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## Central African Republic

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2499 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2020 and requested me to report on its implementation every four months. The present report provides an update on major developments in the Central African Republic since my previous report of 16 June 2020 ([S/2020/545](#)), as well as recommendations on the extension of the mandate of MINUSCA.

#### II. Political situation

##### Political developments

2. The political environment was dominated by preparations for the general elections, the first round of which is scheduled for 27 December, and was increasingly characterized by tension and mistrust amid a slippage in the electoral calendar. During a national address on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the Central African Republic, on 13 August, the President, Faustin-Archange Touadera, called for national unity and reaffirmed his commitment to holding timely, credible, inclusive and peaceful elections. He praised the Government and health-care personnel for their efforts in responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, despite the opposition's continued criticism of the Government's shortcomings in addressing the pandemic.

3. In June, the Constitutional Court rejected the Government's proposed amendment to the Constitution to extend the tenures of the incumbent President and legislators in the event of an instance of force majeure that would delay the timely holding of elections, noting that any slippage in the constitutional timelines should derive from broad national consultations and consensus. Certain political parties and civil society have since been requesting the Government to convene a national dialogue on the electoral calendar. In September, President Touadera convened a series of meetings on the electoral process with opposition parties, former Heads of State and the *forces vives*, comprising political parties, civil society and religious and other leaders. The Coalition de l'opposition démocratique 2020 declined to attend a



meeting held on 17 September, accusing President Touadera of imposing rushed and poorly prepared elections.

4. As at 1 October, 15 political leaders, including three women, had announced their intention to contest the presidency. Recent announcements included President Touadera of Mouvement des coeurs unis, former President François Bozizé of Kwa Na Kwa, former Head of State Catherine Samba-Panza as an independent, former Prime Minister Anicet Georges Dologuélé of Union pour le renouveau centrafricain, Alexandre Ferdinand Nguendet of Rassemblement pour la République, Éloi Anguimaté of the Convention nationale, Augustin Agou of the Parti de la renaissance et du développement durable and former Prime Minister Mahamat Kamoun of the Be Africa Ti é Kwè party. Some of the opposition candidates voiced strong criticism of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, promising to adopt a strong posture towards armed groups.

5. The National Assembly adopted six bills during its second special session, held from 25 June to 9 July, including a revised national budget accounting for expenditure related to the COVID-19, the revised treaty of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the statute on the National Electoral Authority. During a third special session, held from 18 to 23 September, the Assembly passed into law a revised electoral code, with exceptional, derogatory provisions, accounting for delays in electoral operations while maintaining constitutional timelines. Despite the recommendations from the consultative framework and advocacy from the United Nations and other partners, the Government did not include in its draft bill provisions that would allow Central African refugees in neighbouring countries to participate in the polls as they had during the 2015–2016 electoral cycle. A significant number of parliamentarians from the opposition boycotted the vote.

6. My Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Mankeur Ndiaye, engaged national stakeholders and international partners in line with the good offices and political facilitation mandate of MINUSCA to encourage constructive and inclusive political dialogue. To complement those efforts, in July the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, engaged with Prime Minister Firmin Ngrébada on the political and peace processes. On 24 September, Messrs. Chergui and Lacroix, together with the Chairperson of the ECCAS Commission, Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, issued a joint call for national stakeholders to engage in political dialogue with a view to achieving consensus and creating conditions conducive to the holding of peaceful, credible and inclusive elections within constitutional timelines.

7. On the margins of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, I convened a high-level meeting on the Central African Republic with President Touadera, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Chairperson of the ECCAS Commission, during which international partners expressed their support for advancing the political process, including the organization of the elections.

#### **Electoral preparations**

8. Voter registration operations were launched by the National Electoral Authority on 30 June, with a target of 2.5 million voters registered, as compared with 1.9 million registered during the previous electoral cycle. As at 1 October, voter registration had been completed in Bangui and in all prefectures except Nana-Mambéré and Ouham-Pendé, with a total of 1,768,634 Central African citizens registered, including 822,415 women (46.5 per cent).

9. Delays in the registration process were attributed to insecurity and obstruction by the anti-balaka, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) and Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) armed groups in the Haute-Kotto, Ouaka and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures. The National Electoral Authority also experienced several challenges, including technical, operational and logistical issues, which had a negative impact on its operations. These included the limited capacity of the Authority, difficulties in accessing certain remote locations, technical issues with registration tablets and problems with timely payment of registration agents.

10. On 7 August, President Touadera promulgated a statute on the composition and organization of the National Electoral Authority, the mandate of whose members was due to expire on 24 December. A selection commission comprising representatives from political parties, public administration and civil society was established to appoint the 11 new members for a seven-year term. Four current members of the Authority will remain in their positions until the conclusion of the electoral process, alongside the new members, as envisioned in the new statute of the Authority.

11. The political opposition and other stakeholders criticized the National Electoral Authority over its perceived lack of transparency and ineffectiveness, denouncing ineffective communication with the population about the registration process. Despite efforts by the Authority to enhance its operations, opposition parties and other national actors continued to raise concerns.

12. President Touadera signed a decree on 4 September reviving a consultative framework, bringing together representatives from public administration, political parties and civil society to discuss issues related to the electoral process. That forum complements the strategic committee chaired by the Prime Minister that monitors electoral operations. The consultative framework held meetings on 10 and 16 September, during which participants discussed progress and challenges in the electoral process and proposed possible solutions.

13. MINUSCA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) undertook initiatives to encourage women to participate as voters and candidates in the electoral process. Eleven women's situation rooms are being established in Bangui and the prefectures to strengthen the role of women in monitoring the elections.

14. On 2 October, the Prime Minister signed the integrated security plan for the elections. The Government plans to contribute \$1.25 million of the plan's \$4.1 million budget. The plan covers the roles of national security actors, as well as MINUSCA military and police components.

15. As at 1 October, the basket fund managed by UNDP of \$41.8 million to support the presidential, legislative and local elections through 2022 faced an overall gap of \$19.5 million, including \$5.7 million for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections.

16. Disinformation campaigns in the media targeted MINUSCA, including its leadership, in connection with its electoral assistance and good offices mandate. The Mission strengthened its efforts to sharpen strategic communication and to prevent, monitor and respond to hate speech and incitement to violence as and when required.

### **Peace process**

17. President Touadera promulgated four laws adopted by the National Assembly in line with the Government's commitments under the Political Agreement. The legislation provides for the status of political parties and the opposition and a pension

regime for former elected presidents. The President also promulgated the first of a two-part decentralization law establishing part of the legal framework for local elections planned for late 2021. Local elections were last held in 1988.

18. The implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the Political Agreement functioned with COVID-19-related precautionary measures. To facilitate communication and coordination between national and local mechanisms, MINUSCA supported videoconference meetings between the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and prefects. The agendas of these meetings have expanded to cover COVID-19 response and electoral operations.

19. In May, national defence and security forces and administrative authorities deployed to the Bamingui-Bangoran Prefecture for the first time since 2013. The prefects of Nana-Grébizi and Ouaka launched security committees in Ippy and Mbrès on 9 and 17 August, respectively.

20. On 16 June, the executive monitoring committee of the Political Agreement held a session to discuss violence in Ndélé, Bamingui-Bangoran Prefecture; it was agreed to prioritize transitional justice in resolving the conflict between the Gula and Runga ethnic groups. National efforts were complemented by local mediation initiatives.

21. During its 24 July session, the executive monitoring committee focused on violence in the west involving Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, which had suspended its participation in the Political Agreement follow-up mechanisms on 5 June. Members condemned the ongoing violations by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, alliances between armed groups, the use of landmines and the obstruction of humanitarian assistance.

22. Limited progress was made in establishing the joint security units provided for under the Political Agreement. As at 1 October, a total of 216 members of the units had been deployed from Bouar to Paoua, while approximately 346 remained in Bouar. They had not yet started their operations, however. Four members of Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation left the joint security unit camps with their weapons in Paoua and Bouar on 14 July and 14 September, respectively. On 18 August, the strategic committee of the joint security units identified Birao, Bria, Ndélé and Kaga Bandoro as locations for future deployments.

23. On 30 July, the Prime Minister met in Bangui with UPC leader Ali Darassa. According to the Government's meeting record, which the UPC leader signed, Ali Darassa committed to respecting the redeployment of State authority, engaging in disarmament and demobilization operations and allowing the free movement of electoral agents, in exchange for being allowed to re-establish himself in Bambari with a direct line of communication with the Prime Minister. In a communiqué dated 1 August, Ali Darassa disputed that account, indicating that he had signed the meeting record under duress.

24. On 21 August, the African Union led a delegation including representatives from the Government, ECCAS and MINUSCA to meet with Mahamat Al-Khatim, leader of the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), in Kaga Bandoro to encourage the armed group to take further concrete action to implement the Political Agreement.

25. On 2 September, some signatory armed groups issued a joint communiqué denouncing shortcomings in the implementation of the Political Agreement. They requested that the Chairperson of ECCAS, President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, organize an arbitration by the Heads of State of the region as provided for in article 34 of the Agreement.

26. On 8 August, the interreligious platform held a national day of prayer, fasting and forgiveness. Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, the leaders of the platform, travelled to Bossangoa, Ouham Prefecture, on 2 and 3 September to encourage reconciliation and social cohesion between Christian and Muslim communities.

#### **Local dialogue and reconciliation**

27. Local stakeholders continued efforts related to community dialogue and peaceful dispute resolution, with MINUSCA support. Between 18 June and 23 August, several community dialogues were held in the north-east focusing on ending violence in Ndélé, restoring peace and freedom of movement, and facilitating reconciliation between ethnic groups. On 27 August, the Gula and Runga factions of FPRC signed a non-aggression pact in Ndélé that will be monitored by the prefectural security committee and MINUSCA. The situation in the area has since remained stable.

28. Notwithstanding the positive progress in Ndélé, the divide between the Gula, Runga and Sara factions of FPRC in Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran Prefectures continued to deepen, resulting in communal tensions. The FPRC Gula faction and armed Gula elements affiliated with the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC) and the Parti pour le rassemblement de la nation centrafricaine (PRNC) disagreed over leadership in Haute-Kotto Prefecture, undermining social cohesion between communities and heightening fears of attacks.

29. On 29 July, the prefect of Bamingui-Bangoran organized a meeting between Gula and Runga leaders, who agreed to involve armed elements in the reconciliation process. On 14 August, following clashes on 23 July that resulted in civilian displacement and property damage in Ouadda, local implementation and technical committees successfully mediated between Gula and Sara combatants. The situation remains fragile, however.

### **III. Security situation**

30. As at 1 October, there were 644 recorded violations of the Political Agreement, an increase from the 504 recorded during the previous reporting period. Civilians were the targets of 342 violations, followed by illegal military activities (125), restrictions of movement (114) and obstruction of the deployment of State institutions, humanitarian organizations or the United Nations (63). FPRC perpetrated most of the reported violations (179), followed by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (144), UPC (91), MPC (87), anti-balaka elements (73), RPRC (34), the national armed forces (27), Révolution et justice-Sayo Branch (6), Parti pour le rassemblement de la nation centrafricaine (1) and Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (1).

31. In the west, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation maintained its aggressive posture against State authority and MINUSCA, perpetrating a series of attacks in Nana-Mambéré and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures. On 15 June, MINUSCA launched a military operation to reduce the threat posed by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation to civilians and encourage the group's compliance with the Political Agreement.

32. Three national army soldiers were killed during combat with Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation on 21 June in Besson, Nana-Mambéré Prefecture. On 7 July, a MINUSCA vehicle was damaged in Gedzé, Nana-Mambéré Prefecture, by an anti-tank mine suspected to have been laid by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation. This has been the first reported use of landmines in the Central African Republic. One

peacekeeper was killed and three others injured on 13 July during an operation against Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation. The group's leader, Bi Sidi Souleymane (also known as Sidiki), issued several communiqués denying the involvement of the group in these acts and calling for dialogue with the Government to de-escalate tensions.

33. On 17 June, Sidiki signed a memorandum of understanding with Ali Darassa of UPC to formalize the armed groups' alliance to coordinate security and transhumance in their respective areas of operations.

34. Following pressure from the national armed forces and MINUSCA, by late July, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation had retreated from its strongholds in Besson and Niem, Nana-Mambéré Prefecture, as well as in Kouï, Ouham-Pendé Prefecture, towards the Cameroonian border, while continuing illegal activities.

35. On 9 July, MPC leader Mahamat Al-Khatim announced the establishment of a "Markounda coalition", comprising the Mokom anti-balaka wing, FPRC and Révolution et justice-Sayo Branch. The stated objective was to bring peace and security to Ouham Prefecture while facilitating the extension of State authority. On 20 September, Ali Darassa of UPC signed an agreement with Mahamat Al-Khatim to establish a permanent framework of consultation.

36. Armed groups competed for control of mining sites near Markounda and Kouï in Ouham Prefecture. UPC reinforced its presence in late July, creating tensions with MPC. Several MPC combatants, along with their leader, left their Kaga Bando stronghold in early August to install new leaders and control mining sites in the west.

37. In the east, the movements of UPC intensified, posing a threat to civilians on the Mboki and Bambouti axes and around Zemio. On 10 August, UPC elements blocked access to voting centres in Zemio, demanding money from Central African refugees who had crossed the border from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to register. On 13 August, UPC killed a trader, triggering the suspension by local traders of all movements and supplies of basic goods from South Sudan. On the same day, reported UPC combatants kidnapped a medical team providing measles vaccinations in Mboki, Haut-Mbomou Prefecture; the team was released unharmed on 17 August.

38. In Bria, anti-balaka elements targeted the PK3 camp for internally displaced persons. On 13 July, FPRC obstructed the recruitment of internal security forces and, on 16 July, unidentified elements burned their auxiliary checkpoint at PK3. In Yalinga, FPRC elements obstructed the activities of electoral agents on 3 August, jeopardizing the voter registration process. They abducted three National Electoral Authority staff on 27 August, who were released the following day.

39. In Ouaka Prefecture, a series of clashes between anti-balaka elements and the national armed forces was reported in August, near Grimari. MINUSCA and the national armed forces subsequently reinforced their patrols to protect civilians and reduce the threats posed by local anti-balaka elements.

40. In Bangui, crime increased in the PK5 neighbourhood. MINUSCA facilitated dialogue between the Government and former members of self-defence groups that had been dismantled in December 2019. On 30 August, a new police station was established in PK5, with support from MINUSCA.

#### **IV. Regional engagement**

41. During its ninth extraordinary session, held on 3 and 4 June in Libreville, the ECCAS Council of Ministers discussed the report of the Central African Early Warning Mechanism on the political and security situation in the Central African

Republic. The Council of Ministers decided to submit the revised report to the current Chairperson of ECCAS for consideration.

42. In June, President Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo met with former President Bozizé and former President of the National Assembly Karim Meckassoua in Brazzaville as part of efforts to advance political dialogue in the Central African Republic.

## V. Humanitarian situation

43. Intercommunal tensions, armed group clashes and attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers continued to have an impact on the humanitarian situation. More than half of the population, or 2.6 million people, required humanitarian assistance. Some 2.4 million people suffer from acute food insecurity, including 750,000 in the emergency phase.

44. As at 1 October, approximately 659,000 Central Africans were internally displaced and an additional 623,909 were living as refugees in neighbouring countries.

45. Humanitarian activities remained acutely underfunded. As at 1 October, the 2020 humanitarian response plan was 50.8 per cent funded, with a gap of \$272.4 million out of the required \$553 million, including \$153 million for the COVID-19 response.

46. COVID-19 exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and the humanitarian crisis in the country. National authorities undertook mitigation measures to limit the spread of the disease and decentralize their response, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners. As at 1 October, the Government had confirmed 4,850 cases of COVID-19, including 1,915 recoveries and 62 deaths. MINUSCA initiated 162 activities throughout the country to train 3,844 social mobilizers, including 956 women, whose job is to raise awareness regarding COVID-19. MINUSCA also worked with the African Women Leaders Network to enhance the participation of women in COVID-19 prevention and response efforts.

47. Violations perpetrated by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation since May in Mambéré-Kadéï, Nana-Mambéré and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures resulted in the displacement of approximately 15,000 people and impeded humanitarian access. The onset of the rainy season also constrained access by road to some areas. In coordination with the Government, humanitarian actors took measures in Bangui and areas along the Ubangi river prone to flooding during the rainy season.

48. Following a reported deterioration in human indicators in several locations in Ouaka, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou Prefectures, the deployment of humanitarian air assets in August facilitated the delivery of multisectoral assistance in these areas.

49. The Central African Republic continued to be one of the most dangerous places in the world for humanitarian workers. There have been 267 attacks against humanitarians in 2020, resulting in 2 deaths and 20 injuries, a decrease in comparison with the 388 incidents during the same period in the previous year. The most dangerous areas are Ndélé, followed by Bangui, Batangafo and Kaga-Bandoro. Health personnel were attacked and abducted, and health facilities pillaged, by armed groups on the Mbrès axis in June and in Mboki in August.

## **VI. Protection of civilians**

50. MINUSCA and the United Nations country team, in coordination with humanitarian organizations, continued to strengthen national capacity to protect civilians by identifying risks, challenges and solutions to address threats against civilians. The deployment of international surge teams to locations without a permanent presence of international staff remained impracticable owing to COVID-19 restrictions, although community liaison assistants remained active in these areas. Protection coordination mechanisms and predeployment training were conducted virtually.

51. MINUSCA maintained a robust posture to deter threats against civilians. Measures to mitigate harm were integrated into planning to prevent the risk of civilians being adversely affected by operations against armed groups. Following the reported use of landmines by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation in July, United Nations entities enhanced information-sharing and developed mine awareness training modules.

52. MINUSCA strengthened contingency plans for field offices to ensure that physical security and humanitarian risks were anticipated, including in the event of large-scale civilian displacement near its premises. Specific threats were analysed, including possible violence resulting from the electoral process and transhumance.

## **VII. Extension of State authority and the rule of law**

### **Extension of State authority**

53. As at 1 October, 111 out of 174 territorial authorities were operational, including 15 of 16 prefects, 62 of 71 sub-prefects, 15 of 16 prefectural secretaries-general and 31 of 71 sub-prefectural secretaries. Local authorities increased their role in COVID-19 preventive measures, electoral preparations and conflict resolution, including of transhumance-related conflict, with support from MINUSCA.

54. MINUSCA supported the Government in implementing its restoration of the State authority strategy adopted in September 2017, including by providing predeployment training and capacity-building for 45 sub-prefectural secretaries and 15 prefects.

### **Security sector reform**

55. The military justice system was formally launched on 17 July with the swearing in of personnel for the Bangui military jurisdictions, including eight assessors and alternates, four registrars and one clerk. MINUSCA continued advocacy efforts to strengthen security sector oversight mechanisms, resulting in disciplinary action against six soldiers for serious misconduct. MINUSCA applied the human rights due diligence policy in all its support for non-United Nations forces.

### **National armed and internal security forces**

56. As at 1 October, the national forces had a total strength of 8,651 (including 660 women); 2,095 soldiers were deployed in 25 locations, an increase of 171 since my previous report. The recruitment of 2,600 defence forces has been ongoing since July. Logistical, financial and command and control challenges continued to compromise deployments. During the reporting period, the leadership of the national defence forces undertook disciplinary action in six major incidents of misconduct, leading to three dismissals from the armed forces.



57. As at 1 October, 1,464 police officers (344 women) and 2,164 gendarmes (228 women) were deployed to all prefectures except Basse-Kotto, including 8 police officers and 20 gendarmes deployed in June to Ndélé, 30 police officers deployed in July to Bambari and 3 police officers and 4 gendarmes deployed in September to Bangassou. In July, the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic began providing strategic advice to the internal security forces as a complement to MINUSCA support. In August, a junior non-commissioned officer in the gendarmerie was demoted for serious misconduct.

58. On 13 July, national authorities launched the recruitment of 1,000 internal security forces, with support from MINUSCA. On 28 August and 1 September, 1,350 police and gendarmes, including 395 women, graduated. They were deployed on 15 September in units charged with the management of public security and public order. A national committee is working on the integration of ex-combatants through the ongoing recruitment process.

59. The Mine Action Service (UNMAS) promoted weapons and ammunition management best practices through the installation of six specialized storage facilities for the defence forces. Thirty-seven defence and internal security forces were trained in weapons and ammunition management, including self-sustained explosive ordnance disposal. UNMAS provided risk awareness sessions on mines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war to United Nations and humanitarian actors to support the coordination of and response to the new explosive ordnance threat.

#### **Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation**

60. From 22 June to 25 September, the Government, with support from MINUSCA, conducted disarmament and demobilization operations in Bria, Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé for 773 combatants from Séléka *renovée pour la paix et la justice*, MPC, RPRC and Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice, including 40 women, during which 579 weapons of war, 16,134 rounds of ammunition and 174 explosives were collected. National authorities conducted a series of preparatory field missions to Birao, Bria and Kaga Bandoro to secure the agreement and cooperation of armed groups and obtain lists of eligible combatants prior to launching operations.

61. MINUSCA, in collaboration with WHO, expanded its community violence reduction initiatives to support prefectural health authorities in Bambari, Bangassou, Bangui, Bossangoa, Bouar, Bria and Kaga Bandoro in their response to COVID-19.

#### **Justice and the rule of law**

62. On 9 July, President Touadera appointed 21 judges, including 4 women, the first expansion of the judicial workforce in four years. Five national magistrates were sworn in to the Special Criminal Court on 23 July, completing the complement of national judges. The Court increased the number of its investigations into serious human rights violations cases from 8 to 10. MINUSCA provided technical support to national judicial institutions investigating serious crimes perpetrated in violation of the Political Agreement, including cases related to violence in Nana-Mambéré Prefecture in July. Under its urgent temporary measures mandate, MINUSCA arrested and handed over to national authorities nine persons suspected of having committed crimes in seven cases between 1 June and 1 October.

63. On 23 June, 149 newly recruited civilian correctional personnel, including 17 women, were deployed to six prisons countrywide, with mentoring and training support from MINUSCA. On 2 October, 151 prison officer candidates who had been medically screened on 18 September began training, with support from MINUSCA

and UNDP. The Mission also provided support for prison infrastructure projects in Bangui, Sibut and Mbaiki.

64. MINUSCA and UNDP assisted the Ministry of Justice in implementing COVID-19 mitigation measures at prisons. As at 1 October, there were no active cases of COVID-19 in Central African prisons. To that date, there had been six confirmed cases, including one death, at Ngaragba prison.

## VIII. Human rights and the fight against impunity

65. Between 1 June and 1 October, MINUSCA documented 156 incidents of human rights violations. The majority were related to attacks on civilians perpetrated by armed groups, which affected at least 271 victims (138 men, 42 women, 23 boys, 16 girls, 1 unidentified minor, 37 unidentified adults, and 14 groups of collective victims), resulting in 19 conflict-related civilian deaths. This represents a decrease in recorded human rights violations compared with the same period in 2019, when 304 reported violations affecting 494 victims occurred, although COVID-19 restrictions had an impact on the ability of MINUSCA to conduct investigations. Signatory armed groups continued to perpetrate most of the violations and abuses; they were involved in 134 such incidents, affecting 229 victims. State agents, primarily members of the national armed forces, were involved in 14 violations, affecting 18 victims.

### Transitional justice

66. On 30 July, President Touadera, Prime Minister Ngrébada and the Minister of Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation co-signed two decrees setting in motion the establishment of the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation. The decrees pertain to the appointment of the 11 members of the selection commission, as well as the functioning of the selection commission and its technical secretariat. MINUSCA, UNDP and the Peacebuilding Fund are providing financial and technical assistance to the selection commission. On 6 September, the selection commission launched a call for applications to recruit commissioners.

### Conflict-related sexual violence

67. From 1 June to 1 October, MINUSCA documented 60 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 84 victims (45 women and 39 girls), including 55 rapes or attempted rapes, 1 of which resulted in death, 4 forced marriages and 1 case of sexual slavery. While representing a decrease from the previous reporting period, there was reduced monitoring as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. There was a temporary reduction of services offered to victims of sexual violence in some locations as some organizations withdrew personnel owing to the pandemic. Many survivors expressed concern about seeking treatment at hospitals owing to COVID-19.

68. Conflict-related sexual violence was particularly prevalent in the Nana-Grébizi and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures, with the majority of recorded incidents allegedly perpetrated by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation and MPC. In July, eight women abducted from Kounkaya, Ouham-Pendé Prefecture, were repeatedly raped while being held hostage for a week.

69. MINUSCA worked with the national network for the protection of victims and witnesses of sexual violence to monitor the situation in Kaga Bandoro and assess the risk of reprisals against victims by individuals who had been accused or convicted of rape and released in May to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in prisons. The Mission

trained 98 elements of the defence forces on human rights and conflict-related sexual violence in Obo and Paoua.

#### **Children and armed conflict**

70. On 15 June, President Touadera promulgated the child protection code, which criminalizes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups and considers associated children as victims. The enforcement of the code's provisions will enhance the protection of children in accordance with international standards.

71. There was a decrease in the reported number of children separated from armed groups compared with the previous reporting period; however, this can be attributed to the COVID-19-related restrictions, which resulted in challenges in undertaking verification, as well as a decrease in reintegration partners. Thirteen children (2 girls and 11 boys) were separated from MPC, and 22 children (3 girls and 19 boys) were verified as associated with FPRC and await entry into a reintegration programme. Nine children escaped from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

72. MINUSCA, with the support of local authorities and peace committees in the Haut-Mbomou Prefecture, initiated a dialogue with an LRA splinter group on the release of abducted children and the prevention of grave child rights violations.

73. The pandemic resulted in increased risks of child recruitment and use, and sexual violence, including as a result of school closures. MINUSCA raised awareness among 11,032 community members, including 6,688 children and 2,215 women, on these risks and protection against COVID-19.

## **IX. Socioeconomic situation**

74. COVID-19 continued to have adverse socioeconomic effects despite the progressive lifting of preventative measures. *Central Africa Economic Outlook 2020*, issued by the African Development Bank Group in July, projected an annual loss of 3.7 percentage points in economic growth and a deterioration in the budget balance by 3.7 per cent of gross domestic product. This could depress public investment required to sustain growth. The partial closure of the borders with Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributed to a 46 per cent increase in prices for imported goods, including basic food items. As most basic goods are imported and many people rely on informal sectors for their livelihoods, a protracted impact on the economy is projected.

75. Some \$2.44 billion has been disbursed in accordance with the national reconciliation and recovery plan, representing a 62 per cent implementation rate, including in projects to improve the health, road, energy and sanitation infrastructure in several locations, including Bambari, Bangassou, Bangui, Berberati, Bria and Paoua. There is a gap of \$151.1 million out of the \$159.6 million required for the United Nations COVID-19 socioeconomic response and recovery plan.

## **X. United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic**

#### **Military component**

76. As at 1 October, the strength of the MINUSCA military component stood at 11,525 (4.8 per cent women), out of an authorized strength of 11,650 personnel, including 310 staff officers (47 women) and 151 military observers (42 women). It comprised 12 infantry battalions; 1 high-readiness battalion; 1 battle group; 1 special

forces company; 1 quick reaction force company; and enabling units, specifically 1 military police company, 3 multi-purpose engineering companies, 1 reduced engineering company, 1 airfield construction engineering company, 1 heavy transport company, 3 level II hospitals and 1 level I hospital, plus a forward surgery module, 3 helicopter units and 2 uncrewed aerial vehicles. A quick reaction unit was deployed to Kaga Bandoro in September and an armed helicopter unit, including a special forces platoon, is scheduled to be deployed in Bangui in December.

### **Police component**

77. As at 1 October, the MINUSCA police component stood at 2,033 personnel (12.6 per cent women), out of an authorized strength of 2,080, including 332 individual police officers (104 women) and 1,701 personnel (152 women) in 11 formed police units and 1 protection support unit. The protection support unit, along with six formed police units, are in Bangui under the joint task force. Five formed police units are deployed in Bambari, Berberati, Bouar, Bria and Kaga Bandoro. Part of the Kaga Bandoro unit is deployed in Batangafo. On 27 June, parts of the formed police units from Bangui and Bambari, which had been temporarily deployed to Ndélé, returned to their duty stations.

### **Civilian personnel**

78. As at 1 October, 1,478 civilian personnel (26 per cent of whom were women), including 250 United Nations Volunteers and 105 government-provided correctional personnel, served with MINUSCA, representing 90 per cent of 1,622 authorized positions.

### **Status-of-forces agreement**

79. On 2 and 3 September, three MINUSCA personnel were arrested by gendarmes in Bangui, following an issue involving the import of explosive materials required for the work of UNMAS which had been in the custody of the gendarmerie since August. They were released on 4 September, following intervention by MINUSCA leadership.

### **Safety and security of United Nations personnel**

80. As at 1 October, 171 security incidents involving United Nations personnel had been recorded. Ten personnel died, including one during a hostile attack and eight from various illnesses. Fourteen personnel were injured, including six in hostile attacks, one in a fire, five in road traffic accidents and three in a work accident. Movements of MINUSCA personnel were restricted countrywide owing to security risks and COVID-19 prevention measures.

81. As at 1 October, 463 cases of COVID-19 among Mission personnel had been confirmed, with 378 recoveries, 73 active cases, 9 repatriations and 3 deaths. The United Nations country team registered 45 confirmed cases with 42 recoveries.

82. As part of the Mission's COVID-19 response, wearing masks, handwashing and the use of hand sanitizers, as well as social distancing, are mandatory for all personnel. The Mission's Medical Section continues to undertake contact tracing and immediate isolation of both confirmed and suspected cases, as well as quarantine measures for all close contacts. Force medical officers have implemented an improved follow-up mechanism for military patients, with frequent visits to the isolation facilities to follow up on all confirmed cases.

83. National authorities, with MINUSCA support, opened one new investigation into attacks against peacekeepers, bringing to 18 the number of ongoing investigations.

### **Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse**

84. Between 1 June and 30 September, eight allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported against military personnel. A total of 17 sexual exploitation and abuse allegations have been recorded in 2020, a majority of which relate to incidents allegedly committed in prior years. No other allegations of serious misconduct were recorded.

85. Training on my zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and other serious misconduct continued to be delivered remotely owing to the pandemic. Military and police representatives conducted joint camp assessments within the framework of the Mission's comprehensive misconduct risk management.

86. In partnership with communities and target groups such as sex workers' associations, MINUSCA carried out outreach activities and supported the community-based complaint network. MINUSCA used local radio stations, telephone service providers and advertising spots to disseminate messaging on protection from and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. All newly identified victims were referred for needs assessment and assistance, while previously recorded victims continued to be assisted.

### **Support considerations**

87. MINUSCA continued to reduce its environmental footprint. The 49 wastewater treatment plants are fully operational. Composting of solid waste and remediation of the Kolongo landfill project continued, coupled with waste segregation. Waste segregation and composting were extended to the Bangassou, Bossangoa and Bria field offices. Owing to COVID-19-related movement restrictions, MINUSCA was unable to install new meters to monitor its water usage or power consumption.

### **Action for peacekeeping and performance optimization**

88. MINUSCA prioritized its efforts to advance a political solution to the conflict, primarily through the good offices and political engagement of my Special Representative, which facilitated political dialogue among national stakeholders and enhanced coordination and joint action among international partners. United Nations partnership with other international stakeholders, including the African Union, ECCAS and the European Union, was strengthened, including through joint engagement and messaging, resulting in unified support for the political process. MINUSCA also continued its efforts to enhance the effective participation of women in the political process, including in the elections.

89. The suspension of internal flights in March owing to the pandemic hindered the completion of performance evaluations for contingents, although training activities continued. Evaluations resumed in June for Bangui-based contingents.

90. Since June, 11 formed police units and the protection support unit have been re-evaluated. Performance improvement plans for each unit addressed identified shortfalls of equipment and self-sustainment, ammunition and perimeter security. All units were assessed to perform satisfactory overall, although one unit was rated below satisfactory in sustainment. Progress on improvement measures is monitored quarterly.

91. MINUSCA increasingly used the analysis and findings from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System to support decision-making and strategy formulation. The Mission also developed tools to support COVID-19-related planning and analysis, including a dashboard tracking the virus and a timeline tracking events and Mission interventions, including quick-impact projects.

## **XI. Financial considerations**

92. The General Assembly, by its resolution [74/284](#) of 30 June 2020, appropriated the amount of \$937.7 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. As at 1 October, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for MINUSCA amounted to \$194.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,757.1 million. Reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment, as well as troop and formed police personnel, has been made for the period up to 31 March 2020 and 30 June 2020, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## **XII. Observations and recommendations**

93. In December, the people of the Central African Republic will go to the polls to choose who will lead their country and represent them in the National Assembly for the next five years. The success of these elections, and the peaceful and democratic continuation or transfer of power, will be a critical milestone. It is an opportunity to consolidate the democratic gains and constitutional order established in 2015–2016 through elections ending the political transition and setting a new path, firmly away from the successive crises of the past. Throughout, the Central African people have demonstrated persistent resilience; they deserve their leaders' absolute resolve in pursuing peace.

94. National stakeholders, particularly political leaders, should seize this opportunity to consolidate the country's democratic foundations for lasting peace. I call on them to constructively engage in political dialogue on the electoral process and to refrain from any action, including hate speech and incitement to violence, that could undermine efforts to create a conducive environment for successful elections within the constitutional timelines. I welcome in this regard the revival of the consultative framework, which provides an essential platform for national stakeholders to discuss and overcome challenges through dialogue and consensus. National authorities should therefore make every effort to ensure that it functions effectively.

95. The consolidation of constitutional order requires that all citizens be able to enjoy their rights. I therefore deeply regret that the recent amendments of the electoral code did not extend the franchise to over 250,000 Central African citizens of voting age who are living as refugees in neighbouring countries, despite continual advocacy and concerted political engagement with Central African authorities. The United Nations will continue engaging with Central African authorities, and partners, including neighbouring countries, to promote the participation of refugees in the electoral process, while supporting their voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return and reintegration. This would be crucial in efforts to advance peace and reconciliation, and address structural violence in the Central African Republic.

96. The inclusiveness of the electoral process has to also extend to the full and meaningful participation of women, including as candidates. I welcome the fact that nearly half of registered voters are women. Every effort has to be made to ensure that conditions are conducive to their peaceful participation in the polls. I encourage all parties and coalitions to take bold measures to champion the representation of women in elective positions and to seek to exceed the constitutionally mandated 30 per cent minimum of female candidates.

97. The availability of resources is crucial for sustaining the electoral process. I welcome the generous support already provided for the basket fund managed by

UNDP, and complementary electoral assistance projects by partners. Nevertheless, the gap remains significant. The basket fund is facing a possibly crippling liquidity challenge that could impede time-sensitive electoral operations. I appeal to the international community to urgently contribute financially to prevent any delays in the holding of elections.

98. I remain convinced that the Political Agreement is the only viable path to peace and stability in the Central African Republic. It is in the interest of all Central Africans, and their neighbours, to ensure that the peace process is successful. I call on all candidates in the upcoming elections to effectively commit to continuing to advance the peace process and implement the Political Agreement, as part of their political platforms. It is also crucial for all signatories to redouble their efforts to implement the Agreement in good faith and resolve differences peacefully.

99. I note with the regret the increased violations of the Political Agreement by signatories over the past four months. This has tragic consequences for the population and national stability. In March, I called for a global ceasefire amid the COVID-19 pandemic. That appeal was heard by some armed group leaders in the Central African Republic. I appeal to all armed group leaders to heed that call, and to adhere to their commitments under the Political Agreement for the benefit of the communities they profess to protect.

100. I remain deeply concerned by the resurgence of violence in the north-west. Three national soldiers and a peacekeeper were killed while engaged in operations to protect civilians. Far too much civilian death, destruction and displacement has occurred. I strongly condemn these heinous acts and recall that attacks against United Nations peacekeepers may amount to a war crime. The escalation by non-State armed actors, which included the use of landmines, is unacceptable and counterproductive to addressing any legitimate grievances. There is no justification for the use of indiscriminate weapons, which must immediately stop and be investigated to hold perpetrators accountable.

101. The relative stability prevailing in the north-east is positive, particularly the continued respect for the weapons-free zone established in Birao earlier this year. I welcome the proactive efforts of the Government, working closely with MINUSCA, to promote local peace initiatives and the deployment of State authorities.

102. At the same time, far more remains to be done to reconcile communities so that they can live together in peace. I call on all armed group leaders to cease expansionist activities and to explore opportunities for engaging constructively in ongoing processes with significant potential to positively shape the future of the country, including political reforms that will result in expanded political space, as well as the 2021 local elections. It has been more than 30 years since communities last had the opportunity to choose their local officials, so these elections have significant potential for advancing efforts to address grievances and promote democratic representation and local governance.

103. COVID-19 has deepened inequalities, further devastating the health, lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable, including women and children. It has also deepened the humanitarian crisis. I greatly appreciate the work of humanitarian actors, who are providing communities with life-saving assistance and basic services in a challenging and dangerous environment. I strongly condemn the upsurge in attacks against humanitarian workers that put critical life-saving operations at risk. These operations also remain seriously underfunded, including for the COVID-19 response. I appeal to donors to urgently contribute to fill the \$272.4 million gap in the humanitarian response plan.

104. Sustaining peace in the Central African Republic will require that its people finally realize tangible dividends of peace. I call upon those eventually chosen by citizens to lead the country to prioritize, in consultation with local actors, development efforts aimed at building communities and harnessing the potential of the people to meet their basic needs, to realize their personal aspirations and to participate meaningfully in building their State and society. I call on development partners in the international community to explore options for scaling up their efforts, including to support the building of critical infrastructure that will improve people's lives. Historically marginalized segments of society, including women and children, require particular attention, as do areas of the country that remain isolated and vulnerable.

105. I am encouraged by progress in extending State authority through the deployment of civilian and security personnel, which is an essential step towards the Government assuming its responsibilities towards its citizens. I welcome ongoing efforts by national authorities to strengthen the territorial administration countrywide and to recruit, train and deploy defence and security forces that will also play a role in the integrated security plan for the elections. These elections will be an important test of Central African institutions, and its defence and security forces in particular, and a step towards gradually assuming full responsibility for the protection of civilians. This will, however, require serious, sustained commitment from national authorities, with support from partners.

106. National institutions, including the judicial system, should be strengthened to ensure that they are professional, accountable and inclusive of all segments of society. This is particularly essential for security institutions, which have to urgently improve their command and control, logistics, oversight and vetting, with support from partners, and ensure that they are promptly held accountable for any violations, particularly abuses of civilians, including members of minority communities. I also urge partners to work closely together to ensure that support is well coordinated in order to increase synergies and lessen the risk of major strategic gaps. MINUSCA will continue its multifaceted support for the defence and internal security forces, territorial administration and the judicial and correctional institutions, as mandated.

107. The launch of national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations in the north-east is an encouraging step. I welcome the receptivity of some signatory armed group leaders to mediation and reconciliation efforts, and call on them to undertake the immediate and unconditional separation of children from their ranks. I applaud the innovative approach of MINUSCA and development actors to jointly design a project that includes complementary economic dividends. This approach should be expanded to other areas of the country.

108. While there has been some progress with the special mixed security units, I am concerned that major strategic gaps have yet to be addressed. All stakeholders have to prioritize agreeing on a common vision and approach regarding the appropriate sequencing between the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the operationalization of these units, and for their future. I further urge all signatory parties, with the support of partners, to accelerate the establishment of these units and ensure appropriate oversight mechanisms. At the same time, it is necessary to redouble efforts to create sustainable solutions for former combatants, including opportunities for long-term socioeconomic reintegration or integration into national security services.

109. Peace cannot be sustained without addressing the continued, rampant impunity for human rights and other violations, including sexual violence, which is affecting women and girls. I therefore welcome efforts to strengthen and professionalize the police, justice and correctional institutions, including the Special Criminal Court, and



to prioritize the experiences and needs of victims. I am encouraged by progress made towards establishing the Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation, which could be among the most significant opportunities for national dialogue and healing since the 2015 Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation. I urge all stakeholders to engage actively and constructively in its establishment and operationalization.

110. Regional partners, including neighbouring countries, have an essential role to play in the pursuit of peace and stability in the Central African Republic, beyond their role as facilitators of the Political Agreement. The stability of the country and the region are inextricably intertwined. I encourage proactive efforts aimed at regularly convening bilateral commissions with neighbouring countries and reviving and reinforcing the tripartite force with Chadian and Sudanese forces, with a view to strengthening border control and cross-border cooperation. The reform of ECCAS also offers new opportunities for regional engagement and cooperation, including with respect to the Central African Republic.

111. The good offices and political engagement of my Special Representative, in concert with partners and balanced with a robust security posture in the implementation of the Mission mandate, particularly to protect civilians and to facilitate conditions conducive to the holding of peaceful elections, have brought results and will continue. They are a demonstration of the benefits of ensuring that political work remains at the heart of peacekeeping. It is therefore concerning that MINUSCA still faces operational gaps, which have become more urgent to bridge in the light of the pandemic and the imminence of elections. I welcome recent pledges from troop-contributing countries of aviation and quick reaction capabilities, and appeal for their expedited deployment, as well as of other capabilities to support operations and protect civilians and peacekeepers.

112. While important progress has been made in advancing peace and stability in the Central African Republic, challenges remain. Central Africans will need to redouble efforts in order to prevent any reversal of the hard-won gains and to continue to advance towards a better future. The role of MINUSCA in supporting those efforts remains essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of MINUSCA for one year, until 15 November 2021, at its current military and police strength, while maintaining the Mission's mandate, including for electoral assistance.

113. In conclusion, I wish to express my deep appreciation to my Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Mankeur Ndiaye, for his leadership and the proactive performance of his good offices to advance peace in the Central African Republic. I am grateful for the dedication of United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel to performing the Mission's mandate in an already challenging context, since compounded by the pandemic. I also thank troop- and police-contributing countries, donor countries, regional and other organizations, non-governmental organizations and all other partners for their invaluable support. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the guarantors of the Political Agreement, the African Union and ECCAS for their steadfast pursuit of peace for the people of the Central African Republic.

## Annex I

## United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic: military and police strength as at 1 October 2020

Country	Military component				Police component	
	Experts on mission	Staff officers	Troops	Total	Formed police units	Individual police officers
Argentina	–	1	–	1	–	–
Bangladesh	11	18	1 279	1 308	–	–
Benin	3	4	–	7	–	21
Bhutan	2	2	–	4	–	–
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	3	2	–	5	–	–
Brazil	3	5	–	8	–	1
Burkina Faso	–	5	–	5	–	31
Burundi	5	6	741	752	–	–
Cambodia	4	6	204	214	–	–
Cameroon	3	7	748	758	310	30
China	–	2	–	2	–	–
Colombia	2	–	–	2	–	–
Congo	2	10	–	12	138	1
Côte d'Ivoire	–	4	–	4	–	19
Czechia	3	–	–	3	–	–
Egypt	8	23	988	1 019	135	5
France	–	10	–	10	–	2
Gabon	–	–	447	447	–	–
Gambia	4	4	–	8	–	6
Ghana	4	6	–	10	–	7
Guatemala	2	2	–	4	–	–
Guinea	–	–	–	–	–	14
Indonesia	10	9	220	239	140	1
Jordan	3	5	–	8	–	24
Kenya	5	6	–	11	–	–
Madagascar	–	–	–	–	–	1
Mali	–	–	–	–	–	17
Mauritania	4	3	449	456	279	–
Mexico	–	–	–	–	–	–
Morocco	2	20	750	772	–	–
Nepal	5	13	719	737	–	–
Niger	1	2	–	3	–	32
Nigeria	–	3	–	3	–	1
Pakistan	11	27	1 211	1 249	–	–
Paraguay	2	1	–	3	–	–
Peru	6	8	203	217	–	–
Philippines	2	1	–	3	–	–

<i>Country</i>	<i>Military component</i>				<i>Police component</i>	
	<i>Experts on mission</i>	<i>Staff officers</i>	<i>Troops</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Formed police units</i>	<i>Individual police officers</i>
Portugal	–	9	179	188	–	9
Republic of Moldova	2	1	–	3	–	–
Romania	–	–	–	–	–	11
Russian Federation	3	10	–	13	–	–
Rwanda	9	19	1 382	1 410	419	24
Senegal	–	5	–	5	280	25
Serbia	2	2	71	75	–	–
Sierra Leone	5	1	–	6	–	–
Spain	–	–	–	–	–	3
Sri Lanka	–	–	110	110	–	–
Sweden	–	–	–	–	–	3
Togo	4	6	–	10	–	26
Tunisia	1	–	–	1	–	18
United Republic of Tanzania	–	5	450	455	–	–
United States of America	–	7	–	7	–	–
Uruguay	–	2	–	2	–	–
Viet Nam	1	5	–	6	–	–
Zambia	7	12	910	929	–	–
Zimbabwe	2	–	–	2	–	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>11 061</b>	<b>11 506</b>	<b>1 701</b>	<b>332</b>

# Annex II

## Map

