

## **SRSG Rugwabiza Statement to the UN Security Council**

20 February 2025

As delivered

- **Your Excellency, President of the Security Council, Ambassador Fu Cong,**
- **Distinguished Members of the Council,**
- **Your Excellency Ambassador Marius Nzessioue, permanent representative of the Central African Republic**

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**Mr. President,**

1. 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 MINSUCA through the unanimous vote on the mandate renewal. Today, I have the honour to present the latest 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.
2. Nine days ago, a long-range patrol of the Tunisian contingent was ambushed near Zobassinda, more or less 50 km northeast of Ndélé, in Bamingui-Bangoran Prefecture. That happens 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 Government and 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 all troops and police contributing countries for their unwavering support for peace in the Central African Republic.

**Distinguished Members of the Council,**

3. In 2025, the Central African Republic will be organizing local, legislative, and presidential elections. The upcoming electoral cycle represents a significant opportunity to consolidate progress achieved in the extension of State authority, and to lay the foundation for decentralized governance. As such, the organization of safe, transparent and inclusive elections will contribute towards addressing roots causes of recurring conflict in CAR
4. 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 UN 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.
5. The first phase of the voters list revision was successfully carried out in 11 of the 20 prefectures of the Central Africa, from 24 November 2024 to 20 December 2024. During this period, MINUSCA intensified its multifaceted support to national authorities, in synergy with the UN 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 authorities to reopen,

during the second phase, the few voter registration centers, which were not operational due to security challenges.

**Distinguished Members of the Council,**

6. On 18 December 2024, the inaugural meeting of the national committee on securing 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 underway to encourage the registration of all eligible citizens, with particular attention to women, youth, internally displaced persons, as well as returnees and refugees, this in full coordination with the Government, the UN Country Team and civil society. I call on the Government and partners of the Government to provide the timely resources to not jeopardize the implementation of the revised electoral list as well as the calendar.

**Mr. President,**

7. 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 security situation has improved across Central African Republic, the situation remains fragile in border areas where MINUSCA continues to work closely with the Government to strengthen and extend the effective presence of authority. On 17th January, the inauguration by the Prime Minister of the first-ever multiservice border post in the Central African Republic, built and equipped by MINUSCA, in the locality of Bembéré at the border with Chad, represents a significant milestone.

8. As such, the implementation of the Central African national border management policy requires additional support, including through replicating this initiative as a model to facilitate borders control and address cross-border threats, notably in the north-east, where the spillover of the conflict in Sudan is the more prominent threat. On that note, I welcome the positive steps taken by the Central African Government to enhance its security cooperation with neighboring countries.

**Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,**

9. This month marks six years since the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. In this context, I am particularly encouraged by the progress achieved so far, including the dissolution of nine out of fourteen signatory armed groups and the notable extension of state presence and authority in areas formerly occupied by armed groups. I also note the strengthening of the decentralization of the political agreement, proving effective in promoting local mediation and social cohesion.

10. However, notwithstanding the ongoing efforts by the Government and international non-governmental organizations to continue engaging with still active armed groups that have left the Agreement, I should note that results are yet to materialize. There is an urgent need for increased political mobilization, particularly from guarantors of the political Agreement, namely the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States to facilitate the return of those armed groups leaders and subsequent long-term disarmament and demobilization of all combatants.

**11.** Furthermore, much progress remains to be made in the fight against impunity and to promote transitional justice as a key component of the political agreement. I call on the Central African Government to accelerate the operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, through the effective appointment of its new commissioners. I also take this opportunity to stress the urgent need for the Special Criminal Court to secure a sustainable financial support, to adequately perform its functions, and thereby delivering justice for victims, which is paramount for effective national reconciliation.

**Mr. President,**

**12.** Security sector reform remains central to ensuring that national defence forces are equipped to fulfill their primary responsibility to protect the population and the territorial integrity of the CAR. 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 training and professionalization of national defence forces.

**13.** On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025, the Minister of Justice, the Inspector General of the national army, and myself inaugurated the military tribunal of Bouar, showcasing the Central African Government commitment for the establishment of a military justice system, and the promotion of accountability among national defence forces.

**14.** However, recruitment into national defense forces of elements of former self-defence groups, outside the regulatory framework and with limited oversight, risks undermining the progress made in security sector reform. Without clear

accountability, oversight mechanism, command control of such recruits, the extension of State authority could be constrained.

**Distinguished Members of the Council,**

**15.** The human rights situation remains of particular concern, with persistent grave violations. If left unaddressed, these crimes could undermine the hard-earned security gains and further erode social cohesion. I therefore call on the Government to continue taking decisive action to address these violations, ensuring accountability for all perpetrators.

**16.** I welcome the unanimous adoption by the National Assembly, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, of a landmark law on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders in the Central African Republic. I commend this significant milestone which illustrates the Central African's commitment on human rights issues, in line with the National Human Rights Policy, and its five-year action plan.

**Mr. President,**

**17.** As we look ahead, the allocation of timely and adequate resources to the Mission remains essential to consolidate security and stabilization in the Central African Republic. This will also require continuous engagement of development actors, in support of national development priorities, to translate security gains in concrete improvements in the lives of the Central African population.

**18.** I take this opportunity to thank all partners who continue to support peace operations, and MINUSCA's troops and police contributing countries and MINUSCA civilian

staff for their unwavering dedication and commitment, towards building a legacy for peace in the Central African Republic.

**I thank you very much for your kind attention.**