



Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic

1. At its meeting on 1 February 2022, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict of the Security Council examined the fifth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic ([S/2021/882](#)), covering the period between 1 July 2019 and 31 June 2021, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Central African Republic to the United Nations also addressed the Working Group (see annex).

2. The members of the Working Group expressed deep concern at the six grave violations, which continue to be committed against children in the Central African Republic. The Working Group expressed their particular concern about the very high number of violations and abuses committed against children by armed groups. They welcomed and reiterated the importance of implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic between the Government of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups signed on 6 February 2019 (the Peace Agreement). The Working Group expressed concern at the decision by a number of armed groups to denounce the Peace Agreement. The Working Group stressed that the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which serves as guide for the Luanda road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, remains the mechanism for establishing lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic and the framework for dialogue with armed groups that have renounced violence. The members of the Working Group demanded that all parties respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and stressed the importance of accountability and preventing and tackling impunity. In addition, the Working Group expressed concern at the security and logistical constraints posing significant challenges for monitoring and verifying violations and abuses in the Central African Republic. Members highlighted that violations and abuses were mostly committed by armed groups and the need for prevention and accountability for these.

3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General. Further to the meeting, and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#), [2427 \(2018\)](#) and [2601 \(2021\)](#) the Working Group agreed to the direct action set out below.



Public statement by the Chair of the Working Group

4. The Working Group agreed to address the following message to all parties to the armed conflict in the Central African Republic through a public statement by its Chair:

(a) Expressing grave concern at and its strongest condemnation of the increased numbers of violations and abuses committed against children in the Central African Republic; as well as at the disproportionate negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on children, which further exacerbated existing challenges; and urging all parties to the conflict, especially armed groups, to immediately end and prevent all violations and abuses against children, including those involving killing and maiming, recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and the denial of humanitarian access and to comply with their obligations under international law;

(b) Welcoming the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (hereafter “the Peace Agreement”), and the announcement of a ceasefire by President Touadéra on 15 October 2021; expressing deep concern that, despite encouraging steps, the security situation remained fragile and violations and abuses continue to be committed; calling upon the signatories to the Peace Agreement to uphold their commitments, including its specific provisions to protect children; noting with concern that some armed groups have subsequently withdrawn their commitment to the peace process; and urging the parties to work with the United Nations to reinforce their efforts to end and prevent violations and abuses against children;

(c) Calling upon all parties to further implement the previous conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the Central African Republic ([S/AC.51/2020/3](#));

(d) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict by all parties, and stressing that all those responsible be brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through timely, impartial and systematic investigations and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;

(e) Stressing that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of girls and boys should be duly considered, when planning and carrying out actions concerning children in situations of armed conflict;

(f) Expressing deep concern and condemnation of the considerable increase in recruitment and use of children, mainly by armed groups; noting that children were used for sexual purposes, as well as in combat and support roles such as bodyguards, manning checkpoints, spies, messengers, porters and carrying out domestic tasks; strongly concerned at reports that children were used as human shields during the reporting period; strongly urging all parties to the armed conflict to immediately and without conditions release all children still associated with them; urging all parties to the conflict to end and prevent further recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age, consistent with their obligations under international law, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as applicable; also noting in this regard the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;

(g) Expressing concern about the deprivation of liberty of children by parties to armed conflict for their alleged association with armed groups; urging all parties to the conflict to release those children and ensure their full reintegration through

child protection programmes; urging that children allegedly associated with parties to the conflict should be treated primarily as victims, including those children who are accused of having committed crimes, and that detention should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, in line with international law; noting that the Government of the Central African Republic has endorsed the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), and that alternatives to judicial proceedings should be sought for children; and calling on parties to the conflict to engage with the United Nations to adopt and implement appropriate handover protocols to facilitate the release of children to civilian child protection actors and prioritize their reintegration;

(h) Strongly condemning the killing and maiming of children; noting that most cases were attributed to armed groups and unidentified perpetrators, including those resulting from attacks against their communities on the grounds of ethnic and/or religious identity or as a form of reprisal, noting that children were subject to deliberate attacks; and urging all parties to the conflict to cease and prevent the killing and maiming of children, including the use of explosive devices, which has led to child casualties;

(i) Expressing deep concern at cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, which continue to be underreported; noting that most cases were attributed to armed groups, and urging all parties to the conflict to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children; and stressing the importance of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, including mental health and psychosocial support, health, including sexual and reproductive health services, legal and livelihood support and services to survivors of sexual violence;

(j) Strongly condemning attacks on schools and hospitals in violation of international law; noting that most cases were attributed to armed groups; calling upon all parties to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals and to end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel in violation of applicable international law; and expressing deep concern at the number of incidents of military use of schools and hospitals in violation of applicable international law;

(k) Strongly condemning the abduction of children, including for recruitment and use and sexual purposes, noting that most cases were attributed to armed groups, and calling upon all concerned parties to cease the abduction of children and immediately release all abducted children;

(l) Strongly condemning the increased number of incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including attacks on humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets; noting that a majority of the violations were committed by armed groups and unidentified armed individuals; further expressing grave concern at the use of explosive ordnance, which prevented the humanitarian community from delivering vital assistance to communities in need, and calling upon all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access, consistent with United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance as well as the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and to respect the work of all United Nations agencies and their humanitarian partners without adverse distinction;

(m) Welcoming the initiated dialogue between the United Nations and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)-Achaye; urging the faction to end and prevent all violations and abuses and release all abducted children; calling upon the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) and the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) to swiftly implement their respective action plans; and urging all concerned parties to develop, adopt and implement action plans with the United Nations to end and prevent all six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict;

(n) Recalling that the situation in the Central African Republic since 1 August 2012 was referred by the national authorities to the International Criminal Court on 30 May 2014, to which the Central African Republic is a State party; and taking note, in that respect, of the transfer of a former ex-Séléka leader to the Court and the trial of two anti-balaka leaders to the Court, all on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity;

(o) Recalling the Security Council's readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children, and that the Security Council, by its resolution [2588 \(2021\)](#), renewed until 31 July 2022 the asset freeze and travel ban measures imposed by resolutions [2127 \(2013\)](#) and [2134 \(2014\)](#), which apply to individuals and entities as designated by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to paragraph 57 of resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) ("2127 sanctions committee"), for actions that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Central African Republic, such as:

(i) Being involved in planning, directing or committing acts that violate international human rights law or international humanitarian law, as applicable, or that constitute human rights abuses or violations in the Central African Republic, including acts involving sexual violence, targeting of civilians, ethnic or religious-based attacks, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction and forced displacement;

(ii) Recruiting or using children in armed conflict in the Central African Republic, in violation of applicable international law;

(iii) Obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Central African Republic, or access to or distribution of, humanitarian assistance in the Central African Republic;

(p) Expressing the readiness of the Working Group to communicate to the Security Council pertinent information with a view to assisting the Council in the imposition of targeted measures on perpetrators;

To all United Nations peacekeeping operations, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and non-United Nations forces present in the Central African Republic and relevant Member States

(q) Expressing deep distress over continued allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against children by some United Nations peacekeepers, and strongly condemning all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse;

(r) Calling upon the United Nations and relevant Member States to continue to take appropriate action to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including the vetting of all personnel and conducting predeployment and in-mission awareness training, to ensure full accountability in cases of such conduct, including through timely survivor-centred investigations of all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse; to hold perpetrators accountable and repatriate units when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation and abuse by those units; to take appropriate

disciplinary measures; to report fully and promptly on actions undertaken; to ensure that child victims and witnesses are adequately protected during the investigation process; and to facilitate access to medical and psychological support, as appropriate; and in that respect welcoming the appointment of a Field Victims' Rights Advocate by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the adoption of a victim-centred approach, enabling most child victims to access services and education/vocation training;

(s) Urging further efforts by relevant Member States to take appropriate, preventative action, including the vetting of all personnel and the delivery of robust predeployment training concerning sexual exploitation and abuse in accordance with the terms of their memorandums of understanding and other agreements with the United Nations;

To neighbouring States, United Nations bodies, regional organizations and all international partners

(t) Encouraging neighbouring States, regional organizations and all international partners to support the peace process, including to end and prevent violations and abuses against children, in a coherent and coordinated manner and through strengthened partnerships; and emphasizing the important role of the guarantors and facilitators of the Peace Agreement, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and neighbouring states, using their influence to enhance adherence by armed groups to their commitments; and welcoming the adoption of the joint road map for peace by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;

(u) Calling on the international community, including MINUSCA, in conformity with its mandate, the United Nations country team and the Peacebuilding Fund, to provide coordinated support to build the capacities and enhance the effectiveness of the judicial system, including where appropriate and mandated through the provision of financial and technical assistance, as appropriate, to the Central African Republic authorities towards the restoration of the administration of the judiciary, criminal justice and building of child protection systems throughout the country.

5. The Working Group agreed to address a message, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group, to community and religious leaders:

(a) Emphasizing the important role of community and religious leaders in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict and fostering reconciliation efforts;

(b) Urging them to strengthen community-level protection and to publicly condemn and continue to advocate ending and preventing violations and abuses against children, notably those involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks and threats of attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions and denial of humanitarian access, including on the basis of religion, and to engage with the Government, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict in their communities, including by raising awareness to avoid stigmatization of these children.

Recommendations to the Security Council

6. The Working Group agreed to recommend the following to the Security Council:

(a) To ensure that the situation of children affected by armed conflict continues to be taken into account by the Security Council when discussing the mandate of MINUSCA and its activities;

(b) To ensure the continuation of and support for the implementation of a child protection mandate for MINUSCA, especially with regard to monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict, as well as preventing such violations and abuses, including through training and the mainstreaming of child protection, and to maintain and further reinforce child protection capacity and expertise within the Mission;

(c) To continue to encourage MINUSCA, in line with its mandate, to help build the capacities and enhance the effectiveness of the national judicial system in the area of investigations in order to shed light on violations and abuses of human rights committed against children;

(d) To call upon all parties, while noting that a majority of the verified cases were attributed to armed groups, to conflict in the Central African Republic to fully respect applicable international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law;

(e) To transmit the present document to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) concerning the Central African Republic.

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Government of the Central African Republic referring to the Group's public statement on the violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children in the Central African Republic:

(a) Welcoming positive steps taken by the Government of the Central African Republic, including the ratification on 21 September 2017 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(b) Welcoming the signing of the Peace Agreement on 6 February 2019 and calling upon the Government to reinforce its efforts to implement the Peace Agreement, including its specific provisions to protect children, and to end and prevent violations and abuses against them;

(c) Welcoming the adoption of the Child Protection Code, which criminalizes all six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict and considers children associated with armed forces and groups as victims, and urging its full and swift implementation;

(d) Welcoming the arrests and conviction by the Central African Republic authorities of 200 perpetrators of crimes against children, and encouraging the Government to continue to strengthen the ongoing efforts to ensure all cases of violations and abuses against children are addressed;

(e) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict; taking note of the fact that, on 16 February 2021, the hearings in the trials of anti-balaka leaders Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona commenced before the International Criminal Court, and the decision of 21 February 2022 setting the commencement date of the trial of ex-Séléka member Mahamat Said Abdel Kani but remaining preoccupied by the prevalence of impunity for perpetrators of crimes involving violations of international law; and urging the authorities to ensure that all perpetrators are brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through timely and systematic independent investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;

(f) Calling upon the Special Criminal Court, which was inaugurated in 2018, to integrate all violations and abuses against children in its prosecution strategy, calling on the Government to respect the independence and impartiality of the Court,

and requesting the recently nominated Commissioners of the Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Reparations to consider child victims throughout their work and proceedings;

(g) Encouraging the integration of child protection standards throughout the development of transitional justice processes, such as the screening of individuals entering the Central African Republic defence and security forces for violations and abuses against children, as well as the continued screening of bilaterally deployed and other security personnel;

(h) Noting the establishment of a Special Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of serious crimes, violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and bilaterally deployed and other security personnel; and calling upon the Government to take judicial action on the findings of the Special Commission of Inquiry and investigate ongoing violations and abuses by all perpetrators and to ensure that investigations are independent and credible;

(i) Calling on the Government to swiftly appoint child protection focal points in the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and Internal Security Forces and establish effective measures to end and prevent violations and abuses against children;

(j) Welcoming the release of 12 children in May 2020 as well as 10 children in October 2020 who had been detained for their alleged association with armed groups, and encouraging the Government to continue to treat these children primarily as victims of recruitment and use, to hand them immediately and without preconditions over to relevant civilian child protection actors, noting the need to prevent re-recruitment and to include gender-sensitive programmes, and to ensure that, where children face prosecution for allegedly committing crimes, those prosecutions respect the rights of the child;

(k) Encouraging the Government to increase funding for long-term and sustainable reintegration and rehabilitation opportunities for children affected by armed conflict that are gender- and age-sensitive, including access to health care, mental health and psychosocial support and education programmes, as well as raising awareness and working with communities to avoid the stigmatization of these children and facilitate their return, while taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys, including children with disabilities, to contribute to the well-being of children and to sustainable peace and security and to address the root causes of recruitment;

(l) Welcoming the appointment in September 2020 of a Minister Adviser to the President on Child Protection by presidential decree as the child protection focal point for the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme; urging the Government and partners to integrate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children into the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and enable children to gain access to community violence reduction programmes where feasible, and to ensure that child protection continues to be prioritized as a cross-cutting issue in relevant areas, including security sector reform;

(m) Calling upon the Government to ensure access for survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence to gender- and age-sensitive, comprehensive specialized services for survivors, taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys, as well as accountability for those who commit or are otherwise responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children, while ensuring the security of victims, witnesses and their communities;

(n) Recalling the Government of the Central African Republic's endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration in June 2015, and encouraging the Government to implement it and to ensure that attacks on schools and military use of schools are investigated and that those responsible are duly prosecuted, as appropriate;

(o) Encouraging the Government to work on the prevention of violations and abuses against children, as per Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), including through the development with armed groups and civil society of a national prevention plan;

(p) Inviting the Government of the Central African Republic to keep the Working Group informed, as appropriate, of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and the Secretary-General.

8. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Secretary-General:

(a) Encouraging the Secretary-General to continue to call upon all parties engaged in armed conflict in the Central African Republic to fully respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and noting the Secretary-General's global call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, as supported in Security Council resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#) and [2565 \(2021\)](#);

(b) Commending the Secretary-General on the active engagement with parties to conflict and the fruitful work of the country task force on monitoring and reporting in the Central African Republic, and requesting him to ensure that the country task force on monitoring and reporting in the Central African Republic and other relevant United Nations agencies continue their engagement and support to the Government of the Central African Republic to address and prevent violations and abuses against children in armed conflict;

(c) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the country task force on monitoring and reporting continues its engagement with parties to conflict in line with resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) to advocate for the release and reintegration of children and facilitate the adoption of action plans to end and prevent violations and abuses against children;

(d) Requesting the Secretary-General to continue to ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic and of the Child Protection Section of MINUSCA, including by ensuring that sufficient child protection capacities are allocated to the Mission;

(e) Recalling the directive issued by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic to the MINUSCA Force Commander and the Police Commissioner prohibiting the use of schools during the conduct of their activities, recalling the Force Commander's directive on child protection, issued in December 2018 by the MINUSCA Force Commander, and calling for the full implementation of those directives and for the finalization of the Police Commissioner's directive on child protection;

(f) Expressing deep concern over the serious allegations of continued sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers in MINUSCA and by non-United Nations forces, and requesting the Secretary-General to take all necessary measures to ensure full compliance of MINUSCA civilian and uniformed personnel, including Mission leadership and Mission support personnel, with the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to keep the Council fully informed about the Mission's progress in this regard, stressing the need to prevent all

violations and abuses against children, including sexual exploitation and abuse and to improve how these allegations are addressed in line with resolution [2272 \(2016\)](#);

(g) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the matter of children and armed conflict is included as a specific element in all country-specific reports on the Central African Republic;

(h) Requesting the Secretary-General to disseminate the present document to the relevant entities within the United Nations system.

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to paragraph 57 of resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#):

(a) Recalling paragraph 9 (c) of resolution [1998 \(2011\)](#), in which the Security Council requested enhanced communication between the Working Group and relevant Security Council sanctions committees, including through the exchange of pertinent information on violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict;

(b) Welcoming the designation for sanctions by the Committee of individuals involved in the planning, directing or committing of acts that violate international human rights law or international humanitarian law, as applicable, or that constitute human rights abuses or violations, and/or the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, taking note of the reports of the Panel of Experts in line with resolution [2588 \(2021\)](#);

(c) Encouraging the Committee to continue to consider the designation for sanctions of other individuals and entities, in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Committee, and stressing that measures imposed by the Committee are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population, including children, in the Central African Republic.

Direct action by the Working Group

10. The Working Group agreed to send letters from the Chair of the Working Group to the World Bank and donors:

(a) Stressing the critical needs of children in the Central African Republic, and calling upon the international community to support the Government in developing and implementing national policies, programmes and initiatives to enhance the protection and reintegration of children, while recalling that funding, technical assistance and development programmes should be considered in consultation with Central African authorities;

(b) Requesting in this regard the World Bank and other donors to provide flexible, predictable and adequate funding and support to the Government and relevant humanitarian and development partners, to strengthen child protection and reintegration efforts, including:

(i) The establishment of effective recruitment procedures and age assessment mechanisms in the national security forces to prevent the recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law;

(ii) The development and implementation of long-term, sustainable, multisectoral, family- and community-based release and reintegration programmes that are gender- and age-sensitive for children formerly associated with armed groups, emphasizing the importance of psychosocial support, socioeconomic reintegration and community reconciliation, as well as prevention of re-recruitment and use of children in the Central African Republic;

- (iii) The bolstering of systems providing access to appropriate education and vocational training, as well as health care, including mental health and psychosocial services, and nutrition for all children affected by armed conflict, including girls, children with disabilities and other particularly vulnerable children, inter alia, children without parental care and unaccompanied children;
 - (iv) The establishment of birth and late birth registration as a means to prevent the recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law in the Central African Republic;
 - (v) The development and implementation of sustainable, long-term strategies to end and prevent sexual and gender-based violence against children in armed conflict in the Central African Republic, including by addressing the widespread social and economic vulnerability and the particular needs of girls and boys affected by the armed conflict;
 - (vi) The strengthening of national legal, judicial and governance mechanisms, particularly with regard to addressing impunity for violations and abuses against children in armed conflict, including through supporting the capacity of the criminal justice system and the Special Criminal Court;
 - (vii) The provision of technical assistance to build and strengthen the protection and response capacity of child protection personnel at both the governmental and non-governmental levels;
 - (viii) Systematic and adequately resourced monitoring and reporting activities by the United Nations and partners to identify trends and patterns in violations and abuses against children and related child protection priorities and enhance child protection programming accordingly, including supporting the implementation of and compliance with commitments and action plans to end and prevent violations and abuses against children;
- (c) Inviting the World Bank and donors to keep the Working Group informed, as appropriate, of their funding and assistance efforts.

Annex

Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Central African Republic to the United Nations to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict*

Madam Chair,

Allow me to express my sincere thanks for the convening of this meeting, which gives us the opportunity today to consider the fifth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic.

I would also like to thank Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for the multifaceted support provided by the United Nations in the Central African Republic and for introducing the report. I also commend your team for taking the time to draw up the report, which provides an overview of not only the unbearable and intolerable situation of children in the Central African Republic but also the scale of the challenges and issues we are facing, so that effective responses can be developed.

To comprehend the true scale of those challenges, it must be recognized that:

- The persistence of the armed conflict in the Central African Republic is a real obstacle to the promotion of children's rights and human rights, and it is high time to combine and consolidate efforts so that the conflict can finally be brought to an end.
- The main enemies of the universal rights of children in the Central African Republic are armed groups, which, as stated in the report, account for more than 82 per cent of grave violations.

This observation should, Madam Chair, lead to a paradigm shift, moving from an approach based on endless observations to one based on effective action.

It was in this spirit that, in order to defend the institutions of the Republic that were being threatened by the nebulous Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC), end the blockade of the country's main supply route and address the harm being done by the CPC to humanitarian actors, which had led to the suspension of humanitarian assistance for a population that was already in great need, the President of the Republic decided to launch a military counter-offensive utilizing the military cooperation agreements signed with the Russian Federation and Rwanda on support for the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic.

That decision helped to reduce the capacity of the armed groups, restore State authority in a large portion of the territory and loosen the grip that those armed groups had had on the civilian population. Failure to take such action would have resulted in an even more catastrophic situation than the one that exists today.

The population demonstrated its strong support for that action by providing various forms of support (financial and food donations, information, etc.) to the government forces and showed its commitment to the democratic process by turning out to vote in spite of the threats that had been made. We are therefore unable to recognize ourselves in the statements made in the report about the population's alleged crisis of confidence in the defence and security forces and the authorities of the Central African Republic.

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

It was with this popular legitimacy, and with a view to the peaceful and lasting resolution of the conflict, that the President of the Republic, His Excellency Faustin Archange Touadéra, signed the Luanda road map and declared an immediate unilateral ceasefire in order, once again, to give dialogue a chance, as the preferred path to peace.

The road map, with its six strategic pillars – adopted in the context of the revitalization of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 – is an appropriate solution and, we are convinced, an effective means of combating the various violations of the human rights and fundamental rights of children.

The first follow-up meeting on the implementation of the road map was held in Bangui on 14 January 2022, with the participation of the various international partners. Strong recommendations were made on matters including the conduct of an international investigation to identify the sources of the anti-personnel mines being used by CPC in the Central African Republic.

We call upon the entire international community to provide strong support for this process in all its dimensions, including in relation to assessing needs, providing estimates and mobilizing resources for the cantonment of armed groups and the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

The republican dialogue sought by the President of the Republic with a view to easing political tensions and jointly diagnosing the root causes of the recurrent crises in the country has been delayed. The main reason for this is the withdrawal of the opposition political parties from the organizing committee for the dialogue. Discussions are under way to resolve differences and put the process in motion again.

We strongly believe that the effective implementation of all these peace initiatives, accompanied by the holding of the first local elections in over 30 years on 11 September 2022, will help guarantee stability and is thus an opportunity to save lives.

Madam Chair,

With regard to the main topic of today's meeting, efforts continue to be made by the Government of the Central African Republic and donors to sustain the various actions undertaken to combat violations of the rights of children.

In addition to the progress made by the Government reflected in the report, the following achievements should be noted:

- With regard to the report's recommendation that children should be included in the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, the President of the Republic has appointed, by decree, a focal point for children within the programme's Implementation Unit. The focal point's role is to promote the diversion from the courts of cases involving minors accused of criminal association and to seek the prosecution and conviction of those who recruit children to armed groups, in accordance with articles 106 and 179 of the Child Protection Code. The focal point for children works with a contact person within the Implementation Unit to coordinate missions to identify child members of armed groups in conflict zones and conduct activities to combat the recruitment of children into armed groups.
- Following the promulgation of the Child Protection Code, which is mentioned in the report, outreach activities aimed at vulnerable children were carried out. As for its implementing texts, sectoral ministries are in the process of developing their action plans, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

- A strategic committee on combating conflict-related gender-based violence was established by decree No. 21.308, of 25 November 2021. The committee provides a framework for consultation and reflection on the implementation of the vision of the President of the Republic, the Head of State, on combating conflict-related gender-based violence. The committee's functions are established in article 3 of the decree. It is composed of ministerial bodies, civil society organizations and technical and financial partners.
- The Coordination Office for combating trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic is taking the issue of children and armed conflict into account in its awareness-raising activities. Training for the law enforcement and security forces is delivered, with the support of partners (the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime). It is important to highlight that, in 2021, the Coordinator of the Office, Ms. Josiane Lina Bemaka-Soui, Minister and Presidential Adviser responsible for child protection, was named a Trafficking in Persons Report Hero by the Department of State of the United States of America for the development of the national anti-trafficking response and her role in the implementation of the country's first national action plan on human trafficking.

We are pleased that the Secretary-General's report was able to highlight that 200 convictions and various arrests took place during the reporting period. This shows that, contrary to popular belief and in spite of the significant constraints limiting the effectiveness of the judicial system, victims do receive justice. This is a commitment of the President of the Republic, who continuously stresses that no crime will go unpunished, it is simply a matter of time and opportunity. He is thus carrying the aspirations of the people of the Central African Republic with regard to combating impunity, as expressed during the grass-roots dialogue and at the Bangui Forum.

I would like to thank all our partners, and particularly the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which works every day to improve the efficiency of the justice chain and promote the deployment of State authority throughout the country.

These various actions, together with past and future activities, such as the establishment and operationalization of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children in the Central African Republic and the launch of an initiative to eliminate malaria-related deaths in children under 5 and an initiative concerning vaccine doses for children, are sufficient proof of the national commitment to children.

Because of our commitment to defending and guaranteeing the rights of all children, without distinction, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and because this is a common commitment, we cannot remain silent – as the report does – about the crimes committed against children by members of peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. The repatriation of troops whose actions have been proven cannot be a satisfactory response for the victims, and victims deserve much more than a link in the report to an ethics policy web page. There must be no differentiated treatment for perpetrators of these crimes, and we are counting on the customary full cooperation of the Secretary-General to ensure that justice can be done.

Lastly, Madam Chair, I would like to reiterate our thanks to the various partners participating in the resolution of the crisis in the Central African Republic and reaffirm our readiness to cooperate with sincerity and mutual understanding in order to address the many shared challenges. I thank you.