist. The increase in civilian victims due to the attacks and violent extortion practices of armed groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army, is a matter of grave concern.

To achieve lasting peace, the human rights situation in the country must be addressed in tandem with the peace and political processes. In that regard, we condemn conflict-related sexual violence and violations against children. Their perpetrators must be held to account. Impunity fuels a cycle of violence and undermines peace efforts.

The plight of food insecurity among Central Africans, refugees and returnees deserves our attention. We must endeavour to ensure that the Central African Republic, with the resources it possesses, can achieve its full development potential.

The A3+ is concerned about the religious and ethnic overtones of clashes between armed groups. We urge all groups to join and support the peace process. We consider that cooperation between national defence forces and MINUSCA is of paramount importance. We welcome the conducting of robust patrols and the reinforcing of their presence at critical points with a view to protecting civilians and preventing the escalation of violence.

The continued use of explosive devices exacerbates the volatile security situation in the Central African Republic. We underscore the need to limit restrictions on the use of uncrewed aerial systems. They have a negative impact on MINUSCA's mandate implementation and the facilitation of humanitarian access. They also pose risks to United Nations personnel and their premises.

We call on MINUSCA and the Central African Republic's partners to enhance electoral assistance, mobilize resources and support women's participation in the upcoming elections.

The A3+ wishes to reiterate our strong support for MINUSCA. We highly praise and commend Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her remarkable leadership and for her invaluable contribution in the consolidation of peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

We congratulate the new Head of the African Union Mission for Central and Eastern Africa, Mr. António Egídio de Sousa Santos. We wish him well in his important mission.

The African Union is co-guarantor of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We reaffirm our encouragement of and solidarity with the Government and people of the Central African Republic. As the A3+, we remain firmly committed to the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her briefing and welcome Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, to this meeting today.

Recently, the peace process in the Central African Republic has been making continuous progress, and the security situation has continued to improve. At the same time, there are still many challenges in peace and development. The international community should provide the Government of the Central African Republic with targeted support according to its actual needs. I will make three points.

First, China commends the Government's effort to actively promote the implementation of the peace agreement, with important progress made in such aspects as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, decentralization and preparation for local elections. We call on armed groups that have not yet disarmed to cease hostilities and return to the track of political dialogue. We expect the international community to continue to provide financial and technical support for the peace process in the Central African Republic and resolve such issues as the shortfall in election resources.

Secondly, the overall security situation in the Central African Republic is generally improving. However, armed attacks still occur from time to time. The international community and relevant partner countries should continue to support the Government of the Central African Republic in strengthening security capacity and implementing security sector reform. At the same time, close attention should be paid to the spillover effects of the conflict in the Sudan on the Central African Republic. Support should be provided to enable the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries to strengthen border control, curb the cross-border flow of armed elements and combat cross-border crimes and the illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons in order to maintain regional security.

Thirdly, the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/473) pointed out that, although the Central African Republic has achieved economic growth, the growth is slow, and nearly half of the country's population urgently needs humanitarian assistance. Partner countries and donors should honour their commitments and meet the humanitarian needs, while providing more support in such areas as poverty reduction, agriculture and infrastructure to help the Central African Republic to enhance its capacity for independent development.

Under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has made

significant efforts to maintain peace and stability in the Central African Republic and to promote economic development on the ground. China appreciates those efforts and will continue to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MINUSCA. We expect that the report on the independent strategic assessment of MINUSCA will be completed soon as possible, with recommendations for optimizing and adjusting the mandate and staffing of the Mission, so as to ensure that MINUSCA performs its duties efficiently.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her briefing. I also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad, Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon.

The decentralization of the peace process through the implementation of local-level mechanisms is one of the most notable areas of progress. The presence of the State is key to strengthening the implementation of the peace agreement, particularly in border areas, where armed group activity is concentrated. In addition, it helps to maintain and expand the peace agreements signed locally by facilitating the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

On the political front, we have not lost sight of the Government's commitment to hold the first local elections since 1988. Financial support for the United Nations Development Programme pooled fund is critical for the elections to come to fruition. The holding of those elections, which are provided for by the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, will be an important milestone towards the inclusion and empowerment of communities and the implementation of confidence-building measures. It is crucial for that process to advance in an inclusive manner, with the full, equitable, safe and meaningful participation of women and other segments of the population.

The humanitarian situation remains critical, affecting 46 per cent of the population and exacerbated by the influx of people fleeing violence in the Sudan. The provision of humanitarian assistance to the Central African Republic must not stop.

Peacebuilding is achieved by addressing the root causes of conflict. In that regard, I highlight the holding

of the high-level national conference on peaceful and prosperous transhumance, facilitated by MINUSCA. The results of that gathering must be disseminated and effectively implemented in order to reduce violence. Moreover, it is important to point out that the adverse effects of climate change have modified transhumance corridors at the regional level and that those effects can only be combated through a commitment from the entire international community to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Access to climate finance for least-developed countries in conflict is indispensable.

Development is one of the paths to peace. Therefore, as the Central African Republic is in the course of finalizing its national development plan for 2024–2028, it needs the support of United Nations agencies and international and regional financial institutions with the implementation thereof.

In conclusion, peace and justice are mutually reinforcing. Although progress has been made in the country, there remains a need to strengthen the capacities of the judicial system so that, when appropriate, it is able to bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights violations and conflict-related sexual violence.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative Valentina Rugwabiza for her briefing. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon.

At present, it is safe to say that the most complicated phase of the fight against illegal armed groups has been overcome and that qualitative progress has been made on the track towards stabilization in the Central African Republic. That is most strikingly evident when one considers the figures. The Government currently controls 90 per cent of the national territory. Nine of the fourteen signatory groups to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic have been disbanded, and thousands of former fighters have laid down their arms and are currently undergoing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

In recent years, the situation in the Central African Republic has undergone fundamental changes and continues to improve steadily. That has been possible, first and foremost, thanks to the resilience of the people

of the Central African Republic themselves and to the persistent efforts of its Government, with the support of the United Nations and the country's bilateral partners, including the Russian Federation. Despite the ongoing, years-long smear campaign by France, the United States and the United Kingdom, which does not do those countries any honours, the people of the Central African Republic are steadily moving forward and making progress. They are upholding their independence and their sovereign rights, including the right to choose their trusted partners and friends.

Speaking of those successes, we should certainly not ignore the numerous challenges and difficulties still facing the Central African Republic, many of which are still concentrated in the area of security. However, the fact that the threats from militants have been successfully pushed back to the country's borders with neighbouring States is crucial, and that is where we are now seeing the armed groups' activity. The militants are clearly taking advantage of the porousness of the borders to manoeuvre and seek shelter, as well as to replenish their ranks and weaponry, and they are also mainly being financed and trained from abroad. That is how the bandits and their supporters are exploiting the gaps in regional cooperation on border security. It will be vital to help the Central African Republic and its neighbours to coordinate and deal with the problem. The positive developments in the official dialogue between the Central African Republic and Chad on cross-border cooperation were a major step forward in that regard. We firmly believe that will help to step up the joint efforts to eliminate security threats in the border area between the two countries.

From a cross-border perspective, I would like to comment on some of our colleagues' criticism of Bangui in connection with the introduction of new rules for the operation of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) in its national airspace. We realize that this has had an impact on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which has had to adapt the modalities of its work. But how else should the authorities have reacted after the militants began to make regular use of drones? They are sophisticated weapons that one needs to know how to operate and that are not produced in the Central African Republic. The logical question arises as to who is doing that and training and equipping the bandits. It would be naive to assume that they suddenly found out how to use UAVs on their own. Similarly, armed groups have learned to use improvised explosive devices

and mines, which, incidentally, are also manufactured abroad. That is something we should be focusing on when discussing this topic in the Council rather than attempting to look for reasons to criticize the Government of the Central African Republic on political grounds.

There is another issue related to those cross-border threats, and that is the effectiveness of the current Security Council sanctions regime. By all accounts the armed groups do not even seem to be aware of its existence. At the same time, there is no doubt whatever that the sanctions have been hindering the socioeconomic development of the Central African Republic and continue to stigmatize it in the eyes of the international community. In that regard, the Council should consider what the prospects are for the sanctions regime while making the view from Bangui a priority. The situation on the outer perimeter of the Central African Republic is also affecting the humanitarian situation there. The need to care for refugees from neighbouring countries, primarily the Sudan, is exacerbating the humanitarian situation and increasing the burden on the State's budget. In that connection, in addition to stopping the politicization and instrumentalization of external assistance, we should fully finance this year's United Nations humanitarian appeal for the Central African Republic.

In general, it is important to establish systematic assistance to Bangui in restoring peaceful life and converting security-related achievements into progress on the development front. The municipal elections scheduled for this year are one of the most important stages on that path. We support the Secretary-General's call for donor resources to finance the trust fund that will be used to pay for the elections. We believe it is also important to respond positively and in a timely manner to Bangui's request for continued electoral assistance from the United Nations, including during the upcoming election cycles.

We support the work of MINUSCA and its leadership. The Mission remains an important element of the overall effort to stabilize the country once and for all. We thank the troop-contributing countries' contingents for their dedication to their duty. We firmly believe that the full implementation of the peacekeepers' mandate is possible only if mutual understanding is maintained with the authorities of the host country. We call for the settlement of all disputes in the format of a constructive bilateral dialogue, without ultimatums or external pressure. For its part, Russia will continue to support Bangui in establishing peace and security in the country.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her comprehensive briefing today. I also welcome the participation of Ms. Baipo Temon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, in our meeting. I would like to make three points today.

First, we welcome the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to deliver local elections in the autumn. They will be critical to strengthening democracy in the Central African Republic ahead of the presidential and legislative elections next year. However, the detention of political opponents threatens the credibility of future elections. We encourage the full inclusion in elections of women, young people, returnees, internally displaced persons and refugees.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the activities of armed groups, particularly around border areas, mining regions and transhumance corridors. In violation of the arms embargo, they continue to smuggle arms across the border in their pursuit of their military aspirations. In that context, the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) remains vital to supporting stability in the Central African Republic. We welcome the continued productive cooperation between MINUSCA and the country's authorities. The United Kingdom also welcomes the Government's commitment to implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We encourage the authorities to continue their decentralization efforts and their support for sustainable security through the country's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and local peacebuilding initiatives.

Thirdly, we call on all Security Council members to support MINUSCA's ability to deliver on its mandate. The United Kingdom has information that indicates that Russian proxies are likely trying to undermine MINUSCA's continued presence in the Central African Republic, including through disinformation campaigns against the Mission, in violation of the Security Council's resolutions and the country's own sovereignty. Russia's actions targeting United Nations peacekeeping missions, including MINUSCA, highlight its intention to destabilize States in order to achieve its own foreign-policy objectives. The presence and activities of Russian proxies have an impact on communities, exacerbate existing conflicts and undermine long-term economic development. The attempts by proxies acting on behalf

of a permanent member of the Security Council to impede the operations of MINUSCA's uncrewed aerial systems threaten the safety of United Nations personnel. That is unacceptable. We urgently call on the Central African Republic authorities to lift all restrictions on MINUSCA's movements and to reconsider the involvement of destabilizing Russian proxies.

The United Kingdom is committed to working with the Central African Republic to provide long-term stability and development that delivers on the aspirations of all Central Africans.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza for her informative briefing. I also welcome Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon of the Central African Republic to today's meeting.

The Central African Republic has made commendable progress in its State-building efforts. However, the cycles of violence resulting from the persistent activities of armed groups and the negative effects of conflict in neighbouring countries continue to pose serious risks and exacerbate the suffering of civilians. In the light of those circumstances, I want to underscore three points.

First, we welcome the efforts of the Central African Government and the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in sustaining the decentralization process and implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. To that end, the upcoming local elections will be vital for inclusiveness, community empowerment and the extension of State authority required for sustainable peace. Throughout that process, ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, as well as maintaining a safe and inclusive civic space, is crucial. We commend the Secretary-General's efforts to mobilize international support for the elections, including through the United Nations Development Programme basket fund. We also take note of Prime Minister Félix Moloua's formal request to extend United Nations electoral assistance to the presidential and legislative elections coming up in the next two years, as well as to elevate electoral assistance as a priority mandated task of MINUSCA.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the volatile security situation due to the persistent armed group

activity, especially along the borders with the Sudan, around mining sites and along transhumance corridors. The increased use of explosive ordnance is also a serious threat, which jeopardizes security operations and humanitarian access. In that context, strengthening the Central African Republic's capacity to protect its own civilians is important. We commend and fully support MINUSCA's efforts to support the extension of State authority. We also welcome the recent high-level national conference on peace and prosperous transhumance, which gathered various stakeholders. At the same time, we encourage the Central African Government to maintain its progress in improving the national security sector through a transparent and credible process for recruitment into the national defence and security forces, as well as enhanced monitoring of the conduct and discipline of its security personnel. In addition, MINUSCA's early warning capabilities to assess threats, improve its pre-emptive posture and provide reliable community protection remain critical for the Mission to implement its mandate in a robust manner. It is regrettable that MINUSCA's uncrewed aerial systems still remain banned, and we urge the authorities to urgently lift those restrictions and to fully uphold the status-of-forces agreement.

Thirdly, human rights violations, conflict-related sexual violence and violations against children by all parties must cease immediately. It is particularly concerning that recurrent clashes between national defence forces and armed groups contribute to the precarious human rights situation. Strengthening the rule of law and accountability is essential to break the cycle of conflict and violence against civilians. We commend the commitment of the Central African Republic to advancing its national human rights policy and its continued engagement with the United Nations. We call upon the Government to continue to do so.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its unwavering support for Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and MINUSCA in their efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to 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 extend my greetings to the members of the Security Council. I am delighted to

be with them today for this meeting to consider the report (S/2024/473) of the Secretary-General António Guterres, as well as the complementary reports, in particular the report on human rights in the Central African Republic (A/HRC/56/60/Add.2) and that of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to resolution 2693 (2023). Before sharing with the Security Council the remarks and observations of the Central African Government on those various reports, allow me to express to you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations on the assumption of the presidency of the Security Council by your country, the Republic of Korea, for the month of June, which you, Sir, are leading admirably. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding today's meeting. And I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for her summary of the report of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations vision of the security, political and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic.

With Council members' agreement, I would like to take the opportunity of my first statement to this renewed Council in 2024 to extend my congratulations to the States that have joined the Council as non-permanent members. I wish them every success in undertaking the heavy responsibility of maintaining international peace and security conferred on them in Article 24, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations, and entrusted to them by us, the States Members of the United Nations, when we elect them. It seems appropriate to recall that, through their election, we have granted them the power to judge and make decisions on the life or survival of other men and women — notably, millions of other men and women. That is why I would like to urge them to be benevolent, objective, fair and coherent and to respect their commitments to the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations when analysing and making decisions on issues and events brought before the Security Council, the supreme organ of the United Nations. The future and the preservation of humankind depend on the actions they take in addressing the world's disputes and conflicts.

In view of the state of the world — a world increasingly in flux with persistent global insecurity — we must reconsider today's *modus operandi*, which is outdated and more a source of division and destabilization than of maintaining order. Would it not be wise to reconsider

the *modus operandi*, defined by a tiny group of Council members to the detriment of the rest of us, who had no say in the matter because we were not at the negotiating table, despite having been decisive players in the relative peace achieved since the Second World War? Is it not time to abandon that the *modus operandi*, which is dragging us little by little into a world of disintegration, with double standards in the decisions taken, all too often guided by the individual interests of their States and not those of the world?

My country, the Central African Republic, is one of the countries that have suffered and are still suffering the harmful effects of that outdated *modus operandi*. There is a country, the Central African Republic, which since its return to constitutional order, has been making every effort to overcome an unprecedented crisis situation. The solutions advocated and the measures put in place have not been enough to resolve the Central African crisis. Those ongoing measures continue to hinder and even curtail the efforts we are making together. It is a country for which, given the aggression against its population, institutions and territorial integrity, a peacekeeping operation, or rather an operation to maintain dependency, was established, which today, 10 years since its establishment, has not achieved the desired results for the simple reason that the very nature of the United Nations operation was not appropriate for the situation. We saw the limits of that operation when, in 2020 and 2021, there was a new rebellion in the very presence of the Blue Helmets, obliging the legitimately elected President to react to the extreme urgency of the moment given the distress of the population. It was a survival response that is now decried in an effort to conceal the failure of a peacekeeping operation that is, as I said, not appropriate. And it is not for lack of saying it over and over again.

Today my country continues to be called to the bar of the condemned by the Security Council, which pays lip service to hard-won gains, but stubbornly persists in maintaining iniquitous and unworthy sanctions on a country whose population aspires only to peace and respect for its sovereignty.

Reports continue to pour in, rehashing a situation that is already well known, resulting from armed conflict, and for which the Government is sparing no effort to remedy. Above all, the reports continue to fuel the words of many here who do not know the Central African Republic or its history and have never been

there or only for a short visit. Their opinion is therefore based on hearsay.

The Central African Republic is aware of the challenges it faces. We know that our security situation, though improved, remains worrisome. Our challenges remain numerous, but what country does not have challenges to meet? It is for that reason that the President of the Republic remains committed to the political process for the return to peace in the Central African Republic, whose achievements have led to very significant progress.

The Central African Republic has come a very long way, as the Council knows, and today we are in a phase of consolidating these achievements in order to preserve these compelling results, such as the restoration of State authority, the rebuilding of our army and the return to the rule of law through the consolidation of our judicial institutions.

Those achievements are the result of bold — even if sometimes criticized — reforms and assiduous collective work, for which we would like to express our sincere thanks to our partners on the ground. That includes our multilateral partners — MINUSCA, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union, the European Union and the World Bank, to name but a few — and our bilateral partners — the Russian Federation, the Republic of Rwanda, the French Republic, the United States of America and the countries that are guarantors and facilitators in the political process of returning to peace in the Central African Republic.

As I said earlier, we need to move away from the prevailing model of producing reports to describe a well-known crisis situation. The Central African Republic has experienced a crisis that has plunged it into chaos. Armed aggression is not a game; it involves crimes, rapes and human rights violations. We have had to and continue to deal with a rebellion, even if significantly reduced, of armed men, without faith or law. We must therefore escape from this endless game of United Nations reports in exchange for an account of the efforts made and results obtained by the Government of the Central African Republic.

But, as is customary, in order to respond to some of the remarks made in the various reports and in order to inform the members of the Council on the situation in the Central African Republic, I would like

to reiterate and recall that progress has been made in various so-called strategic areas through security sector reform, with the effective redeployment of the defence forces and a reconfiguration of the internal security forces; the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process, in accordance with the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic; the Luanda road map; and the management of arms and munitions; as well as a new strategic framework that has made it possible to guarantee peace, security, social cohesion and improved coexistence across 100 per cent of Central African territory.

With regard to human rights, which have been placed at the epicentre of its Government's public policy, the Central African Republic would like to reiterate before the Council its firm commitment to collaborate fully with MINUSCA and the Panel of Experts in documenting cases of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and, beyond that, in the search for the effective manifestation of the truth, as well as victims' access to justice and the implementation of the national human rights policy.

The national policy is accompanied by an ambitious five-year action plan for the period 2023–2027, with an estimated budget of 3 billion CFA francs, for the implementation of 268 activities, in particular those aimed at improving prison conditions and reducing the rate of human rights violations in the Central African Republic.

With regard to persistent violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, the Government has redoubled its efforts to find ways of ensuring effective protection for the civilian population.

Moreover, certain notable progress and major advances have been made but, unfortunately, not highlighted in the two reports submitted to the Council.

Furthermore, the Government has also undertaken to make available to the competent judicial authorities, for processing in strict compliance with the secrecy of judicial proceedings and in accordance with victim and witness protection measures, the information relating to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law contained in the documented reports of MINUSCA's Human Rights Division.

With regard to the denunciations noted in the latest MINUSCA reports on the human rights situation, the Government, through the Ministry of Justice, has denounced the obvious errors and commented on

their objectivity and completeness. With regard to the disinformation, the Government continues its efforts, but notes, with dismay, the lack of reciprocity when it comes to the Government of the Central African Republic. We note that the disinformation is an expression of the opinion of the population, admittedly excessive and to be contained, but a response of a population whose lives have little value and who are seeing a 10-year-old peacekeeping operation that has been unable to meet their expectations.

The description of the critical humanitarian situation, also in the report, as well as the persistence of human rights violations, should not blind us to the fact that the Council is considering and debating a country that has experienced an unprecedented crisis. It is a country that has been attacked by armed groups and has seen a rebellion made up mainly of foreign mercenaries and supported by politicians greedy for the supreme magistracy without passing through the ballot box. I call for more objectivity and solidarity to break this vicious circle.

In view of the above, however useful it may be, it seems to me that the Council's role is to focus on the real ills that continue to undermine the Central African Republic and to have the courage to take effective, efficient and appropriate measures.

The Government of the Central African Republic wishes to remain in line with the international instruments and frameworks, which should guide us towards greater peace, progress and justice, and towards a restructuring in which every Central African can finally regain his or her freedom and dignity.

However, in all honesty, there is an urgent need for greater coherence if the Council is to remain credible in its decisions on the Central African issue.

Allow me to repeat myself — although the security situation has improved, it remains worrisome, particularly in its cross-border dimension, as some have noted here, due to the resurgence of security crises in neighbouring countries.

It has been said here time and again — security in the Central African Republic must be examined from a subregional perspective. It is on the strength of this premise that the subregional and continental organizations — the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union, through the Peace and Security Council, remain

committed to the Central African Republic, supporting the political process for a return to peace in their capacity as guarantors and facilitators. They took the trouble — in particular, through the presence here in person of President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of Angola, and a representative of President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, representing him here — not only to convey their support to the Central African Republic but also to sound a warning about the subregion. They came to alert the Security Council and to inform members' thinking in order to give a better picture of the situation in the Central African Republic, which they themselves are dealing with because of their proximity to it, and to improve their understanding of the danger posed by certain measures taken by the Security Council, not only for the Central African Republic but for the entire subregion.

The Government established its national border management policy in order to tackle the cross-border security challenge, and, contrary to what has been said here about the start of the joint commissions, has continued to hold the ad hoc joint commissions on security, which seek to establish a common mechanism aimed at effectively countering all the cross-border problems — illicit trafficking, the plundering of resources, poaching and every other form of insecurity. I should also make it clear that a joint ad hoc commission is being held right now in Bangui with Cameroon and Angola, while others have been held with Chad and the Republic of Congo.

Ultimately, what the Government and the people of the Central African Republic want is to fully reassert their sovereignty, as the countries and peoples of the members of the Security Council have done. In other countries, the people who are seen to be martyrs are armed, supported and even beatified. Why are Council members' positions on the Central African Republic different? What is worse, any attempt at a national effort to respond to the plight of the Central African people is subjected to the Council's concerns, or rather accusations. Do we have no right to respect for our dignity? Does the life of a Central African not have the same value or price as another's? And yet I believe that we are all born equal. Does that principle apply only to Council members? As I have said, the Council's hierarchy of values in its outdated *modus operandi* is leading the world to perdition.

How can the Council ask for signs of trust when we have essentially been condemned merely for being who we are, or perhaps for our skin colour or geographic

location? If that is not the case, we want to know why the efforts made in relation to the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe group are viewed differently compared to those of other martyred populations who are, as I have said, supported and beatified. Like others elsewhere, the people of the Central African Republic wanted only to defend themselves against a horde of barbarians and protect their own, as others have done, and do, when attacked — like the resistance fighters in France or those in Ukraine today, for example. Mindful of that reality, and to show responsibility, the Government has decided to reorganize them in order to rein them in and supervise them, which is entirely in line with our aspirations to be a State where the rule of law prevails and to have an organized army. What is incredible is that we are being asked to accommodate the armed groups by integrating them into our law-enforcement forces, but when we do the same in dealing with dissidents or people who want to lay down their arms, it is decried and even condemned. I also want to point out that despite the disinformation campaign being waged to undermine those peacemaking efforts, they have attracted numerous dissidents and the support of the people, who are exhausted by a conflict that has gone on for too long and is being prolonged by the desire of the Council to legitimize armed groups that are trying to destabilize the Central African Republic.

On the political front, the quest for a solution also entails creating a climate of calm in which all Central Africans can express themselves freely. As politicians or representatives of politicians, Council members understand that oppositions exist and that opposing is their role. As far as the Central African Republic is concerned, more and more of our citizens are beginning to transcend these ideas in order to find solutions that fit their problems. This is why President Touadera has continued to create frameworks for dialogue in which Central Africans can freely express themselves without exclusion.

I would like to remind Council members that the political situation that the President inherited is the result of a series of mistakes. We have to differentiate the actions of politicians with seditious ambitions, corrupt politicians who should be judicially liable just like any other Central Africans, from those of one who is a virtuous leader of his country's political life. It is important to treat this matter less superficially, because confusing roles could be subtly construed as taking a position. We should not be too credulous, because too many political connotations are being attached to legal cases that are of an entirely private nature. I also urge the Council to

support this desire for inclusiveness and participatory governance around the forthcoming municipal elections, which represent an opportunity for the authorities to commit further to a democratic path and instil its values in Central Africans long accustomed to cyclical crises, as well as to rethink routes to development so that they are tailored to our national realities.

On the economic front, the Central African Republic's economic and social development must be reconsidered with a strategy and, one way or another, the State budget must be increased. But how can it be increased based essentially on taxes and customs revenues that have been slashed because State revenues have been lost through too many exemptions negotiated here and there and because our economic drivers have been sidelined in favour of international contractors? The problem demands that the status-of-forces agreement between the Government of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA be revised. I should point out that this issue continues to be plagued by delaying tactics. It has become our Sisyphean task despite the desire of the United Nations, reiterated in a letter dated 25 January 2024 from the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, to discuss those stumbling blocks with the Government of the Central African Republic.

That point leads me to comment on the concerns expressed about obstacles to the use of drones. I would like to reiterate that while the role that MINUSCA plays in the Central African Republic is beneficial and necessary, and the coordination of our efforts has improved, that should not detract from the fact that we have some thorny issues that deserve clarification. I would also like to remind the Council that the United Nations has repeatedly reaffirmed the principle of the Central African Republic's sovereignty and its duty to protect its territory and population. Although the status-of-forces agreement contains exemptions that allow MINUSCA to work freely, it must be pointed out that matters of national defence of the Central African Republic fall under that sovereignty, something that every nation cherishes. The application of a legal framework for the use of drones, about which MINUSCA was notified, does not constitute an obstruction of its activities or a breach of the agreement. As to the flying of drones in the Central African Republic's airspace, it is worth recalling the principle of sovereignty as laid down in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which is that "[T]he Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members." According to that, the Central African Republic is a sovereign nation,

subject to no higher authority either on its territory or in its international relations. The Central African Republic is therefore independent, and it does not share that status with any other legal entity, including MINUSCA. Under article 41, paragraph 1, of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961, all persons enjoying privileges and immunities have a duty to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State. They also have a duty to refrain from interfering in its internal affairs. Respect for that principle is very important to the Central African Republic. Furthermore, section IV, paragraph 5 of the agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Central African Republic, on the status of MINUSCA, sets out as clearly as possible the legal obligation to respect local law.

By virtue of its mandate, MINUSCA cannot therefore be considered as a State, even less a super-State, so as to enable it to avoid compliance with the rules laid down by the Central African authorities or because it wishes to replace the Central African Republic, being concerned only with its own interests. This comes at a time when civilians are not being protected, as we can see from the Central Africans who continue to perish at the barbaric hands of armed groups, even in areas where MINUSCA contingents are present, and where the rules of engagement are not consistent with the reality on the ground. As a result, without prejudice to MINUSCA's mandate and in view of the evolving security situation in the Central African Republic, the note circulated by the Minister of National Defence emphasizes the urgent need to suspend all drone flights in Central African airspace.

We also want to point out that there have been drone attacks operated by armed groups and negative forces, not to mention — as we have seen in recent news — that actors entering Central African territory, disguised as humanitarian non-governmental organizations, are in fact training and supplying armed groups. I should say that a joint process to find a solution as quickly as possible has been put in place, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the knowledge of MINUSCA. Work is ongoing in that regard. I also want to remind the Council once again that the status-of-forces agreement signed in 2014 did not explicitly address issues relating to the use of drones, which are a new development that shows that the agreement is actually obsolete in the light of such new factors. That again shows that we should reflect together on how to adapt MINUSCA's mandate to new priorities and realities on the ground. The Government of the Central African

Republic is therefore impatiently awaiting the return of the so-called independent strategic review, which is in any case being conducted by United Nations officials, so that it can decide what position to take on forthcoming deadlines, particularly with regard to the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate, scheduled to expire in November.

Based on all of this — and forgive me for going on at length — I would like to conclude by addressing the subject of the draft resolution to be submitted in mid-July on the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, and more specifically on the arms embargo on the Central African Republic, which suffers from a startling ambiguity that we cannot make head or tail of and that unquestionably puts in question the credibility of the Council and confidence in its intentions in maintaining the text, which now makes no sense at all. Why does the Council, and more particularly the penholder, insist on preserving a text that legitimizes the various armed groups, which are by definition unofficial actors and not recognized by the Council, and which continue to operate in the subregion and in the Central African Republic in particular, by subverting — forgive me for using the term — a text included a procedure of a Sanctions Committee established for the Central African Republic?

The Government of the Central African Republic therefore officially expresses, here in this Chamber, its incomprehension at a text that sows confusion, ignores the realities in the Central African Republic and amounts to a lack of respect for a legitimately elected Government and the dignity of an entire people. The Government's position was outlined in writing in a letter signed by me. That correspondence recalls that the main problem of concern to the United Nations and the Security Council should be the issue of the financing of armed groups and of ensuring the international community's adoption of a firm and unwavering position against those armed groups and their leaders or accomplices. The Government is therefore opposed to any redrafting of a text that since 2023 has lifted all restrictions on access to arms for the regular Central African forces although they continue to exist on those 20 or so pages, when we are ultimately told that the text applies not to the Central African Republic but to armed groups. If the text does not apply, or no longer

applies, to the regular forces of the Central African Republic, it should simply and logically be deleted.

Any attempt at reformulation or attribution to a subregional dimension will be seen as a desire to falsify the reality of the Central African Republic, and therefore as an implicit attempt to maintain sanctions on the Central African Republic and domination and trusteeship over it, in pure violation of its sovereignty. The Central African Republic must not be confused with armed groups, and I appeal to national and international opinion to take note of the fact that the Government of the Central African Republic is systematically confused with the rebels. Paragraph 93 of the Secretary-General's report, which refers to "parties to the conflict", bears witness to that. Who are the parties to the conflict? Is the Government of the Central African Republic a party to the conflict? We do not accept such defamation. If the Council finally decides to take coercive action against the armed groups operating in Central Africa generally, and in the Central African Republic in particular, the Council must be able to work pragmatically and take full measure of the danger posed by those armed groups by adopting a single resolution on the issue to be addressed, which is that of armed groups. The Central African Republic is willing to work on that issue and contribute its experience and expertise.

In conclusion, I urge the Council to show wisdom and adopt a *modus operandi* that will support the Central African Republic effectively and not hinder or harm it, in the hope that its decisions, based on a review of its reports and consideration of the Government's position, will be fair and fitting. I would like to reiterate the gratitude of the Central African Government and its people to the multilateral and bilateral partners involved in the efforts to restore peace to the Central African Republic. My sincere thanks go to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for the work she has done alongside the Government of the Central African Republic. We encourage her to continue her efforts.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.