

**Statement of the Chair of the CAR Configuration of the PBC
at the Security Council Briefing on MINUSCA**

21 February 2023, 10:00 am

Madam President,

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

Allow me to begin my remarks by congratulating Malta on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February, and thank you for your invitation.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the Security Council on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), in my capacity as President of the Central African Republic Configuration, on the progress and prospects for peacebuilding in that country.

I would like to thank the Secretary General for his very comprehensive report highlighting the issues and challenges facing the Central African Republic at a critical moment in its journey towards lasting peace and stability, as well as the recommendations proposed.

We have carefully followed the presentation by the Special Representative of the Secretary General in the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Mrs. Valentine RUGWABIZA, and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to her efforts and those of the whole MINUSCA team, and to express our appreciation for the excellent cooperation established with the Central African Republic Configuration.

Madam President,

The resurgence of armed groups' activities in certain areas of the Central African Republic and the pressure on the country's public finances are leading to the deterioration of the security and socio-economic environments and inflicting a heavy toll on the civilian population.

However, despite the persistence of many challenges, we have witnessed encouraging positive developments over the past period. These developments should be capitalized on to sustain and strengthen the country's commitment to recovery.

First, the political will demonstrated by the Central African authorities for the revitalization and national ownership of the peace process, particularly through the implementation of the commitments made to ensure complementarity and maintain synergy at the political level within the framework of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR (APPR-RCA) and the Luanda Joint Roadmap for Peace in CAR resulting from the Summit of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region.

We encourage the continuation of these efforts, including through the validation and implementation of the strategy of engagement with the armed groups. In this context, we welcome the official dissolution on December 6, 2022 of four armed groups' signatories of the APPR, which we consider a further step towards stabilizing the political and security climate, expanding democratic space, and keeping CAR on the path to sustainable peace.

Peacebuilding can only be effective if it is accompanied by efforts to demobilize armed groups and hold accountable those responsible for serious crimes and human rights violations. We welcome MINUSCA's

focus on creating a protective environment for the population, including support for the expansion of state authority beyond the provincial capitals.

Second, efforts to mobilize the region alongside the Central African authorities in support of the peace process. As the Secretary General emphasized in his report, the situation in CAR has a strong regional imprint. In this regard, we commend the regional and sub-regional organizations, the Heads of State of the region and neighboring countries for their commitment to greater coherence in regional actions, and we call on all regional actors to continue their efforts to defuse tensions in the subregion and address cross-border threats to peace and the political process.

Let me also emphasize the importance of continued constructive engagement from all CAR's partners, including the International Financial Institutions, regional development banks and bilateral partners. The lack of technical and financial capacity, remains one of the main challenges in CAR. We reiterate our call to all partners, whether from the region, the continent, or beyond, to pay particular attention to CAR and provide the necessary support, as the needs are urgent and threaten the gains made in terms of peacebuilding and development.

The Peacebuilding Fund, of which current portfolio in the Central African Republic includes nine projects worth \$18 million, is an example of how investments in peacebuilding and durable solutions are valuable, catalytic, and have a clear and direct impact on populations.

Madam President,

This context highlights the importance of peacebuilding efforts as a tool to address the root causes of instability. This has led the Configuration to focus, in 2022, on strengthening national ownership of peacebuilding priorities, including:

1- The local elections scheduled for July and October 2023.

The country is preparing to vote in these elections, which represent a unique opportunity to promote local governance with elected officials directly accountable to the citizens, thus contributing to the advancement of the decentralization process in the Central African Republic and addressing one of the root causes of the political and security crises in the country.

We encourage the Government to continue its efforts to ensure that these elections can take place in a timely, free, inclusive and secure manner, with the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women, including by adopting effective confidence-building measures and prioritizing dialogue with all political and civil society actors. We are reassured by MINUSCA's support for these elections and its commitment to make every effort to ensure that the elections are peaceful, consensual, violence-free, inclusive and open to all, including women and youth.

However, the major insufficiency of funding for local elections is very worrying. The budget deficit is the main reason why the elections have been postponed three times already. It could affect the holding of the elections and create a real risk for peace and stability. We urgently call on Member States and CAR's partners to mobilize the necessary funds to fill the gap in the budget, which amounts to nearly 7 million dollars, through contributions to the basket fund of the UNDP, which manages the project to support the electoral process.

2- Strengthening of the rule of law and transitional justice.

Access to justice and the fight against impunity are a sine qua non condition for the stabilization of the Central African Republic and the success of any national reconciliation project, contributing to conflict prevention in the short term and sustainable peace in the long term.

We welcome the operationalization of the CAR Special Criminal Court and the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, thanks to combined efforts from the Central African authorities and their international partners, including MINUSCA. These are essential mechanisms for addressing human rights violations, fighting impunity, and ensuring accountability of perpetrators, justice and reparation for victims. The Configuration is proud to have contributed to this endeavor by using its forum to advocate for resources to fill the budgetary gaps of the SCC and the TJRRC.

As we have reiterated on numerous occasions, there can be no peace without reconciliation and no reconciliation without credible mechanisms to combat impunity. In this context, the work of the SCC and the TJRRC is of paramount importance, and we urge all partners to show greater financial, technical and logistical support, to accompany these mechanisms.

3- Implementation of the National Recovery Plan (RCPCA).

The bleak current global economic outlook and the food and energy crisis, coupled with supply chain constraints, have had a negative impact on the national budget and revenue generation for the national peacebuilding plan in Central African Republic.

Investments in socio-economic recovery and development in CAR remain critical to the implementation of the APPR, and to the consolidation of the peacebuilding dividends that are intrinsically linked to sustainable peace. In this regard, I welcome the continued dialogue between the Government and the International Financial Institutions, particularly with the facilitation of MINUSCA.

Madam President,

The Configuration will continue to focus on the coherence and coordination of the above actions, and we will continue to advocate for increased attention and support from the international community to the Central African Republic.

I cannot stress enough that the country is at a critical moment in its history and will need our continued support to ensure a return to lasting peace and sustained stability.

I thank you.