

SRSG Statement to the UN Security Council

21 February 2024

H.E. Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, President of the Security Council,

Distinguished Members of the Council,

H.E Ms. Sylvie Valerie Baipo-Temon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic,

Madame President,

1. I would like to congratulate Guyana on assuming the Presidency of the Council for the month of February. I am honored to present the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic, and to update you on recent developments in the country as well as the implementation of MINUSCA's mandate.

Members of Council

2. On 06 February, a Special Session of the Comité Exécutif de Suivi of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (CAR) was convened and chaired by H.E President Touadera to mark the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR (APPR). The session took stock of the overall progress made in the implementation of the mutualized APPR-RCA and Luanda Roadmap, and witnessed an

important mobilization of national, regional, and international stakeholders, including APPR guarantors and facilitators mobilization. The session appreciated the support extended by the international community, while calling on additional support for the implementation of the remaining commitments, and continuous support to the decentralization of the peace process. Speaking on behalf of all facilitators and guarantors, Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS) Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security commended the achievements secured through the implementation of the mutualized peace process, including the self-dissolution of nine armed groups, and the maintenance of former leaders of Armed Groups in the current government. In addition, he called on remaining original APPR-RCA signatories to rejoin the peace and political process, while commending the critical support provided by MINUSCA to the effective decentralization of the implementation of the political peace and reconciliation agreement.

(pause with the Members of the Council)

3. On 15 January a MINUSCA patrol hit an explosive ordnance device while returning from escorting humanitarian workers delivering assistance to Nzakoundou, a village in the western region of CAR which was recently the epicenter of an attack by suspected elements of the 3R armed group. The explosion killed Steve Emmanuel Atebele from the Cameroon contingent and injured five of his companions. Soldier Atebele was 30 years old and a father. I express my condolences and those of the entire staff of MINUSCA to the family of the deceased and to the Government of Cameroon. The tragic death of this young peacekeeper, which comes in the backdrop of similar

incidents in the last few months, must give cause for expediency in the handling of threats posed to peacekeepers by Explosive Ordnance Devices (EODs) and the appropriate responses that must ensue thereto. It is critically important that we understand the sources and origins of the EODs through the application of proper intelligence gathering and equally pursue cross-border cooperation to stem the tide of weapons flow across boundaries into CAR territory. Furthermore, countries in the region need to scale up cooperation towards effective border management and control to stem the proliferation of arms. EODs as well as light weapons are not only a threat to the population and peacekeepers but equally the most serious constraint to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the western region where 50 per cent of the CAR population live. I therefore wish to request the Council's support for an urgent, dedicated and truly multidimensional response to this threat both for the protection of civilians, and safety and security of our peacekeepers. We need to do the utmost to prevent this spread of these lethal weapons to other regions of the CAR. This approach should include investing in situational awareness, as well as focused cross-border cooperation on the origins, and sources of supply of EODs. Furthermore, the multidimensional response should entail enhanced pre-deployment T/PCC preparedness, adequate training and equipment of contingents deployed, as well as capacity building of national defence and security forces, and further promote communities' awareness and sensitization on the EOD threat.

Madame President

4. The Central African Republic is a vast country with a tropical climate, dense forests and replete with unpassable terrains. The road network in the country covers a

mere distance of about 24,000 km most of which are dirt tracks with only 3 per cent asphalted. The dirt tracks are unusable for road transportation during the 8 long months of heavy rains each year. Throughout the country, many villages are not reachable and almost cut off year-round. In brief, CAR is a landlocked country with no internal connectivity roads. This not only constitutes a major challenge to the mobility of MINUSCA's troops and the national defense and security forces and therefore to the POC and extension of CAR state authority over its territory. These problems are further compounded by our Mission's limited transport and logistics capacities to project personnel and support operations. In responding to POC emergencies in some of the remote areas, the Mission must use all its limited air assets, leaving us ill equipped to attend to other POC pressing needs. The lack of a bulk cargo aircraft has limited the Mission's ability to transport critical materials necessary to undertake its field projects to improve accessibility and mobility of MINUSCA's uniform and civilian personnel. As we prepare soon to initiate MINUSCA's budget deliberations, we count on the Council members and all Member States to avail MINUSCA with the requisite transport and logistic means to consolidate and expand MINUSCA's logistical support to Government of the Central African Republic and national defense and internal security forces to fulfil their primary responsibility of Protection of Civilian and extension of state authority as mandated by the Council.

Distinguished Members of Council

5. Indeed, Resolution 2907 (2023) through which you renewed the mandate of MINUSCA elevated the mission's support to the restoration and extension of state authority (RESA) to a priority task. MINUSCA, in coordination with UN Agencies, has

invested in key areas including the redeployment of civil servants and other state agents from Bangui to their places of assignment in prefectures and sub-prefectures, the construction, refurbishment, and equipment of administrative buildings. As of mid-January 2024, 86% of local administrative authorities are present at their posts. MINUSCA provided logistic, security and capacity-building support to the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform and the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development, reaching a total number of 5007 civil servants (77 %) present in the field compared to only 650 in 2013. I should state that our current mandate has raised expectations for even more. In this context, the Mission will continue to enhance its close cooperation and joint patrols with FACA and the internal forces, especially in border areas and conflict hotspots. This is coupled with the urgent need for security sector reform to which we continue to lend considerable support. However, the elevation of RESA to a priority task has not been accompanied by additional resources for its implementation, which if not addressed during budget deliberations could limit our ability to optimally support the additional mandated priority task of RESA. Furthermore, the magnitude of Security Sector Reform and Restoration of State Authority needs cannot be supported by MINUSCA alone. I therefore encourage member states and partners with relevant expertise and institutional capabilities to support CAR national defense and security forces and, in doing so, support Central African Republic's efforts and progress in building a professional national Army and Internal Security Forces. There is no alternative to lasting securisation of CAR population and preservation of the sovereignty of its territory.

Madame President

6. This is an opportunity for me to salute the Government of CAR for the adoption, on 21 December 2023, of its ten year (2024 – 2034) national policy for the management of border areas. The execution of the plan calls for border cooperation between Central African Republic and neighboring countries including through the activation of the border commissions. These commissions play a crucial role in the common fight against insecurity and all forms of illegal activities that are a perennial constraint to the economic development of the CAR.

Members of Council

7. On 8 December, the Government of CAR and MINUSCA jointly organized a seminar on strategic communication. The aim of the national seminar was to collectively take stock of achievements and challenges of the past mandate and acquaint the Government and CAR partners with the contents of the new mandate as well as the respective roles and responsibilities of the Government, MINUSCA, UNCT and CAR partners in its implementation. The same exercise was subsequently repeated in all the Prefectures of CAR. The strategic communication initiative, which is a first since the deployment of the Mission, was highly appreciated by the central authorities and diplomatic community in Bangui as well as local authorities in the regions. One of the major outcomes of the prefectural seminars was a clarion call by women for support that would permit them to play an engaged and active role in the local elections and in the local implementation mechanisms of the peace and reconciliation agreement in their localities. I intend to continue using my good offices and mobilize the mission, UNCT

and other bilateral and multi-lateral partners towards this goal. A more active and meaningful participation of women and youth in the political life of CAR, especially in the peripheries is central to the meaningful inclusion in the political and socio-economic development of the country.

I thank you for your attention.