



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

9758th meeting

Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Hauri (Switzerland)

Members:

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| Algeria | Mr. Bendjama |
| China | Mr. Dai Bing |
| Ecuador | Mr. De La Gasca |
| France | Mr. De Rivière |
| Guyana | Ms. Benn |
| Japan | Mr. Mikanagi |
| Malta | Mr. Camilleri |
| Mozambique | Mr. Afonso |
| Republic of Korea | Mr. Cho |
| Russian Federation | Ms. Evstigneeva |
| Sierra Leone | Mr. George |
| Slovenia | Ms. Jurečko |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Kariuki |
| United States of America | Mr. Wood |

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2024/730)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2024/730)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, and His Excellency Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco, in his capacity as the Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2024/730, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Ms. Rugwabiza.

Ms. Rugwabiza: I would like to congratulate Switzerland for its presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this meeting, which is of particular importance as we approach the vote of the Council on the mandate renewal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

I am once more honoured to present members today with the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2024/730) and to inform the Council of recent political and security developments, as well as the Mission's main achievements in implementing its mandate, despite persistent operational challenges.

I will address the positive momentum and opportunities stemming from the dialogue between the Government and active armed groups, as well as the continuous progress made in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, notably the organization of local elections, the strengthening of border management and the extension of State presence and authority, with increased local ownership in support of peace and social cohesion.

I am happy to report that the dissolution of six armed groups and three factions of armed group signatories to the Political Agreement, remained effective and resulted in the disarmament and demobilization of their combatants, with the integration of some of them into the national armed forces. However, it remains essential to strengthen the implementation of socioeconomic reintegration activities for the successful and sustainable transition of ex-combatants into their communities.

Engagement between the Central African Government and active armed groups continued, with a view to their return to the Political Agreement. The decision taken by the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique to withdraw from the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement and to renounce armed struggle, has been welcomed positively by the Central African Government with ongoing direct engagement towards the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of their combatants.

On 28 August, the eighth coordination meeting on the implementation of the Political Agreement and the joint Luanda road map, which was chaired by the Prime Minister, underscored the unprecedented opportunity to accelerate engagement with the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement for a comprehensive and sustainable demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of remaining active combatants in the Central African Republic.

As such, the Government has been forthcoming in engaging the members of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement for their return to the Political Agreement, in response to declarations made by some of the Coalition's political and military leaders, indicating their willingness to cease violent struggle and hostilities. I call on regional and subregional organizations, in particular the guarantors of the Political Agreement and mediators of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to further support the ongoing political

momentum by facilitating engagement between the Government and the Coalition's armed group leaders who expressed willingness to renounce violence and return to the Political Agreement, the sole political instrument for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

MINUSCA intensified its multifaceted support to the prefectural implementing mechanisms, which proved essential in fostering social cohesion and strengthening conflict prevention. This support led to an increase in local initiatives to promote conflict prevention and rapid response to protection-of-civilians alerts. In this regard, a series of conferences were convened across prefectures to promote peaceful and prosperous transhumance, a follow-up to the decisions of the 13 May high-level national conference on transhumance. MINUSCA supported the implementation of these decisions through a programme of activities contributing to the prevention of conflicts, strengthening progressive security of transhumance corridors by internal security forces, as well as promoting cross-border cooperation.

On 8 August, the Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development, the Minister of the Interior and Public Security and I launched the construction of the first multiservice border post in the Central African Republic, in the locality of Bembere, at the border with Chad. This flagship project is part of the 10-year action plan for the implementation of the national border management policy and will accommodate civilian and uniformed services, enabling a better management of movement of goods and people, thereby contributing to strengthening regional security and stability.

The preparations for local elections have continued to progress, following the promulgation of the electoral code on 2 July and additional financial contributions to the United Nations Development Programme-managed electoral basket fund. That momentum has been driven by the Government's sustained commitment to the elections, fostered by MINUSCA's multidimensional support, including through good offices and technical assistance.

Local elections are a key component of the Political Agreement and offer a unique opportunity for enhanced governance at the local level. As the people of the Central African Republic will be able to elect their local representatives for the first time in almost 40

years, the Government of the Central African Republic, MINUSCA and the United Nations country team have strengthened their collaboration in mobilizing the broad and meaningful participation of marginalized groups as voters and candidates, in particular women and internally displaced persons. Consequently, 30,000 birth certificates have been issued to members of vulnerable groups, enabling them to register as voters during the electoral registration process due to start next month. That marks a significant step towards an inclusive electoral cycle that will culminate with the general elections slated for the end of 2025.

In that context, the completion of the upcoming 2025 to 2026 electoral cycle is paramount, especially to reinforce institutional stability. It will require MINUSCA's multidimensional assistance, which remains essential, coupled with commensurate resources, in order to ensure inclusive, transparent and peaceful elections.

On 30 September, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the UNICEF country representative and I signed the handover protocol on the protection and transfer of children associated with armed groups and forces to the civilian authorities, marking a significant development in the protection of children's rights in the Central African Republic. That milestone is testimony to the national authorities' commitment to enhancing a protective environment for children, especially in the light of the increased recruitment and use of children by the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe militia in Haut-Mbomou prefecture. Recent engagement by the Mission resulted in the identification and release of 73 children from the ranks of the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe militia for reintegration programmes and their return to school.

MINUSCA maintained the expansion of its footprint in hotspots where the Mission had never been before, in support of the extension of State authority. On 13 July, together with the Minister for Civil Service and Administrative Reform, as well as representatives of the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, I undertook a field visit to the towns of Obo and Bambouti, at the border with South Sudan. I am pleased to report that MINUSCA's intervention in Haut-Mbomou, in close cooperation with the Government, led to the return of 2,000 Central African Republic refugees from South Sudan, thanks to the improved security environment and enhanced access to basic services.

MINUSCA continues to make significant progress in supporting the restoration of State authority throughout the country. During the reporting period, the Mission provided logistical support to the deployment of three governors, 14 prefects and 62 subprefects, while building the capacity of over 2,500 public servants in support of the enhanced provision of basic services. Moreover, the Mission devoted considerable resources to creating acceptable working conditions for civil servants deployed in the deep field by building or rehabilitating 50 administrative facilities over the past two years.

The validation of the new national defence policy and strategy is a significant step forward in forging a republican army that reflects the diversity of the Central African Republic. I commend the Government for its commitment to fulfil its sovereign functions to protect its population and territorial integrity. MINUSCA will continue to support the Government with the relevant security sector reforms and governance strategic frameworks.

I wish to draw members' attention to the increasingly challenging operational environment resulting from a change in the national fuel import policy, which has disrupted fuel supplies to MINUSCA. That jeopardizes MINUSCA's ability to continue to provide optimum support and maintain the momentum achieved in the extension of State authority.

The effective implementation of MINUSCA's mandated priority tasks is intrinsically linked to addressing the immense access challenges in the Central African Republic and requires additional engineering capabilities to enhance road accessibility and mobility. In the past two years, MINUSCA has constructed or rehabilitated more than 2,000 kilometres of roads, 131 bridges and 37 airstrips.

MINUSCA remains instrumental in facilitating the conditions for the advancement of the peace and political process, including by enabling the implementation of the peace process by development partners and United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as by supporting local communities and administrations, protecting civilians and supporting the Government in restoring its authority throughout the country. Despite notable efforts and significant achievements since the start of the Mission, the risk of reversal remains. The tangible and transformational progress achieved in close collaboration with the

Government of the Central African Republic now requires expansion and consolidation, and the role of MINUSCA remains critical. We therefore count on the continuous and concerted support of the Council to extend the mandate of MINUSCA for an additional year and make available commensurate and timely resources for its implementation.

As I conclude, I wish to add my voice to that of the Secretary-General and express my gratitude for the dedication of MINUSCA civilian and uniformed personnel, as well as the United Nations country team, to performing our respective mandates, often in a difficult context. I deeply appreciate the Mission's troop- and police-contributing countries and thank the regional, multilateral and non-governmental organizations and donor countries for their invaluable contributions to peace in the Central African Republic.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Rugwabiza for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Hilale.

Mr. Hilale (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by thanking the Swiss presidency of the Security Council for the month of October for the opportunity to address the Council on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission in my capacity as Chairperson of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her exhaustive and detailed presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2024/730). I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to her efforts, as well as to the whole of MINUSCA, and to assure her of the constant support and cooperation of the Central African Republic configuration.

I will not dwell on the situation in the Central African Republic, given the extensive briefing provided by the Special Representative. I would, however, like to underline that we are meeting at a decisive juncture, if not a crucial turning point, in the Central African Republic's trajectory towards lasting peace and stability. Under the leadership of President Faustin Archange Touadera, the Central African Republic has resolutely striven to create a paradigm shift, with the aim of extricating the country from a situation of protracted

crisis and dependence on humanitarian aid and putting it on the path to sustainable recovery and development, so that it can fully capitalize on its potential and wealth of resources.

That is why the country adopted a new national development plan in September 2024. That framework seeks not only to meet the immediate needs of the Central African Republic's population but also to form part of a long-term vision for peace, reconciliation, justice and prosperity for everyone in the Central African Republic. It specifically reflects the determination of the Central African Republic authorities not to yield to despair in the face of persistent violence, humanitarian crises and internal divisions, by presenting a proactive and comprehensive response to the root causes of the challenges. The Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission commends the adoption of that ambitious plan, which is the outcome of wide-ranging and inclusive consultations that incorporate the views and perspectives of all sectors of Central African Republic society. As a steadfast partner of the Central African Republic, we remain committed to supporting the implementation of that strategic framework, which is not confined to economic growth but also encompasses a vision of peace, reconciliation and prosperity for all people in the Central African Republic, in particular in the following ways.

First, concerning the pillar of inclusive dialogue and reconciliation, peace can be achieved only through talking and mutual understanding. We therefore welcome the plans to introduce platforms for dialogue that bring together all stakeholders — armed groups, governmental authorities, civil society and local communities — and the promotion of the reconciliation programme, which encourages communities to come together, share ideas, heal and live together.

Secondly, concerning institutional capacity-building, ensuring that institutions are capable of meeting current challenges is a fundamental ingredient of development. That is why we are encouraging investment in the authorities' capacity to serve and protect citizens effectively, maintain order and guarantee security nationwide, as well as the reinstatement of the authority of the State in remote areas, where a lack of basic services has often eroded the trust of communities in those institutions, which must reflect their legitimate needs and aspirations.

Thirdly, concerning access to justice and strengthening the rule of law, access to justice for all without distinction and the rule of law are the fundamental principles of any peaceful society, which is why we welcome the further commitments made to establish mechanisms for access to justice and to prioritize the fight against impunity, including for grave crimes committed during conflict.

Fourthly, concerning inclusive economic development, it is crucial to the Central African Republic's long-term stability. We are therefore heartened by the plan's inclusion of investment in infrastructure, transport and energy to stimulate the local economy, encourage entrepreneurship, promote job creation and reduce incentives for violence so as to make communities more resilient to crises.

Fifthly, concerning citizen participation, every person in the Central African Republic has a part to play in building their country. We firmly believe that building the capacity of civil society organizations is decisive for promoting peace, democracy and human rights. In that respect, we welcome the commitment made to ensure that the voices of the people are heard and factored into decision-making processes.

That brings me to a meeting that — as the Special Representative and Head of MINUSCA noted — is crucial for the Central African Republic in the months to come. After yet another postponement, the Central African Republic is preparing to hold local elections in 2025. Those elections represent a unique opportunity to promote local governance, with elected representatives who will be directly accountable to the people, driving forward the decentralization process in the Central African Republic and ensuring the effectiveness of the State's authority by tackling one of the root causes of the country's political and security crises.

The local elections in 2025 will be more than a political event: they will catalyse the effective implementation of the national development plan, paving the way for governance that is more inclusive, transparent and responsive, which is essential for building a future of peace and prosperity for all the people of the Central African Republic. Those elections will play a pivotal role in relation to the strengthening of local democracy in the following ways.

First, they will strengthen local democracy by enabling the election of representatives who reflect communities' aspirations and needs.

Secondly, they will foster citizen participation in the decision-making process by reinforcing local ownership of development initiatives, which is essential for the success of the national development plan.

Thirdly, they will facilitate accountability and transparency by encouraging local elected representatives to be accountable to their constituents and transparent about the management of resources and development projects, thereby fostering trust between citizens and their institutions.

Fourthly, they will enhance the alignment of projects with local needs by identifying and prioritizing the specific needs of communities, thereby ensuring that national development plan projects are aligned with local conditions so that the use of resources is effective and goal-oriented.

Fifthly, they will support the creation of partnerships among local authorities, non-governmental organizations and private actors. That cooperation will be essential for supporting the implementation of the national development plan and ensuring an integrated approach to development.

It is paramount, therefore, that the local elections be held on time so that the electoral cycle, which began in 2020, is completed before the next cycle begins in December 2025.

The financial support of the Central African Republic's partners for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) basket fund earmarked for those elections is crucial. The momentum created by the Government's sustained commitment to the elections and the recent contributions to the basket fund managed by UNDP must be maintained. The Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission will continue to play an essential complementary role in supporting the holding of those elections and the implementation of the national development plan. It will do so by focusing on the following areas.

First, concerning support for efforts to mobilize resources, the configuration will continue to lobby bilateral international and regional partners in order to galvanize the financial and technical resources needed to support those development and peace efforts. Initial steps have already been taken here in New York, in the form of joint initiatives with the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to the

United Nations and the Assistant Secretary-General who heads the Peacebuilding Support Office, whom we thank for her support and backing.

Secondly, concerning coordination among stakeholders, the configuration will continue to serve as a platform for coordination among the various national and international stakeholders, ensuring that our efforts are aligned and effective in supporting the Central African Republic's peacebuilding priorities. A process of reflection is under way to devise an action plan based on the country's priorities that takes into account the comparative advantages and capacities of the various stakeholders, in order to inject fresh impetus into our partnerships and best support the Central African Republic's peace and development efforts.

Thirdly and lastly, concerning follow-up, we are committed to continuing to closely monitor progress in the Central African Republic in order to adjust our strategies in line with the developing situation and the results achieved.

Before concluding, let me remind the Council that MINUSCA remains a vital partner of peacebuilding efforts in the Central African Republic. It is not just a peacekeeping force, but it is also an essential partner in the stabilization and development process. That is why it must take the realities on the ground into account in order to monitor and support developments in the Central African Republic as effectively as possible. However, like all peacekeeping missions, MINUSCA does not — and should not — seek to last indefinitely. It is therefore up to us in the international community to step up our support for the Central African Republic to avoid losing any of the hard-won gains made through the deployment of MINUSCA.

The Central African Republic is looking towards its future with determination and commitment, and we need to seize that momentum and encourage it in order to put the country firmly on the road to recovery. While the task ahead seems immense, with the unfailing support of all its partners, the Central African Republic will have sufficient capacity to realize its vision and achieve its ambition of building a nation in which everyone can enjoy peace, security and prosperity.

The President: I thank Ambassador Hilale for his briefing.

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative for her briefing and to reiterate France's full support. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Morocco, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and I welcome the presence among us of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

France welcomes the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to implement the peace process. The decentralization of that process must continue. The holding of the first local elections since 1988 should contribute to that. It represents an important step that should enable everyone in the Central African Republic to participate in the democratic life of the country. France encourages the Central African Republic authorities to establish conditions conducive to the holding of free, transparent and inclusive elections. The full exercise of civil and political rights by all citizens of the country, in particular women, young people and members of civil society, must be guaranteed. France plans to contribute €2 million to the United Nations Development Programme fund to support the organization of those elections, if the proper conditions are met.

France welcomes the Government's efforts to tackle the issue of porous borders by implementing a national border management policy. The construction of the post at Bémberé, on the border with Chad, bears witness to that commitment.

The Government's moves to distance itself from armed groups that have expressed their willingness to cease hostilities must be supported by the international community. All other armed groups must lay down their arms.

France welcomes the validation of the national development plan, which should enable the Central African Republic to move forward on the road to sustainable development. However, the security situation remains fragile in border areas along transhumance corridors and around mining sites. Armed clashes continue, fuelled by competition for natural resources. Arms and fighters continue to circulate between the Central African Republic and neighbouring States. All that poses a threat to the stability not only of the country but of the region as a whole. The humanitarian situation,

aggravated by the repercussions of the conflicts in neighbouring countries, is a cause for concern.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) remains essential to meeting those challenges. It provides decisive support to the Central African Republic authorities in the fight against armed groups. It provides logistical support to the Central African Republic armed forces and supports the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. It plays a key role in supporting the extension of State authority throughout the country, which was made a priority task in 2023.

MINUSCA must be able to continue its efforts to promote peace and security in the country, in conjunction with the Central African Republic authorities. It must have the necessary resources to be able to do that effectively and be able to step up its presence in areas in which the security and humanitarian situation is most fragile in order to ensure the protection of civilians. In that respect, France reiterates its condemnation of human rights violations — they must stop. Respect for international humanitarian law applies to everyone.

It is also necessary to provide essential support for the organization of the elections and to enable the Special Representative to continue her mission of good offices to move the peace process forward. With that in mind, France will be working with all members of the Council and with the Central African Republic on the renewal of the Mission's mandate in November.

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

We express our profound gratitude to Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), for her important briefing to the Council on the situation in the Central African Republic. We extend our gratitude to the United Nations personnel on the ground, as well as to the troop- and police-contributing countries deployed in the Central African Republic, for their unwavering dedication. We also thank Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Central African Republic configuration, for his briefing.

The A3+ wishes to thank Mr. Edmond Mulet for conducting the independent strategic review of MINUSCA. We take note of his recommendations, particularly those addressed to the Security Council, which will inform our deliberations on MINUSCA's mandate renewal.

The A3+ is concerned about the ongoing multidimensional challenges facing the Central African Republic and would like to address three specific issues.

First, with regard to the political situation, we commend the Government's continued efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We also welcome the progress highlighted during the eighth coordination meeting on the political and peace process, including with respect to the initial implementation of the national border management policy. We are encouraged by the Government's initiative to engage armed groups that have expressed a willingness to return to the peace process, and we continue to call upon all armed groups to commit or recommit to that process. The A3+ congratulates the Government of the Central African Republic on the progress made in implementing the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) programme, with the support of MINUSCA, and we therefore urge other members of armed groups to join the programme. It remains essential that DDRR operations be conducted within the national programme.

The A3+ regrets the fact that local elections planned for 2024 have had to be shifted to next year. Nevertheless, we note that election preparations have been progressing, and we reiterate our support for those significant steps to consolidate democracy in the country. We urge MINUSCA and the Central African Republic's partners to enhance electoral assistance, including through contributions to the basket fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme. We encourage the Central African authorities to strengthen confidence-building measures aimed at promoting inclusive and credible elections.

Secondly, on the security front, the A3+ remains concerned, as the porosity of the Central African Republic's borders has been a fact for many years, facilitating the uninhibited movement of armed groups in border areas and illicit arms trafficking. We welcome the Government's recent efforts to strengthen security cooperation with neighbouring countries, including the

revitalization of border commissions. We commend MINUSCA's continued support in efforts to extend State authority, including by rehabilitating roads and administrative buildings.

The A3+ calls for the support of the international community in restoring and consolidating peace and security in the Central African Republic, which is on an encouraging path to stabilization and must avoid a potential relapse. In that regard, the A3+ underscores the importance of respecting United Nations sanctions against the armed groups, as a critical part of efforts to improve the security situation in the country and to fully implement the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. On that latter note, we acknowledge the contributions of MINUSCA in support of peacebuilding in the country and express our disappointment with the campaign of misinformation and disinformation directed against the Mission.

The third and last point concerns the human rights and humanitarian situation. In order to achieve lasting peace, the human rights situation in the country must be addressed alongside the peace and political processes. We welcome the establishment and reinforcement of early warning networks comprising Central African human rights focal points, and we also welcome the establishment of a commission to investigate human rights violations and abuses and ensure accountability.

We condemn conflict-related sexual violence and violations against children, and we call for the perpetrators of such crimes to be held accountable. We commend the strategic committee on the fight against gender-based violence for its finalization of the revised national action plan on sexual violence in conflict. We look forward to its full implementation.

The humanitarian situation is at unprecedented crisis levels, compounded by large-scale forced displacement linked to climate change. In that context, the A3+ notes with concern that the Central African Republic is dealing with high numbers of internally displaced persons on account of conflict, further exacerbating protection risks for civilians. We urge international partners to provide financial support in order to address the shortfalls in the humanitarian response plan and ensure that it can be fully implemented, as part of measures to address humanitarian needs. Moreover, we strongly condemn any violation of the premises of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Before concluding, let me say that the plight of food insecurity among Central Africans, refugees and returnees deserves greater and urgent attention. We must now work and support the Central African authorities in judiciously utilizing the country's own God-given natural resources in order to attain its food security.

In conclusion, the A3+ welcomes the adoption last month of the national development plan, and it looks forward to the implementation of the plan's five strategic pillars. We reiterate our encouragement to and solidarity with the Government and people of the Central African Republic. The A3+ remains firmly committed to the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and Ambassador Hilale for their informative briefings, which illustrate the critical role that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) plays in supporting peace and security, in coordination with the Government of the Central African Republic and other partners.

I want to begin by expressing deep appreciation, on behalf of the United States, for the commitment shown by the Special Representative, the Mission leadership, MINUSCA staff and the troop- and police-contributing countries to helping the people the Central African Republic achieve stability and security. I would also like to commend the signing last month of the handover protocol on the protection and transfer of children associated with armed forces and groups to civilian authorities. That is an important milestone, because it demonstrates the quality of partnership between MINUSCA and Government of the Central African Republic. That partnership is more important than ever, as MINUSCA works with President Touadera and his Government to fulfil its mandated obligations of extending State authority and supporting elections. The United States continues to endorse MINUSCA's efforts to provide logistical support and technical expertise as the Government of the Central African Republic plans for local elections in 2025. Those elections are a vital step towards sustainable peace and creating the conditions for economic development. To that end, the United States encourages the Government of the Central African Republic to redouble its efforts to engage with

the political opposition and hold elections that are free, fair and inclusive.

It is imperative that MINUSCA uphold its commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and that troop-contributing countries uphold accountability. The Mission must redouble its efforts to ensure that survivors of abuse have access to comprehensive support services and must reinforce public awareness-raising around MINUSCA's mechanisms for receiving and investigating allegations of abuse.

Unfortunately, Kremlin-backed actors continue to obstruct the Mission, denying humanitarian access and attacking humanitarian workers. We are greatly encouraged by the reports of an improving partnership between the Government of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA. Yet there is more that the Government can and should do to allow MINUSCA to operate unhindered in order to keep central Africans and peacekeepers safe. Instances of the Government blocking MINUSCA Mission patrols at the behest of the Wagner Group and restricting its unmanned aerial systems and night flights severely undermine the Mission's ability to identify and clear explosive ordnance and partner with the Forces armées centrafricaines to extend State authority throughout the territory. It also hinders the Mission's ability to protect civilians from armed groups and other predatory actors. That is simply unacceptable. It is clear that Kremlin-backed actors purporting to be security partners are undercutting the Central African Republic's sovereignty and undermining peace for the primary goal of stealing the country's resources. It is deeply troubling that a permanent member of the Security Council continues to push out disinformation that undermines MINUSCA, aims to reduce its effectiveness and puts Central African civilians and peacekeepers in harm's way. Those actions limit civic space and represent a significant barrier to democratic development.

The United States is committed to the people of the Central African Republic and calls for all armed groups to lay down their weapons and rejoin the country's peace process, and we urge the political opposition in the Government to engage in open dialogue as we look ahead to the historic local elections to be held in 2025. The people of the Central African Republic deserve security and stability, and MINUSCA is the international community's most effective mechanism for accomplishing those goals.

Mr. Mikanagi (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Special Representative Rugwabiza and Ambassador Hilale, as Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of the Central African Republic.

It is encouraging to see a gradual expansion of State authority in the Central African Republic. The further promotion of political reconciliation and socioeconomic reintegration in remote areas is fundamental for State-building efforts and ending the cycle of violence in the country. I commend Special Representative Rugwabiza and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for their tireless efforts to advance that cause.

Let me highlight three points today.

First, inclusive engagement with all stakeholders is essential for pursuing a political solution to achieve sustainable peace and stability. We welcome the Government of the Central African Republic's strong ownership of, and commitment to fully implementing, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 2019. The recent statement by the leadership of the *Coalition des patriotes pour le changement*, expressing its intention to cease hostilities, is an encouraging sign, and the Government should seize that momentum towards a much-longed-for sustainable reconciliation. We remain deeply concerned about the continued human rights violations and abuses committed by armed groups. We call on them to immediately and unconditionally lay down their arms and engage in the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process. The transparency and credibility of the process must be ensured by conducting the appropriate vetting, especially for the reintegration of ex-combatants into the national forces.

Secondly, efforts aimed at decentralizing the peace process must continue. Building resilient communities requires local leadership and ownership, while the Government of the Central African Republic promotes security sector and governance reform. We support the Peacebuilding Fund's vital and catalytic role in providing the necessary funds to facilitate the work of local peace and reconciliation committees to address community conflicts, including those linked to transhumance. The

postponed local elections will also remain important to further boost decentralization. The preparation process should become an opportunity to heal deep divisions in the country and, for that purpose, it must be rendered credible by allowing different voices to be heard, including those of women, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants, in a fair and inclusive manner.

Finally, border management is essential for stabilizing vulnerable regions. Ongoing regional conflicts directly affect people's lives in those areas, and enhanced cooperation with neighbouring countries is required to address any negative impacts caused by the country's porous borders. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing implementation efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic of the national border management policy, including the establishment of the border post at the Chad border.

We take note of the report of the independent strategic review of MINUSCA (see S/2024/615), which stresses the Mission's vital role in the areas of the political and peace process, the extension of State authority, security, the protection of civilians and the rule of law, and highlighting the validity of its current mandate. Japan looks forward to constructively engaging in the upcoming consultations on its mandate renewal.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): I would like to express my gratitude to Special Representative Rugwabiza and Ambassador Hilale for their detailed briefings today. I would also like to welcome the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to this meeting. Allow me to also pay tribute to the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for their dedication and their sacrifices.

The briefings we heard today show that MINUSCA continues to play a vital role in the stabilization process in the Central African Republic. Slovenia expresses its full support for MINUSCA and the renewal of its mandate. In that regard, I would like to address three points that, in our view, warrant the special attention of the Security Council.

First, the protection of civilians must remain the top priority for the Mission and the Government of the Central African Republic. We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing violence by armed groups in the country and its impact on humanitarian conditions, including the suspension of humanitarian operations

in some regions owing to security concerns. We call for full respect of international law and international human rights law. We welcome the decision announced by the leader of the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique to cease violence and engage in the dialogue with the Government, and we urge all armed groups to follow suit, join the peace process and engage with the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programmes. However, the recruitment of recently disarmed and demobilized fighters outside of the national framework and without proper vetting procedures could endanger the credibility of the peace process and have a detrimental effect on the long-term security and stability of the country. We encourage MINUSCA to continue to support humanitarian actors, including those implementing health and protection programmes for local populations, who have suspended their activities due to security concerns. We further encourage MINUSCA to improve its communication and outreach strategies, especially in relation to civilians and local communities living in remote areas, in order to raise greater awareness and understanding of the Mission's mandate and counter the rise of misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

Secondly, we commend MINUSCA's initiatives for extending State authority, including infrastructure rehabilitation projects. The construction of new roads, bridges and other civilian infrastructure not only provides the conditions for the deployment of civil administration and national defence and security forces but also builds a positive long-term legacy by contributing to the economic development of the country and providing important economic dividends. Slovenia welcomes the continuation of MINUSCA's training and the facilitation of the deployment of internal security forces. In that regard, we would like to inform the Council that the mandate of the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic, whose objective is to support the reform of the internal security forces, has just been extended for another two years. The European Union, of which Slovenia is a member, will remain a key partner of the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, MINUSCA should continue its electoral support of the Central African Republic, as recommended by the electoral needs assessment mission. We take note of the continued efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to organize local, presidential and legislative elections. In that regard, we encourage

the Government of the Central African Republic to ensure that all electoral processes are safe, inclusive and credible and to protect civilians from any potential security threats. That calls for further engagement with all political parties; the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and young people as voters and candidates; and the registration of all eligible voters, including internally displaced persons and refugees, in order to enable their participation in elections.

Fourthly and lastly, we share the concern expressed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza that the Mission cannot execute its many tasks without the timely availability of the approved peacekeeping budget. In that regard, we urge all Member States to honour their financial commitments.

We take note of the independent strategic review of MINUSCA and the recommendations contained therein (see S/2024/615). They will guide us in our discussions to adopt a mandate that will enable MINUSCA to continue assisting and supporting the Central African Republic.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and Ambassador Hilale of Morocco for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of the Central African Republic at our meeting.

At the outset, let me commend the continued positive relations between the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the Government of the Central African Republic, collaboration that is crucial for addressing the most pressing challenges in the country.

I will make three further points.

First, the United Kingdom welcomes the enhanced joint operations between MINUSCA and the Central African Republic's national armed forces to restore State authority across the country. We stress the importance of that cooperation continuing and deepening to enable MINUSCA to fully deliver its mandate. We also commend their joint work to protect children who have been forcibly recruited by armed groups and to implement a new border management policy.

Secondly, the elections scheduled for 2025 will be a crucial moment for the country and the people of the Central African Republic. We encourage local elections to be delivered according to the current timetable.

We also encourage MINUSCA to work closely with the Government of the Central African Republic to ensure that elections are transparent, with the full participation of refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and ethnic minorities, and that MINUSCA's work complements the work of the United Nations Development Programme in that area.

Thirdly, as we look towards the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate, we should continue to ensure that its work is grounded in the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. That will help to ensure that security gains result in an environment that is conducive to longer-term peace and prosperity. We are concerned that, according to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/730), disarmament operations are taking place outside the national programme, which poses risks to the integrity of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. We encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to further consider its security partners in order to ensure that the country and people of the Central African Republic achieve the peace, security and prosperity that they deserve.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom is committed to continuing to work with the Central African Republic to provide long-term stability and development that delivers on the aspirations of the people of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and Ambassador Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their informative briefings. I also welcome the representative of the Central African Republic at today's meeting.

While the Central African Republic has made commendable progress in its State-building, instability persists, driven by armed clashes and criminal activity, particularly related to the competition for natural resources, which continue to threaten and worsen the suffering of civilians.

I would like to highlight three points.

First, we take note of the decision of the Government of the Central African Republic to postpone local elections to April 2025 in order to overcome funding and operational challenges. While welcoming their commitment to an inclusive political

process, we encourage the authorities to make full use of that period to lay a strong groundwork for timely, inclusive, transparent, credible and peaceful elections. The importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, as well as the maintenance of a safe and inclusive civic space, cannot be overemphasized. We believe that such groundwork will also facilitate preparations for other upcoming national elections following the local elections next year.

Secondly, we remain deeply concerned about the ongoing instability in the security situation, particularly due to the recurrent armed clashes over access to mining sites and influence over main road axes. Porous borders also facilitate the uninhibited movement of armed groups in border areas and illicit arms trafficking. Those threats hinder the effective protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Human rights violations, conflict-related sexual violence and violations against children must stop immediately. We commend and fully support the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to extend State authority in the Central African Republic by rehabilitating the necessary infrastructure and delivering basic social services. We also commend and further encourage the Government of the Central African Republic's ongoing efforts, including the deployment of newly appointed local authorities, as well as the revitalization of border commissions. However, the recurrent non-payment of allowances must be addressed to better manage, oversee and consolidate that progress in order to ensure stability in the Central African Republic. At the same time, national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programmes, along with community violence reduction programmes, are essential first steps to addressing the root causes of instability. We need to keep in mind that any disarmament and recruitment into security forces outside national frameworks risks undermining the integrity of the whole process and must be avoided.

Thirdly, we welcome the recent validation of the national development plan, which is a key step towards transitioning the Central African Republic from recovery to sustainable development. It is important that strategic alignment around its peacebuilding priorities be enhanced to deliver its promised benefits to local communities. We commend the Peacebuilding Fund's support for local peace and reconciliation committees

and encourage stronger collaboration among various stakeholders, including the PBC, the United Nations multilateral partners and international financial institutions. As our briefer Ambassador Hilale rightly pointed out, inclusive dialogue and reconciliation, access to justice, institutional capacity-building and inclusive economic development will be critical for achieving long-lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, Korea reaffirms its unwavering support for Special Representative Rugwabiza and MINUSCA, which remain a key pillar in the Central African Republic's stabilization efforts. Korea will engage constructively with the members of the Council in the upcoming MINUSCA mandate renewal, taking into account the recommendations of the independent strategic review of the Mission (see S/2024/615).

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative Valentina Rugwabiza and Ambassador Omar Hilale of Morocco, Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

We note with satisfaction the sustained stabilization of the situation in the Central African Republic. That has been made possible first and foremost thanks to the consistent efforts of the Government of that country, with the support of its bilateral partners, including the Russian Federation, and the United Nations.

Over the past few years, Bangui has managed to overcome the most difficult phase of the fight against armed groups and to push back the threat posed by militants practically back to the country's borders. At this stage, the armed groups and those who support them, including from abroad, are primarily exploiting the gaps in regional cooperation on border security.

The humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic is also affected by the ongoing situations in its neighbouring countries. Providing care for refugees, mainly from the Sudan, heightens humanitarian needs and increases the burden on the State budget. We join the Secretary-General's call to ensure that this year's United Nations humanitarian plan for the Central African Republic is fully funded.

In the current circumstances, we also believe it is important for systematic assistance to be provided to Bangui in order to ensure a return to peace and transform security gains into progress on the development track. The postponement of municipal elections until next year is one of the most important steps along that path. We echo the Secretary-General's call for donor resources to be mobilized for the basket fund to support the electoral process. We believe it is also important to respond in a positive and timely manner to Bangui's request for prolonged electoral assistance from the United Nations, including in the upcoming election cycles.

The mining sector plays an important role in the Central African Republic's economy. Hundreds of different types of minerals exist in the Central African Republic, and their development could become one of the main pillars of the country's economic recovery. It goes without saying that the country's leadership is making significant efforts to improve the effectiveness and accountability of the extractive sector. Improvements to the system of State control over the production and sale of rough diamonds in the Central African Republic are ongoing. In May, the country adopted a new mining code, which will help to bolster transparency in the extraction and sales of natural resources. In September, a review mission of the Kimberley Process visited the Central African Republic. We hope that, when the Kimberley Process holds its regular plenary meeting in November, it will restore the country's full membership.

A significant milestone for the Central African Republic was the adoption in July of resolution 2745 (2024), which completely lifted the sanctions measures against the Government. Given the positive momentum on the ground, that decision was long overdue. The Security Council simply recognized that objective reality, largely thanks to my country's sustained efforts in the Council.

We would also like to reiterate that the problem of illegal armed groups can be resolved only within the framework of sovereign efforts aimed at stabilizing and ensuring security within national borders, in cooperation with the States of the subregion. It is crucially important to help the Central African Republic and its neighbours to establish coordination and address cross-border threats. The international community should focus squarely on supporting Bangui's efforts to curb the channels through which armed groups receive arms, training and related expertise.

We regret that some Council members, which are putting their national interests and grievances above the interests of the Central African Republic, continue to politicize the situation in that State and to spread insinuations, including with regard to the bilateral cooperation between our two countries, instead of helping to solve the actual problems in the Central African Republic.

We support the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and its leadership. We would like to thank the military personnel of the troop-contributing countries for their commitment to their duty. At the same time, we note that the full implementation of the Mission's mandate is possible only if we maintain mutual understanding with the authorities of the host country. We call for the resolution of all disagreements through constructive dialogue, without any ultimatums or external pressure. We believe that the Central African Republic's opinion on the parameters of the Mission's mandate should be fully taken into account when the mandate is renewed. The same applies to the issue of Bangui's introduction of new rules for the operation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in its national airspace. The modalities introduced by the country's Ministry of Defence must be strictly complied with. The nationwide restrictions on the use of UAVs are not merely the whim of Bangui but an appropriate response to the increasing use of reconnaissance drones and attack drones by militants. United Nations peacekeepers need to adapt quickly to the realities on the ground if they are to carry out their mandate effectively.

In the same vein, we continue to consider the issue of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) of former combatants. The rules of that process are determined by the Government of the Central African Republic. For example, the inclusion in 2023 of the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe militia in the DDRR programme was a sovereign decision by Bangui. The incorporation of representatives of that militia into the national army is carried out under the control of the Ministry of Defence of the Central African Republic, in line with the Government's general efforts to address the complex security threats posed by illegal armed groups, which are hampering the country's return to normalcy. For its part, MINUSCA is carrying out the functions delegated to it to assist the national DDRR process. If United Nations specialists have any concerns with

regard to the specific parameters of the DDRR process, they should discuss them with the Government of the Central African Republic in a constructive manner and try to coordinate work on the DDRR track more closely with the authorities.

Russia will continue to provide comprehensive support to the Central African Republic in order to establish peace and security in the country.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza and Permanent Representative Hilale of Morocco, Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of the Central African Republic at today's meeting.

At present, the political and peace process in the Central African Republic is at a critical stage. In the light of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/730), I would like to highlight the following three points.

First, we need to support the Central African Republic in promoting political and peace processes. During the reporting period, the Government of the Central African Republic continued its dialogue with armed groups and carried out disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation initiatives in the country's capital, Bangui, as well as in Haut-Mbomou and other places. We welcome all of that. We also call on the armed groups that have not laid down their weapons to cease hostilities and return to the track of political dialogue. China has noted that the local elections in the Central African Republic have been postponed owing to funding shortfalls and other issues, and we call on the international community to provide targeted support to ensure the smooth holding of elections next year.

Secondly, we must help the Central African Republic address security challenges. The country continues to face a complex security situation, with ongoing attacks by armed groups and local militias, leading to civilian casualties and displacement. The international community should increase its support to the Government of the Central African Republic to help to strengthen its security capacity-building. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should continue to follow the Council's mandate and support the defence and security forces

of the Central African Republic in strengthening their deployment, improving their ability to protect civilians and responding to the threat of armed groups. We should also pay close attention to the spillover effect of the Sudanese conflict on the Central African Republic and support enhanced cooperation between the Central African Republic and its neighbouring countries to jointly safeguard regional security.

Thirdly, we must support the Central African Republic in consolidating the foundation for peace, as the country is in a critical stage of transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. Only by promoting development, reducing poverty and improving people's livelihoods can we give hope to the people in the country and eradicate the breeding ground for violent conflict. The international community should step up its assistance to support the Central African Republic in implementing its recently formulated national development plan and provide more funding and technical support in infrastructure, agriculture, education and health so as to promote economic recovery and sustainable development and lay a solid foundation for lasting peace.

Under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza, MINUSCA has made considerable efforts to support the political process, the protection of civilians and disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programmes in the Central African Republic. China recognizes all of that and will continue to support the Special Representative and MINUSCA in their work. In August, the Secretary-General submitted a report on the independent strategic review of MINUSCA (S/2024/615, annex). China hopes that the Council will take that as an opportunity to enable MINUSCA to take into account the host country's actual situation and development needs, streamline and optimize its mandate at the appropriate time, truly focus its resources and strength on the core issues and most urgent tasks and continuously improve the capacity and effectiveness of MINUSCA in implementing its mandate.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and Ambassador Hilale for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to today's meeting.

Over the past two years, we have observed notable progress in the security situation in Bangui and other

regions. We have also seen positive developments in the peace process, particularly during the most recent reporting period. We commend the authorities of the Central African Republic for their determination to guide the country towards stability.

The Security Council, too, has played a pivotal role. Considerable compromises were made, which led to the reprioritization of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Other significant steps included the lifting of the arms embargo from the authorities of the Central African Republic, the retention of all other targeted sanctions on armed groups and associated individuals, as well as the refocused mandate for the Panel of Experts' investigations.

We are now at a critical juncture. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan is having a profound impact on the Central African Republic, exacerbating not only humanitarian needs, but also the infiltration of combatants and recruitment efforts. Malta condemns any attempt to further destabilize the region. We welcome the recent efforts by the authorities of the Central African Republic to strengthen security cooperation with neighbouring countries.

While recognizing the necessity of addressing armed groups that refuse to disarm, that must be done without undermining the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration framework or the country's cultural diversity. The upcoming local elections have the potential to bring stability, provided there is sufficient funding and adequate preparation. The European Union (EU), through its \$2.2 million contribution to the United Nations basket fund, is in support of these efforts. This preparation period should also be used to foster dialogue, raise public awareness and facilitate the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in the electoral process. Young persons, too, have an important role to play. The EU has also extended the mandate of the EU Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic for two years, with a €24 million budget allocation for this period.

Malta strongly condemns the continued violations and abuses of human rights in the Central African Republic, especially the grave violations committed against children. The recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as rape, remain disturbingly

prevalent. The violence must end, and victims must be provided with the necessary assistance. We commend MINUSCA's child protection dialogue with the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe in Bambouti. This resulted in the release of 73 children, and the signing of the handover protocol for the transfer of children associated with armed groups to civilian authorities. Additionally, the operationalization of the Bambari government vocational training centre is a step forward.

The completion and presentation of the revised national action plan on sexual violence in conflict is another significant achievement. Accountability is key to ensuring social peace and long-term stability in the country. Malta welcomes the first criminal session of 2024 by the Bangui Court of Appeal, supported by MINUSCA, which also addressed cases of sexual violence. We also commend the work of the Special Criminal Court. International support, alongside capacity-building initiatives, is essential to further assist the authorities of the Central African Republic in their efforts.

To conclude, as the Council prepares to renew MINUSCA's mandate next month, Malta will carefully consider the findings of the recently held independent strategic review. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation to preserve the gains made since MINUSCA's deployment and endorse a one-year renewal of the mandate at its current authorized military, police and corrections strength. Additionally, electoral assistance for the upcoming local and general elections will contribute to securing stability.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for her briefing. I also welcome Ambassador Omar Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and thank him for his detailed briefing. I also want to acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic in the Chamber.

Ecuador has been following the Central African Republic's path to peace since January 2023. During this time, we have seen the progress made by MINUSCA, for example, the peace process, the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and

reintegration programme, the process of reconciliation and justice, and other initiatives to build the capacity of the State in all areas. This is the last time that my country will have the opportunity to address this file, and I would therefore like to make five points.

First, the implementation and strengthening of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic depends, above all, on the State being present throughout its national territory. Until that happens, the reports of the Secretary-General will continue to warn us about the deteriorating security situation in various regions, which shows the country's ongoing vulnerability, in particular with respect to its borders, which are known for being porous and provide pathways for illegal trafficking in arms and natural resources.

Secondly, decentralization depends not just on the peace agreement. It is cross-cutting and includes the political system. Another delay has been announced in local elections, now scheduled for April 2025, due to financial constraints that could not be resolved. I call on the international community to make contributions to the fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme created for that purpose. The Central African Republic has been awaiting the holding of local elections since 1998. Continuing to delay local elections means continuing to delay the development of its people. While awaiting the arrival of financial resources, it is vital that we continue to work to ensure that elections will be transparent and inclusive, with the full equal, safe and meaningful participation of women and other segments of the population.

Thirdly, we must address the underlying causes of violence in the Central African Republic, and illegal trafficking in natural resources must therefore be brought to an end. It is imperative to establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to ensure traceability and to provide capacity-building to the Central African Republic so that it can meet the necessary criteria. As Ambassador Hilale pointed out, peace and development are mutually reinforcing. For that reason, we welcome the adoption of the Central African Republic's national development plan. It is necessary to provide the Central African Republic with access to adequate sources of funding to implement that plan.

Fourthly, we cannot allow the difficult humanitarian situation to go unnoticed. International aid must

continue to reach the population in need, as well as the 29,000 Sudanese refugees who have arrived in the country — mainly in the Vakaga area — after fleeing the war in their homeland.

Fifthly, State presence is key in order to address the persistent cases of human rights violations. It is worth noting that cases of sexual violence have mostly been committed by armed groups. The perpetrators of those atrocious violations must be brought to justice.

In conclusion, the contributions of MINUSCA I mentioned and its principal work to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access are ample reasons for my country to reiterate its support for the Mission as a fundamental pillar in the Central African Republic's path towards peace. Ecuador will support the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate for an additional year until 15 November 2025.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Switzerland.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the representative of the Central African Republic.

As reiterated today by the Special Representative and by Ambassador Hilale, it is essential that the Council and the international community continue to support the Central African Republic in its efforts to establish lasting peace and promote development. We welcome the key role of the country-specific configuration for the Central African Republic in that regard. Switzerland, which is deeply committed to peace and human rights, reaffirms its commitment to stand side by side with the people of the Central African Republic. It is in that spirit that we wish to share the following reflections.

First, the progress made in implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is encouraging and must continue. Switzerland welcomes the Government's efforts to relaunch dialogue with certain members of armed groups, in particular the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, which has expressed its willingness to join the peace process. However, for that momentum to succeed, it is crucial that the authorities of the Central African Republic fully commit to the disarmament,

demobilization, repatriation and reintegration process. As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/730), in order to prevent further instability, any disarmament and recruitment into the security forces must take place in accordance with existing national programmes, policies and processes.

With that in mind, decentralization and the extension of State authority throughout the country must remain at the heart of efforts to achieve lasting national reconciliation. As Ambassador Hilale pointed out, the local elections scheduled for 2025 will mark a decisive stage. They will enable Central Africans to take ownership of the political process and consolidate democracy in the Central African Republic. Switzerland is convinced that inclusive and transparent elections are the cornerstone of lasting peace and will therefore also provide financial support for those elections.

Secondly, the security and humanitarian situation remains worrisome. We deeply regret the intensification of fighting in the east of the country, particularly around mining sites and strategic roads. Those clashes exacerbate the suffering of civilians and increase the risks for humanitarian and United Nations personnel, whose safety must be guaranteed. In that context, Switzerland calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law in all circumstances and recalls in particular the obligation to authorize and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access and to protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel.

We express our concern at the consequences of the violence in the Sudan and in certain regions of Chad, which are exacerbating the humanitarian situation in Central African Republic. Despite those difficult circumstances, we welcome the generous welcome afforded to refugees from those countries by the authorities and the people of the Central African Republic, as well as their support for internally displaced persons.

Finally, regarding the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, Switzerland takes note of the strategic review shared with members of the Council. We reiterate the importance of preserving the Mission's priority tasks and its key role, particularly in protecting civilians, facilitating humanitarian access and promoting and protecting human rights. The Mission's troop ceiling must be maintained so that it can continue to effectively

support the extension of State authority throughout the country.

Peace, stability and prosperity in the Central African Republic must remain a priority for the Council. Since 2022, Switzerland has reaffirmed that commitment through its presence in Bangui, demonstrating our desire to support the Central African Republic through concrete actions. We will continue to work closely with the Central African Republic authorities, the United Nations and civil society to support the country on the road to lasting peace.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Nzessioué (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Please accept the Central African Republic's warmest congratulations to Switzerland on its presidency of the Council for the month of October.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Valentine Rugwabiza, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/730) and for her ongoing commitment to the Central African Republic, which is enabling us to make valuable gains in our quest for recovery. I would also like to thank Ambassador Omar Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing.

Breaking the Central African Republic out of the spiral of crises in a sustainable manner, shifting from a mindset of resilience and humanitarianism to one of lasting sustainable development, with an inclusive approach and a shared vision of prosperity and progress — that is the current credo of the Central African Republic. That credo led my country to adopt, in September, a five-year national development plan worth \$12.8 billion, which is aimed at bringing about a structural transformation of the economy and a prosperous country with high-quality human capital and resilient, sustainable infrastructure that is founded on a more inclusive rule of law, based on the principles of good governance.

In order to accelerate the implementation of that plan and enable my country to catch up with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Government is counting first and foremost on mobilizing its domestic resources by focusing on structural reforms. More particularly, it is focusing on the digital transformation

of public finances, with the aim of doubling domestic revenues by June 2026 and improving the transparency and security of public spending.

In that respect, the Central African Republic views the adoption of the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1) and its annexes, especially the Global Digital Compact, as an opportunity in that fight to mobilize internal resources. We are already looking forward to benefiting from the implementation of the Compact.

The Central African Republic would also like to welcome the visit to Bangui by the Kimberley Process Working Group on Monitoring to assess the operational framework implemented by my country. After so many years of misunderstanding and exploitation of this common multilateral framework, the Central African Republic expects no less than a total lifting of the embargo on its diamonds — a major source of revenue for the Central African Republic. We intend to capitalize on those resources to continue implementing socioeconomic and security policies for the benefit of our people.

The Central African Republic is also counting on the support of all its international partners to assist it in that ambitious development process through concessional loans and donations, as recommended by the International Monetary Fund. In that regard, the contributions made by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), as a partner of the Central African Republic over the past 10 years, are important in promoting inclusive growth. MINUSCA must provide an opportunity for women and the youth of the Central African Republic, who make up just over 70 per cent of the population and have decided that peace involves entrepreneurship. We therefore believe it urgent for MINUSCA to rethink its various supply and procurement chains for goods and services in order to finally give priority to local suppliers, in accordance with the status-of-forces agreement (SOFA). The Mission must be able to state in the Secretary-General's reports on the Central African Republic, in the section on the socioeconomic situation, to what extent it is implementing that mechanism in the Central African Republic and the constraints encountered, if any. The Central African Republic henceforth reserves the right to prohibit goods and services that contravene the SOFA from entering its territory, or otherwise to tax them. That notwithstanding, it remains committed

to working to improve areas of cooperation with MINUSCA in relation to that matter.

The Central African Republic regards the holding of the forthcoming local elections as crucial. I would like to commend the fresh momentum surrounding the process, which is seeing partners and friends of the Central African Republic, including, among others, Cameroon, the European Union, Canada, France, Italy and Switzerland, mobilize for the funding and holding of the elections. It is my hope that that mobilization will continue and that other friends and partners will join this outpouring of solidarity in order to consolidate the hard-won gains achieved in our joint progress by holding local and regional elections in July 2025.

This is also an opportunity for me to extend warm thanks to Ambassador Omar Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and Ms. Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General with responsibility for the Peacebuilding Support Office, for their considerable advocacy work since July vis-à-vis certain Member States with the aim of securing further funding for the holding of the elections. I thank the Ambassador for standing shoulder-to-shoulder with us.

I wish also to underscore the importance that the Peacebuilding Fund holds for the Central African Republic. The Fund has allowed considerable progress to be achieved both in terms of implementing the plan for the justice sector and in terms of security and the bolstering of the resilience of vulnerable people, including women, young people and minorities. Their participation in the upcoming elections is a priority for the Government. I would therefore like to express our appreciation for the project implemented by UN-Women and MINUSCA on financing for the Peacebuilding Fund, which has allowed 30,000 birth certificates to be issued — a sign of how effective their participation will be in future elections. That initiative, which is in line with the new national strategy on lasting solutions for internally displaced people and returnees for the period 2024–2028, must continue in order to achieve optimal inclusiveness and ensure that vulnerable communities are net contributors to the development of the Central African Republic. The plans contained in the strategy must be implemented — and the humanitarian response plan therefore urgently funded — to further reduce the number of those already internally displaced people and to alleviate the plight of people in emergency situations and of refugees in the Central African Republic. I

commend the dogged efforts being made alongside the Government by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic and national and international non-governmental organizations to restore hope to thousands of people in emergency situations.

The Central African Republic is continuing to contend with hostility from certain armed splinter groups along its borders, who are constantly sowing havoc. To address the problem of the porous borders with neighbouring countries, on 26 and 27 June 2024 the Central African Republic held the sixth session of the ad hoc border commission and the third session of the joint commission on cross-border security with Cameroon. Those sessions enabled the two countries to gauge the extent to which the recommendations from the previous sessions, held in Yaoundé from 13 to 15 June 2022, had been implemented, to take stock of the situation along the shared border, to discuss the financing of operations to reaffirm the border, to adopt measures to combat cross-border insecurity and to set out recommendations for the subsequent stages. The proceedings of the fifteenth high-level joint cooperation committee on cooperation between the Central African Republic and Chad were held in Bangui from 21 to 22 October 2024. The meeting concluded with the signing of agreements on regular political consultations, conflict resolution, security matters and refugee repatriation, and an agreement on the creation of a joint border security force. Those initiatives, in conjunction with the implementation of the national border management policy, with support from MINUSCA, will ultimately enable us to address that threat, encourage the peaceful return of refugees and promote sustainable cross-border trade that so that peace and our people can thrive.

In that same spirit of dialogue and consultation, the Central African Republic will continue to implement political and peace processes and will seize every opportunity to include in the peace agreement armed groups or persons wishing to lay down arms. In that respect, the sustainability of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration (DDRR) process remains vital to maintaining the momentum created by its success, which all have acknowledged. The Central African Republic is voluntarily implementing the process, is particularly alive to its benefits and will do nothing to jeopardize it.

No disarmament is being carried out in tandem by the Government. As the unit responsible for DDRR does not have a presence throughout the country, when armed individuals turn up at gendarmeries or sub-prefectures and state their willingness to lay down arms, the Central African Republic is not going to ask them to return home or to the bush pending the arrival of a DDRR mission. In such instances, the local authorities will seize the opportunity to take the weapons out of circulation, thus further guaranteeing the safety of our fellow citizens. A procedure is subsequently set in motion so that the DDRR unit can take over once it arrives. It is vital not to take a dogmatic view of the process, as that would limit any adjustments or flexibility in response to the reality on the ground.

When it comes to human rights issues, the Central African Republic has made great strides. With the support of its partners in recent years, it made painstaking efforts to fill the regulatory lacunae in areas as varied as children's rights and human trafficking. We are aware of the immense challenges that remain, and will pursue our cooperation with various partners, in particular the Human Rights Council, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in order to implement

the various recommendations that have arisen out of our consultations, without exploiting them, so as to make progress on those issues.

Lastly, I would like to draw the Council's attention to the forthcoming discussions on a possible renewal of MINUSCA's mandate. With the positive developments in our country's situation in mind, the Central African Republic sought and obtained from the Council an evaluation of MINUSCA's mandate in order to gauge its relevance in the light of its new framework for action. It is regrettable that, three weeks before the mandate is due to end, the Central African Republic has yet to receive a copy of the evaluation report from the Secretariat. References to the report in the statements of certain members suggest that it is available, and so perhaps it is time to provide it to the Central African Republic, unless the thinking is that the Central African Republic has no say in the possible renewal of the mandate and that the Secretariat definitely wishes to deal exclusively with the Security Council in relation to the matter. That state of affairs reflects a bizarre understanding of what the spirit of partnership with the host country under the SOFA entails. The Central African Republic is awaiting the report, which is important for us to set out our objection. We hope to see it made swiftly available in our working language.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.