



Security Council

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Letter dated 13 August 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution [2709 \(2023\)](#), in which the Council requested that I conduct and provide the Security Council with an independent strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), in accordance with best practices.

In said resolution, the Council requested that the review assess the challenges to peace and security in the Central African Republic and provide detailed recommendations regarding the possible reconfiguration of the mandate of MINUSCA, the effectiveness of the Mission, adequation of resources and options for gradually adapting its civilian, police and military components, as appropriate, as well as recommendations for a possible transition plan and the eventual drawdown of MINUSCA when conditions are met.

In February 2024, I appointed Edmond Mulet to lead the independent strategic review. The attached report, prepared by Mr. Mulet, is being submitted for the attention of the Security Council. I wish to thank Mr. Mulet for conducting this independent strategic review.

Allow me to also thank the Government of the Central African Republic for its collaboration and contributions throughout this exercise. I am grateful to all the relevant stakeholders who collaborated with the review process, including Member States, regional organizations and members of civil society, as well as to the United Nations staff in the Central African Republic for their commitment and efforts in support of the country and its people.

The United Nations stands ready to work with the Security Council and with the Government of the Central African Republic on the implementation of the recommendations, as appropriate, and on any decision of the Council with regard to the mandate of MINUSCA.

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**



Annex

Independent strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, March–June 2024

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to and acknowledge the extraordinary work done by the members of the review team that has resulted in a report that is factual and objective. Many long days and hours were spent researching, preparing and drafting the report and, without the team's knowledge, expertise and acute sense of responsibility, it would have been impossible to complete it.

As opposed to other strategic reviews where up to 25 technical experts participated in the analysis and preparation of recommendations, this review team comprised myself and four other professionals. Despite the lean set-up, we were able to meet with hundreds of interlocutors over more than 80 meetings in New York and the Central African Republic, thus gaining a wide variety of perspectives and opinions that have informed this report. While the original intention was to also travel within the regions, budgetary constraints prohibited this. Nonetheless, I believe that regional perspectives are still accurately reflected in the report.

While this is an independent review, and the findings reflect the views of the review team alone, none of this would have been possible without the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Secretariat. My gratitude goes out to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Valentine Rugwabiza, and her staff in the Mission who provided excellent support throughout our stay in the Central African Republic, thus allowing us to achieve our complex agenda in-country. I am grateful to the Government of the Central African Republic for facilitating meetings in Bangui and with regional partners, as well as for the frank exchanges that we had.

I hope that this report will be of interest to the Security Council and a useful tool for the Council in its deliberations on MINUSCA and the situation in the Central African Republic.

Edmond Mulet
17 June 2024

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Abbreviations

3R	Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation
BINUCA	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic
BONUCA	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic
CPC	Coalition des patriotes pour le changement
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission
FDPC	Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain
FPRC	Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MINURCA	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic
MINURCAT	United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad
MISCA	African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic
MLCJ	Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice
MPC	Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique
RPRC	Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique
RJ	Révolution et justice
RJ-Belanga	Révolution et justice-Belanga
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
SRPJ	Séléka renouvelée pour la paix et la justice
UFRF	Union des forces républicaines fondamentales
UFR	Union des forces républicaines
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPC	Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique

Summary

The 2024 independent strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was authorized by the Security Council in its resolution [2709 \(2023\)](#), following a request from the Government of the Central African Republic. The Secretary-General appointed the former Under-Secretary-General, Edmond Mulet, to lead the review.

The present report provides an independent and strategic assessment of the persistent security, political and socioeconomic challenges in the Central African Republic. Through wide-ranging consultations with the authorities of the Central African Republic, international partners and diverse local stakeholders, the review considers the internal complexities and regional and geopolitical dynamics impacting the country. It highlights the remaining threats from armed groups, intercommunal violence, governance deficits and economic fragility as major barriers to peace.

The review found that the Mission has been instrumental in achieving important gains in the areas of the political and peace process, the extension of State authority, security, protection of civilians and rule of law in coordination with national and regional actors. This was recognized by all interlocutors and there was no demand for the drawdown or closure of the Mission. The review shares this perspective and recommends that this be revisited through a technical assessment mission after the presidential and legislative elections that are currently planned for 2025.

The review acknowledged the national interlocutor's call for an adaptation of MINUSCA to support the Government in early recovery and development initiatives. It recognized that this would be important to consolidate the peace and security gains to which the Mission has contributed, but that the primary responsibility for this rests on the Government, the United Nations country team and development partners. As such, the report also calls upon development partners to play their part in leveraging the humanitarian, development and peace nexus to its full potential.

The team assessed that the mandate remains relevant and underscores the vital role of the Government of the Central African Republic and the international community, in particular the Security Council, in supporting and recognizing MINUSCA as a pivotal instrument of international solidarity for the Central African Republic. It calls for sustained international backing until the national institutions can independently manage security and governance.

In addition, the review extends its scope beyond MINUSCA, suggesting recommendations for United Nations peacekeeping operations globally. These include enhancing operational efficiencies, adapting mandates to better address the realities on the ground and fostering greater international cooperation. The review's recommendations aim to inspire further reforms, move away from templated solutions and establish best practices, refining the strategic direction of peacekeeping missions to ensure that they are more responsive to the dynamic challenges of modern conflict environments. This strategic approach ensures that peacekeeping endeavours are well coordinated, adequately resourced and aligned with the international community's goals for fostering durable peace and development.

I. Background

1. By a letter addressed to the Security Council dated 5 November 2022, the Government of the Central African Republic expressed the need for a review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). It assessed that the changed conditions on the ground

called for an evaluation of the Mission's work to ensure a better alignment with the Government's priorities, examine areas where the Mission's performance could be improved and look at potential adjustments to the mandate. A first independent strategic review was conducted in 2018 and, although it recommended strengthening some of the Mission's tasks, such as political support to the peace process and security strategy, the mandate has remained consistent since the Mission was set up in 2014, with key priority tasks including the protection of civilians, good offices and the extension of State authority.

Mandate and objectives of the independent strategic review

2. By its resolution [2709 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council requested an independent strategic review of MINUSCA by 15 August 2024. This would provide: (a) an assessment of challenges to peace and security in the Central African Republic; (b) recommendations on the possible reconfiguration of the MINUSCA mandate, on the Mission's effectiveness, adequation of resources and options for adaptation; as well as (c) recommendations for a possible transition plan and eventual drawdown of the Mission when conditions are met. The Council further emphasized the importance for this review to be based on broad consultations with the Government of the Central African Republic and other relevant partners.

Guiding principles and methodology of the independent strategic review

3. On 26 February 2024, the Secretary-General of the United Nations announced the appointment of the former Under-Secretary-General, Edmond Mulet, to lead the review. Four independent experts with extensive knowledge of the Central African Republic, the region, peace operations, peacebuilding and the tools available to the United Nations to leverage peace and security were contracted to support the process.¹

4. The review sought to be as inclusive as possible in order to ensure a deep and nuanced understanding of the context in the Central African Republic and of the relevant regional and global dynamics. Its findings are included in the present report, which provides strategic orientation for a possible adaptation of the MINUSCA mandate and situates this within the frameworks of the Action for Peacekeeping Plus agenda and the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace. It places a particular focus on enhancing peace operations by strengthening commitments to multilateralism, fostering partnerships and employing context-specific innovative approaches to mandate implementation, while remaining considerate of the need to balance financial costs and political gains. Given its cross-cutting nature, a gender perspective is mainstreamed throughout the report.

5. The principle of independence, as a cornerstone of this review, cannot be understated. Aside from logistical support provided by the United Nations Secretariat and MINUSCA for the organization of travel and meetings, the review team took steps at every stage to preserve its autonomy and neither MINUSCA nor Secretariat staff participated in its consultations. Thus, the findings and recommendations are the sole responsibility of the review team.

6. With regard to the methodology, in addition to a desk review of existing independent literature and of relevant United Nations internal assessments, the review team held consultations in New York with Member States, the Security Council and Secretariat departments and offices across the peace, security and development spectrum from 22 February to 3 March and from 21 to 27 March. The review team travelled to the Central African Republic between 4 and 20 March, where, starting

¹ The review team had no current professional link with the Department of Peace Operations in New York or with MINUSCA.

with the President, meetings were held with authorities at the national and local levels; representatives of the political opposition; international and regional partners, including the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the African Union, as guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic; Rwanda and Angola as mediators of the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; the European Union; the diplomatic corps; civil society, religious leaders, political parties, youth and women's groups; international financial institutions; representatives of the Chamber of Commerce of the Central African Republic; the Special Criminal Court; MINUSCA; and the United Nations country team. The review team visited the Prefecture of Haute-Kotto to confer with local stakeholders in its capital, Bria, and the village of Sam Ouandja, in the Sub-prefecture of Ouandja-Kotto.

7. In keeping with the strategic nature of the review, it provides recommendations to guide the Security Council's discussions with a view to articulating a vision, prioritizing tasks and allocating resources to MINUSCA. It also provides recommendations for the Secretariat to identify the capacities and capabilities required to translate the Council's decisions into realistic and actionable activities. Finally, recommendations are directed to the Government of the Central African Republic and its partners to further consolidate the security gains and, where feasible, to move towards early recovery.

II. Contextual analysis of the Central African Republic

8. Since its independence in 1960, the Central African Republic has been the theatre of political crises and armed rebellions, often fuelled by contested political transitions. Structural governance shortcomings undermined trust in State institutions and compromised the State's ability to fulfil its fundamental sovereign functions. These conflicts have had a disproportionate impact on women and children, exacerbating their vulnerability and limiting access to essential services. Against this backdrop, the African Union, regional actors and the United Nations have made several attempts to restore peace and stability.²

9. In 2013, the Central African Republic descended into a civil war, which, beyond the human death toll and massive displacement, erased the little remaining institutional capacity of the State. In response, ECCAS stepped up efforts through the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic, which had been present in the country since 2008 and, on 19 July 2013, the African Union established the follow-on African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA).

10. The Security Council authorized the establishment of MINUSCA in April 2014 to replace MISCA, many of whose troops were re-hatted to the new Mission. This was deployed alongside French and European Union forces and was instrumental in stabilizing security, promoting inclusive political processes and supporting the rebuilding of State institutions. These efforts facilitated the appointment of an interim President, Catherine Samba-Panza, the first woman to hold the position in the Central African Republic; the establishment of a transitional Government; and the signing of

² Previous United Nations peace operations include: the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), a peacekeeping mission authorized in 1998; the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), authorized in 2000; the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), a peacekeeping mission based in Chad and authorized in 2007; and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), authorized in 2010.

a ceasefire agreement between the Government and various armed groups at the Brazzaville Forum. The follow-on Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in May 2015, which MINUSCA supported, was an opportunity for widespread and inclusive grass-roots consultations on measures to foster reconciliation. This included critical voices from civil society, religious groups, women's groups and youth groups, as well as community elders, together with political leaders and armed groups. Its outcomes and recommendations established a road map for a political reform agenda and identified clear priorities to help the country to move away from decades of recurrent conflicts. This paved the way for a new constitution in 2015 and the establishment of the Special Criminal Court, addressing serious human rights violations and advancing reconciliation and justice.

11. In February 2016, Faustin-Archange Touadéra was elected President, while legislative elections reinstated the National Assembly, thereby fully restoring constitutional legitimacy. In line with the directives from the Bangui Forum of 2015, President Touadéra's administration focused on national dialogue, reconstruction and enhancing governance. In 2017, the enactment of the National Strategy for the Restoration of State Authority marked a significant step towards integrated support in defence, security, rule of law, civil administration and social services. Following extensive consultations, a national defence plan was developed and signed by President Touadéra on 11 September 2017. Currently under revision, this plan established four military zones and set a target for a 9,800-strong defence force by 2021.

12. Despite national efforts to establish a new institutional framework, violence resurged towards the end of 2016, driven by competition among armed groups over the control of resources. This was increasingly aggravated by inter-ethnic and intercommunal tensions, particularly between Muslims and Christians, while new armed formations emerged, fuelling clashes and attacks on civilians, including widespread cases of gender-based violence particularly targeting women and girls. This continued throughout 2017 and, with the national army still in the process of reconstruction; while France and the United States of America withdrew their forces, MINUSCA stepped in as the primary protection actor. As a result, in November 2017, the Security Council authorized an increase of 900 troops to the Mission's troop ceiling, bringing the overall figure to 11,650 military personnel. MINUSCA conducted several key offensive operations aiming at curbing the influence of major armed groups and supporting broader political strategies to foster peace, including the pivotal Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in Khartoum on 6 February 2019. This agreement, facilitated by the African Union with support from ECCAS, the United Nations and other international partners, included five priority areas for work: disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation; justice and national reconciliation; transhumance; security; and democratic governance. As a facilitator of the Political Agreement, MINUSCA played a supporting role across these areas. As a trust-building measure in favour of the implementation of the Political Agreement, and to facilitate the integration of armed groups into the political fold, President Touadéra included members of the signatory groups in his new Government.

13. However, the lead-up to the 2020 elections underscored the fragility of peace efforts. The slow implementation of the peace agreement and lack of measures to sanction violations heightened tensions, culminating in the establishment of a new coalition of armed opposition groups, the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), which sought to disrupt the polls and seize power. The former President, François Bozizé, whose candidacy for the presidential election was invalidated,

joined and then led the coalition.³ Rejecting commitments made in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, members of CPC significantly expanded their territorial control, taking over major towns and reaching the outskirts of the capital, Bangui, in January 2021. The Mission's ability to respond was limited, and the Security Council authorized the rapid redeployment of 300 troops from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to support its efforts. The Government also sought military reinforcements through bilateral cooperation agreements with Rwanda and the Russian Federation (the latter referred to as "other security personnel"), which helped to contain the situation. The electoral violence severely disrupted efforts to redeploy State representatives, forcing some civil servants and members of the defence and security forces to abandon their posts and seek refuge in MINUSCA bases. There was significant damage to State infrastructure⁴ and the judicial sector was notably affected, with eight prisons damaged and most judicial missions suspended, resulting in only six functional courts and merely 22 per cent of judicial personnel present outside Bangui.

14. Armed violence forced 40 per cent of polling stations to close, and only 35 per cent of voters were able to cast their ballots. The electoral results exposed the limited representation of women in elected bodies. Currently, only 11 per cent of Members of Parliament are women, despite the 35 per cent quota set in the national parity law. The participation of women in politics in the Central African Republic continues to be influenced by traditional gender roles and norms. In addition, systemic discrimination related to access to education and opportunities for economic autonomy constitute further obstacles. Despite these realities, the review found instances of women in political leadership at the local level, specifically in Bria and Sam Ouandja.

15. Government forces, supported by Rwanda and by other security personnel, launched a counteroffensive that took back major cities from CPC. This opened the ground for the latter's reprisals against communities suspected of collaborating with national and international security forces. Concurrently, investigations by national authorities have reported that both national security forces and their Russian partners may have committed violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law during these operations.⁵

16. Against this background, MINUSCA continued to support regional actors' efforts through the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region), which led to the adoption on 16 September 2021, in Luanda, of the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic to guide the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. In October 2021, President Touadéra announced a unilateral ceasefire as part of the road map's commitments, sparking renewed hope for the revitalization of the peace process, however, the latter has struggled to gain traction. Since the signature of the Political Agreement in 2019, the configuration of armed groups has shifted significantly. Political engagement and military pressure have substantially weakened the six signatory movements that initially formed CPC, which has further fragmented due to internal divisions. By December 2023, only four groups remained active within the coalition: Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC), Front populaire pour la

³ The Constitutional Court invalidated the candidature of François Bozizé, citing an international arrest warrant and United Nations sanctions against him.

⁴ Protection of State authorities during the 2020 post-electoral crisis was key in allowing 15 of 16 prefects to remain in place and 54 of 71 sub-prefects to remain at their posts.

⁵ See <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/centrafrique-des-instructeurs-russes-parmi-les-auteurs-dexactions-selon-le-ministre-de-la>.

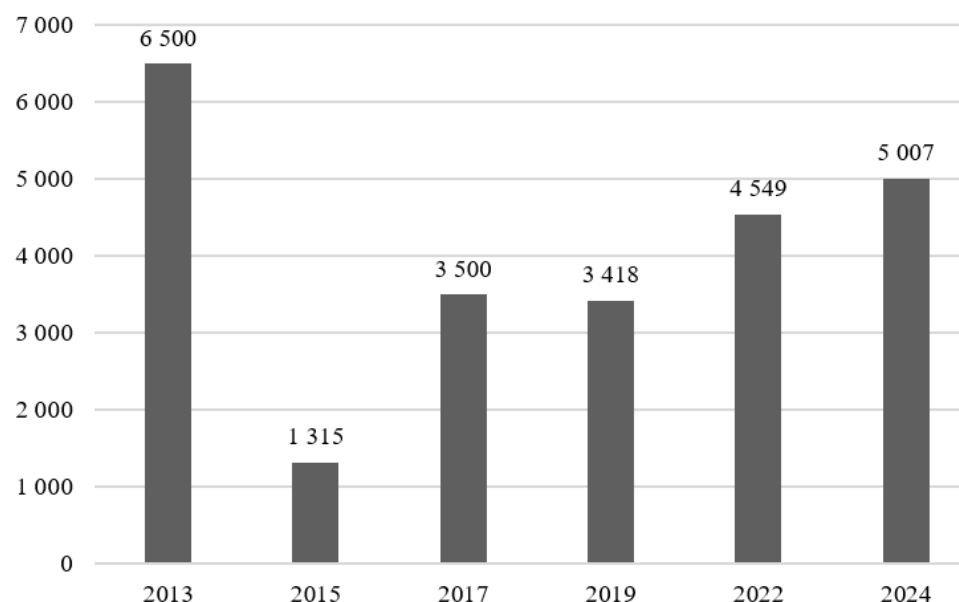
renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) and Anti-balaka Mokom.⁶

17. Six signatory armed groups and wings of three signatory armed groups were formally disbanded in two ceremonies held on 6 December 2022 and 28 April 2023.⁷ As at March 2024, 4,429 combatants (4,147 men and 282 women) had participated in the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. In addition, in July and September 2023, MINUSCA facilitated the Government of the Central African Republic-led demobilization and voluntary repatriation operations of the last Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) fighters from Zemio and Mboki (Haut-Mbomou Prefecture) to Uganda, ending their long presence in the Central African Republic. However, at the same time, the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe movement has emerged in areas formerly occupied by LRA.

18. Since then, there has been a significant shift in the balance of power away from armed groups and towards the Government. As at mid-February 2024, progress in the extension of State authority has been noted, with administrative officials at their posts, although the civil service is still heavily concentrated in Bangui, with numbers in the provinces below pre-2013 crisis levels. The MINUSCA role in providing logistic, security and capacity-building support has been pivotal in the efforts to redeploy State personnel.

Figure I

Number of civil servants deployed at their duty station



Source: MINUSCA.

⁶ UPC, 3R and FPRC have traditionally been the strongest armed movements in the Central African Republic. They also claim to represent the most marginalized and minority communities that are often considered “foreigners”, from which they draw their fighters.

⁷ On 6 December 2022, President Touadéra chaired a ceremony to mark the dissolution of the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC), Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ), Union des forces républicaines (UFR) and Union des forces républicaines fondamentales (UFRF). Moreover, on 28 April 2023, the President chaired a ceremony to mark the dissolution of Révolution et justice – Belanga (RJ-Belanga) and Séléka renouée pour la paix et la justice (SRPJ), as well as wings of FPRC, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) and Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC).

19. While the security situation in the Central African Republic has improved, the political environment remains deeply polarized. During President Touadéra's second term, the presidential majority tabled a constitutional reform to amend the 2015 Constitution, on which a broad consensus existed. On 21 August 2023, the Constitutional Court validated the results of the 30 July 2023 constitutional referendum. This extended the presidential term from five to seven years, removing presidential term limits and strengthening the executive branch, among other changes. Some of those consulted as a part of the review criticized the process and its outcomes, perceiving this as an erosion of democratic norms.

Regional context

20. The Central African Republic is a member of ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and shares borders with Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Sudan. This places it at the centre of regional humanitarian crises, security threats and economic instability. Regional dynamics are therefore hugely influential on the Central African Republic. While the country's relationship with key neighbours, such as Chad and the Sudan, has improved over the past years, it continues to require confidence-building, in the light of links between those countries and some armed groups operating in the Central African Republic or Central African Republic armed actors operating, for instance, in the Sudan. The eventual return of these armed actors to the Central African Republic will bring more volatility.

21. The nation's lengthy and porous borders, coupled with cross-border ties and the prevalence of illegal weapons, have compounded its security challenges. This has facilitated the illegal exploitation of the nation's extensive natural resources, which also provides a war economy for many of the armed actors in the Central African Republic and in neighbouring States. These cross-border issues heighten the risk of spillover of conflict.

22. Regular and continued meetings of the joint commissions with Cameroon, Chad and the Congo could enhance regional border cooperation, improve border management and address common security issues. The new National Strategy for Border Management and its accompanying action plan for 2023/24 is a further step in addressing common challenges.

23. Politically, while the Central African Republic reached a milestone by holding presidential elections in 2016 and 2021, which are important elements of democracy, recent constitutional changes have sparked concerns about a shift towards "strongman governance".

Geopolitical dynamics

24. Rising geopolitical tensions are having an increasing impact on the nation's progress towards sustainable stabilization and undermining the efforts of MINUSCA in supporting these objectives. As the country remains heavily dependent on international solidarity, the deteriorating relationships and progressive polarization among Security Council members – owing to divergences on topics unrelated to the Central African Republic, such as Gaza or the war in Ukraine – are weakening stabilization efforts in the country. This geopolitical dynamic, recognized by the Government and various Member States, including Security Council members, was a significant backdrop to the review.

25. The influence of the Russian Federation and Rwanda in the Central African Republic is expanding, matched by a decline in the traditional roles played by Western partners in the security and development sectors. Prior to entering into bilateral agreements that saw the deployment of "military trainers" identified as elements of

the Wagner Private Military Company and a “protection force” from Rwanda, the main security partners of the Central African Republic included MINUSCA and the European Union, with additional support from France and the United States. This reconfiguration is a result of the withdrawal or reduction of Western support across some sectors.

III. Remaining challenges to consolidating peace and security

Political instability and fragility of the peace process

26. An inclusive approach remains essential to foster dialogue in support of the peace process. While dialogue remains vital, the path to substantive political participation for all armed groups is fraught with complexity. The armed faction’s repeated disengagements from the agreements highlights the fragility of the peace process and underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict, ensures inclusivity and combines economic development with security reforms.

27. A shrinking civic space and a highly polarized political landscape risk increasing internal instability. As seen in the past, when avenues for dialogue appear limited, the expression of political dissent risks being channelled through armed movements. While political opposition leaders continue to decry persecutory measures and discriminatory actions against them, instability could also surge as a result of discontent within pro-government forces. Continued inclusive dialogue along the lines of the Bangui Forum and the incorporation of perspectives from civil society, including those of women and youth, in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic could facilitate a more consensual way forward and provide a privileged avenue for the political and institutional reforms agenda.

Governance shortcomings and dependency on external support

28. The country’s dependency on external support in fulfilling its regal prerogatives makes it vulnerable to shocks and dynamics that have an impact on international solidarity. During the review, this feature appeared most evident in two sectors: security and the national budget. Most interlocutors stressed the importance of continued support to allow the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic to have the capability to operate independently, in compliance with international obligations (both international humanitarian law and international human rights law), and to guarantee that the security of the State would not be compromised should MINUSCA leave or suspend its support.

29. During consultations, stakeholders stressed the urgent need to improve public sector governance, fight corruption and mobilize resources to replenish the State’s coffers. In this connection, there was also recognition of the need for substantial technical assistance to strengthen the policy and institutional framework. Some indicated that systemic governance shortcomings were key elements undermining the business climate and inclusive and sustainable economic growth, as these largely depended on the quality of public sector governance.⁸

⁸ For example, foreign direct investment in 2022 was 1 per cent of GDP, showing that there is currently little appetite to invest from outside. In its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment 2022, the World Bank also noted that virtually no progress had been recorded between 2013 and 2022 in improving: economic management; structural policies; policies for social inclusion and equity; or public sector management and institutions. World Bank, *CPIA Africa: Assessing Africa’s Policies and Institutions – Policies for Economic Resilience in a Turbulent World* (Washington, D.C., 2023). Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/31808ab0-b779-4bed-ad4a-23c692b12456/content>.

A fragile economic context and barriers to growth

30. The Central African Republic is among the world's poorest countries, with one of the lowest global gross domestic products per capita and also with the lowest score in the Human Development Index, illustrating the country's extensive economic challenges. Socioeconomic peace dividends are yet to materialize for most of the population as the range and quality of services are strongly and negatively affected by the economic situation in the country. Women and girls are disproportionately affected in terms of their economic, social and cultural rights, including access to education, land and entrepreneurship. Seven out of 10 women or girls, compared with 5 out of 10 men or boys, are illiterate.⁹ Their low economic status also makes them more vulnerable to gender-based violence and limits their access to justice. Out of 191 countries, the Central African Republic ranks 188th in terms of gender equality.

31. The country is wealthy in natural resources but formal management systems that would increase State revenue and promote equitable redistribution are yet to be established. It has little economic base beyond its natural resources and much of the economy is in the informal sector, where women are often subject to economic vulnerabilities. Although still limited, some investments are increasing in the capital, Bangui. While this signals a timid beginning of economic recovery, a positive return for the State's finances has yet to materialize. In 2023, International Monetary Fund (IMF) concessionary credits prevented a State default, after the suspension of France's contribution in this area. Conditions for the IMF concession included the need for decisive steps to bolster domestic revenues by streamlining tax exemptions, strengthening value added tax collection and fostering customs revenues.¹⁰ This would increase public income and reduce dependence on international assistance but will require huge investments in terms of human and other resources.¹¹ Without this, the State's ability to expand and deliver the services expected will falter, fuelling discontent and undermining several peacebuilding processes, such as the extension of State authority or disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation. For instance, whereas the majority of ex-combatants have received reintegration support, the sustainability of their return to civilian life is questionable in a context where there are insufficient economic opportunities. Efforts must also focus on ensuring that economic policies effectively address gender disparities and support the economic empowerment of women. Increasing institutional partnerships beyond the peacekeeping operation is the only sustainable solution to this.

Threats to security

32. Notwithstanding some security gains, the presence of armed groups in parts of the country remains a destabilizing factor. They continue to target civilians and undermine the livelihoods of vulnerable populations, disproportionately affecting women and children, who face heightened risks of gender-based violence and economic deprivation. While there is recognition that the armed groups have been weakened, they remain resilient. UPC, FPRC and 3R are traditionally considered the strongest armed movements, given their military strength, number of combatants, chain of command and ability to recruit. Simultaneously, other armed groups are

⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Women Count Data Hub, Central African Republic. Available at <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>.

¹⁰ International Monetary Fund, IMF Country Report No. 23/362, Central African Republic, November 2023.

¹¹ For instance, it was noted that the tax office has one car, and the customs service has only 10 computers.

being stood up, including with the support of the other security personnel, who use them as proxies.

33. These armed groups have an ethnic base, and besides recruiting from their communities, the latter are also often used as shields or as an extractive resource. The same communities are particularly at risk of abuse from State agents, especially targeted arrests and torture, in the context of the fight against armed groups. Documented evidence shows that persons of the Muslim faith and members of the Fulani community are disproportionately targeted by State agents, who suspect them of collaborating with armed groups, mainly 3R and UPC.¹² These abuses clearly reinforce false narratives of armed groups claiming to protect their communities and undermine the State's efforts to extend its presence and authority in areas where decades of absence have engendered perceptions of marginalization.

34. The violence committed by these groups has undermined activities to protect civilians, as it has blurred the lines between combatants and non-combatants. Sexual violence remains endemic in the Central African Republic and is often used as a tactic to dominate, displace or penalize the civilian population. Women and children are acutely vulnerable. Conflict-related sexual violence is largely invisible and underreported, owing in particular to survivors' fear of stigmatization and reprisals and a distrust in the national judiciary. According to the Gender-based Violence Information Management System, there were 23,644 incidents of gender-based violence reported in 2022, representing a 104 per cent surge compared with 2021. The trend persisted in 2023, with more than 11,000 instances of gender-based violence documented from January to September.

35. A purely military solution to addressing the threat posed by armed groups is unlikely to be successful. Military operations by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and other security personnel tend to focus on short-term gains, as the ability of the government forces and their allies to hold the terrain remains limited. They have been described as "hit and run" tactics, with the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and other security personnel deploying to an area for short-term operations, forcing the armed movements to temporarily withdraw. This leaves civilians particularly exposed to reprisals once the armed movements return. Military pressure will yield limited results unless accompanied by measures to "hold and rebuild".

36. Finally, the formation and use of proxy militia by governmental forces and other security personnel undermine efforts to sustainably reform the security sector and build a professional and accountable army. It is also likely to pose future challenges in the demobilization of fighters of these informal structures, such as the "requins"¹³ in Bangui or the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe in the south-east of the country.

Challenges to the extension of State authority

37. During consultations, the review team noted difficulties for the State in sustaining its presence in the provinces. Military campaigns to dislodge armed groups seem to be disconnected from a broader strategy and plan for the return of the State. As the capacity of force projection appears to be unsustainable without the ability to hold the gains made, the new national defence policy that is under development is

¹² Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic, 22 August 2022 ([A/HRC/51/59](#)).

¹³ Letter dated 25 June 2021 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to resolution [2536 \(2020\)](#) addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/569](#)).

also seeking to make a shift to a garrison army, concentrated in six new military regions.

38. The effective presence of the State and related personnel remains a work in progress. It is hampered by a lack of infrastructure in the field to receive and accommodate civil servants, limited human resources, low operational budgets and little access to enabling services, including banking. Civil servants at their duty stations systematically return to Bangui to collect their salaries, thus jeopardizing their continued presence in provinces. MINUSCA has offered logistical, security and capacity-building support to the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform and the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development. This has facilitated the deployment and mobility of an average of 75 civil servants and State agents per month. While this has helped to increase the administrative presence across many areas, the State cannot maintain these civilian personnel without the Mission's support. Moreover, despite these efforts, access to basic social services remains low. Remedying this will require prioritization and political will from the Government of the Central African Republic. At present, the United Nations country team and partners are filling the gap, but resources and capacities are insufficient to cover the entire territory.

Border security, spillover of conflicts and transnational organized crime

39. The Central African Republic sits within a difficult region, with active or potential conflicts in most of its neighbouring States. There is a risk of spillover of these conflicts into the Central African Republic, and border areas remain flashpoints, with armed groups and criminal networks exploiting their porosity to move across borders at will, as well as controlling lucrative trade routes. These uncontrolled movements facilitate the flow of weapons, thus exacerbating regional crises. Recent evidence indicates, for instance, that a significant deployment of armed elements within the eastern Vakaga and Haute-Kotto Prefectures was observed at the end of 2023, possibly as part of a coordinated strategy to strengthen the CPC/UPC presence around strategic border locations. Cross-border movement of armed actors from the Sudan and South Sudan are seen to be destabilizing the north-east and the south-east of the country, with the Sudanese paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) fighters and Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, respectively, being reported as present in these areas. Enhanced joint border management is crucial to address common security challenges. Despite efforts to revitalize regional border cooperation and the adoption of the National Strategy for Border Management, tangible results are yet to be seen.

Intercommunal tensions and sectarian divides

40. When MINUSCA deployed in 2014, sectarian violence led several observers to sound the alarm against a potential genocide.¹⁴ While this topic did not feature prominently during the review's consultations, there was a consensus on the need for caution. On one hand, efforts to promote national reconciliation have fallen behind initial commitments. In this connection, challenges encountered to operationalize key mechanisms, such as the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, and the continuous gap in resources are matters of concern. On the other hand, intercommunal violence still affects many communities in the country, in particular

¹⁴ In its resolution [2217 \(2015\)](#) of 28 April 2015, the Security Council welcomed the final report of the United Nations-mandated International Commission of Inquiry ([S/2014/928](#)), noting with concern its finding that the main parties to the conflict, including ex-Séléka, the anti-balaka and elements from the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic who collaborated with armed groups had committed violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses since 1 January 2013, that might amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including ethnic cleansing by elements of the anti-balaka militia.

those living along transhumance routes or around mining sites. Violence along sectarian lines could still occur ahead of the 2024–2025 local and presidential elections. Moreover, the systematic discrimination towards members of certain communities continues to fray the social fabric. The lack of identity documents disproportionately affects members of Muslim and Fulani communities and represents a de facto barrier for them to access local or national administration or social services, such as schools. Furthermore, a consistent share of the Muslim population that lived in the Central African Republic before the crisis has sought refuge in neighbouring countries. While conditions for their voluntary return remain uneven in different areas of the country, new tensions could emerge should they come back and reclaim their land and properties and demand possible reparations. Other persistent inequalities affect access to basic services (water, education and health) in relation to ethnicity, religion, age or gender.¹⁵ The humanitarian consequences of the crisis further increase the pressure on limited basic services and competition for access to these can generate tensions between different population groups.

Fight against impunity

41. Limited to no accountability has been observed for gross violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The consensus on the role of impunity in the recurrent crises reflects a collective aspiration to break the cycle of violence and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace and justice. With support from MINUSCA and the United Nations country team, national authorities have made some progress in enhancing relevant policy and legislative frameworks on human rights, fostering a fragile rule of law sector, and operationalizing transitional justice mechanisms. Despite these gains, the judicial system remains subject to political manipulation that undermines its independence. The establishment of the Special Criminal Court in 2015 and the operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission in 2020 marked important steps in creating a transitional justice system conducive to national dialogue and healing. However, their effectiveness is hampered by financial and other challenges.¹⁶ The impact of these advances will largely depend on a sustained commitment and ownership by national institutions to lead these reforms and mobilize investment and support from partners.

Persistent humanitarian needs

42. The severe protection crisis continues to drive humanitarian needs. Since 2014, nearly 1.3 million people have either been internally displaced or sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The accompanying humanitarian needs, including the provision of shelter, food and access to clean water and health care, underscore the acute and expansive nature of the humanitarian crisis the population faces. The situation is further compounded by the country's weak infrastructure and limited access to essential services, making the delivery of humanitarian aid challenging.

43. Access to health care remains inadequate with many health facilities looted, destroyed or simply depleted of staff or supplies. Diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis are prevalent, and malnutrition rates, especially among children, are alarmingly high. The health sector is heavily dependent on non-governmental organizations. It struggles to match demand, barely offering essential services amid

¹⁵ This problem is particularly acute in areas where the long-standing pressure of armed groups has generated regular spillovers of violence between different communities. See International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Rapport sur l'indice de solutions et de mobilité: République centrafricaine (RCA)", December 2023.

¹⁶ The Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission has not been operational since 7 May 2024, pending the appointment of new commissioners.

one of the world's lowest health worker-to-population ratios. The education system has been severely disrupted contributing to a low adult literacy rate of about 37 per cent, perpetuating poverty and vulnerability, with over 60 per cent of schools attacked or used for military purposes.¹⁷

44. Climate change further disrupts agricultural productivity and over half the population faces food insecurity. It also alters transhumance corridors, leading to heightened conflicts over diminishing natural resources and impacting the livelihoods of communities dependent on subsistence farming and pastoralism.¹⁸

45. The 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan requires \$367.7 million but is severely underfunded, and humanitarian actors are now prioritizing life-saving responses. Some donors have noted that the decrease in humanitarian funding must be accompanied by a transition to early recovery strategies. The success of this transition largely depends on the National Development Plan and the authorities' capacity to secure adequate international support for its implementation. Equally critical for this transition and the provision of sustainable solutions is the relationship between the State and its citizens. Populations have emphasized that this remains a priority alongside the State's presence and capacity to deliver the desperately needed basic services.¹⁹ In areas where this relationship is still developing, it is causing delays in the return of internally displaced persons and hindering the essential peacebuilding efforts that support the reintegration of internally displaced persons into their communities, with particular attention to the needs of women, children and other vulnerable groups.

Risks linked to the presence of other security personnel

46. While other security personnel are seen by some as contributing to short-term security efforts, their activities also present certain challenges. Coordination between security providers has been complicated by political, administrative and logistic factors. This adversely affects the Mission's aptitude to effectively execute its mandate. Concurrently, national authorities regard the other security personnel as valuable allies, often engaging in operations, including kinetic actions, which they perceive the Mission as being reluctant to undertake. There is a recognized need for the State to establish a coordination mechanism between the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, MINUSCA and the other security personnel. However, the Mission's ability to participate in such a mechanism would be tempered by the many previously mentioned factors as well as reports of human rights abuses attributed to some of the other security personnel.²⁰ Beyond well-established rules of international law that bond States in their partnerships with private security providers, the "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework on business and human rights could be of relevance to foster dialogue among stakeholders and uphold human rights.

¹⁷ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, *Education under Attack 2020*, Central African Republic country profile, pp. 117–120.

¹⁸ Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Climate, peace and security fact sheet: Central African Republic", October 2022. Available at www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/22_fs_car.pdf.

¹⁹ Dialogues facilitated by IOM. See IOM, "Rapport sur l'indice de solutions et de mobilité: République centrafricaine (RCA)".

²⁰ Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic, 22 August 2022 (A/HRC/51/59).

IV. Review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Stakeholders' perspectives on the Mission

47. The review confirmed that there is currently no desire or request from the national authorities for the drawdown of MINUSCA. The need for an “adaptation” was however frequently mentioned, highlighting the desire to see an evolution of the Mission’s activities rather than a transition of its functions to other actors. This includes an appeal to undertake activities beyond the role of a peacekeeping operation. In this regard, while acknowledging the fragility of the stabilization gains made, national, regional and international stakeholders are of the opinion that a shift from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development should be made where there is security. They were also clear about the continued relevance of the multidimensional mandate of MINUSCA to further shore up these gains and facilitate this transition towards development.

48. On security, some government members attributed the improved situation to the sole action of the other security personnel. Conversely, local stakeholders, regional and international partners, noted that the presence of MINUSCA and its activities across the country put it in a unique position to support protection of civilians activities and the extension of State authority. The Mission’s presence is also seen as critical for the deployment of humanitarians, regional and international partners, and private sector actors.

49. The role of good offices was particularly appreciated by regional partners, as it often complements their own efforts. They also expressed appreciation for the Mission’s continuous support to elections, as well as to the implementation of the peace process. On the latter, they called for “enhanced synergies” between MINUSCA and the guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. For civil society organizations, assistance on human rights and monitoring, as well as on justice and corrections, is critical to promote much-needed social justice, and to the installation of fully fledged national human rights and justice institutions. They stressed persistent challenges with regard to gender equality and called for more support for women’s economic empowerment. A common theme included the need to rebalance the Mission’s presence and staffing in Bangui and the interior of the country.

50. All interlocutors believe that MINUSCA should increasingly seek to drive long-term growth and strengthen institutions as a means to promote lasting peace. Specific requests from the national authorities, including the President, covered among other issues, the construction and/or renovation of roads and public infrastructure, the training of civil servants and the provision of more assistance on social services and economic recovery. Options to revisit the Mission’s logistic footprint to ensure a positive and longer-term infrastructure legacy were also regularly raised, as was how to ensure that operations yield more economic dividends for the local economy.

51. In sum, while some adaptation can be considered, these views underscore a requirement for partners who are better placed to respond to development needs – including the United Nations country team, international financial institutions and other bilateral and multilateral actors – to step up. Meanwhile, these same partners acknowledged limitations on what they can achieve without the enabling presence of the Mission and without the requisite funding. Enhanced partnership and complementarity of efforts should be therefore at the core of this possible adaptation.

Overall validity of the current mandate and priority lines of efforts

52. Security Council resolution 2709 (2023) outlines priority, additional and other tasks, emphasizing a sequenced approach for efficient mandate implementation. This strategy enables the Mission to rationalize its efforts despite the vast (and dizzying, according to some national interlocutors) array of responsibilities. When discussing the overall validity of the Mission's current mandate, the review highlights tasks that garnered significant attention from stakeholders, suggesting possible adjustments for better implementation. It also considers tasks not frequently mentioned but that, when linked with others, could enhance the coherence of MINUSCA actions.

Protection of civilians

53. The protection of civilians was the mandated task most consistently discussed by stakeholders and its critical importance was acknowledged, as were the Mission's efforts to achieve results in a dynamic and challenging political, security and logistic context. The focus on the protection of civilians mandate also underlined persistent difficulties, as experienced by other peacekeeping operations, in ensuring a clear understanding of the protection mandate, in managing expectations and in matching mandated tasks with required resources and needs on the ground.

54. The MINUSCA protection of civilians strategy is articulated along the traditional three tiers: dialogue and engagement; physical protection; and the creation of a protective environment. Although MINUSCA has deployed significant efforts under all three tiers, the work under tiers I and III has gained less recognition from national stakeholders who have continued to emphasize physical protection by the MINUSCA force.

55. Under tier I, dialogue and engagement, the Mission's facilitation role during various political dialogues and peace processes at national and local level have undeniably contributed to the protection of civilians. For example, protection activities are particularly important in electoral periods to help to safeguard fundamental freedoms. At the local level, dialogue and engagement using mechanisms such as the local peace committees and community alert networks involving civil society representatives, including women's groups and youth groups, also had a positive impact. Moreover, human rights monitoring remains critical to inform dialogue with State and non-State actors to address violations, including those committed against children and those involving conflict-related sexual violence.²¹

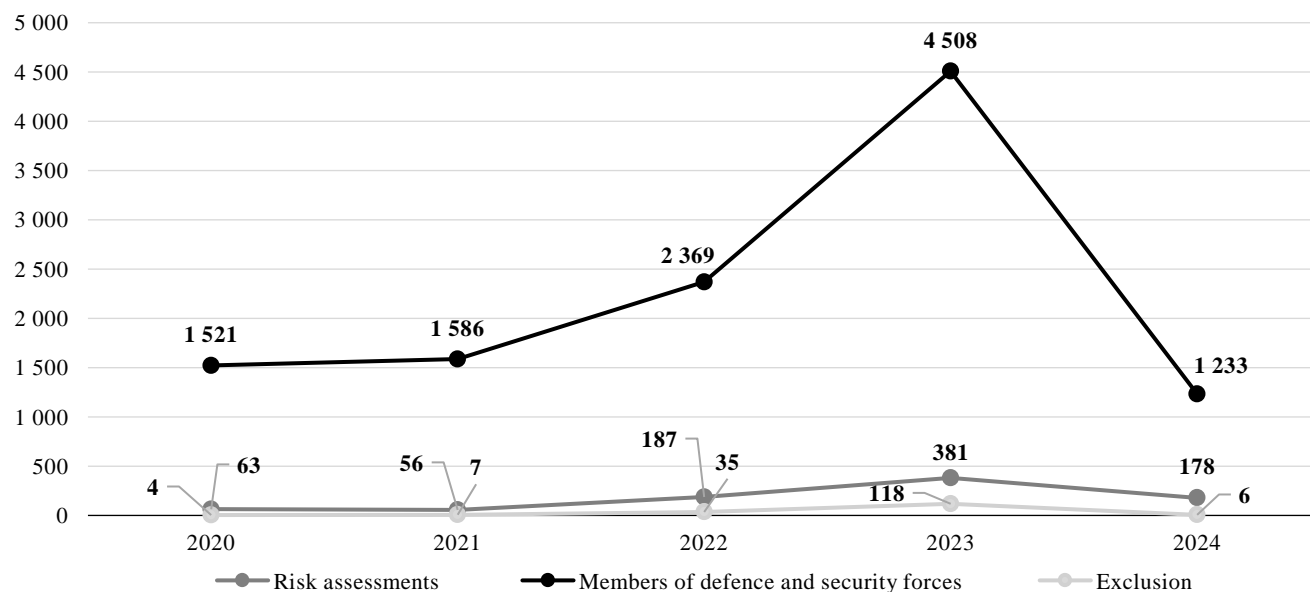
56. Regarding tier II, physical protection of civilians, previous failures in this field continue to tarnish national stakeholder's perceptions of the Mission's ability to implement its protection of civilians mandate. Where previously MINUSCA had overstretched its capacity in an effort to address multiple hotspots, a perceived and/or actual failure to act by units from some troop-contributing countries has also remained embedded in people's minds. Since then, the Mission has emphasized protection through mobile force projection, as well as increasing support to national authorities. This has led to the closure of many of the long-standing temporary operating bases. Although these were difficult to sustain, they had provided protection to local populations and allowed for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. Their departure results in a security vacuum, and this has led local communities to request the Mission to maintain temporary operating bases in their areas.

57. Tier III, the creation of a protective environment, mobilizes several of the Mission's components to assist national authorities on human rights, security sector reform, justice and corrections, child protection and women's protection. Human

²¹ Tangible results of engagement with State actors and non-State armed groups included the identification and release of 42 children (30 boys and 12 girls) between 2022 and 2023.

rights monitoring and assistance is also essential in enabling support to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and internal security forces in meeting their protection prerogatives.²² Despite difficulties in thoroughly applying the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, this can mitigate risks and positively influence the beneficiaries' behaviour. The policy is thus best understood as a tool to reconcile the mandates to support human rights and provide assistance to non-United Nations forces.

Figure II
Support extended by the Mission to defence and security forces



Source: MINUSCA.

Note: Since 2020, a total of 11,217 members of defence and security forces have been screened through 865 risk assessments, leading to the exclusion of a total of 170 members of the defence and security forces owing to their involvement in human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. A majority of the requests for support were related to the provision of transport, joint operations, training and the deployment of defence and security forces in the regions.

58. Although the Government's commitments to uphold human rights and international humanitarian law are welcome, instances of violations and abuses are on the rise, while impunity and the lack of accountability continue to be a serious challenge.²³ MINUSCA had been given a robust mandate on the rule of law, stemming from comprehensive support to the justice system and institutions, including the newly established military system. Its support has also been crucial to strengthen the criminal justice chain in support of a coordinated approach to the deployment of internal security forces, corrections officers and magistrates to reinforce the capacity of the State to investigate and prosecute crimes throughout the country. Moreover, under the urgent temporary measures, and at the request of Central African Republic

²² The number of incidents and victims of violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law continued to increase every year. From July 2022 to June 2023, MINUSCA documented 2,091 human rights violations and abuses and serious violations of international humanitarian law (compared with 1,217 in the previous reporting period), affecting a total of 4,676 victims (compared with 3,222 in the previous reporting period), of whom 1,230 had been subjected to multiple violations. Among the victims, 65 per cent were men (3,018), 10 per cent were boys (464), 8 per cent were women (382) and 5 per cent were girls (250). Some 4 per cent of victims were groups of collective victims.

²³ See enclosure II.

prosecutors, MINUSCA police can complement the investigation capabilities of the internal security forces, including and through support to the Joint Rapid Response Unit to Prevent Sexual Violence against Women and Children. Finally, the Special Criminal Court has been reliant upon comprehensive support from the United Nations for its establishment and for its functioning.

Extension of State authority

59. The extension of State authority was raised repeatedly during discussions with national counterparts as it remains a priority for the Government. It is also a priority task in the Mission's mandate and its political strategy, which recognizes that the end state for United Nations peacekeeping in the Central African Republic implies the "re-establishment of effective democratic institutions, including progress towards sustainable decentralized State administration".²⁴

60. Security Council resolution 2709 (2023) elevates support for the extension of State authority, the deployment of security forces and the preservation of territorial integrity to priority tasks. As with previous resolutions, it also places the lead and ownership for this squarely on the Government's shoulders. This signals the Council's desire to accelerate the fulfilment of sovereign prerogatives, in line with the 2017 National Strategy for the Restoration of State Authority, developed with the support of MINUSCA. Within the Mission, extension of State authority activities stretch across the substantive and the Mission support sides, as well as the civilian and uniformed components, underscoring the need for thorough coordination processes.²⁵ The emphasis put on supporting the extension of State authority has also increased the workload of the regional offices and highlighted the need to realign human and financial resources within the Mission to further support them.

61. The same Security Council resolution places a strong emphasis on the deployment of the State's uniformed and civilian personnel across the country. Security sector reform and the redeployment of the security forces of the Central African Republic – Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, internal security forces and border guards – is a major priority for the authorities of the Central African Republic. Support from MINUSCA has been focused on the development of a strategic security sector reform framework for the re-operationalization of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, including the 2017 national security sector reform strategy, its related defence plan, and oversight mechanisms for the security sector. It has also provided technical and logistical support to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic during coordinated operations. These different layers of support are split between the Security Sector Reform Unit (strategic) and the force (operational). This means that, at times, the efforts can be at odds with each other. The review team noted a potential contradiction between the emphasis in the mandate to support the rapid extension of vetted and trained security forces and longer-term objectives to sustainably maintain such operationalization, by enhancing command and control structures and oversight mechanisms, which are included in other tasks related to security sector reform.

62. The Armed Forces of the Central African Republic also received complementary support from the European Union Training Mission (EUTM), as well as training and

²⁴ MINUSCA Political Strategy 2023–2028.

²⁵ While this coordination seems to be working well at the sector level, facilitated by the delegation of authority granted to heads of offices, there continues to be concerns about the current lack of clarity in the chain of command and approval process for delocalized resource management. This lack of clarity poses challenges to efficient decision-making and resource allocation that is sometimes further compounded by inconsistent communication between the field offices and Headquarters.

operational assistance from other security personnel. These different strains have complicated internal and external coordination. Externally, in the absence of a government lead on coordination, the Mission has established international coordination groups on defence and internal security, but the other security personnel are not represented and coordination of support to the army remains limited. The resulting lack of transparency around the activities of the other security personnel has been a disincentive for security sector reform donors. A credible plan by the authorities of the Central African Republic that addresses this could encourage some partners to unfreeze their support. It would also provide a basis for resource mobilization, to foster coordination among existing partners and to seek engagement from new ones. Without this leading role from the authorities of the Central African Republic, the Mission's ability to deliver on security sector reform, a central pillar of its contribution to a sustainable extension of State authority, will remain limited.

63. Similarly, the MINUSCA police component is working with the internal security forces to enhance its capabilities. Unlike with the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, the single component provides strategic, operational and capacity-building support. External coordination on police reform is more transparent and MINUSCA is implementing projects in partnership with UNDP, other United Nations agencies funds and programmes, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), including through the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law framework. Working-level exchanges take place with the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) to exchange information but there is a lack of capacity to ensure effective national coordination of support to the internal security forces.

64. A stronger trilateral partnership between the State, MINUSCA, and accountable international partners would assist in the professionalization of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and internal security forces. This would help to create the conditions for the sustainable deployment of national security forces, allowing the Mission to draw down. Unless national forces are adequately prepared to maintain stability and security, thereby avoiding a security vacuum that could be exploited by proxies or armed groups, there is a real risk of a relapse into conflict. This strategic partnership should create a seamless transition where the State can independently uphold law and order, preserving the MINUSCA legacy and contributing to long-term peace and stability in the region.

65. On the deployment of territorial administration and other civil servants, the Mission continues to accompany the gradual return of prefects and sub-prefects to localities that are stabilized. There are currently 5,007 civil servants (77 per cent) present in the field compared with 6,500 deployed before the 2013 crisis. They were 1,315 in 2015 and 3,500 in 2017. The number of functioning courts throughout the country increased from 12 to 24 between 2019 and 2024 and the number of operational prisons from 9 to 15 during the same period. The upcoming local elections, planned for October 2024, present an opportunity to further extend State authority to the local level. They also provide an opening for some actors to contest for political power through the "ballot rather than the bullet". These have been envisaged since 2016 and the Government expressed a strong aspiration to hold the local elections with or without international financial support. The latter has not been forthcoming and electoral arrangements remain underfunded, despite pledges from the Government and partners. Preparations for the elections are already behind schedule, and the voter registration that was due to start in February 2024 has not yet commenced.

66. The return of State authority has been facilitated by the Mission's ability to support infrastructure rehabilitation and other work that expedited the provision of basic services. The Mission has innovatively used a variety of tools to implement this

rehabilitation work, including community violence reduction programmes. Between 2022 and 2024, MINUSCA has built, rehabilitated and equipped, through community violence reduction programmes and other funding streams, at least 18 security forces premises, including the military training camp in Camp Kasai and the Operational Centre of the National Gendarmerie in Bangui. It has also rehabilitated civilian infrastructure, such as offices of local authorities, clinics, schools and prisons, and provided training and/or employment for 37,145 beneficiaries (23,692 men and 13,453 women).²⁶ With a 2024 budget of \$8.5 million, community violence reduction programming provides the Mission with a flexible and reactive tool that can help to hold the ground while further peacebuilding and development activities are prepared. Notwithstanding these initiatives, current efforts on extension of State authority remain fragile due to challenges related to coordination, logistics, funding and the absence of solid partnerships with development actors. They are thus difficult to sustain.

Good offices and support to the peace process

67. In accordance with Security Council resolution [2709 \(2023\)](#), the good offices mandate emphasizes engagement in support of reconciliation, national dialogue, electoral processes and constitutional dialogues. It also encompasses extending State authority, enhancing disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and community violence reduction processes, and promoting the inclusion of women and youth, all of which are crucial for sustainable peace. Significantly, the current mandate underscores the importance of integrating the women and peace and security agenda into operations, advocating for the active participation of women in peace processes and decision-making, thus ensuring more sustainable and inclusive peace outcomes.

68. Across the board, stakeholders acknowledged the effective collaboration between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the African Union, ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Regional actors appreciated the role that MINUSCA played and underscored the validity and relevance of the Mission's contribution to good offices. Some civil society actors noted that the Mission's good offices mandate required constant buy-in from the Government. They voiced concerns that this had resulted in MINUSCA having a less outspoken stance on sensitive issues such as human rights. Others expressed their appreciation of the "quiet diplomacy" approach taken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, which had produced positive results. Conversely, some national authorities saw good offices as infringing on their sovereignty and felt that it detracted from their priority of extending State authority. Some international partners noted that more regular meetings with the diplomatic community, under the lead of MINUSCA, could facilitate the alignment of efforts in support of good offices.

69. Since the Mission was set up, good offices have remained a priority task, shifting from crisis response to supporting political stability and addressing the root causes of conflict. The Mission navigated the implementation of its good offices mandate in a context where several other regional and continental actors retained the lead on the peace process. The Mission successfully leveraged its comparative advantage, stemming from its multidimensional nature and its large footprint, to accompany the peace process. In that context, it provided significant support to

²⁶ These are particularly welcomed by the authorities in Bangui and the provinces for providing opportunities for combatants who are not eligible to join the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process and community members at risk of recruitment. Community violence reduction programmes have, in many cases, supported highly visible and appreciated infrastructure development, as well as income-generating activities. As such, they not only help to secure an area, they also provide quick wins in terms of stabilization.

effectively operationalize the mediation and dialogue components of various peace initiatives, including through technical assistance. It also helped to achieve political progress, by reconnecting local and national-level dialogues. These include brokering local peace agreements or setting up follow-up mechanisms, many of which were later re-hatted into the Prefectural Implementation Committee and the Technical Security Committee, which are the local-level monitoring and follow-up architecture of the current Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

70. MINUSCA also plays a central role in supporting the implementation of the peace process through a viable disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, which remains one of the most critical elements to ensure the sustainability of political efforts by providing alternative livelihoods to combatants. The Mission helped to launch the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme in late 2018, targeting Political Agreement signatory groups (see enclosure I) and have actively supported this since. They have used disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and community violence reduction initiatives in a complementary manner to target different caseloads of combatants and persons at risk of recruitment, support communities from which combatants come or may return to and provide “peace dividends” that increase participation. The combined use of community violence reduction and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation initiatives has also allowed for greater women’s participation overall as community violence reduction initiatives can provide support to women who want to avoid disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programmes and the social stigma of being associated with an armed group. Efforts should be made to bring the remaining armed movements into the peace process, which would require an extension of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. While most of the 4,429 participants (4,147 men and 282 women) in the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process²⁷ have received reintegration support, their effective return to civilian life remains conditioned on available economic opportunities, which are currently few and far between.

71. The mandate on good offices, coupled with comprehensive support to peace processes, will continue to be of the utmost relevance in assisting the Central African Republic to navigate challenges to peace in a consensual way. It will also ensure progress on implementation of the Political Agreement and support to ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Enhancing the Mission’s effectiveness

Engagement with the host State

72. The consent of the host State remains a key parameter to leverage peacekeeping efforts. As such, the quality of the relationship between MINUSCA and the authorities of the Central African Republic has a strong impact on the Mission’s ability to operate effectively. There was consensus that this relation is excellent. In particular, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General was singled out by many for having built solid ties with the national authorities.

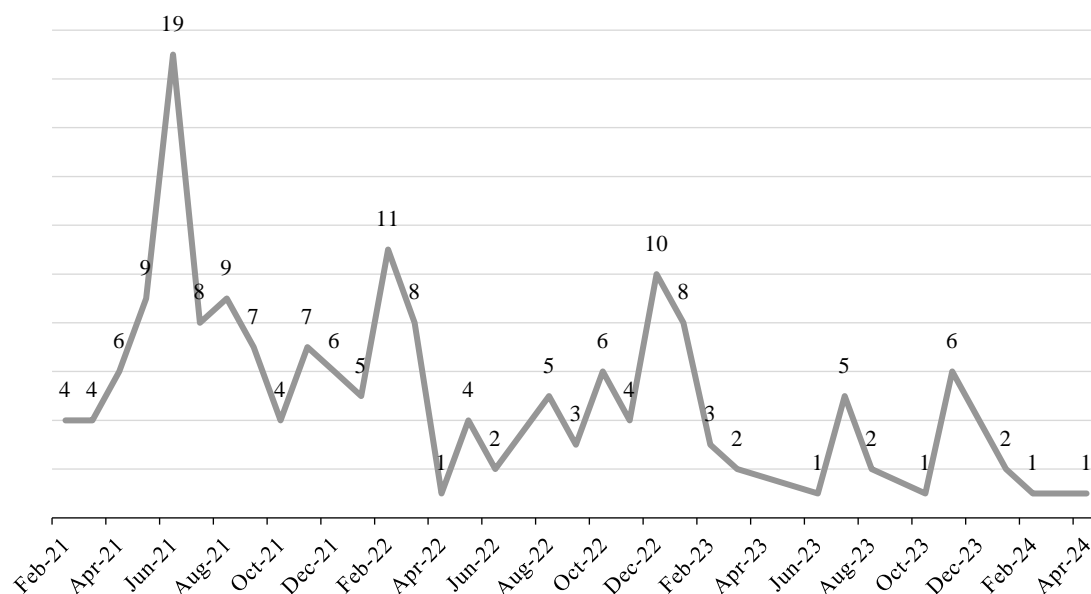
²⁷ Further combatants are said to have been demobilized in parallel processes run by other security personnel, although this remains opaque and has reportedly not been accompanied by reintegration, raising questions as to how sustainable such activities are.

73. The authorities of the Central African Republic have, however, expressed the desire to review the terms of the status-of-forces agreement.²⁸ A key demand is a revision of the regime of tax exemption applied to the Mission and its subcontractors. This is connected to the Government's nascent strategy to increase tax revenue.²⁹ In particular, there was a demand that tax exemption be lifted on the Mission's import of fuel and other goods and to prioritize local purchasing.

74. At the operational level, violations of the status-of-forces agreement continue to be an impediment to the Mission's effectiveness, affecting freedom of movement, situational awareness and the security of peacekeepers. Cases of obstructions to movement including those of patrols and for the deployment of civilian personnel have been recorded. The impact of these violations is significant because they tend to occur where protection needs are critical, thus undermining the Mission's ability to respond pre-emptively or quickly to protection of civilians concerns. The Government's decision to restrict the use of unmanned aerial vehicles³⁰ and the seizure of MINUSCA unmanned aerial vehicles and related equipment by the Government and other security personnel undermines situational awareness, critically limits the operational capabilities of peacekeeping forces and increases the security risk to them. This impacts their ability to fully implement their mandate in support of the Government.

Figure III

Status-of-forces agreement violations impacting MINUSCA



Source: MINUSCA.

²⁸ The status-of-forces agreement defines the legal agreement between the host State and the United Nations, including on the application of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. This is of the remit of the General Assembly.

²⁹ The review also collected allegations indicating that some economic operators – both contractors for the Mission and resellers in the country – might be benefiting from the tax exemptions connected to goods imported for MINUSCA and reselling them on the markets. No proof was submitted to corroborate these allegations.

³⁰ Decree enacted in December 2023.

Mission footprint

75. In the light of the improved security situation in Bangui, national and other counterparts are calling for MINUSCA to adopt a less militarized stance, to reflect the reality of a gradual return to normalcy. This would also allow MINUSCA to support the internal security forces in reasserting their role as internal security providers. It could also align with the Mission's objectives of a gradual transfer of certain security tasks, such as the protection of key officials or static guard duties of national institutions, to the security forces of the Central African Republic.

76. The review found that multiple partners are providing protection to officials and national institutions of the Central African Republic. To maximize resources, MINUSCA should reassign their personnel from these duplicative security roles in the capital to more needed areas in the provinces, while ensuring rapid response capabilities for emergencies remain intact. In addition, a re-evaluation of the Bangui Joint Task Force is suggested, with a view to separating the military and police elements, to allow each component to re-task its personnel as best required.

77. Mission effectiveness would also benefit from a similar reassignment of civilian personnel away from the capital to the provinces. At present 69 per cent of staff are located in Bangui against 31 per cent in the field, despite the Mission's work to reduce the imbalance. These efforts are however hampered by administrative rules that limit staff mobility, even within the Mission area, making it both administratively difficult and financially costly to reposition personnel. The difficult working environment in the Central African Republic in general, but especially in the field offices, is a further disincentive to personnel relocating to the "deep field". Conversely, some stakeholders underscored that the lack of mobility may negatively affect the performance and well-being of staff in the field. In a staffing review conducted in the second half of 2023, it was found that there is a need for a mobile and agile workforce that can travel to hotspots. However, there are limited enablers, such as: sufficient accommodation to support staff deployment to field offices; a flight schedule facilitating agile movement between field offices; and surge teams to backstop and ensure business continuity when staff go on rest and recuperation.

78. The Mission Support Division in MINUSCA is significantly smaller than in similar peace operations.³¹ The component was already stretched by the 2021 increase of 2,750 troops and 940 police. This was not accompanied by additional civilian personnel, to properly manage the higher numbers of uniformed personnel. As the Mission reconfigures, the support component might be further taxed. While the Mission Support Division has adapted and digitalized many processes to try to compensate for these low levels of staffing, this still has a cost in terms of staff retention, and the realm of what can be done using current resources is likely to reach its limits.

79. Finally, staff noted that, as the Mission outgrew its headquarters, its presence in Bangui had been spread across different compounds, reducing the ability of staff to interact. Interlocutors claimed that this disincentivizes integration and coordination, in particular between civilian and uniformed personnel. In field locations, it was reported that institutional coordination mechanisms work to varying degrees and are bolstered by informal coordination that, in turn, is facilitated by greater co-location.

Integrated planning and coordination

80. The review team noted several positive steps taken by the Mission regarding integrated planning and coordination, including the development of key strategic

³¹ For example, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali had five Regional Administrative Officers for 5 regions, while MINUSCA has five for 11 regions.

documents, such as the Mission's political strategy and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. These are aligned with the Mission's plan and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System framework, which remains instrumental to accurately capture the Mission's impact and enhance accountability.

81. The establishment of a Joint Mission Planning Unit with embedded military and police planners was key in strengthening integrated planning mechanisms and promoting digitization efforts across components. However, several challenges remain in breaking long-standing habits of working in silos. This is particularly evident in operational planning, where the level of integration, and more specifically the extent to which civilian colleagues are involved in military and police planning, is uneven. Continued support from the Mission's leadership is needed to advance integration.

Overcoming operational challenges

82. The MINUSCA operational environment is characterized by difficult terrain and major impediments to ground movements. These include vast distances, the absence of decent road and bridge infrastructure, a long rainy season and severe floods. Ground transport over two thirds of the territory is restricted for eight months of the year due to the rains. Specialized vehicles and skill sets are required even in the dry periods due to the poor road conditions. In the west of the country, the growing use of explosive ordnance on main transport routes further compounds these challenges.

83. In this context, the deployment of ground forces is slow and cumbersome. Mobility challenges continue to affect the Mission's ability to implement several priority mandated activities, such as patrolling or rapidly responding to protection of civilians threats, documenting abuses and conducting human rights investigations. Mobility challenges also affect the safety and security of peacekeepers, including casualty and medical evacuations.

84. The Mission is working to address these major logistical and transport challenges, and the provision of adequate engineering and air assets will be important for it to overcome some of these difficulties. In the context of the integration of protection of civilians into the concept of force projection, air assets also represent fundamental enablers to react to a dynamic and changing environment with emerging threats in areas where the Mission does not have a presence. However, difficulties in generating these capabilities continue to negatively impact on the Mission's ability to deliver on its mandate.

Strategic communications

85. Clear and open communication is essential for fostering a cooperative environment that supports the mission's objectives and helps to promote lasting peace. The review team frequently heard of incidents suggesting the involvement of Mission staff in various contentious situations. In some cases, they were outdated, in others, the interlocutor failed to back them up with any evidence. Yet, they continue to be repeated and to harm the Mission. Over the past years, the Mission has been the target of several misinformation and disinformation campaigns, leading to misunderstandings with communities and the host State and having a negative impact on its image and credibility.

86. An example of a long-standing communication challenge is around the United Nations sanctions regime. During consultations, several national stakeholders, including senior authorities, decried the arms embargo imposed on the country under the sanctions regime established pursuant to Security Council resolution [2127](#)

(2013).³² Further to the request of the Government to lift the arms embargo, the Security Council granted successive easing, and in 2023 the notification requirements were lifted on the supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel and the provision of assistance, advice and training to the security forces of the Central African Republic.³³ Despite these changes made by the Security Council, it became evident that the narrative about the embargo harming the country had not changed.

87. Besides countering mis- and disinformation, strategic communication can play an important role in building trust and facilitating dialogue. Through targeted campaigns to disseminate accurate and verified information, it can prevent tensions and promote the Mission's work. Managing expectations about what the peacekeeping operation can realistically achieve is crucial to maintain the Mission's credibility and legitimacy.

Economic dividends

88. Peacekeeping operations are large and expensive but have also repeatedly been shown to offer value for money. During consultations, national and international stakeholders frequently made the comparison between the Mission's budget, and the national budget. At \$1.2 billion per year, the former is more than twice that of the national budget of the Central African Republic. Such high costs are often unavoidable when operating in an environment where national infrastructure and other capacities are inadequate or inexistent. The allocation of such substantial resources by the General Assembly of the United Nations demonstrates a robust commitment to aiding the Central African Republic, but it also raises expectations and questions on how it is or should be spent, and what the Mission would leave behind after such a massive investment. National counterparts often queried the economic dividends of such an investment for the country. In particular, they asked how MINUSCA procurement and operations could better benefit local businesses and how its physical implantation could be revisited from temporary accommodations using prefabricated buildings to more durable infrastructure that would eventually benefit the country once the Mission departs.

89. The Mission's operations already provide important dividends. For example, it facilitates national authorities' travel to the provinces which is a low priority in the mandate but one MINUSCA has always supported as it helps to manifest State extension. The Mission's presence contributes to the local economy through the recruitment of national staff, the drive for real estate (including privately to accommodate mission personnel) and its local procurement activities benefit local businesses.³⁴ However, the review identified a prevailing sentiment that MINUSCA could do more, including by increasing the share of goods purchased locally. Towards the same goal, suggestions were also made for a review of the status-of-forces agreement, although this is not within the Mission's prerogatives.

90. While keeping in mind that a peacekeeping operation's main objective is to support stabilization efforts, this review would strongly recommend a switch from the "templates" mindset to systematically integrate the notion of a "positive legacy". For MINUSCA, this shift would also align with increased emphasis on building national

³² This had required, among other things, advance notification of weapons transfers or sales to the national security services, something that the authorities said harmed their ability to build up the security services.

³³ See Security Council resolution [2693 \(2023\)](#)

³⁴ At the time of writing, MINUSCA employs 593 national staff, and another 43 people are under recruitment. Moreover, about 1,060 personnel work as contractors and another 200 as daily workers. On the drive for real estate to accommodate Mission staff, this also comes with perverse effects such as a high cost of living, and that of pushing Central Africans towards neighbourhoods in more peripheral areas.

capacities and enhancing national ownership. Concretely, this would mean prioritizing local procurement and supply chains. Where not feasible, the Mission, together with the United Nations country team, should continue to invest in business seminars for local vendors to increase opportunities as well as the competitiveness of local producers within the United Nations Global Marketplace. Expectations will have to be managed as strategic goods and services in support of the Mission's operations will continue to be procured by United Nations Headquarters in New York.

91. Accommodation in the field should be built in durable material, which has been assessed to be more cost effective in the long term and more respectful of the environment.³⁵ The use of generators should be replaced by environmentally friendly solutions such as solar systems. The Mission has already commenced a gradual shift along these lines, for instance, with accommodation using Hydraform interlocking blocks and producing energy through alternative means. Where possible, these pilot initiatives should be promoted and expanded.

92. The review team is cognizant that a systemic move towards these sustainable solutions in the Central African Republic or in other Missions represents a significant shift in terms of entrenched processes and ways of doing business. The review team acknowledges the cash crunch and the need to show value for money. In some cases, the changes suggested could result in some savings as compared with "business as usual". Where it may be easier or cheaper to maintain current processes, the cost benefit calculation around these systemic changes should not just be monetary. Their political benefit should also be factored into the decision-making process.

V. Consolidation of efforts with the United Nations country team

93. The review team received positive feedback regarding integration efforts between MINUSCA and the United Nations country team. These could be enhanced to avoid duplication as well as perceptions of internal competition, thus achieving greater impact. During consultations, national stakeholders regularly partnering with the United Nations questioned the effectiveness of the notion of "One United Nations".³⁶ Another pivotal aspect of integration is the sharing of resources and expertise between MINUSCA and the United Nations country team. This collaboration could mirror the synergies created elsewhere, where shared training programmes on conflict sensitivity and human rights significantly enhanced the capabilities of both the peacekeeping mission and the United Nations agencies.³⁷ By promoting similar exchanges, MINUSCA can leverage the specialized knowledge of United Nations country team members in areas such as health, education and governance, thereby enhancing the Mission's overall impact.

94. The Peacebuilding Fund was mentioned as an important vector of integration, and for pushing the humanitarian, development and peace triple nexus. Ongoing discussions in the Fifth Committee for the allocation of assessed funding to the Peacebuilding Fund were welcomed. If this is approved, entities such as the Special Criminal Court could be encouraged to apply for funding from the Peacebuilding Fund, thus enhancing their sustainability and autonomy.

³⁵ Department of Operational Support and Department of Peace Operations, Comprehensive Logistics Transportation Assessment Report, 2023.

³⁶ A successful example of joint integration is Liberia where integrated planning and coordination led to a seamless transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

³⁷ United Nations Security Council, "Report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)", <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmik>.

95. It is essential to acknowledge that many of the requests from national partners for support on development related initiatives fall outside of the scope of a peacekeeping operation. In the absence of other contributing actors, MINUSCA has often stepped in primarily through community violence reduction and quick-impact projects. However, the United Nations country team is better placed to address these development tasks. After the Government, they are the main partner that should stand up and take over from a peace operation when it draws down or is planning to do so. In the Central African Republic, both the United Nations country team and donors are currently far from able to do so, largely due to a lack of funding but also due to security concerns in some regions. Ensuring an effective handover of tasks, by MINUSCA requires a sustainable increase in their capacity and funding as well as a long-term commitment by agencies, funds, programmes and donors to take forward the Mission's work. This must be taken into account when considering any change or adaptation of MINUSCA mandate. United Nations country team members admitted that they are currently unable to assume many of the Mission's relevant tasks. Nor are they able to expand their work without the Mission's enabling presence.

96. The National Development Plan, expected to be published in the third quarter of 2024, presents an opportunity for donors to bolster their support for development, and to align this support behind national priorities. In addition, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, jointly developed with the Government, provides a road map to harmonize efforts on sustainable development. Adequate funding from donors to fully operationalize these frameworks is crucial to ensure a comprehensive approach to the nation's recovery and development. Without this, Member State's substantial investment in the Mission over the last decade will likely yield few long-term benefits for the Central African Republic and the region.

VI. Increased partnership with regional and multilateral organizations

97. The authorities of the Central African Republic conveyed their appreciation of the region's role, which they view as complementary to the MINUSCA stabilization efforts. In addition to previous stabilization work by ECCAS, members of the regional block have also led several mediation initiatives for the crisis in the Central African Republic. On several occasions they have provided punctual financial relief to the Central African Republic to allow the Government to meet its obligations and pay salaries of civil servants.

98. The involvement of the member States of ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, through their constructive role, will continue to be essential, not only for stability in the Central African Republic, but also to prevent and address cross-border challenges with potential regional implications. Mechanisms such as the mixed commissions could help to address regional challenges, while the operationalization of the tripartite force between the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan to support conflict prevention and management in the region remains pending and is increasingly challenged by the current circumstances in the Sudan.

99. The European Union has also been a strong supporter of the Central African Republic, primarily through its two training missions, EUTM, which has been working with the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, and EUAM, which has been working with the internal security forces. These were deployed further to a request from the Government of the Central African Republic. Concerns over the presence of the other security personnel led EUTM to suspend the operational training pillar of its work in November 2021, although it continued to develop the human

resource management and logistics capacity of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic. It was understood that the European Union has also frozen all disbursements of budgetary support to the Central African Republic although they have provided some of the only external funding for the organization of elections.

VII. Planning for a phased transition

100. Security Council resolution 2709 (2023) requested the review to provide “recommendations for a possible transition plan and eventual drawdown of MINUSCA when conditions are met”. Looking at lessons from other peacekeeping contexts, the successful transition and drawdown of a peace operation requires a political consensus between the host country, the Security Council, the Secretariat and peacekeeping stakeholders on the minimum requirements for the transfer of tasks to national authorities and their partners.³⁸ This can be envisaged when peacekeeping stabilization efforts are gradually matched with the growing capacity of national stakeholders to sustainably and peacefully resolve conflicts and when State institutions can minimally function.

101. When discussing a potential transition and drawdown of MINUSCA, the review noted several key considerations that should guide the collective reflection, as follows:

(a) There was no request from the host State for a transition, drawdown or withdrawal, but rather an “adaptation” of MINUSCA to contribute more towards security, early recovery and development efforts;

(b) All stakeholders agreed on the fragility of current stabilization gains and the remaining challenges to peace and security, including emerging ones on the borders of the Central African Republic. MINUSCA maintains undeniable relevance, despite the presence of other security personnel and their contribution to security;

(c) National institutions currently lack the capacity to take over core tasks from MINUSCA. Developing those capacities and sustaining a minimal institutional foundation will require engagements and partnerships beyond peacekeeping;

(d) Given the volatile environment in the Central African Republic, continuous monitoring of the security situation and conflict dynamics is crucial to avoid a relapse into conflict;

(e) At present, conditions on the ground do not justify a drawdown of MINUSCA in the short to medium term. Despite this, the current geopolitical context and the peacekeeping template are not conducive to sustained multilateral actions.

102. It is the review’s assessment that the Central African Republic is at a crossroads. While the country is on an encouraging path to stabilization, the risk of a potential relapse remains. The 2024–2026 local, regional, legislative and presidential elections might be a useful indicator of the path that the nation chooses. The peaceful, transparent and fair conduct of these elections could confirm or establish institutions at national and local levels and be an important step in restoring local democratic

³⁸ In Haiti, the Security Council’s decision to draw down the United Nations peace operation in 2017 came amid budgetary pressures, when conditions on the ground for a successful transfer were still unmet. The result of this rushed drawdown is a relapse into conflict, which negates the heavy financial, political and human investment in the previous operations, and will now require greater financial commitments to sustainably address. In Mali, the host State’s abrupt demand to end an operation it felt no longer aligned with its vision on peace and security priorities is mostly the consequence of a broken dialogue between the Security Council, the Secretariat, peacekeeping stakeholders and national authorities.

governance while facilitating the extension of State authority. They could encourage the partners of the Central African Republic to remain engaged and support peacebuilding and development efforts. However, if they are seen as flawed and the elected authorities are considered to lack legitimacy, this could jeopardize stabilization gains and the United Nations position as an advocate of peaceful and fair transitions may put it at loggerheads with the authorities in the Central African Republic. The latter could also adopt a more demanding posture, particularly vis-à-vis their expectation of an “adaptation” of the Mission.

103. When laying out parameters for a phased transition, this report assumes that the upcoming 2024–2026 elections will be peaceful. With this in mind, by 2026, MINUSCA and the elected authorities should initiate discussions on a potential transition plan, with a clear timeline, a gradual transfer of responsibilities checked against benchmarks and commitments from the host State, the United Nations country team and other partners. Once the political notion of a transition plan is agreed with the host State, the development of such a plan could be supported by a detailed technical assessment that is beyond the scope and expertise of the current independent strategic review.

104. The Mission should begin to adopt a transition mindset and integrate a self-sustainability component in all its activities. This includes enhancing capacity-building activities across uniformed and civilian sections, through co-location or embedding of the Mission’s expertise with national counterparts, to help to boost the pool of available and qualified human resources. The Mission should also start a gradual reconfiguration of its military and civilian footprint, as outlined in previous sections. Here, consideration should be given to a two-speed approach with a coordinated regional “drawdown” of Mission assets in areas where the conditions allow, and a shifting of these assets to the regions where peace is still to be consolidated. A reduction of the MINUSCA presence and footprint from a particular region should be coordinated in advance with State authorities to ensure that the withdrawal is matched with the required capabilities by the State and/or the United Nations country team. The Mission’s approach to mandate implementation and allocation of resources should support building a positive legacy in line with the nation’s strategy for economic recovery.

105. Experiences clearly demonstrate that the consequences of a premature and poorly sequenced withdrawal of peacekeeping operations are profound, impacting security, political stability, humanitarian conditions, and development prospects. It is essential that withdrawals are carefully planned and coordinated, adhering to a well-defined sequence that ensures the sustainability of political gains, the protection of civilians and continued support for development initiatives. This principle is especially pertinent to the Central African Republic, where the strategic drawdown of MINUSCA must be executed with the utmost care to avoid undermining the fragile gains made thus far.

VIII. Observations

106. The achievements of MINUSCA in the Central African Republic over the years are commendable, showcasing significant progress in conflict resolution, community protection, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and community violence reduction. Thirteen conflicts were resolved through 119 local committees with 590 volunteers, while 78 Community Alert Networks and 132 Community Protection Plans have been established, engaging 4,000 volunteers. Efforts included informing 200 women about the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signing local peace agreements and

supporting Political Agreement monitoring mechanisms. In 2023, over \$1 million was allocated to support the redeployment of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, and significant human rights training was conducted. Security sector reform saw the building and equipping of facilities, while efforts on the rule of law contributed to a doubling of the number of operational courts to 24 and an increase in the number of prisons to 15. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and community violence reduction programmes demobilized 4,429 combatants from 2018 to 2024, benefiting 28,049 individuals, including 1,276 children who were separated from armed groups. Beyond its mandate, MINUSCA undertook extensive infrastructure projects, constructing and repairing 123 bridges, building airstrips and helicopter landing sites, and completing 460 kilometres of roads from 2019 to 2024.

107. Despite these commendable achievements, the Mission operates amid a challenging and often hostile context, compounded by a lack of coordination from local authorities regarding the presence and activities of other security personnel. MINUSCA frequently faces violations of the status-of-forces agreement, including imposed no-fly zones and night flight bans that severely hinder logistical operations and emergency response capabilities. The confiscation of unmanned aerial vehicles by the host Government further complicates surveillance and intelligence-gathering efforts, crucial for maintaining security and monitoring conflict zones. The Mission also contends with the interception and delay of essential products and equipment destined for MINUSCA, ranging from medical supplies to critical communication tools. These disruptions not only impede operational efficiency but also put the lives of peacekeepers and civilians at greater risk. Staff members often face bureaucratic obstacles and undue scrutiny from host authorities, complicating their ability to carry out daily tasks and undermining their morale. Moreover, MINUSCA is targeted by disinformation campaigns aimed at discrediting its efforts and fostering distrust among the local population. These campaigns, often propagated through social media and local networks, spread false narratives about the Mission's intentions and actions, exacerbating tensions and complicating community engagement efforts.

108. With regard to human rights, it is crucial to acknowledge the ongoing efforts without diminishing the gravity of the situation. The political process still requires robust support for it to succeed. Human rights are universal principles, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and upheld by all Member States. This universal commitment is especially vital in the Central African Republic, where advancements in human rights are directly linked to fostering peace and stability. Progress in this area not only supports the well-being of the population but also strengthens the overall political and social fabric of the nation.

109. MINUSCA has the potential to be a highly successful Mission, but this requires concerted action at various levels. The success of MINUSCA depends significantly on the conditions set for its operation. It is essential for the Government of the Central African Republic to develop a coherent vision for peace and stability that takes into account the Mission and to mobilize adequate international support around this. The Government must actively coordinate with MINUSCA so that the latter can provide the necessary support and align its activities with national priorities.

110. The Mission itself, along with the United Nations Secretariat, must strive to move away from entrenched practices. Transparency about the challenges faced, particularly those related to force generation, is critical for the effectiveness of the Mission and the success of its performance. Clear communication and openness at all levels and between all parties can build trust and foster more robust support from international stakeholders.

111. Regional actors, such as the African Union, ECCAS, and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, also play a crucial role and must work more synergistically to support the Mission. Their cooperation and active participation are vital in addressing cross-border issues and enhancing regional stability, which directly impacts the Mission's success.

112. Furthermore, the Security Council and international partners must provide unwavering political support and adequate funding. The Security Council must affirm its primary responsibility for ensuring international peace and security by leveraging all efforts for the success of peacekeeping missions. It must present a unified voice on key issues concerning peace and security, in particular those that directly affect host countries where peacekeeping operations are present. As the central tool reflecting the commitment and solidarity of the international community in pursuit of peace, the Council's unified stance is crucial. International partners are called upon to step in with political support and necessary resources, ensuring that MINUSCA has the means to effectively fulfil its mandate.

113. Without a unified approach and consistent support at all levels, efforts on the ground are likely to falter. The Mission serves as an instrument of international support, and its success hinges on the collective commitment and coordinated actions of the government, regional actors, the United Nations and the broader international community.

IX. Recommendations

A. To the Security Council

114. It is recommended that the Security Council:

- (a) Maintain the consensus around the Central African Republic and ensure that divisions within the Council do not undermine the progress in the political process and impede MINUSCA from implementing its mandate;
- (b) Continue to provide political support for good offices in the Central African Republic, promoting regional engagement and accountability;
- (c) Ensure that the prioritization of mandated tasks remains current and that these are in line with the Government's primary needs;
- (d) Review, in consultation with MINUSCA, the "other" and "additional" mandated tasks. Where relevant, facilitate their sequenced handover to the Government and the United Nations country team;
- (e) Guarantee that the mandated tasks are matched with the requisite resources and capabilities to fulfil them;
- (f) Ensure that further discussions on a handover of tasks are informed by a comprehensive technical assessment and that the achievements of the last 10 years are safeguarded;
- (g) Encourage Member States and donors to step up their support for the Central African Republic as a means of sustaining the gains made in peace and security and building a foundation for the eventual handover of Mission tasks;
- (h) Remind all involved of the need to uphold United Nations principles and values especially regarding the promotion of democracy and human rights, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(i) Continue to work with the United Nations Secretariat and other stakeholders to advance reforms that ensure that peacekeeping, as a Security Council tool to promote peace and stability, is fit for purpose;

(j) Initiate reflections on how to promote accountability of private military and security companies, including through the “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework on business and human rights, existing voluntary international codes of conduct and ongoing efforts to promote responsible security practices in situations of armed conflict and other high-risk environments.

B. To the Mission

115. It is recommended that the Mission:

Protection of civilians

(a) Continue communication efforts to explain the Mission’s protection of civilians mandate, the Government’s primary responsibility on protection of civilians and the Mission’s role in support of this;

(b) Enhance focus on protection of civilians tier I, dialogue and engagement (see para. 55 above), and tier III, creation of a protective environment (see para. 57 above), to support the State in assuming its obligation to protect civilians and the country’s territorial integrity;

(c) Ensure that decisions on the reconfiguration of the Mission’s footprint are coordinated and planned with the United Nations country team and national authorities to secure continued protection of civilians;

Extension of State authority

(d) Undertake with the Government and the United Nations country team a thorough assessment of the needs for the extension of State authority in areas that are secure and establish joint plans to meet these needs;

(e) Where the extension of State authority is not possible at present, consider alternative approaches to stabilization and the provision of basic services (for example area-based development coupled with local peace deals) that will support and not undermine future efforts to extend the State into these areas;

(f) Identify and establish, with the Government, the United Nations country team and other partners, the processes required to hand over to them tasks related to the extension of State authority and to sustain the deployment and presence of the administration in the provinces;

(g) Continue to leverage the catalytic potential of quick-impact projects and community violence reduction projects in supporting the extension of State authority;

(h) Enhance capacity-building activities across uniformed and civilian sections, through co-location or embedding, in line with the provisions of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces;

(i) Align operational plans to strategic frameworks for support to the defence and security forces as a part of extension of State authority;

Good offices

(j) Continue the regular and effective engagements with the Government and members of the international community and relevant national actors to communicate regarding the Mission's work and to secure their support;

(k) Expand engagement in dialogue facilitation, ensuring comprehensive stakeholder involvement in political processes, and focus on making the peace process inclusive, in particular for civil society, women, youth and marginalized groups;

(l) Maintain the close cooperation with regional organizations and neighbouring countries to effectively address matters of relevant concern affecting the Central African Republic;

(m) Leverage the expertise and resources of regional partners and United Nations offices to address regional issues that may be an impediment to peace in the Central African Republic;

Mission footprint

(n) Review the Mission's presence to accelerate the redeployment of uniformed and civilian personnel from Bangui to the field offices;

(o) Assess the need for securing key officials and institutions in the light of the role of other forces in this field and consider redeploying Mission assets currently engaged in these activities to other tasks and duty stations;

(p) Implement recommendations from the comprehensive logistics transportation assessment report prepared by the Department of Operational Support and the Department of Peace Operations in 2023 to optimize the Mission's footprint;

Economic dividends

(q) Identify the positive legacy that MINUSCA should leave behind and work to ensure that all activities going forward are planned to sustainably maximize this goal;

(r) Promote more investments in local supply chains and procurement processes that benefit the local economy;

Strategic communications

(s) Continue to engage with the Government on a joint communication framework to inform the population about the Mission's mandate and work;

(t) Promote the inclusion of strategic communications in all Mission activities and planning processes;

Planning for a phased transition

(u) Establish now dedicated capacities to prepare and support transition planning activities and the gradual handover of tasks checked against benchmarks and commitments from the host State, the United Nations country team and other partners;

(v) Initiate, before 2026, discussions with the authorities on a potential transition plan, and update this as required so as to be prepared and able to consolidate the gains made should conditions allow for a drawdown or a request is made for one;

(w) Build a coalition of actors committed to peacebuilding to complement the work of the Mission and work with that coalition to define key tasks and support the mobilization of resources and political will needed.

C. To the host State

116. It is recommended that the host State:

Political and peace process

(a) Remain engaged in the political and peace process and ensure that these are inclusive, with the participation of political actors, civil society, women and youth groups;

(b) Redouble efforts to promote national reconciliation and human rights and to address impunity and other root causes of conflict;

(c) Create a strategic partnership with accountable international actors to support the Central African Republic in independently providing security and guaranteeing the rule of law for its population;

(d) Foster an inclusive and open political dialogue that incorporates all political entities and civil society to support credible and inclusive elections in 2024 and 2025;

(e) Work collaboratively with all parties to establish confidence-building measures, such as transparent voter registration and reliable voting technology well in advance of the elections;

Extension of State authority

(f) Promote increased coherence of military and political strategies;

(g) Ensure adequate coordination and planning with international partners, in particular MINUSCA and the United Nations country team;

(h) Certify that security operations are conducted in line with human rights and international humanitarian law principles;

(i) Verify that security operations are accompanied by measures to sustainably extend the civilian authority of the State;

(j) Strengthen good governance as a part of the extension of State authority and seek the accountability of all State officials;

Strategic communications

(k) Work closely with MINUSCA to establish joint communication frameworks that align the Mission's activities with national priorities and promote mutual understanding;

(l) Enhance the capabilities of national and local government officials in strategic communication, focusing on public engagement, media relations and crisis communication;

Natural resource management

(m) Implement sustainable natural resource management systems that would increase State revenue and promote equitable redistribution of wealth.

D. To the United Nations Secretariat

117. It is recommended that the United Nations Secretariat:

On peacekeeping

(a) Work with the Security Council and other stakeholders to advance reforms that ensure that peacekeeping, as a tool to promote peace and stability, is fit for purpose;

(b) Move away from traditional peacekeeping templates to better respond to the precise and dynamic contexts in which deployments occur;

(c) Open discussions to explore potential adjustments to status-of-forces agreements so that they can better support the needs of peacekeeping operations in the light of recurrent misunderstandings about their application with host States;

(d) Initiate reflections on the role of a peacekeeping operations to extend State authority with a view to better supporting this beyond the return of a State's security presence;

(e) Involve civilian and uniformed Mission leaders in assessments of potential troop-contributing countries when generating uniformed components and evaluating the performance of existing contingents;

(f) Take measures for more sustainable solutions for the accommodation of civilian and uniformed personnel;

(g) Establish, where peacekeeping missions are operating in environments alongside other international security providers, a robust coordination and oversight mechanism that aligns the objectives and activities of all parties involved. This includes creating a dedicated liaison unit in peacekeeping missions to continuously analyse geopolitical dynamics, maintain open diplomatic channels and ensure compliance with international legal and human rights standards;

On the Mission

(h) Deploy a technical assessment mission, in coordination with other peacekeeping stakeholders, for the development of a transition plan once a political agreement is secured with the host State;

(i) Engage in a frank dialogue with MINUSCA troop-contributing countries on the expectations regarding their tasks and performance and hold them accountable should they fail to meet the agreed standards;

(j) Prioritize force generation of critical assets, including air assets and engineering capabilities;

(k) Implement the recommendations of the 2024 review of uniformed capacities conducted by the Office for the Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership, with a view to enhancing the Mission's posture on the implementation of physical protection of civilians;

(l) Empower the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with the authority to reallocate existing Mission resources to expand activities on the extension of State authority, such as for quick-impact projects and community violence reduction initiatives, in accordance with priority mandated tasks.

E. To the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

118. It is recommended that the African Union, ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region:

- (a) Sustain political and mediation efforts on the Central African Republic and continue to work to improve bilateral relationships between some of the member States of ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;
- (b) Enhance efforts to effectively operationalize conflict prevention and management mechanisms, such as the mixed commissions, as well as the Central African Republic-Chad-Sudan tripartite force;
- (c) Continue working and coordinating actions with MINUSCA on good offices on the Central African Republic.

F. To the United Nations country team, partners and international financial institutions

119. It is recommended that the United Nations country team, partners and international financial institutions:

- (a) Apply, where feasible, the co-location or embedding of personnel with the counterparts of the Central African Republic, with a view to accelerating the development of national capacities;
- (b) Build up programmes and resources and establish sustainable structures and programmes that will not leave a void when MINUSCA draws down;
- (c) Examine, alongside MINUSCA, how to manage the enabling support currently provided by the Mission (access, security and in other areas) so that any reconfiguration and/or drawdown of MINUSCA does not jeopardize that work;
- (d) Pursue as of now efforts for integration between the Mission and the United Nations country team without waiting for political signals or decisions that precipitate a handover of tasks;
- (e) Co-finance a dedicated United Nations-international financial institution liaison officer with the aim of bridging the gap between the United Nations and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, to ensure their efforts in peacebuilding and development are well coordinated and mutually reinforcing;
- (f) Continue to advocate the continued eligibility of the Central African Republic to the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence Envelope, which is essential to ensure sustained financial support for the country's recovery and development;
- (g) Encourage the ongoing strategic alignment exercise on peacebuilding by the Government of the Central African Republic, the African Development Bank, the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank, which highlights the importance of a coordinated and unified approach to tackling the country's complex challenges.

G. To international partners and donors

120. It is recommended that international partners and donors:

- (a) Provide funding for the national humanitarian and development plans and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework to allow the United Nations country team and other partners to step up ahead of an eventual drawdown of the Mission;
- (b) Ensure that all demobilized combatants receive reintegration support and that this is linked to broader economic and social recovery programmes;
- (c) Provide funding and other assistance for the upcoming elections in coordination with MINUSCA;
- (d) Enable a strategic and accountable partnership with the Government of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA to create a seamless transition where the State can independently provide security and guarantee rule of law, while contributing to peace and stability in the region.

Enclosure I

Tables

Table 1

Demobilized combatants from 17 December 2018 (date of the official launch of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme) to 21 March 2024

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Number demobilized</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R)	310	4	314
Anti-balaka Mokom	767	84	851
Anti-balaka Ngaïssona	187	22	209
Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC)	71	5	76
Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)	1 004	31	1 035
Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ)	83	4	87
Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC)	309	17	326
Révolution et justice – Belanga (RJ-Belanga)	122	7	129
Révolution et justice – Sayo (RJ-Sayo)	266	8	274
Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC)	304	10	314
Séléka renouvée pour la paix et la justice	138	12	150
Union des forces républicaines fondamentales (UFRF)	98	31	129
Union des forces républicaines (UFR)	255	43	298
Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC)	233	4	237
	4 147	282	4 429

Source: MINUSCA.

Table 2

Current distribution of MINUSCA staff

<i>Duty station</i>	<i>Number of positions</i>	<i>Percentage of positions to total authorized</i>
Bambari	43	3
Bangassou	30	2
Bangui	960	69
Berberati	29	2
Birao	20	1
Bossangoa	43	3
Bouar	69	5
Bria	54	4
Douala	2	0.1
Entebbe	4	0.3
Kaga Bandoro	68	5
Ndele	24	2
Obo	19	1
Paoua	23	2
Total	1 388	

Source: MINUSCA.

Enclosure II

Commitments of the Central African Republic to human rights mechanisms and participation in international instruments

<i>Human rights instrument</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Ratification or accession</i>
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1966	1971
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Not applicable	1981
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Not applicable	1981
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Not applicable	1981
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Not applicable	2016
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Not applicable	1991
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Not applicable	2016
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	Not applicable	2016
Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	Not applicable	2016
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1990	1992
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	2010	2017
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	2010	2012
International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance	Not applicable	2016
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2007	2016
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2007	2016
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	Not applicable	1986
African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)	2009	2010

Source: MINUSCA.