

Ensuring fair and timely elections in Central African Republic

Thank you, Mr President. I want to start by thanking our briefers; we share much of their analysis. I join others in paying tribute to the peacekeepers in MINUSCA and we think in particular of those who lost their lives. I also want to express our solidarity with the government and the people of the Central African Republic as they face the twin threats of continued violence and of Covid-19.

Mr President, the 2019 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation remains the only viable framework for sustained peace in the Central African Republic and it must be protected. While condemning the repeated violations of the peace agreements by members of some signatory armed groups, we welcome the progress that has been made recently, including ongoing high-level engagement and the legislation adopted by the National Assembly.

Mr President, the Central African Republic is at a crossroads as it approaches the presidential and legislative elections later this year. As many here said today, these elections must be a turning point. In this regard, I want to underline three points:

First, the elections must be held in a peaceful, free and transparent manner, and within constitutional deadlines. All Central Africans must have the chance to be heard. The UK is in the process of reviewing its financial support to the elections, and we hope to make a contribution shortly.

Secondly, in the likes of certain signatories withdrawing participation, we must not be complacent about the risks to the peace agreement. We stand ready to impose appropriate measures, including sanctions, in line with Article 35 of the Peace Agreement, in response to violations.

And thirdly, the UK reiterates the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire amid the Covid-19 pandemic to allow health and humanitarian needs to be met. We recognise the secondary impacts of Covid-19 and that they will require support to address the longer-term fallout from the pandemic.

In conclusion, Mr President, while challenges still remain in the Central African Republic, we should reflect on how far the country has come already. Let us all today recommit to ensuring that this year marks a turning point for the Central African Republic leading to long-term stability and prosperity for the people because they deserve it.

Thank you, Mr President.