

Combating the risk of arms proliferation and ensuring a pathway to peace in Central African Republic

Thank you, Mr President. I would like to start by thanking France, as penholder, for their sterling efforts to achieve this outcome.

The United Kingdom supports this resolution, which renews the targeted sanctions and the arms embargo for a further 12 months. We would once again like to underline that the objective of the arms embargo is to prevent armed groups, who continue to perpetrate violence in the Central African Republic, from accessing weaponry. However, our support to this resolution does not detract from our continued belief that a technical renewal would have been the appropriate course of action at this time. It is disappointing that one or two Council members insisted on the inclusion of exemptions on mortars.

The accurate use of mortars requires significant levels of training and equipment. We urge the government of the Central African Republic and its partners to ensure this training is in place in order to avoid increased risks to civilians and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law.

These risks are not hypothetical. Reports continue of atrocities against civilians in the Central African Republic, including reports which reached us even as negotiations were ongoing on this resolution. We remain deeply troubled by allegations that such atrocities are being committed not only by armed groups but by members of the national armed forces and indeed by private military contractors.

Mr President, the United Kingdom supports the government of the Central African Republic as it pursues security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation process. We welcome the progress it has made so far towards delivering on the benchmarks this Council set in April 2019.

However, those benchmarks for the lifting of the arms embargo have not yet been met. Until they are met, further proliferation of arms both within the Central African Republic and the wider region risks potentially disastrous consequences for civilians.

We therefore urge the government of the Central African Republic to accelerate its efforts to meet the benchmarks, and to take full responsibility for ensuring effective storage and management of weapons and ammunition. Such progress is vital to improving security for the people of the Central African Republic, combating the risk of arms proliferation, and helping to ensure a pathway to peace and reconciliation.

Thank you, Mr President.