



# Security Council

Eightieth year

**9864**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Thursday, 20 February 2025, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

---

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Fu Cong . . . . .	(China)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Yahiaoui
	Denmark . . . . .	Ms. Lassen
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Greece . . . . .	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana . . . . .	Ms. Benn
	Pakistan . . . . .	Mr. Akram
	Panama . . . . .	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Cho
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Ms. Karim
	Slovenia . . . . .	Ms. Jurečko
	Somalia . . . . .	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Kelley

## Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

---

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 ([verbatimrecords@un.org](mailto:verbatimrecords@un.org)). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): 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 Ms. Portia Deya Abazene, President of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Rugwabiza.

**Ms. Rugwabiza:** I would like to congratulate China on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Council for the unwavering support expressed to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) through the unanimous vote on the mandate renewal (see S/PV.9783).

Today I have the honour to present the most recent report of the Secretary-General and to provide an update on recent political and security developments, as well as MINUSCA efforts in implementing its mandate.

Nine days ago, a long-range patrol of the Tunisian contingent was ambushed near Zobassinda, approximately 50 km north-east of Ndélé, in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture while on a protection of civilian mission. Armed elements opened fire on the patrol, resulting in the tragic loss of Seifeddine Hamrita, a peacekeeper of 29 years old. I strongly condemn this attack and extend my deepest condolences to the family and to the Government of Tunisia. I reiterate my call to the Central African authorities to spare no efforts to investigate and bring the perpetrators of this horrendous attack to justice. This incident is a stark reminder of the sacrifices made by those on the frontlines of peacekeeping, and I wish to pay tribute to troop- and police-contributing countries for their unwavering support for peace in the Central African Republic.

In 2025, the Central African Republic will be organizing local, legislative and presidential elections. The upcoming electoral cycle represents a significant opportunity to consolidate the progress achieved in the extension of State authority, and to lay the foundation for decentralized governance. Therefore, the organization of safe, transparent and inclusive elections will contribute towards addressing roots causes of recurring conflict in the Central African Republic.

I am pleased to report that progress has been made in the implementation of the electoral process. This momentum has been driven by sustained national commitment and enhanced collaboration with MINUSCA, the United Nations Country Team and other partners to advance the revision of the voter list as a cornerstone for inclusive and credible local, legislative and presidential elections.

The first phase of the voters list revision was successfully carried out in 11 of the 20 prefectures in the Central African Republic, from 24 November to 20 December

2024. During this period, MINUSCA intensified its multifaceted support to national authorities, in synergy with the United Nations Country Team. As a result, 98 per cent of registration centres were operational, allowing for 570,000 new voters to be registered. I also welcome the commitment made by the National Electoral Authority to reopen, during the second phase, the handful of voter registration centres that were not operational owing to security challenges.

On 18 December 2024, the inaugural meeting of the national committee on the securing of the elections was convened and chaired by the Prime Minister, further demonstrating national commitment to fostering a conducive environment for the conduct of elections. In addition, continuous efforts are under way to encourage the registration of all eligible citizens, with particular attention to women, youth and internally displaced persons, as well as returnees and refugees. That is done through coordination with the Government, the United Nations country team and civil society. I call on the Government and its partners to provide resources in a timely fashion so as to not jeopardize the implementation of the revised electoral list and calendar.

The persistent pockets of insecurity, particularly in areas where armed groups engage in predatory operations to control mining sites and transhumance corridors, remain a real concern. While the overall security situation has improved across the Central African Republic, it remains fragile in border areas, where MINUSCA continues to work closely with the Government to strengthen and extend the effective presence of authority. The Prime Minister's inauguration on 17 January of the first-ever multiservice border post in the Central African Republic, built and equipped by MINUSCA in the locality of Bembéré on the border with Chad, represents a significant milestone. In that connection, the implementation of the Central African Republic's national border management policy requires additional support, including by replicating that initiative as a model, with a view to facilitating border control and addressing cross-border threats, especially in the north-east, where the spillover of the conflict in the Sudan is the most prominent threat. On that note, I welcome the positive steps taken by the Government of the Central African Republic to enhance its security cooperation with neighbouring countries.

This month we mark the sixth anniversary of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. In that context, I am particularly encouraged by the progress achieved so far, including the dissolution of nine of 14 signatory armed groups and a notable extension of the State's presence and authority in areas formerly occupied by armed groups. I also note the strengthening of the decentralization of the Political Agreement, which is proving effective in promoting local mediation and social cohesion. However, notwithstanding the ongoing efforts by the Government and international non-governmental organizations to continue engaging with the still-active armed groups that have left the Agreement, I should note that we have yet to see results. There is an urgent need for increased political mobilization, in particular from the guarantors of the Political Agreement, specifically the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, to facilitate the return of those armed groups and the subsequent long-term disarming and demobilizing of all combatants.

Furthermore, much progress remains to be made in the fight against impunity and in the promotion of transitional justice as a key component of the Political Agreement. I call on the Government of the Central African Republic to accelerate the operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission through the effective appointment of its new commissioners. I also want to take this opportunity to stress the urgent need for the Special Criminal Court to secure sustainable financial support so that it can adequately perform its functions and thereby deliver justice for victims, which is crucial to effective national reconciliation.

Security sector reform remains central to ensuring that the national defence forces are equipped to fulfil their primary responsibility of protecting the Central African Republic's population and territorial integrity. The validation of key security governance frameworks during the previous reporting period was a significant step forward but now requires sustained investment in building the institutional capacity of the security sector, including through the training and professionalization of the national defence forces. On 7 February, the Minister of Justice, the Inspector General of the national army and I inaugurated the Bouar military tribunal, showcasing the commitment of the Government of the Central African Republic to the establishment of a military justice system and the promotion of accountability among the national defence forces. However, the recruitment of elements from former self-defence groups into the national defence forces, outside the regulatory framework and with limited oversight, risks undermining the progress made in security sector reform. Without clear accountability, oversight mechanisms and command and control over such recruits, the extension of State authority could be constrained.

The human rights situation remains an issue of particular concern, with persistent grave violations. Left unaddressed, those crimes could undermine hard-earned security gains and further erode social cohesion. I therefore urge the Government to continue taking decisive action to address those violations, ensuring accountability for all perpetrators. I welcomed the National Assembly's unanimous enactment on 27 December 2024 of a landmark law on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders. I commend that significant milestone, which illustrates the Central African Republic's commitment to human rights issues, in line with the national human rights policy and its five-year action plan.

As we look ahead, the allocation of timely and adequate resources to the Mission remains essential to consolidating security and stability in the Central African Republic. That will also require the continued engagement of development actors in support of national development priorities so as to translate security gains into concrete improvements in the lives of the people of the Central African Republic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all partners who continue to support peace operations, as well as the countries that are contributing troops and police to MINUSCA and the Mission's civilian staff for their unwavering dedication and commitment to building a legacy for peace in the Central African Republic.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Deya Abazene.

**Ms. Deya Abazene** (*spoke in French*): I greet everyone with respect and gratitude for the opportunity afforded to me to address the Council today. In my capacity as President of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic, I am here today to speak to the Council about a subject that is close to my heart and that lies at the heart of the future of my country, the Central African Republic — the involvement of women in the development of our country's economy.

Despite our adoption of international conventions and a Constitution that guarantees equal rights, harmful practices continue to hold women back in the Central African Republic. The Central African Republic has been in the grip of a political and military crisis since 2012 and is facing major economic challenges, with a rising poverty rate and weak representation of women in leadership positions. It will be crucial to undertake a study of women's contribution to the economy, as they represent just 15.5 per cent of business owners in some sectors and are contending with numerous barriers, such as access to secure land tenure, the means of production and extension services, as well as to education and training, financing, markets and decent employment.

The existence of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs is a crucial asset in developing female entrepreneurship in the Central African Republic. It provides a forum for women entrepreneurs at the local level to exchange and share their experiences and also brings together women from the subregion and beyond.

The Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic was created in 2023 by women entrepreneurs in the Central African Republic. Its primary goal is to bring together all women's entrepreneurial synergies within a single organization in order to pool our efforts, speak with one voice and be a driving force for proposals and solutions for a fairer, more inclusive economy.

In the two years of our existence, we have raised the level of women's entrepreneurship in the Central African Republic through the following achievements.

Through networking development, 102 women entrepreneurs who are members of the Federation have participated in international conferences and exhibitions on entrepreneurship in several countries.

The National Fair of Women's Entrepreneurship, held from 4 to 9 March 2024 in Bangui, brought together more than 2,500 women entrepreneurs from the 20 prefectures of the Central African Republic and the diaspora. Three clusters were set up: a support-advisory service, trade and industry development and a focus on food security.

In terms of training, more than 2,700 women have received practical training in leadership, management, financial education, digital marketing and project management.

The first national bootcamp for women agricultural workers, held from 25 April to 1 May 2024, improved the skills of 200 rural women farmers and ranchers, focusing on value-chain management.

In terms of access to markets, seven agricultural fairs were held, generating 6,000 tons of products sold and 25 million CFA francs in sales. More than 1 million people were made aware of the need to buy local products.

Finally, during the national fair, 150 stands were set up, attracting more than 1,000 exhibitors and 1 million visitors, generating sales of 45 million CFA francs.

The entrepreneurial achievements of Central African women are the result of their determination and the political will to support them. However, much remains to be done. We need more support, resources and recognition for women entrepreneurs, as well as policies and programmes that encourage women's entrepreneurship and facilitate access to finance.

Promoting equal economic opportunities between men and women is an issue of social justice and is crucial to the sustainability and profitability of businesses. The Central African Republic will not be able to realize its potential as long as more than 51 per cent of its population — that is, women — continue to be marginalized. The main challenge is to help women and young people to become genuine entrepreneurs, which is essential for economic growth and a stable job market.

I am therefore appealing for support for women's entrepreneurship initiatives in the Central African Republic. We need the Security Council's support to continue advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in our country. We need the Council's support to help women overcome the obstacles they face and realize their full potential. We need the Council's support to build a stronger and more inclusive economy in the Central African Republic. Together we can make a difference. Together we can build a better future for all women in the Central African Republic.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Deya Abazene for her briefing.

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

**Mr. De Rivière** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her statement and reiterate France's full support for her work. I would also like to thank Ms. Portia Deya Abazene for her statement and welcome the presence among us of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

France welcomes the Central African Government's ongoing commitment to organizing the local and general elections scheduled for 2025. The holding of local elections is a key stage in the decentralization of the peace process and the strengthening of democracy. It is essential to create favourable conditions for holding free, transparent and inclusive elections, particularly for women, young people and members of civil society. The revision of the electoral register should enable all Central Africans to exercise their civil and political rights. To support that effort, France has allocated a contribution of €2 million to the United Nations Development Programme fund dedicated to the elections. That is part of an overall budgetary aid package of €10 million disbursed last December. France is calling on its international partners to provide financial and material support for the organization of the elections.

On the security front, despite an improvement in recent years, the situation remains fragile. The attack against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) on 11 February in the north-east of the country, which led to the death of a peacekeeper, bears witness to that. France strongly condemns that attack and pays tribute to the memory of that soldier. Armed clashes continue, fuelled by competition for natural resources. Weapons and fighters continue to circulate in the border areas between the Central African Republic and neighbouring States, which benefits the armed groups. The incursions into Central African territory by the Rapid Support Forces from the Sudan are very worrisome. The conflicts in neighbouring countries are exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation. Attacks on civilians have led to further displacements, and the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence persists.

France welcomes the Central African Government's commitment to managing its border. Those efforts must be accompanied by an extension of State authority. France reiterates its full support for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation efforts and for efforts to reduce violence. It calls for the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

Peacebuilding in the Central African Republic depends on continued progress in the fight against impunity. The Special Criminal Court plays a crucial role in that respect. The €200,000 contribution made by France in December 2024 will enable the Court to continue its work. France calls on all partners to provide support to the Court.

MINUSCA plays an essential role in all areas. France welcomes the unanimous renewal of its mandate last November (see S/PV.9783). That is a strong signal of support from the members of the Council. France joins the Secretary-General in calling for MINUSCA to be given the resources it needs to fully implement its mandate.

**Mr. Alfaro de Alba** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic and the statement by 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. We also welcome Ms. Portia Deya Abazene and thank her for her participation.

At the outset, we would like to express our sincerest condolences to the family of the Tunisian peacekeeper who lost his life on 11 February. That heinous act, perpetrated against individuals who devote their lives to protecting civilians and strengthening peace in the Central African Republic, is unacceptable and must be unequivocally condemned.

The year 2025 is a crucial year for the Central African Republic. The holding of local elections, scheduled for July, represents a significant step forward in strengthening democracy and governance at the community level and is a central component of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. These will be the first local elections in more than three decades. It is therefore critical that this process be transparent, inclusive, representative of the country's diversity and duly financed.

It is important to recognize the efforts and preparations for the elections, including voter registration, despite the financial and logistical challenges that must be overcome to ensure the integrity and fairness of the process. We express our concern about reports of shrinking civic and political space, as well as demands for institutional reforms. In that regard, we urge the Government of the Central African Republic, the Independent Electoral Commission and all stakeholders to ensure that these elections take place in a peaceful environment, with the participation of all sectors of society, especially women, youth and traditionally marginalized communities, recognizing their key role in promoting peace and social cohesion in the Central African Republic — despite the obstacles they face in politics, access to resources and protection. We urge the international community to strengthen their inclusion in decision-making and ensure their safety.

The international community must continue to support this effort through technical assistance, electoral observation and financial support, thus ensuring the transparency and legitimacy of the electoral process. This democratic exercise will not only consolidate governance in the Central African Republic, but will also lay the foundations for lasting peace and sustainable development.

In that context, our country expresses its support to MINUSCA, whose work has been crucial in the protection of the civilian population, the strengthening of the political process and the implementation of the 2019 peace agreement. It is essential that the international community continue to support the Mission, guaranteeing the necessary resources and mandate so that it can carry out its work with maximum effectiveness.

We cannot allow the crisis in the Central African Republic to take a back seat to other global emergencies. The humanitarian situation remains alarming. According to recent data, nearly 3 million people are in need of urgent assistance. The conflict has led to the forced displacement of 1.4 million people, of whom approximately 664,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, while more than 465,000 remain displaced within the national territory. In the same vein, we urge the international community to redouble its financial support to the humanitarian response plan, which still faces a funding shortfall, and to bolster support to humanitarian agencies operating on the ground.

The Council has reaffirmed the link between climate change, peace and security. In the Central African Republic, drought and deforestation have limited access to water and arable land, aggravating the humanitarian crisis and generating tensions between farmers and pastoralists, leading to instability and violence. Environmental damage has facilitated the recruitment of young people by armed groups, perpetuating the cycle of violence and insecurity. Integrating environmental mitigation into peacebuilding initiatives is key to reducing risks and strengthening stability.

Panama advocates a cross-cutting approach that combines sustainable development, climate resilience and vulnerability reduction in order to achieve real peace. We urge all parties to reject violence and commit to dialogue as the only path to lasting peace. Only through close cooperation between the Government, civil society, regional actors and the international community can we contribute to a sustainable solution for the people of the Central African Republic.

**Ms. Lassen** (Denmark): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her comprehensive and informative briefing. I also wish to thank Ms. Deya Abazene, President of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic for her work and for her words to the Council this morning. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic in this meeting.

Like others, Denmark condemns, in the strongest terms, the 11 February attack that resulted in the death of one peacekeeper. We express our heartfelt condolences to the family, Government and people of Tunisia. The attack underscores the dangers faced by United Nations personnel.

I will make three points.

First, I would like to touch upon elections, accountability and reconciliation. Free, fair and peaceful elections are fundamental to the continued peace process in the Central African Republic. Denmark welcomes the efforts of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to support voter registration ahead of the upcoming local elections. The successful registration process in Bangui provides a strong foundation for expanding access beyond the capital. Ensuring the meaningful participation of women, young people and marginalized communities remains essential. We underscore the urgent need to extend voter registration efforts beyond Bangui in a timely manner.

Denmark also commends the ongoing peace and reconciliation initiatives. The decentralization of the peace process to local communities is producing tangible results, such as fostering greater inclusion. These local engagement initiatives are making a difference by reducing conflict and strengthening community resilience.

Secondly, on the security and humanitarian situation, Denmark remains deeply concerned about the impact of violence and regional instability on the people of the Central African Republic. Rising insecurity along the north-eastern border and escalating violence in border areas in the south-east and north-west, threaten hard-won progress. They also worsen existing humanitarian challenges.

In that regard, we commend the work of the host State and welcome the recent agreement between the Governments of the Central African Republic and Chad to establish joint border security posts. We acknowledge MINUSCA's vital role in facilitating this initiative, which is a step towards greater regional stability.

Despite this progress, the humanitarian situation remains dire. High levels of food insecurity persist, compounded by climate-related disasters, including flooding. Restricted access to basic services exposes women and girls to a high risk of gender-based violence, including rape and early and forced marriage.

We commend MINUSCA's continued efforts to support the Government, United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners in responding to these urgent needs. We also positively note the recent adoption of national legislation on the protection of human rights defenders — an important step forward in safeguarding fundamental freedoms.

Thirdly, on operational challenges, Denmark recognizes MINUSCA's support to initiatives such as rebuilding critical links, including roads and bridges. These are paramount to boosting the Mission's ability to implement its mandate.

However, persistent logistical challenges remain. Road accessibility continues to hinder mobility, and disruptions in fuel supply are jeopardizing MINUSCA's and humanitarian actors' ability to sustain operations. Addressing those constraints is imperative. Fuel shortages not only impact the Mission's ability to deliver on its mandate, but they also undermine ongoing infrastructure projects that are essential for stability and development.

MINUSCA has demonstrated its ability to work systematically and constructively with the Government of the Central African Republic to implement its mandate. Denmark commends MINUSCA's critical role as a stabilizing force in the country and the region. As we look ahead, the international community must ensure that the Mission continues to receive the support and resources necessary to sustain its progress and maintain peace and security in the Central African Republic.

**Mr. Kelley** (United States of America): I would like to start by offering our condolences and deepest sympathies for the Tunisian peacekeeper who was fatally wounded in the 11 February attack on a United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) patrol. The United States condemns all attacks against peacekeepers and thanks Tunisia for its contributions to MINUSCA.

I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her informative briefing, illustrating MINUSCA's vital role in supporting peace and security in the Central African Republic. I would also like to thank her and her Mission's leadership, MINUSCA staff and troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment to promoting peace in the Central African Republic and helping to establish the conditions that the country needs to enable it to break from past cycles of violence.

We commend MINUSCA's recent work with the National Elections Authority to support voter registration and prepare for local elections, and we look forward to the Mission's support for the second phase of voter registration in March. We were also pleased that a joint border post, built and equipped by MINUSCA, was opened on the border between the Central African Republic and Chad in January. That is a step towards the expansion of State authority over the entire territory of the Central African Republic and along its borders. We commend the strengthened cooperation between the authorities of the Central African Republic and Chad.

The United States is committed to the Central African Republic's sovereignty and independence. MINUSCA is key to promoting those goals and remains the least costly way to achieve them. By promoting security and stability and working with the Central African Republic's Government to expand State authority, MINUSCA is playing a vital role in creating conditions conducive to peace and economic development. Partnerships among MINUSCA, the Government and the local population are essential to achieving the Mission's priority tasks. Respect for human rights is also crucial to sustainable peace and prosperity, and MINUSCA continues to play an invaluable role in reporting on human rights protection challenges and progress in the country.

Regrettably, not everyone shares those goals. It is clear that Kremlin-backed actors, purporting to be security partners, are undercutting the Central African Republic's authority and undermining peace, with the primary goal of stealing the Central African Republic's resources without contributing to its development. Through the insidious propaganda spread by those actors, they are also undermining the stability of the Central African Republic and the self-determination of its people. I will say what we have said before. It is unacceptable that a member of the Council is continuing to disseminate information that is diminishing MINUSCA's credibility and effectiveness. Such manipulation harms the civic space and impedes democratic development.

For MINUSCA and the Central African Republic to be successful, it is imperative that the status-of-forces agreement be upheld and that alleged violations of the agreement be reported to the Council. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her reporting on compliance with the agreement and express our serious concern about a reported violation, the blocking of MINUSCA fuel trucks. That must stop. In addition, MINUSCA will be successful only when the United Nations zero-tolerance policy is fully implemented. We are deeply concerned about the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse outlined in the most recent report of the Secretary-General, and there must be accountability for those actions.

In conclusion, the United States calls on all armed actors to lay down their weapons and join the process for peace, and we urge the Government and the political opposition to engage in open dialogue to reduce tensions in the run-up to the historic local elections in July.

**Mr. Akram** (Pakistan): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this morning's briefing. We express our gratitude to Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), for her important briefing. We also thank Ms. Portia Deya Abazene for her contribution on the human dimensions of the situation. And we welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic in our proceedings today.

We condemn the attack on 11 February that killed a MINUSCA peacekeeper and offer our condolences to his family and to the Government and the people of Tunisia. The perpetrators must be brought to justice. We would like to make the following points.

First, Pakistan conveys its deep appreciation to MINUSCA for its efforts to promote peace in the Central African Republic. MINUSCA has demonstrated its ability to anticipate, innovate and adapt in addressing the operational challenges. Pakistan is proud to have 1,300 of its troops in MINUSCA.

Secondly, as of 4 February, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for MINUSCA amounted to \$570.7 million. There is an urgent need for allocating resources to MINUSCA commensurate with its implementation of its priority mandated tasks, including its multidimensional support for elections and the extension of judicial, administrative and security support to the authorities. A strong and effective MINUSCA is now needed more than ever to sustain peace in the Central African Republic.

Thirdly, the elections in 2025 and 2026 represent a unique opportunity to consolidate the gains made towards strengthening stability in the Central African Republic, and we welcome the Government's continued efforts to prepare for them.

Fourthly, we commend the Government on the continued positive developments in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. Despite that progress, clashes over transhumance corridors and the religious and ethnic overtones of clashes between armed groups in some areas are concerning. If unaddressed, they may jeopardize social cohesion, security and stability. We call on the armed groups that have not laid down their arms to cease hostilities and return to the path of political dialogue.

Fifthly, the inauguration on 17 January of the Bembéré multiservice border post on the border between the Central African Republic and Chad represents a significant milestone in the Central African Republic's efforts to strengthen border management, enhance security and promote economic cooperation. That achievement has been

made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Government, MINUSCA, the Chadian authorities and development partners.

Lastly, I would like to say that we highly appreciate Special Representative Rugwabiza's leadership and her invaluable contribution to the consolidation of peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

**Ms. Jurečko** (Slovenia): I want to thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her detailed briefing. We also welcome the statement of Ms. Deya Abazene. And I would like to welcome the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to this meeting.

We condemn in the strongest terms the recent attack on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) patrol. Slovenia expresses its deep condolences to the family of the peacekeeper who was killed in that heinous attack, as well as to the Government and the people of Tunisia and to the United Nations.

Despite notable progress in several areas, the Central African Republic continues to face serious challenges. In that regard, I would like to make three points.

First, we reiterate our call to all armed groups to renounce violence and immediately rejoin the peace process. We welcome the continuous commitment by the Central African Republic Government to implement the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Luanda road map, especially the efforts to improve border management and ensure peaceful transhumance. The participation of civil society, women and youth in those activities should be continued.

Secondly, local elections can signify a major step in the further decentralization of the country, but only if conducted in a peaceful, inclusive and transparent manner. We are encouraged by the political and financial commitment of the Central African Republic Government towards voter registration and other electoral processes. However, elections will be considered credible and democratic only if all eligible voters are able to register and cast their vote, including women, youth, minorities, internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees. We also encourage the Central African Republic Government to enable open political and civil space and to continue the dialogue among all political actors. Furthermore, the attacks on voter registration agents must stop. The Government and MINUSCA should do their utmost to ensure their safety. We take note of the funding shortfall in regard of the proposed budget for the local elections. The European Union, of which Slovenia is a member, has already contributed \$2.2 million to the United Nations basket fund. We support the appeal of the Secretary-General to the international community to provide additional financial and material resources for the timely and orderly holding of elections.

Thirdly, we would like to express our support to MINUSCA's effort to improve the efficiency of the Mission in line with its five-year political strategy, including by optimizing logistical support and supply chains. Building on the objectives of the United Nations environment strategy for peace operations 2023-2030 to increase efficient use of resources, Slovenia, together with Bangladesh, Germany, Italy and the Republic of Korea, organized an event on the environmental impact of United Nations peace operations. We have heard that by increasing the share of renewable energy, MINUSCA not only decreased its environmental footprint, but also improved its operability and effectiveness, minimizing exposure and threats to its peacekeepers. That has enabled the Mission to carry out its mandate more effectively. That calls for our continued support to all environmental management initiatives by MINUSCA, and we encourage the Mission to continue with its ongoing efforts.

Finally, reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by MINUSCA staff are extremely alarming. We urge MINUSCA and relevant troop-contributing countries to promptly investigate them, take all appropriate measures and continue to provide assistance to the victims.

The unanimous decision by the Council to renew the mandate of MINUSCA confirmed the crucial role that the Mission plays in the peace and stabilization process of the Central African Republic. That political commitment should also be accompanied by sufficient resources, so that MINUSCA will be able to perform its mandate to its full extent.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and Ms. Abazene for their briefings today. And I welcome the participation of the representative of the Central African Republic in our meeting.

Like others, I extend my condolences to the fallen Tunisian peacekeeper's family and express our gratitude for the personal sacrifices that peacekeepers and their families make in support of peace. We condemn all attacks on United Nations peacekeepers.

I will make three points today.

First, the United Kingdom welcomes the work by the Government of the Central African Republic, in coordination with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), to advance voter registration for elections. The elections should be an important milestone in expanding the political participation of all individuals in the Central African Republic. However, the United Kingdom has information that proxies directed by the Russian State have plans to interfere with the Central African Republic elections, including through suppressing political voices and conducting disinformation campaigns to interfere in political debate. Those actions demonstrate that Russian proxies act without regard for the Central African Republic's sovereignty in order to secure continued support for their destabilizing objectives. Furthermore, they jeopardize the dedicated United Nations role, mandated by the Council, to help support inclusive, free and fair elections in 2025 and 2026.

Secondly, the United Kingdom also welcomes progress by the Government of the Central African Republic to improve its security and accountability capacity. That includes delivering the first disciplinary sanctions against magistrates since 2013. However, as the report of the Secretary-General highlights, the Central African Republic faces many security challenges. Attacks by the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces in the Central African Republic threaten progress made in implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The United Kingdom calls on all actors to respect the Central African Republic's territorial integrity. We also encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to enhance border management with the Sudan to support refugees and prevent their exploitation by armed elements.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the human rights situation in the country. The United Kingdom condemns reports of Wagner Ti Azande and other armed groups committing atrocities against civilians, including conflict-related sexual violence. Grave violations against children are also increasing. We urge the Government of the Central African Republic to enhance its efforts to identify recruited children and secure their handover to child protection actors. We also call on all actors to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

In conclusion, the coming year will be important for supporting peace and security in the Central African Republic, including through elections. The United

Kingdom remains committed to supporting MINUSCA and the Government of the Central African Republic to embed genuine long-term security while preserving the Central African Republic's sovereignty.

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

We thank 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), and Ms. Portia Deya Abazene, President of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic, for their informative briefings to the Council on the situation in the Central African Republic. We also acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic in this meeting. We extend our gratitude to the United Nations personnel serving in the Central African Republic, as well as the troop-contributing countries, for their unwavering dedication to peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

The A3+ strongly condemns the killing of a Tunisian peacekeeper of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, on 11 February, near the village of Zobassinda, while the peacekeeper was conducting a patrol to protect civilians. We express our deepest condolences to the family of the peacekeeper, the people and the Government of Tunisia, as well as MINUSCA. We reiterate that attacks against United Nations peacekeepers in the Central African Republic are a violation of international humanitarian law, and we urge all parties to the conflict to ensure their protection.

The A3+ is concerned about the multidimensional challenges facing the Central African Republic. We wish to make three points in that regard.

First, we commend the Government's continued efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We are encouraged by the positive developments on deepening decentralization, national cohesion and peaceful transhumance activities.

Noting the progress made in implementing the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme with the support of MINUSCA, we urge the Government to ensure that DDRR operations are conducted within the national programme and in the context of a comprehensive economic empowerment and development agenda. In that regard, we further urge the armed groups that have not done so, to cease hostilities and participate in the political dialogue and the peace initiatives.

Despite security, logistical and financial challenges, preparations for local, legislative and presidential elections are progressing and must be supported. We emphasize the need for an open and constructive dialogue between the Government and opposition parties in order to create conditions conducive to peaceful, inclusive and transparent elections.

The A3+ calls for concerted efforts to ensure that all eligible citizens are registered during the first and second phases of voter registration, with particular attention to women, youth, minorities and internally displaced persons and returnees. That will further strengthen the Central African Republic-owned and -led political process. In that regard, we urge MINUSCA and other development partners to prioritize electoral support, including through financial contributions to the basket fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme, strengthening confidence-building measures and promoting inclusiveness so that the outcomes of the election will be credible and reflect the will of the people of the Central African Republic.

We encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to consider restructuring the National Electoral Authority and the Constitutional Council in order to increase the inclusivity of the upcoming elections. We wish to underline that the success of the local election process is essential for the strengthening of direct democracy, legitimacy, local development and the extension of State authority throughout the national territory.

Secondly, on the security front, despite some gains achieved in various parts of the country, the A3+ remains concerned about instability in areas in the north-west and the east, with armed confrontations concentrated around mining sites and along transhumance corridors, exacerbating internal displacement and the humanitarian crisis. We note that the conflict in the Sudan continues to have implications for peace and stability in the Central African Republic. We call for reinforced efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons, while also enhancing border security to prevent spillover violence.

Given the importance of strengthening the porous borders and internal security, we welcome the inauguration of the Bembéré multiservice border post, the first multiservice border post in the Central African Republic, built with the support of MINUSCA. The inauguration of this border post, coupled with the reactivation of the bilateral joint commission with Chad, will contribute to enhancing security and economic cooperation across the Great Lakes region. We call for enhanced border security measures in order to curb the movement of armed groups and illicit arms trafficking, which continue to destabilize parts of the Central African Republic. That can only be done through the full implementation of the border management policies.

Thirdly, the A3+ notes with concern that human rights violations and abuses increased during the reporting period. We continue to strongly condemn the persistent violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights, particularly conflict-related sexual violence and violations against children. We call for the protection of civilians and for accountability measures to address the human rights violations and abuses, bearing in mind the threat they pose to social cohesion and stability. The A3+ commends the Government of the Central African Republic for signing the handover protocol on the protection and transfer of children associated with armed groups and forces with the United Nations and urge that further measures be taken to protect conflict-affected children and end their recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups.

Impunity perpetuates the cycle of gender-based sexual violence in the Central African Republic and undermines efforts to protect peace and development. We call for an enhanced role for the strategic committee on the fight against gender-based violence through the implementation of the revised national action plan on sexual violence in conflict. Community-based initiatives to address human rights violations and help survivors of gender-based violence must be fully supported.

We remain deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation. With more than 3 million people facing food insecurity and increasing numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees, compounded by climate change-related flooding, the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic is deteriorating. Humanitarian responses by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other institutions must be well-coordinated to maximize complementarities, including national structures and systems. We urge international partners to increase financial support to address the shortfalls in the humanitarian response plan and ensure that it meets the humanitarian needs in the Central African Republic.

Before concluding, the A3+ would like to welcome the lifting, in November, of the restrictions on diamond exports, imposed by the Kimberley Process since 2013. This

will enhance the Government's implementation of the National Development Plan for 2024–2028 and improve the economic situation of the Central African Republic.

We reiterate our strong support for the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and MINUSCA in assisting the Government and the people of the Central African Republic to bring lasting peace and stability, as mandated by resolution 2759 (2024). We note the initiative of MINUSCA to enhance opportunities for local economic development through seminars and other initiatives in various locations in the Central African Republic. The seminars have been instrumental in educating potential vendors about United Nations procurement requirements in order to enhance local participation in the Mission's procurement activities, in compliance with the United Nations financial regulations and rules.

In conclusion, the A3+ remains firmly committed to the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Central African Republic. We reiterate our call for all armed groups, including foreign actors, to cease their destructive actions in the country and allow the implementation of a comprehensive peace process. The Government of the Central African Republic must be able to positively harness and judiciously manage its natural resources if it is to attain peace and sustainable development for its people. We underscore the importance of respecting the sanctions regime against the armed groups, as part of efforts to address the conflict in the country and to fully implement the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, whose sixth anniversary was celebrated earlier this year.

**Mr. Cho** (Republic of Korea): I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza and Ms. Deya Abazene for their informative briefings. I also welcome the Representative of the Central African Republic to today's meeting.

Before I begin, the Republic of Korea strongly condemns the attack that claimed the life of a peacekeeper last week. We extend our deepest condolences to the family of the bereaved and to Tunisia. We reiterate that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes and call for a thorough investigation in order to ensure accountability. We also reaffirm our unwavering support for Special Representative Rugwabiza and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

I wish to highlight three points today.

First, we call on the Central African Republic Government to continue preparing for timely, orderly and inclusive local, legislative and presidential elections. While we take note of the need for adjustments, given the funding and operational challenges, efforts should be sustained in order to keep the electoral process on track. When held, those elections will present a vital opportunity to consolidate the Central African Republic's hard-won gains. We were encouraged to see the Central African Republic Government actively promote the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women, youth, internally displaced persons and returnees in the first round of voter registration. Such notable efforts should continue in the following rounds as well. The recent adoption of the law on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders and the operationalization of the National Human Rights Steering Committee are positive developments. However, we are concerned about the shrinking political and civic space. We hope similar progress will be reflected in the electoral process.

Secondly, we encourage continued improvements in border management and peaceful transhumance, in line with the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The inauguration of the multiservice border post in Bembéré and the reactivation of the bilateral joint commission with Chad, after five years, are meaningful steps towards greater stability in the Central African Republic. Likewise, local-level conferences following the national

transhumance conference are also promising. Strengthening decentralization and social cohesion remains essential, as transhumance continues to be a key driver of violence.

That brings me to my final point. We remain deeply concerned about the persistent insecurity in the north-west and the east of the Central African Republic. Transhumance-related incidents and farmer-herder clashes are fuelling armed group activity, inflicting further suffering on innocent civilians. It is alarming that human rights violations and abuses increased by 18 per cent since October 2024. Particularly, conflict-related sexual violence and associating children in combat is not acceptable, and armed groups must immediately release them unconditionally. The spillover of the conflict in the Sudan is another grave concern. The presence of the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces in the Central African Republic only brings more risk to the already fragile landscape. It is therefore important that the Central African Republic Government redouble its efforts to reform the security sector and strengthen national defence capacities. All armed groups must lay down their weapons and join the peace process in good faith. We commend and extend our support to the important role MINUSCA is playing on the ground.

The Central African Republic stands at a critical juncture in its transition from post-conflict recovery to sustainable development. Peacebuilding priorities will be central to that process. As the informal coordinator between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, Korea will seek to foster coherence and collaboration in both bodies' commitment to long-lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

**Mr. Sekeris** (Greece): I also would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Rugwabiza and the President of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic, Ms. Abazene, for their very informative briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representative of the Central African Republic in our meeting.

At the outset, I would like to extend my country's deepest condolences for the loss of a peacekeeper of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), after being attacked by armed individuals on 11 February. Our sympathy goes to the victim's family, the troop-contributing country, Tunisia, and the United Nations. The circumstances of his death must be fully investigated and perpetrators must be held accountable. We emphasize that attacks against peacekeepers constitute potential war crimes.

The reporting period under consideration, as highlighted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in her update, was marked by positive developments in the political process, in particular the advancement of electoral preparations for the local, as well as legislative and presidential, elections expected to be held later this year and in 2026.

We welcome the launch of the voters' registration process, and we encourage all political parties to contribute to the creation of an inclusive political environment, by raising electoral awareness and encouraging dialogue. To that end, the registration and mobilization of women and youth voters is essential, and specific public funding should be guaranteed by the Government of the Central African Republic for the support of the general electoral effort.

On the security situation, we acknowledge the further progress being achieved in the restoration of State authority in areas beyond the capital's boundaries, a positive trend to which MINUSCA continues to significantly contribute. Nevertheless, we express concern about the significant impact that the ongoing conflict in the Sudan has on the Central African Republic. Recent gains in overall border management

policy, through recent effective bilateral cooperation with Chad, are undermined by the transiting of armed groups across the porous north-eastern region of the country.

On the humanitarian front, the country's situation remains of high concern. We commend and support all United Nations and humanitarian staff who operate on the ground, and we call for the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to be secured across the Central African Republic's provinces, which is indisputably needed.

We continue to witness violations and abuses of human rights in the country. We are also deeply concerned about the sharp increase in grave violations against children, especially their recruitment and use, as well as the killing and maiming of minors. We urge all parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report on children in armed conflict to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent those grave violations.

It is also important to underline the valuable role of the Special Criminal Cour in support of transitional justice. We note also the reported progress achieved in areas of the justice sector by the national courts and their overall improved performance.

In conclusion, Greece remains steadfast in its support for MINUSCA, its personnel and its leader, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as they perform their duties with dedication, under complicated circumstances, contributing to peace and stability. We stand ready to support the next steps in the political process, including the organization and successful conduct of elections, which will pave the way for the full implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, to the benefit of the country and its people.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Valentine Rugwabiza for her briefing, and we listened with interest to the statement made by Ms. Portia Abazene. We welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

First of all, we would like to convey our condolences to the family and loved ones of the Tunisian peacekeeper who died on 11 February. Our condolences also go to the Tunisian Government and the United Nations peacekeeping Mission.

Despite such one-off tragic incidents, the security situation in the Central African Republic continues to change significantly for the better. In recent years, Bangui, with the support of the United Nations and bilateral partners, especially Russia, has managed to make considerable progress in the fight against illegal armed groups and to ensure State control over 90 per cent of the country's territory. Threats have certainly not been definitively eliminated, and work in that area continues. However, armed groups and bandits have been largely pushed to the borders with neighbouring countries.

It is now important to support the efforts of the Central African Republic to ensure border security and to help to prevent cross-border movements of fighters and stop their weapons supplies. We hope that the United Nations Mission will provide as much assistance as possible in that regard. We note the efforts made by the Government of the Central African Republic on that track and on developing border cooperation with its neighbours. In that regard, positive advancements in official dialogue between the Central African Republic and Chad appear to be a serious step forward. The month of January saw the opening of a joint crossing point on the border between the States, which was done through the assistance of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African

Republic (MINUSCA). Prior to that a number of important bilateral agreements had been signed.

At the same time, we are concerned by the situation along the border with the Sudan. The border area is controlled by the Rapid Support Forces, which negatively affects the security situation and is placing an additional burden on humanitarian action. There is also a growing number of cases of insurgents from the Sudan infiltrating the Central African Republic, and the illegal trade in weapons and precious metals is also on the rise. There are reports of fighters in the Central African Republic being recruited to fight on the side of the Rapid Support Forces.

We support Bangui's intention to curb challenges in that regard. We are convinced that the consistent growth in the combat capability of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, combined with international support, will help to ensure that the necessary response measures are effective. The adoption of resolution 2745 (2024) in July 2024, which fully lifted the arms embargo on the Government of the Central African Republic, has made a considerable contribution to their successful implementation and, in general, to the strengthening of security in the country.

MINUSCA is continuing to make a significant contribution to overall efforts to stabilize the situation in the country. We support its leadership and thank the troops from troop-contributing countries for their dedication to duty. We note that the Mission is fostering mutual understanding and constructive dialogue with the authorities of the host country. It is our hope that, in the period ahead, as mandated, MINUSCA will provide the necessary assistance to Bangui in the holding of elections as part of the upcoming election cycles scheduled for this year and 2026. We are convinced that the successful holding of municipal elections in July — set to be the first in decades — will be a milestone on the way to resuming a peaceful way of life and translating security achievements into development progress. We agree with the Secretary-General's appeal concerning the need for additional donations to be made to the trust fund for financing elections.

We trust that the normalization of the situation in the Central African Republic will allow its people to focus on a constructive domestic agenda. The lifting of export restrictions under the Kimberley Process, which will allow legal diamond exports to finally reach internationally competitive levels, is intended to open up a wealth of opportunity. Through their actions, the authorities of the Central African Republic have proven their commitment to pursuing efforts to improve the well-being of the civilian population. At this stage, it is important to support Bangui in building on the achievements of recent years and in further stabilizing the national territory. It must not be forgotten that, among other measures, that will also help to improve the situation throughout the region of the Central African Republic.

Against that backdrop of a marked improvement in the situation in the Central African Republic and the consistent forging of friendly relations between Moscow and Bangui — not only between the Governments but also among ordinary people — it is surprising that our American and British colleagues continue to flog the dead horse of the smear campaign that they are waging against Russian cooperation. It is time to realise that the campaign has run out of steam and is futile, given that it is at odds with reality. Some Council members, for example, have already come to their senses and changed tack. Russia intends to continue providing comprehensive assistance to the friendly country of the Central African Republic on a mutually respectful and equal basis in the interests of lasting peace and security.

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

I thank Special Representative Rugwabiza for her briefing and reaffirm our continued support for her work and that of the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). I listened carefully to Ms. Deya Abazene's observations made from the perspective of women and development, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to today's meeting.

China strongly condemns the recent attack on MINUSCA peacekeepers and expresses its condolences regarding the Tunisian peacekeeper whose life was claimed.

At present, the situation in the Central African Republic is generally good, with positive progress being made in enhancing governance capacity and advancing the political peace process. The international community should help to build on that momentum and step up support for the Central African Republic so that it can achieve lasting peace and stability. I would like to make three points.

First, the ongoing preparations for elections at various levels in the Central African Republic are an important step in consolidating peace and have the potential to set the country on the path to peace, development and prosperity. MINUSCA's priority should be to support preparations for elections. We hope that the parties in the Central African Republic will strive for consensus through dialogue and consultation on specific elections-related arrangements. The international community should help the parties in the Central African Republic to forge ahead with those preparations and avert undue external interference.

Secondly, peace and stability in the Central African Republic are closely connected to the situation in neighbouring countries. We welcome the recent efforts undertaken by the Central African Republic with Chad and other neighbouring countries to strengthen cooperation on security, reinstate intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms and establish joint border security forces. The international community should focus its attention on the spillover effects of the conflict in the Sudan and support the Central African Republic in strengthening security capacity-building and border controls and in maintaining regional stability.

Thirdly, development is the necessary route to long-term stability. China is pleased to see the decision by the Kimberley Process at the end of last year to fully lift the restrictions on the Central African Republic's export of rough diamonds. Such exports are seen as a stimulus for the economic recovery of the Central African Republic.

In providing humanitarian assistance, the international community should, in the light of the priority areas identified in the Central African Republic's national action plan on development, actively step up investment and expand economic and trade cooperation with the Central African Republic so as to help the country swiftly attain sustainable development. In that connection, assistance to youth and women in seeking employment and engaging in entrepreneurship is critical to improving livelihoods, economic development and social stability.

China has always been a steadfast partner in supporting the Central African Republic's development. Last September, while visiting China and attending the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, President Touadéra, together with the Chinese leaders, drew up a road map for practical cooperation between the two countries. China would like to work with the Central African Republic to implement the consensus achieved by the two countries' leaders and play our part in the Central African Republic's development, prosperity and long-term peace and stability.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Nzessioué** (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the People's Republic of China on its presidency of the Security Council and to commend it for its enlightened stewardship of our work this month.

I also wish to welcome the new non-permanent members, whose term began in January. I wish them every success.

I would also like to express our 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 tireless efforts in support of the Central African Republic. I thank Ms. Portia Deya Abazene, President of the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs of the Central African Republic, for her inspiring input.

The Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed on 6 February 2019, marked its sixth anniversary in February — a milestone in the recent history of our country. Those six years call to mind the firm determination of the people of the Central African Republic and His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Republic and the Head of State, to leave behind decades of violence and forge new prospects founded on unity, social cohesion and national reconciliation. Since the signing of the Agreement, the Central African Republic has taken great strides in the quest for peace and the consolidation of the authority of the State. Thanks to the combined efforts of the Government, bilateral and multilateral partners, including MINUSCA, and civil society, nine of the 14 armed groups officially announced that they were disbanding; 7,000 combatants have been disarmed and demobilized and 20,000 weapons of every calibre have been collected. Those are historic achievements, and they demonstrate that dialogue, collective engagement and political will are fundamental pillars of bringing peace to the country.

However, while those achievements are significant, they cannot overshadow the major challenge that remains: the total eradication of the now-isolated small armed groups that continue to commit atrocities against the peaceful population. The objective of the President of the Republic is clear and unwavering: to achieve a Central African Republic free of the presence of any illegal weapons and guarantee a future in which every citizen can live in the peace, security and dignity that they deserve. That fight, which requires commitment and perseverance, will not stop until the last weapon has been laid down and no armed groups threaten the State's sovereignty.

In that context, we once again call on all reticent armed factions to join the peace process. The door to dialogue remains wide open, and the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, along with the Luanda road map, remains the legitimate and structured framework for achieving definitive peace and reconciliation together. All stakeholders now have the historic responsibility to promote adherence to, and the implementation of, that peace process. I want to mention the important role of the guarantors and facilitators of the process, but also that of the Security Council, which will have to move away from conventional rhetoric and take effective measures that could force recalcitrant armed groups to return to the peace process. Moreover, concrete implementation and monitoring of individual sanctions, combined with careful and ambitious work on the groups' sources of supply and financing, could enable us to finally achieve those objectives.

Despite some attacks by isolated individuals along the border, the security situation in the Central African Republic remains stable, thanks to the efforts of the Government and our international partners. Like all variants of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, these small armed groups continue to attack the civilian population and sow terror, targeting our defence forces, MINUSCA and humanitarian

convoys. They plunder villages and markets, prevent the free movement of goods and people and seriously disrupt the electoral census process. Such insecurity is a direct threat to the democratic process that we are trying to consolidate.

This is the place for me to express our solidarity with, and compassion for, MINUSCA following the death of the Tunisian peacekeeper who fell victim to the cowardly attack perpetrated on 11 February against one of its convoys in the prefecture of Bamingui-Bangoran. We firmly condemn the act and offer our sincere condolences to his family and the people and the Government of Tunisia. The Central African Government, guided by the principle of zero tolerance, is fully committed to working with MINUSCA to ensure that that act does not go unpunished and that its perpetrators are brought before the competent courts. In the border areas, the ongoing crisis in the Sudan is having a serious impact on our country. The proliferation of cross-border armed groups is aggravating the situation, particularly in the Vakaga area, where repeated incursions threaten the stability of the region. The influx of foreign fighters, coupled with the massive increase in the number of Sudanese refugees, is exerting unsustainable security and humanitarian pressure on our territory.

The Central African Republic cannot face those challenges alone. Protecting our borders is an absolute priority. We cannot allow those areas to become sanctuaries for armed groups that undermine our national and regional security. We must act to support the Central African Government in its stabilization efforts. I call on the international community to strengthen its support for the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the internal security forces, in particular through increased training, logistics and intelligence capacities. I also call for a strengthening of MINUSCA's mandate for more proactive action in the face of such threats. In addition, I would like to advocate for more rigorous control of cross-border flows and increased support for the management of refugees in order to prevent any infiltration of armed fighters into our country.

I would like to make the following key observations, which will enlighten the members of the Council as to the human rights situation. The topic of human rights in the Central African Republic has been placed at the epicentre of our public policy. In that regard, we once again wish to reiterate our firm commitment to collaborating fully with MINUSCA and the Panel of Experts in documenting cases of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and, beyond that, in the search for manifestation of the truth, victims' access to justice and the effective implementation of the national human rights policy. It is also important to specify that the national policy is accompanied by an initial five-year action plan for the period 2023–2027, with an estimated budget of CFA3 billion, for the implementation of 268 activities, in particular those aimed at improving prison conditions and reducing the rate of human rights violations in the Central African Republic. Lastly, the persistent violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have also driven the Government to redouble its efforts to find ways of ensuring effective protection for the civilian population.

It is with hope that I take the floor today to bring to members' attention a crucial stage in the political and democratic history of the Central African Republic. Our country is preparing to hold local elections — an event that marks a decisive turning point in the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law. It has been more than three decades since the people of the Central African Republic have had the opportunity to elect their local representatives. This long-awaited electoral process is a unique opportunity to strengthen local governance, bring institutions closer to citizens and fully restore the authority of the State throughout the territory. The Government, in close collaboration with MINUSCA and its partners, is working to ensure an inclusive, free and transparent election. That commitment is essential to

rebuilding trust between citizens and our country's democratic institutions, because we know that a credible and well-organized electoral process is a fundamental pillar of stability and lasting peace.

However, we must face major challenges. One of the most pressing challenges is the financing of the elections. To carry out the process successfully, we still need financial support of \$7 million. I commend the contributions already made by our international partners, which demonstrate their commitment to democracy and stability in the Central African Republic. However, additional resources must be mobilized to ensure the effective holding of the electoral process. The organization of these local elections is a key step towards the consolidation of the State, the prevention of conflicts and the renewal of a social contract between the authorities and the population. By supporting the process, the international community will contribute directly to the peace and development of our country. Therefore, today I call on the Security Council and certain members of the Council to set aside their geopolitical considerations — which have nothing to do with us and are pushing them to look for a needle in a haystack at all costs — to continue to help us in this democratic process. I call for international mobilization to ensure the success of the electoral process and ensure that our citizens can exercise their right to vote in complete safety.

Today the Central African Republic is taking a new step forward with the confirmation of its status as a full participant in the Kimberley Process and the lifting of all restrictions on the export of its rough diamonds. That decision, taken at the Kimberley Process plenary in Dubai in November 2024, is the result of an unwavering commitment by the Central African Government and its partners to restoring the legitimacy and transparency of our diamond industry. The Central African Government has worked tirelessly to implement the requirements of the Kimberley Process, by strengthening the regulatory framework and improving control and traceability mechanisms. The promulgation, on 21 August 2024, of a new mining code will allow the Central African Republic to promote investments and fight against fraud in this strategic sector.

Thanks to those important advances, our country is demonstrating its firm commitment to guaranteeing that the diamond trade is transparent, secure and in line with international standards. The Central African Republic expresses its deep gratitude to the Chair of the Kimberly Process, under the leadership of the United Arab Emirates, which has played a key role in achieving that crucial milestone. I would also like to thank all the international partners, member States of the Kimberley Process, civil society organizations, experts and all those who have contributed, through their technical support, commitment and cooperation, to that collective success. That progress is a testament to what can be achieved when national efforts are supported, without manipulation or bad faith, through solid international cooperation and a shared vision for sustainable development and the governance of natural resources.

I would like to reiterate again that every step forward in peace and security must be consolidated by concrete and lasting action. We know that peace is not just the absence of conflict; it must be anchored in inclusive economic growth, effective governance and real opportunities for our people. It is that vision that has guided the development of the national development plan 2024-2028, which today is our road map for a more stable and prosperous future. That plan, based on four strategic axes, reflects a strong ambition: to make the Central African Republic a country in which peace and progress go together, where every citizen can benefit from the fruits of development and where institutional stability becomes a driving force for prosperity. The lifting of restrictions on diamonds is a unique opportunity for the Government to mobilize additional resources in support of the ambitious national

development plan. We are convinced that, thanks to those new growth prospects, we will be able to strengthen our institutional capacities, create jobs and improve the living conditions of our people.

It is in that same spirit that the Government has put in place a stabilization programme aimed at accelerating the redeployment of State authority, guaranteeing access to basic social services and relaunching the local economy. The programme was implemented in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), beginning in 2023, and is starting to bear fruit. One of the key achievements of that initiative was the inauguration, in October 2024 in Bossangoa, of the first infrastructure built under the programme, in the presence of His Excellency the President of the Republic and Head of State, along with our financial and technical partners. The event marked a decisive step in our commitment to restore hope to our people affected by years of conflict and insecurity.

Consolidating peace requires concrete action and sustained commitment. That is why, from this rostrum, I am making a solemn appeal to our international partners to step up their financial support for the UNDP-led stabilization programme. Increased mobilization of resources will enable us to extend the programme to other localities, in particular along the border areas with Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan, where the security and humanitarian challenges remain worrisome.

In addition to the redeployment of the State and economic recovery, the programme plays a crucial role in strengthening peace and social cohesion. It provides invaluable assistance to populations that have long been marginalized and offers a tangible opportunity for reconstruction and reconciliation. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that those efforts are not in vain and that the progress continues unhindered.

We are aware, however, that the humanitarian challenges remain urgent and largely underfunded. Despite the combined efforts of the Government and the international community, the situation on the ground remains fragile. Many displaced and vulnerable people continue to require vital support. We therefore urge all our partners to maintain their humanitarian support. It is crucial that the momentum of solidarity continue and that assistance to the populations most at risk be maintained and reinforced.

We would also like to remind all our partners that our national development plan offers a clear and ambitious road map for the sustainable recovery and stabilization of the Central African Republic. We are firmly committed and unswervingly optimistic, even though we are fully aware of the scope of the task ahead.

With that in mind, the Central African Republic reiterates its commitment to the effective implementation of the plan, to ensure that we are not dependent on external aid in the long term. We are determined to use our resources responsibly and transparently to stimulate growth, consolidate peace and promote the emergence of a strong and diversified private sector.

In that respect, MINUSCA, in its multidimensional role, must be a source of economic opportunities for young people and women, who find their resilience in entrepreneurship. In that regard, I would like to stress how important it is for us that MINUSCA promote local procurement so that the Central African Republic can achieve its vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

**The President** (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

*The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.*