

Speech: Building Peace and Security in Central African Republic

Thank you Mr President and a big thank you to all of our briefers. I would like to in particular ask SRSG Onanga and SR Moussa to pass on to their teams on the ground the thanks of the Council for the work they do in difficult circumstances and I echo my American colleague's thanks and tribute to the Ambassador of Cote D'Ivoire for the very important work he has personally been spearheading on behalf of us all.

Mr President, we share the Secretary-General's assessment that the security situation in CAR remains extremely fragile – a message repeated in a letter sent to all of us today by 45 NGOs active in that country.

As our briefers today have illustrated there are some positive signals of progress in CAR, but the security, humanitarian and justice situation remains concerning. The international community must not relax its efforts towards building a secure, stable, and peaceful CAR.

Civilians, peacekeepers, and humanitarian workers continue to be attacked. More than one in four Central Africans remain displaced; half of the population are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Only 36% of the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded. We encourage all member states to help fill this gap. The UK has provided £63 million – or \$81 million – in humanitarian aid to CAR since 2015. We believe that this aid supports progress towards a stable, secure, and peaceful CAR – something that remains in all of our interests.

It is clear that in order to achieve peace in CAR, efforts to stabilise the country in the short term must go hand in hand with longer-term progress on reconciliation, justice, and peace-building.

We therefore welcome the efforts of the African Peace Initiative, which remains the only viable path to peace. I agree wholeheartedly with the French Ambassador on the need to avoid parallel initiatives which risk confusion or worse.

A co-ordinated and sustained international support is vital if CAR is to achieve long lasting peace and stability. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that there should be greater UN involvement in the Initiative, to ensure link up between political, peace, and security efforts and to reinforce crucial co-ordination between national and international partners on CAR's road to peace.

Mr President, MINUSCA has an essential role to play in supporting the Peace Initiative, and the UK is committed to working within the Security Council to ensure that MINUSCA can deliver this support as part of its stabilisation mandate. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation for MINUSCA's renewed focus on the peace process, including through more direct

engagement.

Also, in support of MINUSCA's mandate delivery, we commend the Secretary General's plan to introduce a performance management mechanism to alleviate some of the pressures on the mission. This will give it greater ability to improve performance and to enforce the zero tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation and sexual harassment. I note in this content, SRSG Parfait's comments about ensuring that troops that are deployed are properly trained and equipped. He is right in saying that that is a responsibility of this Council.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish and implement a comprehensive strategic outreach and communication plan, making clear what MINUSCA is delivering for the people of CAR, building a better understanding of the peace process, and making sure we take into account the views and needs of Central Africans. As we have all heard many times in this Council and seen, an inclusive peace process, including one that is inclusive of women, is more likely to be sustainable and successful.

Among these concerns for CAR, we must remember that there can be no peace without justice. Incitement to violence, including on religious and ethnic grounds, and attacks on civilians, peacekeepers, and humanitarian workers will continue unchecked if perpetrators perceive impunity to be the standard.

We recognise the efforts by the government of Central African Republic, together with MINUSCA, to bring some of the perpetrators of serious crimes to account. In this regard, we hope that the positive news of the inaugural session of the Special Criminal Court yesterday will soon translate to concrete progress in the fight against impunity, especially now that the Court's investigations can officially commence.

We urge the Central African Republic to work with international partners to expedite progress on criminal and transitional justice, and ensure that judicial mechanisms are in place to support due process on these and other cases – this remains an essential component to bringing stability to CAR.

Mr President, the international community and the government of the Central African Republic have come a long way since elections in 2015. We must continue to unite in our focus on building peace and stability in the country and on creating the conditions for the long-term protection and prosperity that the people deserve.