5. The situation in the Central African Republic

During the period under review, the Security Council held five meetings and adopted three resolutions, all under Chapter VII of the Charter, in connection with the situation in the Central African Republic. Three of the meetings were convened to adopt a decision of the Council and the remaining two took the form of briefings. More information on the meetings, including on participants, speakers and outcomes, is given in table 1 below. In 2020, Council members also held one open videoconference. In addition to meetings and videoconferences, in 2020, Council members held informal consultations of the whole. The Council also held one closed videoconference with countries contributing troops and police to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). More information on the videoconferences is provided in table 2 below.

During 2020, the Council heard three briefings on the reports by the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic, consistent with the four-month reporting schedule established by resolution 2387 (2017). Two of those briefings were delivered by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA at meetings of the Council and one briefing was delivered by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations at an open videoconference. The Council was also briefed by the Chair of the Central African Republic Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, the African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic, and the Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

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109 For more information on format of meetings, see part II, sect. I.
110 For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.
111 See A/75/2, part II, chap. 32.
112 Council members held a closed videoconference on 4 November 2020 in connection with the item entitled “Meeting of the Security Council with the troop-and police-contributing countries pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001), annex II, sections A and B”; see A/75/2, part II, chap. 22.
The briefings focused on the political, security, economic and humanitarian situation in the country, particularly the developments after the signing of the Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic on 6 February 2019, the issue of the upcoming presidential and legislative elections in 2020 and 2021 and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, in the light of the first anniversary of the Peace Agreement, in his briefing to the Council on 20 February 2020, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA stressed that the inclusive Government that had emerged from the Agreement remained valid and operational and that the signatory parties had reaffirmed their commitment to it, notwithstanding numerous difficulties, including the continued violations of the Agreement by some armed groups. He commended the progress made in connection with reduction of violence against civilians, extension of State authority, the establishment of the special mixed security units, as provided for by the Peace Agreement, and the fight against impunity and promotion of transitional justice.114

At the same meeting, both the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations and the African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic outlined the areas of progress and remaining challenges in the country. In terms of progress, both briefers highlighted the gradual return of State authority in the country, the ongoing dialogue between the Government and different stakeholders and the formation of special mixed security units. Among the challenges still facing the country, the two briefers emphasized the continued violence and clashes between the different armed groups, shortcomings in the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the need to step up the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.115 The Head of the Delegation of the European Union further elaborated on its role in the country, particularly its significant support for the upcoming elections.116 Taking note of the concerning security and humanitarian situation in Birao, Ndélé and Bria, the African Union Special Representative stressed that the implementation of all aspects of the Peace Agreement, was the best political framework for

114 See S/PV.8728.
116 Ibid.
stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic. He added that it was for that reason that the National Assembly had opened an extraordinary session on 19 February 2020 to review and adopt the draft texts envisioned in the Peace Agreement. The Chair of the Central African Republic Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission briefed Council members on his visit to Bangui from 11 to 14 February 2020, focusing on the elections, the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. He also welcomed the verdict of the Bangui Court of Appeal, condemning the Bangassou militiamen for their abuses against the civilian population and United Nations Blue Helmets and said that the Special Criminal Court was pursuing its investigations with the aim of starting trials in early 2021, but was still facing difficulties with recruitment and funding.

On 22 June 2020, Council members held a videoconference at which they were briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Managing Director for Africa of the European Union External Action Service. During the videoconference, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations recalled that the political situation was marked by increased mobilization towards the upcoming elections, challenging legal framework and political tensions. He reported that the security situation remained volatile and despite some progress regarding the implementation of the Peace Agreement, most notably the adoption of legislation as stipulated therein, some armed groups, including the signatories, continued to use violence for expansionist aims. The African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security informed Council members that three months after its suspension due to COVID-19, the executive monitoring committee of the Peace Agreement had been able to hold its session in May, and general consensus was that significant progress had been made in particular in the adoption and enactment of all the laws provided for in the Agreement. He also reported on the deployment of the first group of African Union military observers in Bangui. The Managing Director for Africa of the European Union External

117 For a detailed report from the visit, see letter dated 20 February 2020 from the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2020/131).
118 See S/PV.8728.
120 Ibid.

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Action Service briefed on the assistance by the European Union to the electoral process in the Central African Republic.

On 17 October 2020, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General briefed the Council on the progress 20 months after the signing of the Agreement in the areas of political reform, the restoration of State authority and transitional justice. He also focused on the electoral assistance provided by MINUSCA and international actors and reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of the Central African Republic. He underscored that despite the negative impact on the operations of MINUSCA, the Mission had been able to continue to implement its mandate and support the authorities in the fight against COVID-19, in particular through logistical and material assistance. He also welcomed the establishment of the new European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic to support the country’s security sector reform, which would strengthen the work of MINUSCA.121 The African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security welcomed the fact that he would be meeting with the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, the President of the ECCAS Commission and, potentially, the Vice-President of the European Commission to support the Government and other stakeholders from the Central African Republic to assist the country on its path towards peace and development.122

Throughout 2020, Council members continued to discuss the critical factors for the successful implementation of the Peace Agreement, including the political support by the Council, regional actors, and the international community. Council members also addressed issues relating to the holding of free, peaceful and inclusive elections in 2020 and 2021, including the support of MINUSCA and regional organizations in that regard, as well as the role of sanctions, particularly the establishment of key benchmarks to serve as a road map that could lead to the easing of the arms embargo.123 In 2020, Council members also addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of MINUSCA’s mandate and the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in the country.

121 See S/PV.8771.
122 Ibid.
123 For further details on the discussion, see part II, sect. III. B.

During the period under review, the Council adopted three resolutions under this item, two in connection with the sanctions measures regarding the Central African Republic and one relating to the mandate of MINUSCA.

With respect to the sanctions measures, the Council expanded the list of exemptions to the arms embargo twice during the reporting period.\(^\text{124}\) Firstly, by resolution \(2507\ (2020)\) adopted on 31 January 2020, the Council expanded the list of items exempted to include provisions of unarmed ground military vehicles and ground military vehicles mounted with weapons with a calibre of 14.5 mm or less and ammunition specially designed for such weapons.\(^\text{125}\) Secondly, by resolution \(2536\ (2020)\), adopted on 28 July 2020, the Council added to the list of exemptions rocket propelled grenades, supplied to the Central African Republic security forces, including state civilian law enforcement institutions, and intended solely for support of or use in the Central African Republic process of security sector reform.\(^\text{126}\) The Council also renewed twice the provisions on the asset freeze and travel ban measures, as set out in resolution \(2399\ (2018)\).\(^\text{127}\) The Council continued to monitor the progress achieved by the authorities of the Central African Republic on the key benchmarks enumerated in the presidential statement of 9 April 2019.\(^\text{128}\) In that regard, stressing the importance of the authorities achieving the key benchmarks in order to contribute to the advancement of the security sector reform, the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation processes and necessary weapons and ammunition management reforms, the Council continued to request the Central African Republic authorities to report to the Committee on the progress achieved in that regard.\(^\text{129}\) The Council further requested the Secretary-General, in close consultation with MINUSCA, including the United Nations Mine Action Service, and the Panel of Experts, to conduct assessments on the progress achieved by the authorities on the key benchmarks.\(^\text{130}\)

\(^\text{124}\) For more information on the sanctions measures concerning the Central African Republic, see part VII, sect. III. For information on the Committee established pursuant to resolution \(2127\ (2013)\) and the Panel of Experts, see part IX, sect. I.

\(^\text{125}\) Resolution \(2507\ (2020)\), para 1(g).

\(^\text{126}\) Resolution \(2536\ (2020)\), para. 1(g).

\(^\text{127}\) Resolutions \(2507\ (2020)\), para 4; and \(2536\ (2020)\), para. 4.

\(^\text{128}\) S/PRST/2019/3, seventh paragraph.

\(^\text{129}\) Resolutions \(2507\ (2020)\), para. 12; and \(2536\ (2020)\), fourth preambular paragraph and para. 12.

\(^\text{130}\) Resolutions \(2507\ (2020)\), para. 13; and \(2536\ (2020)\), para. 13.
Further to the adoption of resolution 2507 (2020) on 31 January 2020, the representatives of China and the Russian Federation, in explaining their abstention on the vote, expressed regret that the appeals of the Central African Republic and others for the easing or lifting of the arms embargo had not been considered. The representative of the Russian Federation further noted that the arms embargo on the Central African Republic may have played a positive role in the early stages, but that it was then effectively an obstacle to the rearming of the national army and security forces — the very institutions that bore the primary responsibility for upholding the peace and security of their own citizens. The representative of France, as the penholder, emphasized that the Council was always ready to listen to the legitimate concerns of the Central African Republic, underlining that in order to help equip and strengthen the mobility and security of the Central African forces, from September 2019 to the date of the adoption, the Council had twice authorized a significant easing of the arms embargo. The representative of Niger stated that the adoption of the resolution was indeed a response to the legitimate request of the authorities of the Central African Republic to pursue the definitive lifting of the arms embargo on the basis of progress made in the area of storing and preventing the diversion of weapons. The representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, while taking note of the Central African Republic’s calls for a complete lifting of the arms component of the sanctions measures and recognizing some merit to that request, primarily as it related to enabling the security forces to reclaim territory from armed groups, did not believe that the time was ripe for a complete lifting of arms measures, as there still remained some shortcomings with weapons and ammunition management in the country. Joined by several other speakers, she recognized the commitment by the Central African Republic to achieving progress on the key benchmarks. Some Council members expressed regret that the Council had been unable to reach consensus on the issue and had failed to adopt the resolution unanimously.

On 28 July 2020, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2536 (2020). Further to the vote, the representative of France, as the penholder on the resolution, welcomed the unity of the

131 See S/PV.8712, China and Russian Federation.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Germany, Estonia, Indonesia, China and United Kingdom.
134 Ibid., France, Estonia and United Kingdom.

Council on the issue of sanctions measures concerning the Central African Republic and affirmed that the Council remained attentive to the legitimate concerns of the Government.\textsuperscript{135} The representative of the United States, speaking on behalf of Belgium, Estonia, Germany and the United States, expressed concern that without better management and tracking of the weapons brought into the country, changes in the sanctions regime would significantly increase the risk of the proliferation of rocket-propelled grenades, both within the Central African Republic and the region. He further expressed support for the 12-month extension of the sanctions measures, which they agreed would allow the Government sufficient time to achieve progress on the key benchmarks.\textsuperscript{136} The representative of the United Kingdom also expressed concern regarding the further easing of the arms embargo contained in the resolution. The representative of the Russian Federation, while acknowledging that the simplified procedure for supplying grenade launchers to address the needs of the Central African Republic was another small step in support of the Central African people, recalled the demands of the country for lifting of the restrictive sanctions regime, adding that it acted as an obstacle to the rearming of the Central African Republic national army.

During the period under review, the Council extended the mandate of MINUSCA once for a period of one year until 15 November 2021.\textsuperscript{137} By resolution 2552 (2020), unanimously adopted on 12 November 2020, the Council welcomed the progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreement as well as the work carried out by MINUSCA.\textsuperscript{138} The Council reiterated MINUSCA’s priority tasks concerning the protection of civilians and United Nations personnel, the support to the peace process, electoral assistance and humanitarian assistance.\textsuperscript{139} The Council also specifically requested MINUSCA to contribute to alleviating the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.\textsuperscript{140} The Council reiterated all of the remaining tasks of MINUSCA bearing in mind that these tasks as well as the priority tasks were mutually reinforcing.\textsuperscript{141} The Council

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{135} See S/PV.8750.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Resolution 2552 (2020), para. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Resolution 2552 (2020), seventh and eleventh preambular paragraphs.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid., para. 31. For more information on the mandate of MINUSCA, see part X, sect. I.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Resolution 2552 (2020), para. 31 (d).
\item \textsuperscript{141} Ibid., paras. 32-33.
\end{itemize}
recalled its resolution 2532 (2020) demanding a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on its agenda and calling upon all parties to armed conflicts to engage immediately in a durable humanitarian pause for at least 90 consecutive days, in order to enable the safe, timely, unhindered and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.  

142 Ibid., seventeenth preambular paragraph.

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Table 1
Meetings: the situation in the Central African Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting record and date</th>
<th>Sub-item</th>
<th>Other documents</th>
<th>Rule 37 invitations</th>
<th>Rule 39 and other invitations</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</th>
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<tr>
<td>S/PV.8771</td>
<td>Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic</td>
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Republic
(S/2020/994) Commissioner for Peace and Security, Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service

S/PV.8776
12 November 2020

Draft resolution submitted by France (S/2020/1106)

Table 2
Videoconferences: the situation in the Central African Republic

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Videoconference date</th>
<th>Videoconference record</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</th>
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<td>22 June 2020</td>
<td>S/2020/572</td>
<td>Letter dated 24 June 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council</td>
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