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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Jürgenson	(Estonia)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivièrè
	India	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe
	United States of America	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2021/571)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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/2021/571)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Angola, the Central African Republic, Chad and Congo to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mankour Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; and Ms. Rita Laranjinha, European Union Managing Director for Africa.

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/2021/571, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ndiaye.

Mr. Ndiaye (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure to be at this meeting to present to the Security Council the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2021/571).

I would like to begin by thanking Council members for their continued attention and unanimous support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The Council meeting of 7 June (see S/PV.8787) and the subsequent press statement (SC/14542) attest to that.

I also welcome the presence of the international partners of the Central African Republic, including

President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola and Acting President of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union; the representative of the current President of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); and the Managing Director for Africa of the European Union, as well as the representatives of the Central African Republic and Chad.

President Touadera and the signatories of the political process have made a commitment to conclude the electoral process by holding local elections at the beginning of 2022, which should contribute significantly to decentralized governance, local development and the participation of all citizens in political life in the interest of their respective localities.

I therefore urge Member States to continue to support the Central African Republic in holding those local elections, the last of which was held in 1988, by contributing to the basket fund of the United Nations Development Programme in order to cover the financial shortfall, estimated at \$10 million, and with the support of MINUSCA. That will require maintaining electoral support in the framework of the mandate that the Council has entrusted to MINUSCA.

I remain concerned nonetheless about the negative consequences of the military counter-offensive carried out by the defence and security forces, bilateral forces and other security personnel to eliminate the guerrilla forces of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC). In central and north-western Central African Republic, there is an asymmetrical war, with CPC armed groups largely responsible for serious human rights violations. That has resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, with new waves of displaced persons and 57 per cent of the national population in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

It is regrettable to note that the extension of State control over its territory through the strengthening of the presence of defence and security forces and the deployment of bilateral forces and other security personnel, who are legitimately perceived by the population as a rapid and effective response to the threats caused by the CPC, have not had the desired effect in terms of protecting civilians.

Indeed, never in the past have violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, allegedly

committed by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, bilateral forces and other security personnel and which were documented in detail in the areas under their control, equalled the level of those documented by MINUSCA and brought to the attention of national authorities. That undermines any chance of building social cohesion and establishing a relationship of trust between the Government and its citizens; exacerbates the marginalization of some communities; and leads to the radicalization of armed groups given that those same factors led to the unprecedented institutional crisis of 2013. That is a new trend. If we do not pay attention to it, it could destroy the meagre, hard-won progress that was achieved in the quest for social cohesion and national reconciliation.

The deployment of bilateral forces will be useful and legitimate only if it contributes to protecting civilians from the atrocities committed by armed groups, enhancing the professionalism and effectiveness of the defence and security forces in the framework of security-sector reform, and ultimately putting an end to the violence. The goal is to free women, children and the civilian population as a whole from the terror they are experiencing in order to create an environment conducive to finding a lasting political solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic.

It is regrettable to see that the number of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence recorded in the first quarter of 2021 is five times higher than in the last quarter of 2020. The establishment on 4 May of a special commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations of violations of international humanitarian law committed by the armed forces of the Central African Republic, their allies and other security forces, which MINUSCA had brought to the attention of the Government, has certainly led to heightened interest. However, the commission must be able to establish specific responsibilities in an impartial manner and draw the necessary legal and political consequences.

MINUSCA intends to continue to document violations of human rights, which will be the subject of public reports in order to preserve a frank, transparent and constructive framework for dialogue with the authorities of the Central African Republic. The ineffectiveness of the chain of command and control of the defence and security forces, as well as the lack of credible interlocutors among certain bilateral forces in a context where military operations continue against the CPC, has led to some confusion, resulting

in an unprecedented increase in and a continuation of violations — which are not being responded to — of the status-of-forces agreement. Indeed, there were 39 such violations from February to June.

MINUSCA has often been confronted with restrictions on its movement, searches of its vehicles, harassment of and threats against its personnel and violations of its bases by the national defence and security forces. An example is the recent invasion of our Bria operations base, in Haute-Kotto prefecture, by the armed forces of the Central African Republic, who arrived with the goal of forcibly taking gasoline from our bases. The violations of the status-of-forces agreement expose peacekeeping personnel to unjustified dangers and jeopardize the security and safety of the Blue Helmets.

Nor has the security context spared humanitarian actors, who are working to alleviate a crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the violence committed by the CPC and the operations under way to counter it. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached levels unprecedented since 2014. Forced evictions of IDPs took place in early June in the cattle-grazing area of Bambari, which is an area protected by international humanitarian law.

While 57 per cent of the population requires assistance and protection and 700,000 people are at risk of famine, humanitarian workers were the targets of attack 225 times during the first five months of 2021. Looting and the militarization of civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals hinder access, which is already inadequate to ensure basic services. In addition to compromising the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance, the current situation is shredding the social fabric and harming efforts to achieve peace and stability.

In an environment that is among the most dangerous in the world, the humanitarian community provided multisectoral assistance to more than 1.2 million people in the first quarter of 2021, in particular thanks to a civilian-military coordination that has been very effective. However, the humanitarian response plan for 2021 had been financed only up to around 35 per cent as of 20 June. Additional funding is necessary to continue to support the humanitarian response throughout the territory of the Central African Republic.

The frequent and deplorable use of explosive devices also raises concerns and deserves the attention

of the Security Council. The situation is particularly appalling because it restricts the people's freedom of circulation, hinders economic activities, including agriculture, commerce and animal breeding, and reduces the mobility of MINUSCA and humanitarian actors. We have shared our concerns with the relevant national authorities and encouraged the ratification of the relevant international conventions that make it possible to establish a system of prevention and combat against this scourge.

In this regard, it will be impossible for the international forces to continue to operate alongside MINUSCA without reducing the Mission's effectiveness. It is in that context that we are determined to implement our mandate despite the challenges. We hope that with the support of all the members of the Council, appropriate measures will immediately be taken to create optimal conditions to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and enhanced performance of MINUSCA. That requires better cooperation among the conventional forces deployed in the Central African Republic and MINUSCA, with strict respect by all actors on the ground of resolution 2552 (2020), which related to its mandate.

MINUSCA received assurances from President Touadera, who on 22 June convened a meeting on the coexistence of internationally deployed forces and instructed his military hierarchy to explore with all actors possibilities relating to a *modus vivendi* and a better coordination. We count on all members of the Council so that this dialogue can lead to concrete results with respect to the mandate and peaceful coexistence with the deployed conventional forces.

MINUSCA is resolved to implement its mandate and maintains a strategic high-level dialogue with President Touadera, the new Prime Minister and the relevant authorities to create conditions favourable to the implementation of MINUSCA's mandate. However, the security of the troops and United Nations personnel remains an imperative. I would like to recall that in the north-west part of the Central African Republic, an area particularly marked by the operations being carried out against the CPC, a delegation led by my deputy, who is present here, was fired at on 30 May. That incident cannot remain uninvestigated, and it will not stop us from discharging our mandate in that area.

A humanitarian team visited Bang, near the border with Chad, on 19 June to deliver humanitarian assistance.

We will continue to protect the civilian population, support humanitarian assistance and maintain access throughout the extent of the territory of the country. That also applies to MINUSCA's freedom of movement. On that point, I would like to thank the Council for having provided MINUSCA, through resolution 2566 (2021), the additional resources necessary for the effective implementation of its mandate, in an environment that has become increasingly more complex, and ensuring the security and safety of the Blue Helmets.

Currently 40 additional elements of the Rwandese formed police unit have already been deployed, and we expect 300 soldiers from the Rwandan armed forces to be deployed by the end of June or the beginning of July. The Mission has readjusted its capacity to provide shelter, and all sites are in the process of being finalized. That reinforcement will make it possible, *inter alia*, to enhance the presence of the Mission on the territory of the country and strengthen the protection of civilians, as requested by the people, and to ensure the safety and security of the Blue Helmets in the face of emerging threats.

I wish here to condemn the campaigns under way aimed at disinformation and at inciting physical violence against the Mission's leadership and the personnel and property of the United Nations and of certain international partners that have already been stigmatized, with unpredictable consequences.

In addition to the revamping of the legislative branch in early May, President Touadera initiated that of the executive following the resignation of the Prime Minister on 10 June. The efforts of the executive branch of the Central African Republic in terms of bilateral engagement have already led to positive results — for example, in easing tensions with Chad following the incident that took place on the border between Chad and the Central African Republic on 30 May, and averting a deterioration of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

I welcome the announcement by President Touadera on 10 June of the holding in the near future of a republican dialogue in the country. In order to be decisive and productive, the dialogue must be inclusive in order to allow for the effective participation of all the segments of society of the Central African Republic. It should be noted that the national consultations have already made it possible to consolidate the terms of reference of the republican dialogue by proposing

a nine-point agenda. In a constructive manner, the recommendations made by the stakeholders during those preliminary consultations have already helped to ease political tensions, with the lifting on 31 May of the ban on some democratic opposition leaders leaving the country. The participation of the Coalition démocratique de l'opposition 2020 in the national dialogue remains possible despite its refusal to take part in the national consultations. Its meeting on 16 June with the Prime Minister is evidence of that.

The implementation of a peace agreement often experiences setbacks. The efforts undertaken over the past period to revitalize the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic bear witness to the viability of that instrument for peace and stability in the country despite the questions over its future that the formation of the CPC has legitimately raised. The framework for dialogue that it continues to provide must serve to implement the commitments of the signatory parties. I see that as a renewed opportunity to expedite the disbanding of armed groups and the re-engagement in the Agreement of those elements willing to disassociate themselves from the CPC and renounce violence.

MINUSCA will continue to support the Government, in conjunction with other international partners, in implementing the Agreement, as well as in its efforts to restore State authority, particularly with regard to the capacity-building of the defence and security forces. The assessment of the implementation of the national security sector reform strategy has identified priorities that will require the full attention and involvement of the Government and coordinated and clear support from international partners. Those priorities include supporting the good governance of the security sector, promoting democratic accountability, restoring the chains of command within the defence and security forces and improving coordination, at both the national and the international levels. The same assessment also points to the need to extend reform to all security sectors, particularly water, forestry and customs, which contribute to the protection of natural resources and the generation of revenue for the State.

As reported to the Security Council a fortnight ago (see S/PV.8787), the visit by the United Nations, African Union (AU), ECCAS and European Union (EU) delegation to the Central African Republic from 2 to 5 June highlighted a call for the normalization of relations with international partners. President

Touadera's statement committing to take steps to enable partners to fulfil their role to the best of their ability must now be acted upon without further delay. By meeting the Ambassador of the European Union delegation and the Ambassador representing ECCAS on 16 and 17 June, respectively, the new Prime Minister gave a positive impetus to the new Government, which should be in place within the next few hours, to continue working with all partners.

Military operations against the armed groups of the CPC will not be enough to restore peace, safety and security. We therefore welcome the new impetus that President Touadera is giving to the political and peace processes. Such impetus is in line with his will, as expressed to the joint AU-United Nations-ECCAS-EU mission. We must seize this new opportunity to harmonize regional initiatives and encourage the future Government to mobilize the support of all international partners for the success of the inclusive political dialogue and for the ownership and effective implementation of any road map that may emerge from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and ECCAS, with the assistance of the African Union.

I would like to welcome the important steps taken by President Lourenço, who convened two summits on the Central African Republic and who is also overseeing the work done by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola and Rwanda to finalize the road map for the settlement of the crisis in the Central African Republic. That initiative has the full support of the United Nations and MINUSCA.

Now more than ever, we need the Security Council's support. The conditions for implementing our mandate have changed with new threats. In general, United Nations peacekeepers and personnel are at greater risk. Hate speech and incitement to violence against MINUSCA, its personnel and the Central African Republic's partners have multiplied in recent months, constantly fuelled and exploited by actors close to the presidential majority. President Touadera has pledged to put an end to that and to ensure respect for the status-of-forces agreement. We await the fulfilment of that commitment by the new Government, which is already giving rise to great hope. Despite the numerous challenges, there is an opportunity, supported by the new future Government, in particular within the framework of the Political Agreement, to restore lasting stability, peace and development to the Central African

Republic. For its part, MINUSCA stands ready to uphold the principles and values of the United Nations.

The President: I thank Mr. Ndiaye for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Adeoye.

Mr. Adeoye: I am currently attending the Berlin Conference on Libya, and I deeply appreciate this opportunity given to the African Union. I will be very brief.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I would also like to emphasize that this is my first time addressing the Council since my election as African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and I feel very honoured and privileged to do so.

It is also important to know that the African Union illustrates once again its commitment to the strategic partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in peacemaking and peacebuilding on the continent.

As guarantors of peace in the Central African Republic, we are ready to continue to work with all stakeholders, including the United Nations, the European Union and all bilateral and multilateral partners to make peace a permanent feature in the context of the Central African Republic.

Let me also use this opportunity to emphasize that the African Union values the strong cooperation and action by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. In that regard, we highly commend the able and resourceful leadership of the President of Angola, His Excellency Mr. Lourenço, in his capacity as Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. In particular, we wish to bring the attention of the Council to the diplomatic initiatives spearheaded by the Angolan President to promote national reconciliation, peace and stability in the Central African Republic. The actions taken by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region are indeed complementary to the strengthening of the African Union's strategy of finding African solutions to African problems.

As members are aware, I undertook a joint visit to the Central African Republic with Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, earlier this month. We were able to do so

in the company of the European Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the United Nations. That made it a very important visit because we were able to engage the leading players and actors in the Central African Republic, including the President himself, women's groups, young people, members of the majority and other political parties and the mayors at the provincial level.

In the light of that event, it is important for me to re-emphasize a number of factors and outcomes detailed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/571).

First, we note the legitimacy of His Excellency President Touadera following his re-election. We are very pleased with him for appointing a Prime Minister and for the ongoing process of the formation of a new Government.

Secondly, our visit demonstrated the commitment of the international community to the outcomes of ensuring that the Central African Republic remains on track towards peace and stability, knowing full well that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) continues to play an important role in stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic. We therefore stand ready to continue supporting MINUSCA, along with ECCAS, the European Union and the United Nations.

It is essential to condemn all actions by armed groups, including the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, in the Central African Republic and we have called on all those who have returned to fighting after losing the elections to renounce violence and instead move towards inclusive dialogue and reconciliation.

It is also important that the African Union demonstrate the need to move forward on revitalizing the peace process. We are committed to the full and unconditional implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and denounce all violations of its provisions. Moreover, the ceasefire must continue to hold, and the good people of the Central African Republic must remain engaged in the process of achieving and consolidating democracy.

On the external front, we are committed to helping the Central African Republic and its neighbours, particularly Chad, to reach a compromise with regard to the recent skirmishes along their shared border. We

are very pleased that President Touadera dispatched three of his former ministers to N'Djamena. We are now beginning to see signs that the two sides will choose an amicable way of settling their border dispute and issues related to cross-border security and movement.

We must remain seized of the issue of peace in the Central African Republic. As a guarantor, the African Union stands ready. We have deployed military observers to Bangui and we call on the Council to provide logistical support to them, through MINUSCA, in order to ensure that the ceasefire is fully monitored and that the security situation remains stable in order to protect the innocent people of the Central African Republic.

I am also pleased to inform Council members that the African Union Peace and Security Council will be undertaking a field mission to Bangui next week, with the support of MINUSCA. We heartily congratulate our brother Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye for facilitating that visit, which will be a very important opportunity for us. We must not forget to push to open up more space for the political participation of civil society in the Central African Republic, especially women's groups and young people, so that democracy and good governance become entrenched in the long term.

Finally, allow me to conclude by once again stressing the strategic importance of the United Nations-African Union partnership for a positive impact on peace and security on the continent in general.

The President: I thank Mr. Adeoye for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Laranjinha.

Ms. Laranjinha (*spoke in French*): After my most recent statement in February (see S/2021/187, annex III), I am honoured to be here once again on behalf of the European Union (EU), which, as the Security Council knows, has been particularly involved in the Central African Republic for years.

I would like to share our assessment of both the progress made since then and the major challenges still facing the country. Moreover, I had the opportunity to talk directly with the Central African authorities during the recent joint visit of the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Those messages were also conveyed bilaterally by the EU.

Despite the threats posed by armed groups, constitutional order has been maintained, the

electoral process has been able to proceed, leading to the re-election of President Touadera, and a new Prime Minister has been appointed. However, many challenges remain and the high expectations of the population, including the minority communities, must be met immediately. Urgent reforms should be rapidly implemented. We look forward to close cooperation with international partners and remain ready to provide our support.

We also welcome the announcement that a credible and inclusive national dialogue will soon be held. That is the only way to find a lasting solution to the crisis. The authorities must create the conditions for the political opposition to find its rightful place in that dialogue. The participation of Central African society in all its diversity is also essential. The European Union is available to provide advice, support and expertise as part of its mediation assistance.

Lastly, we welcome President Touadera's commitment to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which is the only common and viable framework. The effective implementation of the recommendations made during its evaluation must be ensured by involving all the signatories and in close coordination with the guarantors, facilitators and partners.

A lasting solution to the crisis cannot be solely military. Dialogue among the parties and the re-engagement of all — the Government and the armed groups willing to remain in or return to the process after renouncing violence — is also necessary. It should be accompanied by greater inclusion and a larger role for civil society, especially women and young people, and political parties. In that regard, we support the renewed efforts of our partners in the region, the AU, ECCAS and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, and we encourage the harmonization of the initiatives under way.

Despite these developments, I would like to highlight several elements of particular concern that continue to weigh on the current political situation. Disinformation campaigns, pressure on the opposition and the media, hate speech and incitement to violence against partners such as the EU, France and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) must stop.

We welcome the public condemnation of disinformation by President Touadera and the President of the National Assembly, as well as the reaffirmation of their attachment to cooperation with international partners. But strong and visible measures are now expected to bring that disinformation to an end definitively and build mutual trust.

We are also deeply concerned about the excessive use of force, which jeopardizes the authorities' investment in promoting social cohesion and expanding State authority, as well as the reported violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, not only by armed groups but also by the Central African armed forces and some of their allies. Such actions are unacceptable. We have noted the authorities' decision to establish a commission to investigate those violations and expect full transparency from them. Those responsible for serious human rights violations must be brought to justice.

We take this opportunity to express our full support for MINUSCA, in particular in the face of the attacks and access restrictions that it has faced in discharging its mandate.

Those profound concerns and significant expectations were expressed in a clear, strong and united manner by the partners during our joint visit to Bangui. Concrete actions and tangible gestures are now expected from the authorities.

The Central African Republic remains an extremely fragile country, facing an acute humanitarian crisis. The entire international community must therefore remain mobilized and united and continue to provide an urgent and appropriate response to the pressing humanitarian needs of the Central African populations.

The EU has been, is and will remain one of Central African Republic's closest partners, working for peace and reconciliation, democracy and recovery. We have recently demonstrated that by providing decisive support for the elections. With all its tools and through its multidimensional action, the EU is committed to supporting the country on the difficult path of reform.

We will do so in the service of the Central African population, through a respectful and demanding dialogue based on trust with the Central African authorities and on the basis of reciprocal commitments.

In all those efforts, we are more determined than ever to continue close cooperation and coordination

with the United Nations, the African Union and ECCAS, as well as with all partners concerned, including neighbouring countries. Our actions will be taken in full transparency and we expect the same from all friends of the Central African Republic. It is up to the authorities to ensure that all actors are engaged in the same spirit and to the same ends.

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

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of note by the President of the Security Council S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola.

President Lourenço (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations, Mr. Sven Jürgenson, on his assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June.

On 20 November 2020, the Republic of Angola was elected as Chair of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). During the two years of its term, Angola intends to dynamize and strengthen the ICGLR to face the challenges of maintaining peace, security, stability and development in the region, with the support of bilateral and multilateral partners namely, the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations.

The strategic plan of Angola's chairmanship is enshrined in the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region of 15 December 2006 and is guided by the principles of international law, namely the Charter of the United Nations Organization and the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

The security situation in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in the Central African Republic, is characterized by the active presence of armed groups, of which 14 groups are signatories of the 6 February 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation

in the Central African Republic, six of them having denounced the Agreement.

The Government of Angola recognizes that international support is now increasingly important to contribute to the Central African Government's efforts to ensure peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

On 29 January, in Luanda, capital of the Republic of Angola, we held an ICGLR Summit in reduced format on the political and security situation in the Central African Republic. In addition to Angola, the Summit was attended by His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo; His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad and Chairperson of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, as a special guest; His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic; senior representatives of the Heads of State of Rwanda and of the Sudan; as well as the Chairperson of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Commission and the Executive Secretary of the ICGLR.

The Heads of State and Government renewed their commitment to promote dialogue and continuous consultation among political actors and civil society with a view to bringing the Central African Republic out of the current crisis. They called on the rebel groups to observe an immediate and unilateral ceasefire and to abandon the siege of the city of Bangui and return to their initial positions, as well as to open the Duala-Bangui corridor to allow the free movement of people and goods. They also tasked the current Chairs of ICGLR and ECCAS to take the necessary steps, together with the Security Council, in order to lift the arms embargo imposed on the Central African Republic.

The Republic of Angola, in its capacity as Chair of the ICGLR and in continuous consultation with the Central African authorities, has brokered political-diplomatic consultations with Cameroon, the Congo, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan with a view to collecting and sharing the information needed to facilitate the process of contacting key political and military actors.

On 20 April, the second Summit on the political and security situation in the Central African Republic was held in Luanda, which, in addition to the Heads of State mentioned above, was also attended by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and representatives of the Heads

of State of the Sudan, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This summit was marred by the sad news — received during the meeting — of the death in battle of the President of the Republic, Marshal Idriss Deby Itno.

During the proceedings, the Heads of State and Government were briefed on the results of the political and diplomatic consultations carried out with the Republic of Angola on the political and security situation in the Central African Republic that led the main armed groups to commit to abandoning the armed struggle and to joining the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. It is fair to acknowledge the role played throughout this process by the Chadian authorities who contributed greatly to the success of this mission. Political leaders welcomed the results obtained and mandated the Government of the Central African Republic to carry out the implementation of the conclusions of the Heads of State through a ceasefire so as to allow the establishment of a favourable climate for peace and national reconciliation.

On the same occasion, the Heads of State and Government urged the armed groups not to carry out actions that might jeopardize the ceasefire, and they called on the international community, in particular the United Nations, to encourage the regional efforts aimed at revitalizing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. The Heads of State and Government further decided to establish a task force led by the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of the Republics of Angola and Rwanda to work to implement, in collaboration with the Central African authorities, the recommendations resulting from the consultations with the armed groups. The summit also committed the Heads of State and Government and other international partners to achieving peace and stability in Central African Republic within the spirit of the Republican Dialogue road map.

It is in this framework that Angola immediately sent its Minister for Foreign Affairs to Paris to brief President Emmanuel Macron on the progress achieved at the April summit, and, with the same purpose, the Minister was sent to Addis Ababa, where he also briefed the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. In May and June, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, the Republic of Angola and the Republic of Rwanda met on three occasions in Bangui to adopt a proposed joint

road map for peace in Central African Republic, which defines the main activities to be developed.

All States have the inalienable right to create the capacity to defend themselves against internal and external threats by equipping their armed forces with personnel, weapons and equipment that meet their needs and capabilities, unless there are strong, objective reasons that may lead the international community through the Security Council to curtail that right. The arms embargo authorized by the Security Council, which makes it impossible for the Central African Government to acquire weapons, was a measure taken at a particular juncture, and it was appropriate and necessary at that time, but the context is different today. Years have gone by, and the picture has changed. It is therefore unrealistic to believe that the justifications for such measures in the past should continue to prevail in the current situation. If we take into account the fact that the current Government was legitimately elected in the last general elections, and this was recognized by the international community.

The Council would be sending a wrong message if the international community that is working towards disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of members of armed groups is also impeding the building of legitimate armed forces capable of meeting the challenges of a troubled country and a troubled region at a time when international terrorism has moved its epicentre from the Middle East to Africa. The situation is aggravated by the fact that world Powers have decided to expel mercenaries and foreign fighters from Libya without disarming, assisting or repatriating them — a situation that can exacerbate the proliferation of terrorism and increase the threat to peace and stability in the Sahel region and the countries of Central and Southern Africa. It is imperative that States acquire the capacity to defend themselves against this very real threat.

The army of heavily equipped mercenaries, which travelled thousands of kilometres towards N'Djamena, would have continued its destructive path had Chad not invested in its armed forces. This confirms the idea of the need for States to be strong in the fields of defence and security. While the country counts on the presence of personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and other forces on the ground to help the Central African Republic train its troops and equip them with weapons and equipment, the national forces

must learn to stand on their own feet and be in position to ensure their own defence and security when the foreign forces finish their mission and withdraw. At the same time, we consider it important that Central African authorities work towards neutralizing the negative forces that invest in weakening its relations with the United Nations and influential members of the Security Council with whom they have to work in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect in the defence of peace and security for our countries.

Based on all the foregoing underlying reasons, the Luanda summit mandated the Heads of State of Angola and Congo, the current Chairpersons of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community for Central African States, respectively, to address the Security Council on behalf of the States and the peoples of the two subregions and request the lifting of the arms embargo that still exists against the legitimate Government of the Central African Republic. We hope that the Security Council will start looking at this case with a new mindset and offer greater justice to a country that is shackled by a measure that is not in harmony with the prevailing situation today.

The President: I now give the floor now to the representative of the Congo.

Mr. Mouanda (Congo) (*spoke in French*): His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of Congo and Chairperson-in-Office of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), would have liked to have personally joined his friend and brother, His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola and Chairperson-in-Office of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), to give voice to the strong concerns of the countries of the subregion represented by these two organizations on the situation in Central African Republic. Unfortunately, previous commitments are retaining him at home, and I have been asked to deliver his message to the Council on this situation in the Central African Republic, to which he remains personally committed.

“I would like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to the President of the Security Council as well as to the members of the Council for the opportunity afforded us to share with the Council the strong concern of the States members of our two geopolitical organizations — the Economic

Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) — about the latest developments in the situation in the Central African Republic, a brotherly country, which has been shaken and destabilized by decades of armed conflict.

“I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the presence in New York of His Excellency President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, with whom I am working on the issue on a regular basis. His presence in New York during the coronavirus disease pandemic to make heard the voice of the ICGLR member States superlatively illustrates his personal commitment to the Central African Republic. At the same time, it reflects the firm resolve of the community of countries of the Great Lakes region, on whose behalf he is speaking in his capacity as ICGLR Chairperson, to reiterate their full solidarity with our brotherly country.

“The countries of the subregion continue to work towards the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Our countries will unwaveringly continue to work together with the brotherly people of the Central African Republic and its Government to achieve lasting peace in strict respect for its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity.

“Of course, the primary responsibility for bringing about the necessary conditions to achieve that end lies with the Government of Central African Republic itself, in particular by focusing on confidence-building measures aimed at national reconciliation; ensuring the protection of the civilian population, which is unfortunately paying the heaviest price for the recurring armed conflicts; and at the same time assuming the overarching duty to protect the country’s territorial integrity.

“In addressing the worsening political situation and the resurgence of violence that the Central African Republic saw suddenly faced with last year, I spoke out in no uncertain terms on behalf of the States members, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Economic Community of Central African States, to condemn the shift away from peace. In a public statement delivered on 24 December

2020, together with my peers, I firmly urged all stakeholders to prioritize dialogue and avoid any action that could lead to renewed bloodshed in the Central African Republic.

“Moreover, on the eve of the 27 December 2020 dual elections, the tenth extraordinary session of the Conference of ECCAS Heads of State and Government, held in Brazzaville on 26 December 2020, unequivocally condemned the use of violence as a means of resolving conflicts and all attempts to challenge the institutional order in the Central African Republic.

“At the meeting, together with my brother and friend His Excellency President Faustin Archange Touadera, we adopted a series of concrete and urgent measures to resolutely support the Central African Republic on the path leading towards stability and lasting peace.

“Today, in the light of current persistent security challenges, MINUSCA acted on the relevant decision by the Security Council to reinforce the Mission’s troop strength and reiterated the importance of the subregion’s commitment to the political and peace process.

“We believe that we must be more proactive in supporting the Government of the Central African Republic so that it can better shoulder its responsibilities as guarantor of the security and the protection of its people and ensure the nation’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“ECCAS is therefore relying on the wisdom of the Council to adopt measures that take that reality into account so that the defence and security forces can equip themselves with the necessary resources to address the situation on the ground, while strengthening their operational capacities, which are today largely limited by the embargo that President Lourenço and I have regularly referred to.

“In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the firm commitment of the subregion to pursuing the political and peace process in the Central African Republic. ECCAS, which is one of the guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, calls on the international community to support President Faustin Archange Touadera with greater determination in the struggle, particularly with

regard to his commitment to an inclusive republican dialogue, which represents a decisive step towards national reconciliation.”

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): The situation in the Central African Republic surpasses the most pessimistic scenarios that we imagined a few months ago.

I will stress three critical issues — the urgency of the situation, justice and reconciliation.

First, with regard to the urgency of acting to end the violence, the situation in the Central African Republic is abhorrent — extrajudicial executions, gang rapes, torture and the military occupation of schools. The violence is targeting Muslim communities in particular, as illustrated by the assassination of a traditional leader a few days ago. We are not talking about rumours but well-documented facts.

People are kept in fear and living in inhumane conditions. France condemns the violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law committed in the Central African Republic, as well as the law of silence that has been imposed on the victims. The Central African Republic has become one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarian and medical personnel, with more than 220 incidents since the beginning of the year. Almost 600,000 people are at risk of starvation, owing to insecurity and the increasing restrictions on humanitarian access.

Let us be clear. The armed groups of the Central African Republic no longer pose the only threat to the people of the Central African Republic. The reports of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic (S/2021/87) and the Secretary-General (S/2021/571) point to the responsibility of a new mysterious actor that is operating alongside the armed forces of the Central African Republic. Some will try to deny the presence of the Wagner Group, but who are those men involved in the fighting, in what capacity are they present in the Central African Republic and to whom are they accountable for their actions?

It is important that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) provide us as soon as possible with more details about what is really happening on the ground. It is also imperative that the smear campaigns against MINUSCA and other representatives of the international community stop.

Our priority must be to protect civilians. That is the principle underlying the reinforcement of MINUSCA, which was decided by the Council and will begin this summer. France calls on all parties to guarantee safe and unhindered humanitarian access. France condemns the increasing use of explosive devices and calls on the Central African Republic to ratify without delay the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines. France calls on the authorities of the Central African Republic and bilateral forces on the ground to comply fully with their obligations by fully respecting the status of forces agreement.

Finally, it calls on Member States with influence to do everything in their power to achieve de-escalation. France is also concerned about the attack on a Chadian post on the border with the Central African Republic that left several people dead last month. We commend the authorities of the Central African Republic and Chad for their willingness to shed light on that incident.

Given the situation and the risk of destabilization in the region, it is clear that the spread of weapons is part of the problem and that the complete lifting of sanctions cannot be the solution. As we have already stated here in the Council, it is clear that changes in the sanctions regime must be part of an overall strategy that takes into account the progress made on the political front in the Central African Republic, regional efforts and inroads made in achieving arms-control objectives set by the Council.

Our second priority must be justice. Violence must not go unpunished. I welcome President Touadera’s commitment to prosecuting those responsible for the violence and those who issue threats against the United Nations. I also welcome his decision to establish a commission of inquiry into abuses committed in the Central African Republic. France calls for the commission to work closely with the United Nations and the African Union and for its conclusions to be followed by effective prosecutions. The Special Criminal Court will play an important role. It has strong international support, including from France. Some abuses could be prosecuted at the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, reconciliation alone will bring about peace. That was the message conveyed by the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the European Union during their recent visit to Bangui. We noted the efforts of Prime Minister Dondra to meet with the political

opposition as soon as he was appointed. It is an encouraging first step. We hope that it will be followed by the appointment of an inclusive Government and harmonious cooperation with the international partners of the Central African Republic.

I welcome the President of the Republic of Angola to today's meeting and laud his personal commitment. I also laud the participation of representatives of the region. France fully supports regional mediation. The road map drawn up by Angola and Rwanda calls for dialogue with all political groups and for a resumption of the peace process with the armed groups.

Lastly, France encourages the authorities of the Central African Republic to fully commit to this path — the only way to bring reconciliation, peace and stability to the region.

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam): My delegation welcomes the Acting Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and President of the Republic of Angola, His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, to today's meeting.

I thank Special Representative Mankeur Ndiaye; European Union (EU) Managing Director for Africa Rita Laranjinha, as well as African Union (AU) Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye for their informative briefings.

I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Congo.

Allow me to highlight the following points. First, with regard to the political and security situation, Viet Nam is encouraged by the commitment of the authorities of the Central African Republic to reinvigorating the peace process, ensuring socioeconomic development and implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We take this opportunity to reiterate the central role of the Political Agreement — the most feasible way towards stability in the country.

Nevertheless, we would like to express our grave concern about the continued fragility of the security situation, which severely affects civilians. My delegation calls on all parties to exert every effort to settle differences through peaceful means, while taking into account the aspirations for peace and development of the people of the Central African Republic. Trust and confidence need to be rebuilt in order to pave the way

for a broad and inclusive political dialogue. Meanwhile, the equal participation of women and youth in the process is also important.

Secondly, as a result of violence, socioeconomic hardship and the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic is alarming. It is distressing to see the statistics provided in the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/571) — more than half of the population is in need of assistance, one third is displaced, 2.3 million face food insecurity; and more than 630,000 face emergency (phase 4) and so on.

We are also troubled by the continuation of security incidents affecting humanitarian work on the ground. My delegation therefore calls for further assistance for the people of the Central African Republic. We would also like to reiterate that it is an obligation to maintain unimpeded, sustained and secure humanitarian access.

Thirdly, we fully value the role of regional cooperation in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Regional organizations are well positioned to understand the root causes of conflict and can provide great assistance in that regard.

We take note the efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to help settle the insecurity situation in the Central African Republic. We also support the efforts of Chad and the Central African Republic to ensure a peaceful settlement of the border incident, including the agreement to establish an international commission comprising the AU, ECCAS and the United Nations to clarify the incident.

With regard to the question of sanctions, as mentioned today by representatives of the countries of the region, we believe that such measures serve as a temporary tool for promoting conditions conducive to the maintenance of international peace and security. They should be lifted when conditions allow. Regular reviews are needed to ensure their effectiveness and impact on the long-term objectives of peace, stability and development.

Last but not least, the current crisis cannot be overcome without the support of the international community. My delegation fully supports the efforts of the AU, EU other regional and bilateral partners to bring back peace to the Central African Republic. To that end,

we recognize the vital role played by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). At the same time, we are concerned about reports regarding incidents that have affected MINUSCA's operations in recent months, as well as other anti-MINUSCA rhetoric and actions.

The most favourable conditions should be created to assist the Mission in discharging the mandate entrusted to it by the Council. The safety and security of peacekeepers must also be a priority for all concerned. We would like to emphasize the importance of the full implementation of the status-of-forces agreement. It is crucial that all efforts be well coordinated to help promote peace and stability in the country.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Council, namely Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

We welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. João Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and acting Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and we thank him for his engagement and his insightful statement.

We join other delegations in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, for his comprehensive briefing on the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

We also thank the representative of the European Union, Ms. Rita Laranjinha, and the representative of the African Union, Mr. Bankole Adeoye, for their insightful briefings.

We commend the fundamental role played by MINUSCA in assisting the authorities and people of the Central African Republic in their quest to achieve lasting peace and stability.

We thank and commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2021/571).

The A3+1 statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and recent developments in the country and the region.

On the political front, the December 2020 presidential and legislative elections served as a litmus test for both the usefulness of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the progress made in its implementation. Those elections, which were organized with the support of international partners, made it possible to preserve constitutional order and institutional stability despite challenges and threats. The finalization of the electoral process will be completed with the holding of credible and inclusive local elections, which are tentatively planned for the first quarter of 2022.

We value the efforts of MINUSCA and the United Nations country team in providing integrated electoral support for the preparation of those local elections. We also commend the efforts of the Central African authorities and the contribution of all stakeholders to that process and look forward to the holding of the elections in a more peaceful and secure climate.

We further note with satisfaction the recent holding of national consultations as a prelude to what is known as the republican dialogue and the association of partners in that process. We encourage political dialogue, including with political opposition, civil society, women and young people, in order to create better conditions for the democratization and reconciliation of Central African society.

We note that some progress has been made in the implementation of the Political Agreement and we reiterate our conviction that it remains the only valid political framework for peace and stability. While we commend the continued efforts to reinvigorate the Political Agreement despite ongoing armed confrontation with the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), we note with concern that some key provisions of the Political Agreement have not been implemented. The situation is further complicated by the many violations of the Political Agreement by signatory armed groups. We call on all parties to abide by the provisions of the Political Agreement and to work effectively on their full implementation.

We note the joint visit made earlier this month by representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the European Union to Bangui, as well as the meetings they held with all parties to encourage credible and inclusive political dialogue to revitalize the peace process.

We also remain deeply concerned about the continued threats and attacks against the civilian population, humanitarian actors and United Nations peacekeepers, as well as allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law allegedly committed by the parties to the conflict and their allies. We strongly denounce the disinformation campaigns, hate speech and targeted attacks against MINUSCA and its leadership, as well as other international partners of the Central African Republic. In that regard, the A3+1 acknowledges the public statement by President Touadera calling for an end to those acts and the prosecution of the instigators.

The A3+1 regrets the cross-border incident that occurred on 30 May, which generated tensions between the Central African Republic and Chad. We are encouraged by the speedy way in which the two parties moved to address it through dialogue. In that regard, we welcome the joint communiqué by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of both countries as a first encouraging step towards resolving that issue through diplomatic channels.

On the security front, the A3+1 remains deeply concerned by the ongoing destabilizing activities of armed groups, mainly CPC-affiliated groups, which have resulted in further casualties and displacements. We express our concern over the unprecedented reports of violations of the status-of-forces agreement and obstructions targeting MINUSCA. Those acts are hindering MINUSCA's ability to effectively conduct its mandate, in addition to putting its personnel at risk. We welcome President Touadera's commitment to ending those acts and ensuring the prosecution of the perpetrators. We further call on the Central African Republic authorities and their partners to abide by that agreement.

We commend the Central African Republic national authorities on the conduct of a review of the national security-sector reform strategy and look forward to the implementation of the resultant recommendations.

With regard to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, we commend the efforts of the Central African Republic authorities, with the support of MINUSCA, in advancing that important task along with the improvement of the justice and law sector, despite the negative impact of the volatile security situation on its functioning during the electoral phase.

We note the recent assessment report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved so far by the Central African Republic authorities on the key benchmarks related to the arms embargo with the support of MINUSCA and other regional and international partners. While we commend the efforts of the Central African Republic authorities and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic aiming at further advancing the full implementation of those benchmarks, the A3+1 considers that the full and effective implementation of those benchmarks will pave the way for the lifting of the arms embargo. We recall, in that respect, resolution 2566 (2021), in which the Council reiterated its readiness to review the measures of the arms embargo on the Government of the Central African Republic through, *inter alia*, the suspension or progressive lifting of those measures in the light of the progress achieved on those key benchmarks.

We call on the national authorities to strengthen their efforts in the fight against impunity, including through the Special Criminal Court, as well as the operationalization of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation.

The already volatile security situation has further exacerbated the dramatic humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic. Population displacement, surging food prices, the socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus disease and the declining agricultural production caused by floods are but a few of the alarming aspects of the dire humanitarian situation. United Nations data indicates that more than half of the population — 2.8 million people — need humanitarian assistance and protection, with 1.9 million in dire need, whereas half the country's children are out of school.

In that regard, we call on the Central African Republic authorities and all armed actors in the country to ensure unhindered humanitarian access. We appeal to international and regional donors and partners to further provide financial support for the country's humanitarian response plan.

We join the Secretary-General in expressing deep concern about the significant increase in human rights violations and abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence, targeted abuse, the stigmatization of ethnic and religious minorities, and the use of excessive use of force by all perpetrators, be it armed groups, the national defence and security forces, or bilaterally

deployed or other security personnel. We encourage the Central African Republic authorities to ensure the implementation of international humanitarian and human rights law and that all violators are held accountable.

We reiterate our deep concern about the illicit trafficking, trade, exploitation and smuggling of natural resources, and illegal taxation, which continue to fund and supply armed groups, further threatening peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

While reaffirming our continued solidarity with and full support for the people of the Central African Republic in their legitimate efforts to achieve stability and development, we reiterate our strong belief that achieving those objectives will be possible only by relaunching the peace process. There is no alternative.

In conclusion, the A3+1 commends the efforts deployed by the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, in their capacity as guarantors of the peace agreement, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners in their quest for peace in the Central African Republic. We reiterate our full support to the commendable efforts of MINUSCA in that regard. We encourage them to enhance their good offices to contain tensions and encourage all stakeholders to engage in dialogue as the only way to bring security and stability to the Central African Republic and the entire region.

In that respect, we are looking forward to the outcome of the field mission to be conducted by the African Union Peace and Security Council to Bangui by the end of this month.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank all our briefers, whose reports today, I think, have painted a clear image of the current challenges in the Central African Republic. I also want to thank, on behalf of my delegation, President Lourenço for being at this meeting today and sharing his views and updates on the situation. And I thank especially Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for the important contributions that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is making every day to save lives.

I want to begin by expressing the deep appreciation of the United States to all the troop- and police-contributing countries and civilian staff,

whose presence on the ground in the Central African Republic is so, so critical. The United States condemns all attacks against peacekeepers in the strongest terms, and we again stress that those attacks may constitute war crimes under international law.

As we have heard today, there are a growing number of reports of human rights violations and abuses, especially those appearing to target members of the Muslim community. The United States is deeply concerned by those reports. We are troubled as well by continued reports of the commission by the armed forces of the Central African Republic and Russian instructors of violations of international humanitarian law and the United Nations arms embargo.

In his report (S/2021/571), the Secretary-General notes a 28 per cent increase in incidents of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law over the past four months. Furthermore, the Secretary-General's report marked an alarmingly sharp increase in abuses committed by national and bilateral personnel. I think we need to be clear about these bilateral personnel. The individuals committing what many are now referring to as atrocities are not independent actors. They are operating as a direct extension of Russia's Ministry of Defence.

We remain deeply disturbed that a member of the Security Council has failed to take action to prevent its mercenaries from impeding MINUSCA's freedom of movement on a daily basis. We condemn — as other speakers have — the appalling incident in which those bilateral Russian actors threatened the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and a United Nations delegation that was on a humanitarian mission to Bang on 28 May. Such life-threatening actions interfere with MINUSCA's ability to conduct its daily operations. They endanger peacekeepers and civilians and they prevent humanitarian actors from delivering assistance. Those types of abuses undermine stability and security in the Central African Republic, and they threaten to derail the fragile peace that Central Africans have been working to realize since 2013.

We call on all Member States to support MINUSCA and the peacekeepers whom we have sent into harm's way. The United States reminds the Government of the Central African Republic that it is responsible for the safety and security of United Nations personnel serving in the Central African Republic and for upholding the status-of-forces agreement (SOFA). We call on the

Government of the Central African Republic to ensure that all security actors operating on its territory respect the SOFA and the authority of the mission.

We reiterate the need for all security actors in the country to respect human rights and comply with international humanitarian law. It is critical that everyone focus on credible security sector reform, fully coordinated with MINUSCA and other security partners, rather than undermining those reform efforts and fuelling the conflict in the Central African Republic.

The Council must speak with one voice against abuses and actions that destabilize the Central African Republic and risk the lives of civilians. MINUSCA has made tangible gains in supporting the Central African Republic on its path to peace and stability. We cannot let the irresponsible and unrestrained actions of mercenaries imperil that progress. The United States will continue to support accountability for those who commit human rights abuses and violations. The people of the Central African Republic deserve justice.

Let me conclude by saying that we congratulate the newly appointed Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, Mr. Henri-Marie Dondra. The United States looks forward to further strengthening its bilateral partnership with the Central African Republic, and we hope that the new Government will bring renewed energy to fully implementing the 2019 peace agreement.

It is essential that the ongoing violence in the Central African Republic be brought to an end in a peaceful manner, with the full implementation of the peace agreement and inclusive political dialogue. In that regard, let me emphasize that it is crucial to take the needs of women and girls into account. Ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all spheres at all levels of the political leadership throughout the peace process can yield substantial benefits for long-term peace and stability in Central African Republic.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): Let me begin by warmly welcoming the President of Angola, His Excellency Mr. Lourenço, to today's meeting. We greatly value the thoughts and insights that he shared with us. We appreciate the role of Angola in this particular matter. We would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye, European Union European External Action Service Managing Director for Africa Rita Laranjinha and African Union (AU) Commissioner Bankole Adeoye for their respective

briefings. I also welcome the representatives of the Congo, Chad and the Central African Republic.

The developments following the presidential elections held in December 2020 have provided hope for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The legislative elections took place in line with the constitutional timelines despite the precarious security situation and boycott by the opposition Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC). We commend the role played by the National Electoral Authority, in collaboration with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations country team, in holding those elections. We hope that the authorities will hold the local elections as scheduled in 2022. We also take note of the convening of the new Parliament and the appointment of the new Prime Minister. We wish the Prime Minister well in forming an inclusive Government and focusing on advancing institutional reforms.

The holding of national consultations and the announcement of a republican dialogue are positive developments, even though the CPC has refused to join. It is important that the authorities reach out to the elected opposition members and parties, putting aside their political considerations in the interest of peace. The stakeholders, particularly the CPC, must heed that call and participate in the dialogue. The full implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the only way forward to achieve national reconciliation, end political tensions and bring stability to the country. In his inaugural address, President Touadera emphasized the implementation of the Political Agreement, good governance and reconciliation. We look forward to follow-up actions on the ground.

The continuing violence in the Central African Republic remains a cause for concern. Armed groups continue to challenge the authority of the Government and pay no heed to the peace agreement that they signed. We condemn the violence and attacks perpetrated by the armed groups, especially those against innocent civilians, including women and children. It is regrettable that we are witnessing an increase in serious human rights abuses, including sexual violence, in areas dominated by the rebels. That constant state of unrest is a major cause of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The increasing population displacement, food scarcity and malnutrition, compounded by the effects of the

coronavirus disease pandemic, need urgent attention. The international community should extend all possible assistance to address the humanitarian situation.

The deployment of local authorities in the prefectures of the Central African Republic is a right step in implementing the peace agreement. We also welcome the improvement in the deployment of judicial personnel, the holding of disciplinary hearings and the opening of investigations, including into the attacks against MINUSCA peacekeepers. MINUSCA should extend assistance to the Central African Republic, in line with its mandate, towards the extension of State authority across the country. We also call on all partners, including countries assisting the Central African Republic on a bilateral basis, to continue to coordinate closely with MINUSCA on the reform of the justice and security sectors. We must consolidate the early gains and ensure that the requisite systems are put in place.

There has been a considerable increase in violations of the status-of-forces agreement during the reporting period, which has put the safety and security of peacekeepers in jeopardy. That is a cause of very serious concern. We need to protect those who are protecting us. We take note of President Touadera's personal assurances to the joint United Nations-AU mission earlier this month and hope that there will be no impediments to MINUSCA's operations. The authorities of the Central African Republic, MINUSCA and other troops on bilateral arrangements must work in a coordinated manner. We also welcome the establishment of an independent international commission by the Central African Republic and Chad to examine the 30 May border-post incident. It is important that terrorists and terrorist groups not take advantage of violence and instability and spread their tentacles further in the region.

India has been assisting the Central African Republic through its development partnership, including lines of credit for several projects, as well as through capacity-building programmes. India has also supported MINUSCA by contributing more than \$1.5 million over the past year.

In conclusion, let me say that the Central African Republic has a historic opportunity to move forward towards sustainable peace. All stakeholders must bury their political differences and work together to ensure that. The international community, including the United

Nations, the AU, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region can play a positive role. The onus is clearly on the political stakeholders in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): May I, too, begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ndiaye for his leadership in these challenging times and, through him, the military, peace and other personnel under his leadership for their service. I also thank President Lourenço for his contribution to our discussions this morning and for the perspective that he brings from the region through his delegation. We are also grateful to the other briefers.

It is clear from the briefings we heard this morning and from the reporting that the Central African Republic today faces a series of complex challenges — a fragile security and political environment; armed groups fomenting instability in order to line their pockets; enormous unmet humanitarian needs; and now a new factor of instability: Russian private military companies acting in concert with the national armed forces to obstruct the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and violate the rights of the civilians and citizens of the Central African Republic.

In the face of all of that, the United Kingdom commends the continued resilience and courage of the people of the Central African Republic and of the women and men of MINUSCA, who continue to put their own lives at risk to protect civilians. I want to underline, as others have this morning, our utmost concern at the significant increase in status of forces agreement violations against MINUSCA. They are unacceptable and they must stop immediately.

The United Kingdom is also deeply troubled to hear further reports of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses, including acts of sexual violence. We know those are being committed not only by armed groups — something that we have sadly come to expect — but also by members of the national armed forces and the Russian private military personnel accompanying them.

Now I know my Russian colleague will deny this in her statement. But the evidence is increasing and overwhelming and I hope they will reflect on the role they want to play in the Central African Republic

and their responsibilities as a permanent member of this Council. I join France and others in calling on MINUSCA for clarity on the status of Russian private military personnel and more detailed reporting on questions of violations and who is committing them.

We are encouraged by President Touadera's commitment to addressing impunity. But we now urge the Government to take concrete steps to investigate all allegations and take preventative action. Justice and accountability are fundamental building blocks of any viable path towards stability and development.

At the same time, we express our concern at the further allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by some MINUSCA personnel and urge all contributing countries to swiftly address such allegations, in line with the United Nations zero-tolerance policy.

We are extremely worried by the further deterioration in the humanitarian situation over the course of the past six months. As we have heard, an estimated 2.8 million people are now in need of protection and assistance. We urgently call on all actors to respect the principles of humanitarian access, including the protection of humanitarian workers, in line with resolution 2417 (2018). As Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Brown is here, I want to thank her directly for her own personal efforts and the risks she is taking in that regard.

It is now imperative that all political actors, including the Government, armed groups and the opposition, move ahead with a constructive and inclusive national dialogue. That is essential to deliver stability and development for the people of the Central African Republic.

We have heard today from the briefers and others what needs to be done to make progress. We therefore continue to support the engagement of the peace agreement guarantors and other regional actors in bolstering those efforts and we welcome the joint visit of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the European Union and the United Nations. Above all, however, we look to the Central African authorities to live up to their responsibilities to find a sustainable exit from the current crisis and advance an inclusive settlement. That is the only route to a lasting peace.

Finally, as others including President Lourenço have raised the issue of the arms embargo, let me

briefly set out our view, which chimes with that of others. In the light of the volatile situation, we believe it is important to maintain the arms embargo as it stands, pending further progress on the key benchmarks set out by the Security Council in April 2019, in particular regarding weapons management. We agree the time may come to ensure the Central African Republic's defensive capabilities, but that time is not now.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to welcome His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, and the representative of the Central African Republic, the representative of the Republic of the Congo and the representative of Chad to the meeting today. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mr. Bankole Adeoye, and European Union Managing Director for Africa, Ms. Rita Laranjinha, for their briefings.

Since the end of last year, the Government and people of the Central African Republic have overcome difficulties, completed electoral processes and formed robust new institutions. The Government has resumed the exercise of State authority over larger areas of its territory. Those developments deserve to be fully recognized. Realizing lasting peace and development is the aspiration of the people of the Central African Republic and the common expectation of regional States and the international community.

China commends the Government of the Central African Republic for its active political consultations, looks forward to the success of the republican dialogue and encourages parties to continue to implement the Peace Agreement and resolve their differences through dialogue. The international community, based on respect for the leadership of the Central African Republic Government, should provide specific and constructive assistance.

Regional organizations, such as the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union, have paid close attention to issues in the Central African Republic and actively advanced the political process. Presidents Lourenço and Sassou Nguesso have convened multiple regional meetings and created a working group on this matter and have vigorously conducted mediations and good offices. The presence

of President Lourenço in New York for today's meeting has once again demonstrated the strong determination of concerned States to push for a settlement to this issue.

China supports finding African solutions to African problems and supports subregional organization's efforts in the light of the realities and actual needs of the Central African Republic to push for political settlements to its issues and to realize peace, stability and regional prosperity and development.

China will continue to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MINUSCA. China maintains that the status of forces agreement must be upheld to improve peacekeepers' safety. China supports MINUSCA and the Government of the Central African Republic in strengthening communication and coordination in order to increase mutual trust and understanding and jointly maintain peace and stability in the Central African Republic. In the light of recent developments in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA should rationalize its resources and forces. Eventually, the Central African Republic should rely on itself to establish a lasting peace and stability.

China hopes that the relevant parties can address the border conflicts. The international community should support the Government of the Central African Republic in strengthening its security forces' development and management and help it to upgrade its own capability to maintain stability. The Government of the Central African Republic has made great efforts to meet the benchmarks for the lifting of arms embargo and has made progress. The Security Council should heed the calls of the Government of the Central African Republic and regional States and lift the arms embargo against the Central African Republic as soon as possible.

The Central African Republic's peace and development requires international help and support. The Central African Republic faces many challenges in maintaining stability, fighting the pandemic and ensuring people's livelihoods. The Government is in financial difficulty and 2.8 million people need humanitarian assistance. Countries, in particular the major Powers, should utilize their advantages, step up assistance and cooperation and help the Central African Republic translate its energy resource potential into development advantages, eradicate poverty and eliminate the root causes of conflict.

Parties should fully respect the Central African Republic's sovereignty, respect its input and strengthen communication and coordination in order to build positive momentum and more effectively advance the well-being of its people. Along with the international community, China stands ready to continue our contribution to further peace and development in the Central African Republic.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have taken note of the statements of the speakers at today's meeting.

We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of Angola, Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, as well as the representative of the Republic of the Congo, who read out a statement by the President of the Economic Community of Central African States, the President of the Republic of the Congo, Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso.

We are carefully following the developments in the Central African Republic. The Government forces were able to repel insurgent forces while limiting their ability to mount military offensives. The situation overall has been stabilized. At the same time, an alliance of illegal armed groups — the so-called Coalition of Patriots for Change — has not given up its plans to take power by force. In these circumstances, we believe that it is important to contribute in every way possible to bolstering the legitimately elected authorities of the Central African Republic.

We are convinced that the 6 February 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic remains the only possible basis for achieving lasting peace and security in the country. Accordingly, we welcome the initiative of President Touadera to launch a Republican Dialogue. The refusal of the political opponents of the Central African leadership to take part in the preliminary consultations is not constructive, as they are missing a unique opportunity to articulate their demands and achieve satisfaction of, if not all of their demands, then of at least part of them.

We welcome the contribution of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Economic Community of Central African States in contributing to the settlement of the conflict in the Central African Republic. We also welcome the outcome of the second mini-summit of the States members of the ICGLR, which took place in Luanda

on 20 April, which discussed the relaunching of the Khartoum agreements. At the same time, we believe that any mediation initiatives sponsored by subregional organizations should be conducted only with the consent and participation of the Government of the Central African Republic.

We believe that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should be an important element in ensuring security in the country, taking into account such functions entrusted to peacekeepers as combating illegal armed groups, protecting the civilian population, including internally displaced persons, and contributing to security sector reform. It is also our firm belief that, in selecting additional contingents to serve in MINUSCA, the United Nations Secretariat must closely coordinate with Bangui and heed the views of the Central Africans themselves, including with respect to the national make-up of the police and military contingents deployed. This is the only way to enhance the Mission's performance and improve the quality of cooperation between the United Nations and the Central African authorities.

At the same time, it is important to realize that MINUSCA cannot and should not be a substitute for the efforts of the national authorities, who bear the main responsibility for the fate of their country and for protecting their population. In this regard, it is important to continue building the capacity of the Central Africans forces. However, the arms embargo hinders this task. We once again draw the attention of our colleagues in the Security Council to the need to listen to the appeals of the Central African Republic itself and partners in the region to lift the restrictions against Bangui.

On the whole, we are in favour of closer coordination between MINUSCA with Bangui and bilateral partners on the ground. We are convinced that fully fledged implementation of the mandate of the peacekeeping mission can be achieved only by maintaining mutual trust and confidence with the authorities of the host country.

At the request of the authorities of the Central African Republic and with the knowledge of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic — the specialized sanctions committee — Russian instructors are present and

working in the country. They are successfully enhancing the professional expertise of the Central African security forces without taking part in combat operations against the illegal armed groups. However, in recent days, we have witnessed constant attempts to discredit our instructors on the basis of highly dubious reports, which looks like an anti-Russian political hit job. If one undertakes a Google search on the Central African Republic on the Internet, hundreds of references to American and French media reports about so-called Russian mercenaries come up. At the same time, there is no evidence provided for these allegations. The sources are anonymous, supposedly to guarantee the safety and security of these witnesses. Further, the pictures that are shown do not correspond at all to the text of the articles. Can this not be considered an information campaign? I would like to ask the Ambassador of France this question: was France not the target of a similar information campaign in 2014 and 2015?

Once again, let me repeat: any possible cases of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights must be investigated by the national authorities. For example, just a few days ago, the Government of the Central African Republic confirmed the outcome of an investigation of the recent murder of the mayor and sultan of the city of Kouï, and a number of Western colleagues and media accused the Russian instructors of his death. The involvement of Russian instructors in the victim's death has not been proven, whereas the investigation confirmed that the main culprits were fighters from the Return, Reclamation, and Rehabilitation movement.

As far as the unfounded allegations coming from the United States are concerned, they are not made by chance. Our colleagues seem to see Russian instructors — or, rather, so-called Russian mercenaries — everywhere. The impression this gives is that people in Washington are living in a virtual reality. Everything that the United States does is good, whereas everything that everyone else does, especially Russia, is evil.

At the same time, the opinions of the African States whose issues come before us are of no interest to anyone at all. In the course of every one of our statements in the Council, whether it is on Iraq or on Afghanistan, we consistently draw attention to two instances of violations of humanitarian law or of human rights committed by the United States, namely, detainees in Guantánamo and inhumane interrogation, both of which

are well documented. Yet the United States, which has accusations for us at every turn, seems always to be trying to shift the attention of the international community from focusing on the destructive activities of the illegal armed groups in the Central African Republic, which are precisely the activities that are at the heart of the new cycle of escalation of violence in the country.

We have often said that, in the Central African Republic as well as in the African continent as a whole, there is enough room to welcome mutually reinforcing efforts by all countries that are ready to help Africans return to the path of peace and resolve some of their chronic problems. Many of those chronic problems are the result of the colonialist and neo-colonialist policies of our Western colleagues.

The situation in the Central African Republic has been growing worse for many years. Various international actors have been trying to help. What has been done to stabilize the situation? What were the successful results? For those who have a short memory, in December 2020, a military coup was planned and declared in the Central African Republic. It was derailed largely thanks to the fact that a number of bilateral partners, including Russia, came to the assistance of the legitimately elected authorities of the country. Russia will remain open to working together with all constructively motivated actors.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the briefings by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mankeur Ndiaye, Commissioner Adeoye and Director Laranjinha. I especially welcome the President of Angola, Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, and thank him for sharing his perspective with us earlier. I also thank the representatives of the Congo, Chad and the Central African Republic.

Mexico welcomes the mediation efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, chaired by Angola, to foster peace efforts in the Central African Republic. Undoubtedly, the coordinated support of regional organizations can decisively drive the political process and mitigate the impact on neighbouring countries. The unfortunate incident on the border with Chad at the end of May, in which six soldiers were killed, showed us the security risks that the situation in the Central African Republic poses to the region.

We welcome President Touadera's proposal to hold a republican dialogue. We are convinced that the formation of a new Government under way represents an opportunity to open spaces for various political actors, including women, at all levels of responsibility and revitalize the reform agenda, in line with the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We believe that the political instability affecting the country demands an inclusive dialogue that addresses the legitimate grievances of marginalized communities and lays the groundwork for true reconciliation.

Mexico supports the work carried out by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and especially recognizes its efforts to protect the civilian population. The success of the implementation of its complex mandate depends on effective cooperation with the authorities of the Central African Republic. We therefore note with concern that the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/571) reveals a significant increase in attacks against the Mission, including violations of the status-of-forces agreement by national security forces.

We also condemn the targeted attacks against the Muslim population. Those acts are a setback on the path towards reconciliation and create new grievances that complicate the prospects for achieving sustainable peace. Mexico urges the authorities of the Central African Republic to take the necessary steps to mitigate tensions among the communities and deliver justice to the victims.

On the road to reconciliation, accountability for the crimes committed during the conflict in the Central African Republic is crucial to achieving peace. In that regard, the operationalization of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation must begin as soon as possible. Accordingly, we call for the allocation of the needed resources to that end.

My country welcomes the establishment of a special commission of inquiry to investigate allegations of serious crimes and violations of human rights allegedly committed by the national armed forces and bilaterally deployed and other security personnel. We hope that that body will begin to operate as soon as possible and contribute to improving public confidence in State institutions, which is crucial to ending the current cycle of violence.

Unfortunately, the violence continues to aggravate the humanitarian situation by increasing the number of internally displaced persons and refugees from the Central African Republic. With regard to such vulnerability, my country, Mexico, condemns in the strongest terms the forced recruitment of children, as well as the increase in sexual violence against women and girls, by armed rebel groups, State security forces and forces deployed under bilateral agreements. Mexico urges parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In conclusion, we believe that it is particularly important to give momentum to a renewed regional strategy to implement the Nairobi Protocol and the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly. Legislation on conventional arms and the establishment of the National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons are key to combating their proliferation in the Central African Republic and throughout the region. Support for the national authorities in their implementation is urgently needed. The widespread availability of weapons will only increase the deadly nature of the conflict and pose a constant threat to any prospect of peace.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Let me thank today's briefers for their valuable insights. Let me also thank Secretary-General Guterres for his latest report on the Central African Republic (S/2021/571). I also welcome the presence of the President of Angola and the representatives of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Chad.

Recent news from the Central African Republic, including the latest report of the Secretary-General, is very sobering. Norway is deeply concerned about the increase in protection concerns and the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country. More than half of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. One third remains displaced. Half of the country's children are out of school, and food insecurity has reached alarming levels, with the risk of even worsening next year.

Crucially, much of the humanitarian crisis is man-made. Therefore, we see three important elements that must change to ease the suffering of the people:

First, the violence against civilians must stop. Human rights violations and abuses, including conflict-

related sexual violence, must stop. Violations of international humanitarian law must stop. Violations and abuse of children's rights, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, must stop. And the targeted abuse and stigmatization of ethnic and religious minorities must stop. Let me be clear. This is a message to all parties to the conflict. Armed groups should lay down their arms and commit to the process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation. But the national defence forces and their foreign instructors also bear a heavy responsibility.

The Secretary-General is clear in his latest report, which states that,

"Investigations by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) revealed that most civilian deaths resulted from indiscriminate, disproportionate and excessive use of force by national defence forces and bilaterally deployed and other security personnel." (S/2021/571, para. 66)

That is unacceptable. The national army and those who have been invited to support it should protect the people — not kill, rape and loot.

Secondly, the recent sharp increase in the number and gravity of status-of-forces agreement violations by national security forces, as well as by their Russian instructors, is inadmissible. MINUSCA is an instrument of the Council. It must be allowed to do its work and fully and independently implement its mandate. MINUSCA's access should be unrestricted for the Mission to truly protect civilians, as it is mandated to do.

We urge all those with influence over the actors on the ground to help end the targeting of MINUSCA and ensure the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers. Recent signals by the authorities of the Central African Republic are positive, but we need to see an actual change in the field. Norway also strongly condemns the targeting of humanitarian workers and infrastructure. We call on all actors to ensure unhindered humanitarian access.

Thirdly, an inclusive political dialogue must be resumed. We need a reinvigorated peace agreement. We applaud the announcement by President Touadera of the imminent launch of a "republican dialogue".

We encourage him to make that dialogue genuinely inclusive, addressing all legitimate grievances.

We congratulate Prime Minister Dondra on his recent appointment and look forward to the formation of a new, inclusive Government. We call on the new Prime Minister to ensure the full, equal and meaningful political participation of women. That could be a unique opportunity to put the political process back on track. We recommend in particular making use of the excellent African Union (AU) resources, such as FemWise-Africa, to that end.

Norway commends actors in the region for their engagement. We applaud the intensified involvement of the AU, the United Nations, the European Union and the Economic Community of Central African States. We appreciate the leadership of the President of Angola and urge the Government of the Central African Republic to honour commitments on dialogue and inclusion made during the second mini-summit held in Luanda in April. We encourage the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to continue working closely with the international community in those important mediation efforts.

Let me conclude by expressing Norway's deep appreciation for MINUSCA's work, in very challenging circumstances. We are pleased to see that the reinforcement of the Mission is gearing up, following the decision of the Council to increase troop ceilings. Norway has also decided to second civilian staff to MINUSCA. Special Representative Ndiaye and his team have our full support and confidence.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank the briefers for their very clear and relevant briefings today. I would like to acknowledge, in particular, the presence of His Excellency President Lourenço. The work of the Central African and Great Lakes region has been and will remain crucial for the Central African Republic. I also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Congo, Chad and the Central African Republic.

I would like to sincerely thank Mankeur Ndiaye and the entire team of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for the continued implementation of their mandate, despite the considerable challenges they face.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains extremely worrisome. The 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic set the stage for a peaceful solution for the political parties in the country. It must be implemented with urgency and determination. Preparations for a "republican dialogue" offer a unique opportunity for the authorities to undertake a truly inclusive process. It must include all stakeholders, including women, young people and opposition parties.

The holding of presidential elections, as well as the first round of the legislative elections, before the constitutional deadline, was a success and demonstrated the determination of the citizens of the Central African Republic. The small number of women elected to office is disappointing. We encourage the authorities to ensure that women are meaningfully represented in the Council of Ministers. Local elections provide another opportunity to encourage and facilitate the participation of women as voters, candidates and elected officials. Every effort must be made to protect those who exercise their right to vote.

(*spoke in English*)

We appreciate the continued engagement of neighbouring States and regional organizations to promote peace and dialogue. That commitment is evidenced by the presence today of the representatives of Angola and the Republic of the Congo. It is vital that those regional efforts continue and that the Council work to support them. We call on the authorities of the Central African Republic to engage constructively in those efforts.

We welcome the recent joint African Union-European Union-United Nations-Economic Community of Central African States visit to the Central African Republic, along with the assurances provided during that visit. Commitments made by the authorities, including President Touadera, must now be followed by concrete action.

We are gravely concerned about continuing serious status-of-forces agreement violations, which endanger United Nations personnel and place the protection of civilians in jeopardy. Ireland calls on the Government and all parties on the ground to facilitate unhindered access for all United Nations operations. That is essential to MINUSCA's ability to fulfil its mandate. Attacks against MINUSCA, including those perpetrated

in the media or online, are simply unacceptable and must end immediately.

Violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law are widespread and escalating in the Central African Republic. Allegations of violations and abuses perpetrated by national and bilaterally deployed and other security personnel are of particular concern. MINUSCA documented a staggering 278 per cent increase in such incidents.

We urge the Government of the Central African Republic to systematically investigate all allegations of human rights and international humanitarian law violations and to prosecute the perpetrators of all such violations. Those investigations must be independent, impartial and conducted in line with international standards. We welcome progress made towards the full operationalization of the Special Criminal Court and hope that it will help to contribute to the fight against impunity in the Central African Republic.

Conflict-related sexual violence, which is already at unacceptable levels, is increasing significantly in the Central African Republic. As they committed to in the 2019 Central African Republic-United Nations joint communiqué, the authorities have a responsibility to protect victims and survivors and ensure the provision of holistic and survivor-centred support services, including psychosocial, sexual and reproductive health services. Impunity must not be tolerated and perpetrators, regardless of nationality or affiliation, must be brought to justice.

We also condemn the continued attacks against humanitarian workers in the strongest possible terms. With the humanitarian situation now at its worst level in five years, the deliberate targeting of those working to bring assistance to people in need is totally unacceptable. It is absolutely vital that unhindered humanitarian access be ensured by the Government and all armed actors operating in the country. A total of 2.3 million people are now food insecure in the Central African Republic. There is no doubt that conflict and insecurity have played a key role in exacerbating those needs.

(spoke in French)

In conclusion, it is clear that the Central African Republic finds itself yet again at a critical juncture in its history. Finding the right path to meet the needs of all Central Africans requires the strong and continuous

commitment of the national authorities, the countries of the region and, of course, the Security Council. Only by working together can we ensure that the hard-won gains achieved since 2013 are not lost.

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

I thank Special Representative Ndiaye for briefing us today on developments in the Central African Republic and on the difficulties and dangers facing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). I would also like to thank Mr. Adeoye, President Lourenço and Ms. Laranjinha for sharing their observations with us after their visit to the Central African Republic.

There are two distressing developments that I would like to highlight today.

First, Estonia strongly condemns the significant increase in human rights violations and abuses and the excessive use of force committed by all perpetrators, including armed groups and national defence and security forces and their Russian partners. Reports of the exploitation of ethnic and religious tensions and the execution of innocent civilians are horrifying. While armed groups continue to be responsible for the majority of such incidents, the number of documented human rights abuses by the Central African Armed Forces and their partners has almost tripled. The reported indiscriminate and excessive use of force, including summary executions, conflict-related sexual violence and looting, severely undermines attempts at establishing national cohesion and reconciliation. Unfortunately, such behaviour has already spilled across borders and led to clashes with and casualties among the Chadian forces.

Secondly, the hostile threats and incidents by the national security forces and their partners targeting MINUSCA and United Nations staff are utterly unacceptable. Such actions violate Security Council resolutions and the commitments made as part of the Status of Forces Agreement. They unnecessarily hinder MINUSCA from protecting civilians and obstruct humanitarian aid at a time when food security for the people of Central African Republic is the worst it has ever been. They also endanger the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers and staff. Such hostile actions must stop immediately, and accountability for those violations must be established. With a greater

variety of security actors active on the ground, it is particularly important to ensure the coordination of activities in order to avoid unwanted and completely avoidable clashes in the field.

The two foregoing developments pose great challenges to the new Government of the Central African Republic, undermining its authority and prospects for peace in the country. Estonia joins the call for the rapid revitalization of the process for reconciliation and political dialogue and supports the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in those processes.

I wish to conclude by commending the efforts of the guarantors and facilitators of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the active support of regional initiatives aimed at achieving peace in Central Africa.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Kpatamango (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Republic of Estonia on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of June, and I wish to thank you in particular, Sir, for convening today's session dedicated to my country, the Central African Republic. Allow me also to appreciate the exceptional participation in this meeting of His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and current Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic and its Head of State, and on behalf of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all those who are gathered in this Chamber today for the kind attention they have given to my country, despite their many other commitments and busy schedules.

Today's meeting, on the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), contained in document S/2021/571 and published on 16 June, gives me, on behalf of my country, the opportunity to share with the Council the political and

security situation the Central African Republic in the light of recent events. It also provides an opportunity to clarify certain points in the report — as well as others that are the subject of much speculation — something that tends to tarnish the efforts made by the Central African authorities, the Central African population and all international and bilateral partners working alongside the Central African Republic to establish lasting peace and security.

On the political front, after the failure of the attempt to destabilize the country by the rebel forces of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), it is imperative to highlight that the past four months have seen the consolidation of institutional stability and, consequently, the preservation of the constitutional order. That is due in part to the inauguration of the President of the Republic on 30 March for a second term of office, as well as the inauguration of the seventh legislature, the six remaining seats of which are to be filled in the upcoming elections scheduled for 25 July.

Respect for constitutional order, which has been demanded and advocated by the entire international community and supported by the Central African subregion, has required considerable efforts aimed at preserving the democratic gains made and avoiding falling back into the vicious circle of crises that has always condemned the Central African Republic to precariousness and violence.

In accordance with his commitment to constitutional stability and a policy of dialogue, the President of the Central African Republic reaffirmed, in his inaugural speech, the priorities of his second term of office. Those priorities are fully aligned with the issues and challenges that the Central African Republic is facing, namely, good governance, human rights, development and prosperity, ensuring greater social cohesion and a better life for Central Africans and not forgetting security for the country, its population and its territory through the continued implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, which was achieved with the participation and contribution of all.

To that end, President Touadera has initiated a Republican Dialogue in order to once again reaffirm his desire to involve all Central Africans in the country's reconstruction. Such a dialogue will give the Central African Republic and all components of the nation the opportunity to turn the page on so many years of barbarity, violence and human rights and territorial

integrity violations. It is not another dialogue based on the notion of inclusiveness, often confused with the concept of integration, which seeks for each individual to integrate into an existing space, instead of allowing the space to be extended or enlarged in order to guarantee a place for each individual.

This Republican Dialogue is in essence inclusive, as it aims to rally Central Africans around the concept of the Republic and its values — unity, dignity and work — and engage them in a discussion on the common national interest. To do that, the first stage, which was initiated and led directly by the President of the Republic, made it possible to hold consultations with the country's national stakeholders — political parties, civil society, religious associations and so forth — and national institutions. The consultations were conducted mostly through direct exchanges, as well as through the submission of written suggestions and proposals, such as the contribution made by the opposition parties that formed the Coalition de l'opposition démocratique 2020. At the conclusion of the first stage, the President of the Republic presented his conclusions from the consultations in an address to the Central African people on 6 June and launched the second stage, which is the preparation and organization of the Republican Dialogue.

The Dialogue will be conducted in a transparent manner with the participation of all, in accordance with the guiding principles set out in the road map for the Republican Dialogue, which was presented to the country's stakeholders and all the technical and financial partners working alongside the Central African Republic, namely, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, which is our peace plan, the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, which is our development and post-conflict recovery plan, and the conclusions of the 2015 Bangui Forum, which is our reconciliation plan. Accordingly, the achievements and progress of our collective work will be strengthened and consolidated.

I can assure you, Mr. President, that the people of the Central African Republic, having learned from a violent past, want to turn the page and begin a new chapter that looks towards a better future. The Central African people want to go beyond a purely political dialogue, which in their experience amounts to discussions about political posts and indulges a political immaturity that leads to too many dialogues and political forums.

Would Council members disagree if I said that any society that embraces unethical, selfish and reckless behaviour is doomed to failure and decline? To promote national stability, as specified in paragraph 5 of the report, we must be innovative and not simply repeat yesterday's solutions, which have not produced the desired results. We need to be credible and constructive and work towards a dialogue based in substance, not form. Aware that our choices determine our future, we must make the right choices today, consistent with the values we defend, in order to have a positive impact on the future or to correct or improve upon our mistakes.

On the security front, I would first like to recall that the common goal remains the return of lasting peace and stability. Institutional stability has cost us dearly — with the blood of civilians, of valiant soldiers of the armed forces and security forces of the Central African Republic, of peacekeepers from the United Nations and from bilateral forces, and with violations of human rights. We must not turn away from that objective so as not to risk creating a haven for the enemies of peace. We must remain firm in our ideals, which are also at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations. Indeed, in 2012, following the invasion of the Central African Republic by the Séléka Coalition, and in 2013, following the counter-attack by the anti-balaka faction — which led to the erroneous belief that this major crisis was religious in nature — my country naturally turned to the international community, through the French Republic, its historical partner, to request and obtain an intervention by United Nations forces in order to protect civilians and avoid a massacre that was nothing other than an expression of the will to commit genocide against Central Africans, be they Muslim, Christian or animist.

Throughout the various crises experienced by the Central African Republic, our approach has been the same: to request that the international community, the subregion and our traditional partners provide consistent support commensurate with the challenge. That was seen in the recent security situation, which was rightly foreseen by the Central African authorities, who called for extending MINUSCA's mandate to secure the upcoming elections. The difficulties on the ground resulting from the cruelty and barbaric atrocities of the CPC rebels have forced the Central African authorities to meet their responsibilities and ensure the defence and protection of their people and territory. That is what led to the launch of bilateral

agreements that would strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Mission.

In the period from December 2020 to today, the most recent elections were held without bloodshed and territories have been liberated, which has brought joy to people who had been deprived of their land, property and freedom of movement for too long. We must remember that we prevented a human disaster from being perpetrated in the Central African Republic. And by simply acting in legitimate self-defence, we prevented terrorism and terrorists from setting up a system whose very essence is war, violence, racism, oppression, repression and the impoverishment of an entire people, as the illustrious Nelson Mandela so rightly said.

Our common challenge is to silence the guns and eradicate armed groups and terrorism. That has been the challenge of the Central African Republic for decades. It is why the allegations made against the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, their allies and the United Nations forces must be addressed, as the report states. To that end, a special commission of inquiry was established and is working to ensure that the truth prevails and that justice is rendered so that proven perpetrators are held accountable and punished. Respect for the separation of powers requires that we let the judiciary continue its work within the scheduled time frames.

However, persistent unverified allegations lead us away from our humanist ideals, making us forget the aggressor at the expense of the victim. It is crucial not to ignore the fact that the Central African Republic, its people and its republican institutions have been attacked by CPC armed groups and mercenaries. I would therefore recall that the Charter of the United Nations, in defining the Purposes and Principles of the Organization, states that one of the purposes the United Nations is

“to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace” (*Charter, Article 1, para. 1*).

Inspired by this principle, at the Security Council meeting on 21 January 2021, the Central African authorities, through its Minister for Foreign Affairs, asked the Council to establish an international commission of inquiry to shed light on the perpetrators of the conspiracies, attacks and attempts to destabilize the

Central African Republic (see S/2021/76, annex XIV). That request, while legitimate and essential, did not receive the Council’s attention. Now we are confronted with the truth.

The Central African Republic is astounded by the account of unacceptable and implausible allegations, such as crimes perpetrated with anti-personnel mines said to have delays in order to give the perpetrator time to escape. I reiterate the words of the President of the Republic: no crime will go unpunished.

I would like to remind those present that the Central African population is a people that has been bruised and traumatized by incessant violence. They have been too scorned, vilified and denigrated for the Central African authorities to allow such allegations to be overlooked. That would fuel a loss of trust on the part of the people, who have been distraught since the great crisis of 2012 at the atrocities perpetrated by those who came to protect them. The rapes, crimes and sexual violence must be punished, whoever the perpetrators, impartially and without discrimination.

I have spoken at length, but the situation and the context needed to be clear. To conclude, I would like to address three points very briefly.

The first point concerns the presence of Russian instructors. It should be recalled that it was in the presence of Council members that the Security Council, the guarantor of the maintenance of peace in the world, authorized the delivery of weapons from the Russian Federation, accompanied by instructors. Every Member State present here was informed and took part in the discussions. Moreover, nothing is done on Central African territory without all the technical and financial partners being around a common table.

The second point concerns the perception of Member States regarding the difficulties reported by personnel. Imperfection being human, if we need to improve the way in which we work together, the Central African Republic has always been willing to make the necessary effort so that the efforts of all contribute effectively to maintaining and consolidating peace and security. That is imperative, since the outcomes of such work are expected to realize the dreams and hopes of the Central African people.

Knowing that certain difficulties encountered on the ground will in fact be resolved by sharing information with the Central African authorities in

advance, during the reporting period up until today the Central African Republic has remained in a state of emergency, meaning that fundamental freedoms can be restricted.

Improving our coordination is extremely necessary and feasible. The long-scarred Central African Republic has that sweet dream of the famous Madiba to be a nation at peace with itself and the world — a sweet dream still very far from that of development and prosperity.

I conclude my remarks with my third point, which is the embargo. To help us effectively would mean also leaving us to shoulder our responsibilities. The crutch imposed by the embargo is a real handicap for my country. It is a handicap that benefits the intentions of enemies of peace without any political ideology or vision of a society for the Central African nation because they are not Central Africans. It forces the Central African Republic to seek the necessary external support to make up for its shortcomings. It is a handicap which, due to the unjust sanctions, deprives the country of its basic legitimate right, which has been established as a fundamental principle — the principle of the sovereign equality of all Members.

No State has built an army under the control of sanctions on its Government forces. The Central African people humbly wish to live in peace and request that their dignity be restored to them through the lifting of the embargo, which denies them dignity and leaves them at the mercy of mercenaries motivated only by blood.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chad.

Mrs. Baroud (Chad) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate the Republic of Estonia on its successful presidency of the Security Council during the month of June and on convening this important meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic. I would also like to welcome the presence at this meeting of His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Acting Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to my brother, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central African Republic, for his very enlightening briefing on

the developments in the situation in the Central African Republic, and to Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and, of course, Ms. Rita Laranjinha, European Union Managing Director for Africa, for their inspiring briefings.

Chad and the Central African Republic are neighbouring countries with a long border of more than 1,900 kilometres, sharing a common destiny, history and centuries-old ties between the populations on both sides of the border. That is why Chad has always stood by the Central African Republic, including at difficult moments in its history. On several occasions, Chad has not hesitated to share the few means at its disposal with its sister country, the Central African Republic, when it was necessary.

Chad has also consistently supported all subregional, regional and international efforts to restore peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and will continue, alongside the international community, to advocate and work for the peaceful resolution of the Central African crisis through inclusive dialogue.

Since the resurgence of violence in the Central African Republic, on the eve of the presidential election last December, the peace dynamic created by the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed by the Central African parties in February 2019, has been lost.

The latest developments in the situation in the Central African Republic, marked by human rights violations and atrocities committed by foreign mercenaries against civilians, run the risk of exacerbating the violence, with all the humanitarian, social and security consequences that that entails for the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries.

That situation concerns us all. Chad wishes to express its deep concern about the rupture of the peace dynamic and the lack of progress in the peace and reconciliation process despite the ongoing appeals of the international community, in particular the Security Council, the African Union and subregional organizations. Chad regrets that the military option has taken precedence over negotiations with all Central African actors, including armed groups.

Chad shares the concerns expressed in various reports, particularly those of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic, the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, with regard to the increasingly prevalent role played by foreign mercenaries in the deterioration of the situation in the Central African Republic, thereby exposing the civilian population to atrocities and human rights violations. Chad appeals to the United Nations, and MINUSCA in particular, to strengthen the protection of civilians.

On 30 May, the outpost of Sourou on Chadian territory was attacked by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the foreign mercenaries accompanying them. Six Chadian soldiers died, five of whom were taken prisoner and then coldly executed on Central African territory. That attack inside Chadian territory is indisputable proof that the situation in the Central African Republic represents a serious threat to the stability of the entire region. That deadly attack, about which the Central African authorities say they are surprised, demonstrates the prominent role of foreign mercenaries in the conduct of military operations and control of the country. The presence of those mercenaries during the attack against Chad leaves no room for doubt.

Despite that attack against its territory, the Government of Chad showed restraint in order to give dialogue a chance. It was in that framework that a Central African Republic delegation was received in N'Djamena that included the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security. Following these bilateral discussions, it was decided to establish an international impartial team comprising experts from the United Nations, the African Union and ECCAS to establish the facts and assign responsibility.

That deadly attack against Chadian territory did not help efforts to resume dialogue as called for

by subregional organizations, including the African Union, which has been resolutely committed to efforts seeking to silence the guns in Africa. The growing role of foreign mercenaries risks wiping out the gains made over several years and dragging Africa back into renewed cycles of devastating violence. Chad calls on the international community, primarily the United Nations and the African Union, to ensure that the progress made in terms of peace and stability is upheld and strengthened.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic, of 16 June 2021 (S/2021/571), details the recurrent attacks that MINUSCA faces, imperilling the lives of peacekeepers. Chad calls on the perpetrators of such attacks to cease them, reiterates its full support for MINUSCA and calls on the Security Council to grant the Mission all resources necessary to discharge its mandate.

In conclusion, Chad recalls once again the pressing need for inclusive political dialogue, including with armed groups, to definitively restore peace to the Central African Republic. Chad endorses the call by ECCAS regarding the need for regional mediation and underscores the importance of coordinated action between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, with a view to a resumption of dialogue and the implementation of the peace process. Indeed, progress on inclusive dialogue and in restoring State authority throughout the country in the context of the peace process will make it more likely that the embargo imposed on the Central African Republic to prevent weapons from falling into the hands of militias and armed groups and exacerbating violence will be lifted.

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

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.