



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9508th meeting

Thursday, 14 December 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Montalvo Sosa.	(Ecuador)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil.	Mr. França Danese
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mrs. Paolini
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	Japan	Mr. Iriya
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Russian Federation.	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America.	Mr. Simonoff

Agenda

Briefing by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the outgoing Chairs of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council: Ambassador Ferit Hoxha, Permanent Representative of Albania, Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1518 (2003) and Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014); Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman, Permanent Representative of Ghana, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013); Ambassador Mohamed Abushahab, Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the United Arab Emirates, representative of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) and representative of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012); and Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang, Permanent Representative of Gabon, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2653 (2022) and Chair of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Hoxha.

Mr. Hoxha: During my two-year term on the Security Council, I have had the privilege to chair four subsidiary bodies, namely, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1636 (2005), on Lebanon; the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1518 (2003), on Iraq; the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), on Yemen; and the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions. While the 1636 and 1518 Committees have been lenient, the 2140 Committee and the Informal

Working Group have made up for them, the Informal Working Group in particular weighing heavily on the daily agenda.

Although there were no meetings of the 1518 Committee over the past two years, the Committee continued to reach agreement on the delisting requests. In the course of the past two years, we have witnessed continued progress in the delisting of entities on the Committee's sanctions list. The delisting of individuals on the sanctions list has been sustained over the past two years. In December 2021, there were 81 individuals on the sanctions list, dropping down to 70 individuals in December 2022, and now, as we speak, 66 individuals remain on the list.

With regard to sanctioned entities, in December 2021 there were 13 entities on the sanctions list. In December 2022, there were 10 entities, and today the same number remain on the list. The reduction of the number of sanctioned individuals and entities over the past two years, namely, by approximately 19 per cent with regard to individuals and by approximately 23 per cent with regard to entities, was due to the efforts of the Committee and the Permanent Mission of Iraq, which submitted a number of delisting requests, all of which were agreed upon by the members of the Committee.

Over the past two years, the 2140 Committee met a total of 10 times in informal consultations, in addition to conducting its work through written procedures. In November 2022, the Committee held a joint meeting with the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023), at the recommendation of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, to discuss issues of mutual relevance to both Committees, including the link on illicit smuggling routes. Over the past two years, the Committee issued a total of 13 press releases. A press release was also issued on 26 September on the topic of children and armed conflict (SC/15423) as it relates to the work of the Committee. The Committee met five times to receive briefings from the Panel of Experts, both via video-teleconference and in person, following the submission of their respective midterm updates and final reports, and to consider the recommendations contained therein. In that regard, the Committee agreed to follow up action on four of the recommendations emanating from the various reports by the Panel of Experts.

On 15 February 2022 and on 15 March and 8 November 2023, pursuant to paragraph 19 (e) of Security Council resolution 2140 (2014), the Chair of the

Committee gave briefings to the Security Council on the activities of the Committee. The Committee received more than 400 vessel inspection reports from the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism in the past two years. The Committee also received nine implementation reports from nine Member States in 2022. In the same year, the Committee sent seven communications to three stakeholders with reference to the implementation of the sanctions measures. Over the past two years, the Committee received one request for exemption invoking paragraph 12 (a) of resolution 2140 (2014). Four entries were added to the list in 2022, including one entity. No entries were removed from the list. There are now 12 individuals and one entity on the Committee's sanctions list.

I regret that the Committee was not able to receive an oral briefing in 2022 from Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, owing to the lack of consensus among the members of the Committee. I also regret the fact that, in 2023, the 2140 Committee and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023) could not hold a joint meeting to discuss the challenges related to the violations of the arms embargo and maritime smuggling of arms, as documented by the reports of Panel of Experts of both Committees.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the members of the Committee for their serious engagement with the Chair, to the Security Council Affairs Division, which has consistently supported the Chair and the smooth functioning of the entire work of the Committee. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Panel of Experts, with which we have had close cooperation, which has operated at its full capacity only for the past six months.

Over the past two years, I had the privilege of chairing what proved to be a very challenging yet very stimulating subsidiary body, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions. While this biennium was marked by challenges that often brought us to a standstill in the Council, the Informal Working Group continued to demonstrate its relevance as a forum for building consensus to address key challenges and improving the overall functioning of the Council. In that regard, my objective as Chair was to steer discussions in the Group towards making the Council more efficient and effective in its work and decision-making, but also

more transparent and inclusive of the viewpoints of all of its members, the wider United Nations membership and particularly those affected by its decisions. I believe that we have made very significant progress in that regard.

In the period from 2022 to 2023, the Informal Working Group maintained its focus on ensuring the full implementation of the provisions of the note by the President of 30 August 2017 (S/2017/507) and the subsequently adopted 13 presidential notes, in addition to addressing other — both long-standing and new — working methods challenges. To that end, the Group held 10 formal meetings, two informal informals and one informal retreat in Tirana, in my own country, in October 2022. The Council also continued to hold its annual open debates on working methods, which have served as a critical avenue for our engagement with the wider membership and as a basis for defining priority areas that need to be addressed in the Informal Working Group.

As we reflect on the accomplishments and challenges related to working methods over the past two years, allow me to highlight three important achievements.

First, the Informal Working Group aligned its own working methods with that of other subsidiary bodies. At the outset of 2022 and 2023, the Informal Working Group adopted a programme of work setting out the main priorities and planned actions for the upcoming year. That made the work of the Group more predictable and results-oriented. Furthermore, as an important step towards greater transparency, the Group adopted its first-ever annual report in 2022 (see S/2022/1032), thereby aligning itself with the practice of other subsidiary bodies of the Council. Beyond providing a summary of the Group's activities, the annual report includes a set of selected indicators to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of note 507 and the subsequent presidential notes, thereby giving us a better overview of how the Council is performing with regard to its working methods and what gaps remain.

Secondly, the Informal Working Group served as a forum for concrete and practical discussions on the implementation of the Council's working methods. In line with its programme of work, the Informal Working Group maintained the standing agenda item introduced by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, under which presidencies of the Council gave briefings on their efforts to ensure the implementation of note 507 and

the subsequent presidential notes and, importantly, reflected on possible future action. In line with presidential note S/2021/647, of 12 July 2021, Council presidencies continue to play a crucial role in facilitating and securing the implementation of those provisions, including through their monthly commitments outlining their working methods priorities.

Under my tenure during these two years, we expanded the focus on the implementation of note 507 and the subsequent presidential notes to include as a standing item the real question of penholdership. Under that item, at every meeting of the Informal Working Group, penholders and co-penholders on Council decisions and other outcome documents shared their observations on the good practices and challenges faced during the negotiation and drafting process. Regular open discussions in the Informal Working Group on how Council members hold the pen have proven to be both timely and conducive to generating concrete proposals on how the practice could be enhanced. In particular, I believe the discussions have been conducive to a better understanding of the role of the penholder and a recalibration of some of its most problematic, if not pernicious, aspects.

That leads me to what I consider to be the third achievement of this period, namely, that the Informal Working Group was able to produce three new notes of key importance to the functioning of the Council. Indeed, under the auspices of the Informal Working Group, the Council adopted three new notes.

The first note, issued as document S/2023/612, set out the procedure for the observance of minutes of silence in the Council to ensure that those solemn occasions are conducted in an orderly and respectful manner and are devoid of any politicization.

The second note, issued as document S/2023/615, reaffirmed the commitment of the Council to making every effort to agree provisionally on the appointment of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of subsidiary bodies for the following year, as provided for in note 507, no later than 1 October, and included an interim contingency measure in case provisional agreement is not reached in time for the month of January. I am of course very pleased to note that we will not have to utilize the contingency measure at the beginning of 2024, as Council members have completed the selection of Chairs for next year.

And the third note, adopted just weeks ago, on penholdership, issued as document S/2023/945, is a step forward to ensure that all Council members can hold the pen. It facilitates an understanding of the process and avoids a too-prescriptive approach to the process. The note also aims to ensure that the Council's outcomes are succinct and action-oriented and reflective of meaningful consultations with the Member States concerned and other stakeholders — a key aspect for their successful implementation. I am proud to say that this last note is a true testament to the spirit of the Group — a forum in which important initiatives can be successful through dialogue and compromise. With its adoption, the Council demonstrated once again the ability to work together and hear the calls, both within and from outside the Council, for greater accountability and inclusivity in the decision-making process.

As I said during the annual open debate on working methods in September (see S/PV.9410), the working methods are a critical tool for the functioning of the Council and the successful implementation of its mandate. While they do not provide solutions to the conflicts on the Council's agenda, they can open up paths towards finding those solutions by facilitating the efficient, effective, transparent and inclusive functioning of the Council. It is therefore crucial for all of us to remain engaged in advancing this agenda, while proactively contributing to its enhancement and utilizing the tools at our disposal, such as the Informal Working Group, to fulfil our responsibilities.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my entire team and all the members of the Informal Working Group for their engagement and productive cooperation on the many issues addressed over the past two years. Their commitment and incredible engagement to the advancement of the Security Council's working methods have been truly inspiring. I also wish to pay special tribute to the Charter Research team of the Security Council Affairs Division. I like to call them the "unsung heroes", who behind the scenes, with their dedication, patience, professionalism and commitment, have been essential to helping the Informal Working Group turn the impossible into the possible. I am immensely grateful for their invaluable support.

In conclusion, I wish my colleague, the new Permanent Representative of Japan, every success as the incoming Chair of this important subsidiary body.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Hoxha for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Agyeman.

Mr. Agyeman: For the past two years, I have had the honour and immense privilege of chairing the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, for which I brief this afternoon. I welcome the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the Committee's activities in 2022 and 2023 and to share some personal observations. Before doing so, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretariat for the support provided over the course of the past two years.

Since early 2022, the Committee has met on 15 occasions in various formats, including remotely during the coronavirus disease pandemic. The Committee met with representatives of the Central African Republic and States of the region, and also had briefings from the Panel of Experts, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and officials of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Discussions focused, *inter alia*, on the security situation in the Central African Republic, the activities of armed groups, the monitoring of the arms embargo and the management of weapons and ammunition, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and the situation of children in the Central African Republic. During the briefings to member States, invited States, including the Central African Republic, and States of the region, discussed with the Committee and the Panel of Experts the midterm and final reports of the Panel.

I regret that, during my chairmanship of the Committee, no consensus was found in terms of convening a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who had briefed the Committee on an annual basis from 2015 to 2021. Information conveyed during those briefings was extremely useful for Committee members. I hope that my successor will continue the practice of convening regular briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and that the Committee will find consensus in terms of hearing similar briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

On 9 August, the proposed slate of five experts to serve on the Panel was placed on hold in the Committee. I regret that, to date, the hold has not been lifted. It is

my fervent hope that the Panel will be established as soon as possible to provide much-needed information to the Committee in its work on the situation in the Central African Republic. In that context, I wish to point out that, while the Security Council had requested the Panel to provide the Council, after discussions by the Committee, with the requested midterm and final reports, the current hold will make it impossible for the Panel to complete that task of providing such information in a timely manner.

Member States, including the Central African Republic and neighbouring States, cannot meet with the Committee and the Panel to discuss the midterm and final reports of the Panel. It will also be difficult for the Panel to submit former listing proposals. In that context, the fact that the Committee has not sanctioned any individual since December 2021, in my view, is not lost on those armed group leaders who are continuing to destabilize the Central African Republic. The Committee may need to agree upon new listing designations as soon as feasible.

From 6 to 9 June, together with the majority of the members of the Committee, I had the opportunity to visit the Central African Republic. I am particularly thankful that we were able to conduct that visit, which allowed me and the members of my delegation to engage with the authorities of the Central African Republic on very pertinent issues concerning the work of the Committee, prior to the adoption of resolution 2693 (2023), on 27 July, by which, among other things, the Security Council decided that the arms embargo no longer applied to the Government of the Central African Republic.

I would now like to make some personal observations regarding the situation in the Central African Republic, the lifting of the notification requirement and the importance of the Chair's visit.

First, I remain concerned about the destabilizing activities of armed groups in the Central African Republic, which continue to deploy various forms of violent tactics against security officials and civilians alike, including summary killings, maiming, sexual violence and kidnapping, among other things. I am also deeply concerned about the incessant attempts, by both local and foreign armed militia groups, to covet the Central African Republic's mineral resources, and stress the importance of designating individuals, groups

and entities found culpable of illegally exploiting and trading in the country's natural resources.

In July, the adoption of resolution 2693 (2023), which called for the total lifting of the arms embargo measures imposed on Central African security forces and civilian law enforcement institutions, in line with the wishes and aspirations of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic, as well as of the African Union and subregional organizations, marked an important turning point in the restoration of normalcy in the country. I believe that the removal of such restrictions will ensure that the authorities of the Central African Republic are better equipped to curb the destabilizing activities of armed groups and fulfil their responsibility to protect civilians. I affirm support for the Central African Republic as it carries out crucial security sector reforms and encourage it to continue developing its capacity for enhanced weapons and ammunition management practices, which will prevent arms from slipping into the hands of unauthorized armed groups.

With respect to the importance of the Chair's visit, let me reiterate that such visits to the Central African Republic and, when possible, to neighbouring countries are an effective tool to raise awareness on the purpose and scope of the sanctions measures in the Central African Republic. Following the recent removal of all restrictions on the Central African Republic authorities, subsequent Chair visits could be used to sensitize the population of the Central African Republic to the new regime of measures and encourage concerted national efforts to end the reign of terror unleashed by armed groups. Based on my experience, I believe that media engagements by the Chair during their visits, including through the use of United Nations radio and press interviews, serve as an effective tool for public sensitization and education on the sanctions measures.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Ghana's support for the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, and its Panel of Experts. I also want to use this opportunity to extend my deep appreciation to all the members of the Committee for their cooperation. I also seize this opportunity to extend to the incoming Chair of the Committee the greatest success in their upcoming role.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Agyeman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Abushahab.

Mr. Abushahab: I welcome the opportunity today to share some reflections with the members of the Security Council on behalf of Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh.

As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism, Ambassador Nusseibeh set out to enhance the Committee's ability to respond to the complex and global threat of terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee held 13 plenary meetings this year, with an additional meeting planned for later this month. Also, on the Committee's behalf, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) conducted nine visits to Member States, on almost every continent, to conduct country assessments.

The Committee not only continued its valuable work, but it also broke new ground. It marked a significant achievement by agreeing on guiding principles on threats posed by the use of unmanned aircraft systems for terrorist purposes, which addressed a major gap in Member States' response to the threats posed by new and emerging technologies. Those principles will help to enhance Member States' capabilities, while strengthening international cooperation on preventing and countering the use of drones for terrorist purposes. We now possess a framework for responding to that threat — a success shared by all Committee members. That development has been particularly poignant for the United Arab Emirates in the light of the terrorist drone attack on Abu Dhabi in January 2022.

Going further, the Committee has also deepened its knowledge through analytical reports on new trends and the exchange of good practices, from border management and countering terrorist narratives to the role of artificial intelligence in addressing future terrorism threats. Since the Delhi declaration, significant progress has been made on the development of the guiding principles for preventing and countering the use of emerging financial technologies, as well as the guiding principles on the use of information and communications technologies for terrorist purposes.

The Committee continued its engagement with the private sector, academia and civil society over the past year. It also benefited from the informative briefings and collaboration with specialized agencies such as the Financial Action Task Force, the International Civil Aviation Organization, INTERPOL and the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, among many others.

If the Committee is to continue going from strength to strength, we must focus on preventing and addressing the root causes of terrorism, including the ideology that underpins it. The recent report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh (S/2023/568) highlights that terrorist groups continue to exploit hate speech and intolerance in calling for terrorist attacks. The Security Council recognized that complex phenomenon by unanimously adopting resolution 2686 (2023), in June, which made clear the need to prioritize prevention. As conflict and the root causes of terrorism are increasingly ripe for exploitation, it is critical to promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence, including through whole-of-society approaches and cross-cutting implementation.

Against the backdrop of new and emerging trends and challenges, the United Arab Emirates will continue to encourage and support CTED, given its unique role and expertise within the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, to undertake further in-depth analysis. Those efforts will facilitate the continued work of the United Nations in addressing terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

In that regard, I wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Natalia Gherman, as well as the CTED and Security Council Affairs Division teams for their hard work, professionalism and good-natured support throughout the year. Much more can be done to spread the word about the immense responsibility and success of the Committee and CTED, both within and beyond the walls of the United Nations.

Ambassador Nusseibeh also had the privilege of chairing the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012), concerning Guinea-Bissau, over the past two years.

Since the closure of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, in December 2020, the 2048 Committee has had a relatively modest level of activity. The Security Council itself has not met to discuss the situation in Guinea-Bissau since the closure of the Office, but the Council continues to receive regular updates on key developments in the country as part of the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

Ambassador Nusseibeh sought to reflect the broadest range of views possible in the Committee and

to coordinate with members, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau and the Secretariat. Resolution 2048 (2012) also gave the Sanctions Committee the authority to add new names to the sanctions list, as well as to delist individuals. That is in addition to the tasks of monitoring the implementation of the travel ban and encouraging dialogue among the relevant actors. There are currently 10 names on the Guinea-Bissau sanctions list, all of whom are subject to the travel ban. During Ambassador Nusseibeh's term as Chair, no proposals were made to either list or delist any individuals.

Informal consultations were held on 24 March, with the aim of receiving updates and considering any issues relevant to the sanctions regime. At that point, the Committee was briefed on the political and security developments on the ground by both His Excellency Mr. Samba Sané, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobe, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa. The Committee also discussed the potential of reviewing the 2048 sanctions list and the sanctions regime. Following the briefing, the Chair prepared a brief summary of the informal consultations, which was then agreed upon within the Committee and issued as a press release on 27 April 2023 (SC/15269).

I want to conclude my remarks by extending my deep appreciation to the members of both Committees for their invaluable contributions, as well as to the Secretariat for its excellent and tireless support. Finally, I wish the incoming Chairs every success, and we assure them of our continued support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Abushahab for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Biang.

Mr. Biang (*spoke in French*): Over the past two years, I have had the immense privilege of chairing three Security Council Committees, namely, the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), concerning South Sudan; and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2653, (2022) concerning Haiti. In addition to chairing those three Committees, I also chaired the Council's Informal Working Group on International Tribunals, established under resolution 1966 (2010). I am pleased to have the opportunity today to brief the Council on

the activities of those Committees and of the Informal Working Group in 2022 and 2023, and to share with the Council some personal observations. Before I do that, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretariat for the support it has provided me over the past two years.

Allow me to begin by summarizing the activities of the 1533 Committee, concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Over the past two years, the Committee met more than 20 times in various formats, including remotely during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Committee heard briefings by its Group of Experts, as well as the Minister of Mines of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and representatives of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mine Action Service and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Among other things, the discussions focused on the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the activities of armed groups, the monitoring of the arms embargo, the management of arms and ammunition, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Four informal consultations took place with States in the region to consider the mid-term and final reports of the Group of Experts.

I regret that consensus was not reached during my chairmanship on hearing a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who had reminded the Committee that, every year from 2015 to 2021, there had been briefings on those matters. The information shared in such briefings would be extremely valuable for the members of the Committee. I therefore hope that my successor will continue to organize regular briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and that the Committee will reach consensus on hearing similar briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In November 2022, along with the majority of the members of the Committee, I had the opportunity to visit the Democratic Republic of the Congo; I also visited Rwanda and Uganda. Logistical and health difficulties linked to the COVID-19 pandemic had prevented my predecessor and the members of the Committee from

visiting Rwanda and Uganda in November 2021. I am therefore grateful that we were able to make that visit last year, particularly in the context of the continuing tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

Let me now turn to the activities of the 2206 Committee, concerning South Sudan. Over the past two years, the Committee met 14 times in informal consultations — six times in 2022 and eight times in 2023. The Committee heard briefings by the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, among others. Three of the informal consultations took place within the framework of the Committee's briefings to Member States, during which the Coordinator of the Group of Experts presented the Group's interim and final reports to participants.

Over the past two years, among other things, the Committee's discussions focused on the political, security and humanitarian situations in South Sudan, the progress and the challenges in implementing the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the situation of children in South Sudan. I regret that the Sanctions Committee on South Sudan, like the Sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was not able to reach consensus on a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who had briefed the Sanctions Committee six times between 2015 and 2021. I hope that the Committee will soon find consensus on hearing briefings by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In my capacity as the Chair of the Sanctions Committee on South Sudan, I had the privilege in October of making a visit — a field visit this time — to South Sudan, in the company of the majority of the members of the Committee. Most of the discussions during the visit focused on the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement, in particular chapter 2, on transitional security arrangements, the fulfilment of which is closely linked to South Sudan's compliance with the main benchmarks set out in paragraph 2 of resolution 2577 (2021), and South Sudan's call for the lifting of the arms embargo.

I would now like to make a few personal observations on my perception of the conduct of the first two Committees, whose activities I just mentioned.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to reiterate my deep concern about the deteriorating security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo owing to the recurring activities of armed groups. I condemn the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and the involvement of armed groups and criminal networks in the illicit trafficking in natural resources. I would also like to stress the importance of listing individuals who commit serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, as well as individuals and entities involved in the illicit trafficking in resources, which fuels the activities of networks of armed groups. We believe that those individuals would be further deterred if they felt the crushing weight of being singled out by the Sanctions Committee.

I would like to say a few words about the lifting of the notification regime on the Democratic Republic of the Congo set forth in resolution 1533 (2004). I would like to reiterate Gabon's conviction that the removal of the notification clause in December 2022 has been an asset to the country's Government in enabling it to respond more effectively to the armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that it will enable the country's authorities to fulfil their responsibilities in the face of the security challenges posed by well-equipped armed groups that are receiving arms in violation of the arms embargo.

Let me now make a few personal remarks on South Sudan. First of all, I would like to welcome South Sudan's decision to accept returnees and refugees from the Sudan since the conflict in that country began in April, and I would like to express my concern about the disastrous humanitarian situation in South Sudan, in particular the record levels of food insecurity and the challenges posed by natural disasters and regional insecurity, as well as the persistent violence in the Sudan. I would also like to underscore that all the parties have an obligation to facilitate humanitarian access.

I welcome the recent progress in the reconstitution of the National Constitutional Review Commission, the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Council in preparation for the elections scheduled for December 2024. I want to encourage the Government of South Sudan to redouble its efforts to organize

safe, free, fair and credible elections, including by engaging in dialogue with the relevant stakeholders on the preparations required for the elections. I would like to highlight three important points concerning the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the relevant main benchmarks, and of the arms embargo.

First, I welcome the progress made so far in implementing the Revitalized Agreement, including the recent deployment of 750 members of the first group of graduates of the necessary unified forces, and I stress the importance of continuing to make progress in implementing the Revitalized Agreement and the main benchmarks. I would like to recall that the Government of South Sudan can request exemptions from the Committee to address the equipment needs of its armed forces. It is important to underscore the fact that the Security Council has asked the Government of South Sudan to report to the Committee by 15 April 2024 on progress made towards meeting the main benchmarks.

To summarize — or to make a long story short, as they say — I would like to reiterate the importance of the Chair's visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. I think that it is possible, in those regions, for that kind of visit to be repeated so as to raise public awareness about the objectives and scope of Council sanctions. I would also like to stress the importance of the work carried out by the Group and by the Panel of Experts, which are crucial to the Committee receiving objective and reliable information. I would also like to highlight the support behind the work of the experts, which is exceedingly important.

I would now like to turn to my chairmanship of the Working Group on the International Tribunals. As Chair of the Informal Working Group on International Criminal Tribunals, established pursuant to resolution 1966 (2010), during my last statement — on Tuesday, 12 December — at the briefing on the twenty-third progress report (see S/2023/566) of the International Residual Mechanism (see S/PV.9502), I had the opportunity to convey my deep gratitude to all Member States for their invaluable support and the spirit of cooperation they demonstrated throughout my mandate. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for the high quality of its technical assistance, which not only facilitated our chairmanship but also the conduct of our work.

In the first two years of my mandate as Chair of the Working Group, we focused mainly on two salient issues: first, the biennial review process of the Residual Mechanism's activities and, secondly, the renewal of the mandates of the judges, the President and the Prosecutor. Regarding the process of reviewing the Mechanism's work, from the beginning of our chairmanship, the objective has been to consult with all members of the Working Group to reach agreement on a timeline related to reviewing the Mechanism's methods of work. Resolution 2637 (2022), which was adopted unanimously in June 2022 (see S/PV.9072), concluded the Council's review of the progress of the Mechanism's work, including significant progress of its functions since the previous review, which took place in 2020 under the chairmanship of Viet Nam. That important resolution had the merit of aligning all key aspects linked to advancing the Mechanism's work, including the questions of workload, the relocation of convicted persons who have completed their sentences and cooperation with States where fugitives are suspected of having found refuge. The review also included the implementation of, and follow-up to, recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of key points related to the Mechanism's working methods.

Regarding the renewal of the mandates of the judges, the President and the Prosecutor, from a practical standpoint, I would like to stress that the renewal of the President's mandate happened just after the adoption of resolution 2637 (2022) pursuant to procedure involving an exchange of correspondence between the Council and the Secretary-General. Judge Graciela Gatti Santana of Uruguay was therefore appointed to replace Judge Carmel Agius of Malta. The renewal of the mandate of the 24 judges happened just after the adoption of the resolution, in consultation with the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, through an exchange of correspondence initiated by the Secretary-General. The renewal of the Prosecutor's mandate is the only one related to this matter that was initiated by resolution 2637 (2022). Furthermore, following the death of Judge Elizabeth Ibanda-Nahamya of Uganda in January 2023, the Secretary-General nominated Judge Lydia Mugambe Ssali of Uganda in May 2023 as her replacement. The next Mechanism progress review will be held in 2024 under a new chairmanship. It is important to note, for reference, that the Working Group met formally with the President and the Prosecutor of the Mechanism on 9 and 13 December 2022 and

on 9 June and 11 December 2023 successively. The official Council meetings to assess the progress of the Mechanism took place successively on 14 June (see S/PV.9062) and 12 December 2022 (see S/PV.9217) and on 12 June (see S/PV.9344) and 11 December 2023 (see S/PV.9502).

I would like to reiterate my country's steadfast support for the work of the Informal Working Group. My country's position is reflected in my own personal view of the International Criminal Tribunals' work, which are essential subsidiary bodies in countering impunity for the grave crimes perpetrated in the Balkans and Rwanda. During our chairmanship, we observed meaningful progress, particularly concerning the effective transition of the Mechanism to a residual institution, in accordance with the goal set out in resolutions 1966 (2010) and 2637 (2022). We hope that the efforts of the Working Group will continue in an unfettered way, with the effective cooperation of Member States. I would like to take this opportunity to wish every success to my successor, Ambassador Michael Kanu, in this important responsibility, and I assure him of my delegation's full cooperation.

Lastly, I would like to take stock of the work of the Committee established on Haiti. The Committee was established on 21 October 2022 subsequent to the adoption of resolution 2653 (2022), and I was appointed Chair in 5 December 2022. The Committee guidelines were adopted on 8 February 2023, and were then adopted and revised on 6 November 2023 following the adoption of resolution 2699 (2023), which established an arms embargo in Haiti. The Committee also began the process geared towards reaching a cooperation agreement between the Committee and INTERPOL through an exchange of letters. The Committee is currently awaiting a response from the Secretary-General of INTERPOL for the agreement to enter into force.

The Committee held seven meetings in 2023; six informal consultations and one briefing from Member States. The Committee received briefings from the Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations, from the Panel of Experts, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL. The Committee carried out its work primarily through written proceedings. Throughout my mandate, more than 90 notes were sent. Ten official communications to Member States and other stakeholders were sent, and three notes verbales were sent to Member States. I visited Haiti and the Dominican Republic from 12 to

16 June, when I had the privilege to meet with senior officials in Haiti and the President of the Dominican Republic. The visit helped to enhance cooperation between the Committee and its Member States. Owing to extraordinary circumstances, I was not accompanied on the visit by the members of the Committee. I briefed the Council three times; twice relating to the work of the Committee and once following my visit to Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

Resolution 2700 (2023) instructed the Committee to promptly review the updating of the list of persons and entities designated under resolution 2653 (2022), taking into account the report submitted by the Panel of Experts. In my capacity as Chair, I actively collaborated with the members of the Committee to promote and facilitate the implementation of the Council's instructions. The Committee was proactively

seized of the matter and recently, on 8 December, four individuals were inscribed on the sanctions list.

I would like to conclude by thanking all members of the Committee for their commitment. I would like to thank my team for its dedication, and the Secretariat and Security Council Affairs Division for their professionalism. I would like to wish my successor every success and to assure him of my complete availability.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Biang for his briefing.

On behalf of the Security Council, I take this opportunity to express appreciation to the outgoing Chairs for the manner in which they have discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.