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### Technical assistance and capacity-building

## Human rights situation in the Central African Republic

### Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic, Yao Agbetse\*

#### *Summary*

In the present report, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic gives an account of the human rights situation in the country between July 2021 and June 2022.

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\* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 48/19 of 11 October 2021 renewing the mandate of the Independent Expert and requesting him to submit a written report at its fifty-first session.
2. The present report covers the period from July 2021 to June 2022.<sup>1</sup>
3. The Independent Expert was able to visit the country from 11 to 18 February 2022 after the travel restrictions that had been in place since March 2020 owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic were lifted. The Independent Expert's second visit is scheduled for 27 July to 5 August 2022, when he will visit the prefectures of Haute-Kotto and Vakaga and meet with local authorities of the Central African Republic and various stakeholders and partners operating in these prefectures. During this next visit, the Independent Expert would like to meet with relevant ministries and institutions to follow up on the recommendations made in his previous reports and the communications addressed to the Government.
4. The Independent Expert wishes to commend the Government of the Central African Republic for its cooperation. He notes with satisfaction that the Government has participated regularly in the various dialogues held during sessions of the Human Rights Council,<sup>2</sup> represented by Arnaud Djoubaye Abazene, Minister of State for Justice, the Promotion of Human Rights and Good Governance.
5. The Independent Expert is grateful to the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations country team, the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), other technical and financial partners, civil society organizations, the media and all those who have cooperated with him in the fulfilment of his mandate.

## II. Political situation

### A. Local elections of 2023

6. Local elections, which were initially scheduled for 11 September 2022, have been postponed. In April the National Electoral Authority adopted a revised calendar that calls for elections to be held in January 2023. Municipal elections have not been held in the country since 1988.
7. MINUSCA is implementing a nationwide mobilization, outreach and civic education programme to ensure the engagement of youth in the electoral process and the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women as voters and candidates, including by ensuring that the legally mandated 35-per-cent quota for women's participation in decision-making bodies is met.
8. According to the National Electoral Authority, the cost of holding local elections will amount to approximately US\$ 10 million. On 2 September 2021, the Government announced that it would provide \$400,000 for the electoral mapping exercise scheduled for the period from October to December 2021. The Government has committed to providing the National Electoral Authority with \$2.7 million from the 2022 State budget.
9. The Independent Expert sees local elections as a crucial springboard for finding grass-roots responses to local challenges. They are an opportunity to put the decentralization law of 26 February 2020 into practice. Strengthening local governance is essential for the country's recovery in terms of territorial administration and for fully restoring State authority by ensuring that the State's justice and security services are effectively present at the local

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<sup>1</sup> A few developments that took place in July 2022 are nonetheless noted.

<sup>2</sup> At the forty-eighth, forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions of the Human Rights Council.

level throughout the country. These elections represent a political and democratic solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic.

## **B. Political dialogue and implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the joint road map**

10. During the reporting period, there were no significant developments in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in Bangui on 6 February 2019.<sup>3</sup> Since July 2020, the activity of the special joint security units has lost momentum, including in the north-east and south-east of the country. It is essential to mobilize the guarantors and facilitators, with the support of technical and financial partners, for the effective implementation of the Agreement's monitoring structures by June 2023. Despite the funding of projects for the socioeconomic reintegration of individuals, including children, who have left armed groups, this challenge remains outstanding.

11. Two meetings of the Executive Monitoring Committee under the Agreement were held, on 14 February and 25 May 2022. The focus was on the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of armed groups. A monitoring committee has been established to conduct monthly reviews of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation operations and to take stock of the implementation of the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic, adopted in Luanda on 16 September 2021 by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

12. Announced by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra on 6 February 2021, the republican dialogue was held in Bangui from 21 to 27 March 2022, pursuant to a presidential decree of 15 March 2022. In his message to the nation on 15 October 2021, the President stated that the country had two tools for building peace: the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, for the armed groups, and the republican dialogue, for the nation's social and community leaders. He also announced that the unilateral ceasefire was intended to facilitate the implementation of the Luanda joint road map.

13. As a result of the republican dialogue, 217 recommendations were adopted. They address, inter alia, matters of security, peace and reconciliation, the rule of law, political governance, economic and social recovery, and foreign policy and international cooperation. The fight against impunity is the backbone of the recommendations, again reflecting the abiding, deep-seated aspirations expressed by the people during the 2015 Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation and successive national consultations.

14. By a decree of 1 August 2022, the members of the monitoring committee were appointed. The Independent Expert calls on the authorities of the Central African Republic to make every effort to bring the recommendations of the republican dialogue to fruition. He notes the risk that the question of revising or rewriting the Constitution of 30 March 2016 will absorb all efforts, to the detriment of the investment needed for the adoption of practical measures to give effect to the conclusions of the dialogue and move towards peace.

## **III. Security situation and peace process**

### **A. Current situation**

15. The security situation remains precarious and volatile despite the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by the President of the Republic on 15 October 2021, one month after the adoption of the joint road map intended to give new impetus to the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which continues to be the frame of reference for political dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> S/2019/145, annex.

16. Since April, there has been a resurgence in attacks by armed groups, which target armed forces positions and commit violations against civilians. The presence of members of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement in Sam Ouandja (Haute-Kotto prefecture), in the north-east of the country, is a source of great concern for the population. According to consistent reports from local authorities and residents of the region, the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement is active on the road leading to the Sudan. In the north-west, in the sub-prefecture of Ngaoundaye, the group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) has targeted armed forces positions and committed atrocities against civilians.

17. Insecurity is an obstacle to the effective exercise of many rights. In the prefecture of Haute-Kotto, particularly in Ouadda, Sam Ouandja and Yalinga, children have been deprived of the right to education for the past four years. Several of these localities have been abandoned by their inhabitants, who have fled to the forest. In places where education is still accessible, the number of students awarded a certificate of lower secondary studies was significantly smaller this year than in the years predating the violence.

18. Efforts to secure certain areas are significantly hampered by the lack of road infrastructure and the severe degradation of existing roads. During the rainy season, most of the roads in the hinterland are completely impassable, especially in the prefectures of Haute-Kotto and Vakaga. Because of this situation, the country's armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces are unable to liberate remote areas dominated by armed groups, conduct disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation operations, or carry out patrols. The local populations are thus subjected to the parallel administration imposed by armed groups, who commit acts of extortion against the inhabitants, help themselves to their herds, confiscate farmers' crops, collect illegal taxes and occupy public infrastructure such as schools and health centres.

19. Most urban areas are secure. However, armed groups entrenched in the forests are still capable of causing harm, as shown by acts of terror committed in rural and peri-urban areas. This situation limits the freedom of movement and activities of these populations and confines them to a small area.

## **B. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process**

20. Improving the security situation and restoring State authority throughout the country depend to a large extent on the progress of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. At a meeting for the strategic review of the political process, held in Bangui on 4 June 2022, the participants examined the status of implementation of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation operations. With support from MINUSCA, the Government has deployed mobile teams to continue disarmament and demobilization operations in the prefectures of Vakaga and Nana-Mambéré under the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.

21. As at 1 June 2022, the total number of combatants disarmed and demobilized through the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme since its launch in December 2018 stood at 3,826, including 219 women.

22. In March 2022, the Independent Expert shared his concern about the slowdown in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and called on the authorities to give fresh impetus to the process. Between 28 March and 20 April 2022, the Government disarmed and demobilized 216 members of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, including 4 women, in the prefecture of Vakaga. Between 19 and 24 April, it disarmed and demobilized 95 combatants, including 5 women, from 5 armed groups in Bossembele and Bouar.

## **C. Training and deployment of security and defence forces**

23. In January 2022, the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic suspended training for the country's armed forces, defence and security forces and

internal security forces. In May, China announced a training project for the armed forces of the Central African Republic.

24. It is imperative that the recruitment process for the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces continue to meet the requirement for human rights background checks and incorporate modules on discipline and human rights. The strengthening of security in areas that have benefited from disarmament requires the deployment of properly trained and equipped defence and security forces to protect the population and prevent the reconstitution or multiplication of armed groups. As at 1 June 2022, 6,860 members of the internal security forces, including 3,562 police officers (884 women) and 3,298 gendarmes (525 women), were deployed across the country; 5,212 remained in Bangui. MINUSCA and the United Nations Development Programme supported the training of 1,892 police officers and gendarmes (534 women) on issues such as community policing, conduct and discipline, and conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. It is important to have disaggregated statistical data on the strength of the national defence forces, including the number of trained and equipped soldiers.

#### **D. Security sector reform**

25. The national security sector reform strategy (2022–2027) aims to address the functional, organizational and structural challenges of the security system and to establish governance for democratic oversight to address shortcomings in terms of training, resources and infrastructure.

26. The High Council for National Security, created in April 2020 to oversee the protection of persons and property and to promote the improvement of security in the country with a view to restoring State authority, held its first meeting on 31 March and 1 April 2022, with support from MINUSCA and the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic. Emphasis was placed on recommendations regarding human resources management reform and improved working and living conditions for military personnel.

27. There are consistent reports that members of the country's armed forces, sometimes in small numbers, have been deployed in a manner incompatible with the security requirements of the deployment site and that clear command directives are lacking. Sometimes, instead of the three to six months initially planned for field deployments, armed forces are deployed for a year or more without being relieved. Salaries and food allowances are not paid on time, which leads to frustration and demotivation among the troops.

28. It is important to set up a real chain of command, to ensure effective control of the forces deployed, to provide them with logistical equipment and to supervise and support them continuously so that they can carry out their mission of protecting the civilian population under suitable conditions. Security Council resolution 2648 (2022) of 29 July 2022 provides a response to the issue of equipping the armed forces and defence and security forces of the Central African Republic.

### **IV. Hate speech and incitement to violence**

29. The proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence and the use of manipulation, misinformation and disinformation<sup>4</sup> in the media and social networks are of great concern to the Independent Expert. These threats and recurrent expressions of rejection are poisoning the relations between the authorities of the Central African Republic, their technical and financial partners, opposition parties and civil society organizations; eroding trust among stakeholders and hindering the reconciliation process and progress towards peace; and posing a dangerous threat to the upcoming local elections.

30. A regional forum on the prevention of conflicts related to hate speech, organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Economic Community of

<sup>4</sup> See [A/HRC/47/25](#).

Central African States, was held in Bangui from 26 to 29 April 2022. The forum focused on mechanisms to prevent the pernicious phenomenon of hate speech.

31. In addition to the relevant international human rights instruments that it has ratified, the country has a national plan for the prevention of incitement to hatred and violence and a High Council for Communication.

32. Anyone who engages in hate speech, incitement to violence, manipulation, misinformation or disinformation hinders the peace process, stability, recovery, reconciliation and security. Those who do so are enemies of peace and are liable to prosecution before national and international courts.

## **V. Humanitarian situation**

### **A. Persistent challenges**

33. Between January and May 2022, 69 incidents affecting humanitarian workers were recorded in the Central African Republic. In May alone, 17 incidents were recorded, including several cases of highway robbery, particularly around Batangafo, where a humanitarian team was temporarily detained. One humanitarian worker was killed in the prefecture of Ouham. In the first five months of 2022, most such incidents took place in the prefectures of Ouham (28 per cent), Ouaka (13 per cent) and Bangui (12 per cent). Theft, robbery, looting, threats and assault account for 75 per cent of the incidents; interference and restrictions account for 25 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

34. In the west and north-west, particularly in the prefectures of Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Mambéré and Mambéré-Kadéï, explosive devices caused several incidents, resulting in deaths and population displacement. Some schools were closed because parents did not want to send their children to school.

### **B. Humanitarian needs**

35. The humanitarian community in the Central African Republic estimates that 2 million people will need assistance by the end of 2022. This means that an amount of \$461.3 million is needed. In 2022, 63 per cent of the population of the Central African Republic, or 3.1 million people, are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. According to a December 2021 report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the number of internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic was 692,000 and the number of refugees was 737,000. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 48/19, the authorities of the Central African Republic should work promptly for the safe, dignified and sustainable voluntary return of displaced persons and refugees. This will enable such persons to participate in the forthcoming local elections. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian actors facilitated the voluntary return of 3,186 people between January and July 2022.

## **VI. Compliance with international and regional commitments to the promotion and protection of human rights**

### **A. Positive developments**

36. On 15 April 2022, the Central African Republic adopted a national action plan to combat trafficking in children, specifically targeted at preventing the use and recruitment of children in conflict.

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<sup>5</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, archives, situation report of 9 June 2022.

37. A law abolishing the death penalty was adopted by the parliament on 27 May 2022 and promulgated by the President of the Republic on 27 June 2022.

38. Decree No. 21.308 of 25 November 2021 provides for the establishment of a strategic committee as part of the effort to combat conflict-related gender-based violence in the Central African Republic. This committee developed a multi-year action plan for 2022–2023, which it presented in June 2022.

39. The Prime Minister issued Order No. 033/PM.21 of 22 December 2021, amending and supplementing the provisions of Order No. 013 of 26 April 2003 on the establishment, organization and operation of the national committee for reporting and follow-up of recommendations under international human rights instruments. From 18 to 23 June 2022, the Ministry of Justice, supported by the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA, organized two capacity-building and orientation sessions for members of that committee on reporting to the African treaty bodies and to United Nations human rights monitoring mechanisms. A process of reflection was launched on the establishment of the national mechanism for the prevention of torture, following the country's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

40. On 17 March 2022, the Central African Republic submitted a request for inclusion on the list of States taking part in the 2023 voluntary national review in the framework of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Independent Expert calls on the Government to seize this opportunity to address the challenges related to vocational training (Sustainable Development Goal 4), women's empowerment and participation in decision-making (Goal 5) and security and justice sector reform (Goal 16).

41. A national policy on human rights and fundamental freedoms is being developed. Technical and financial partners should gear their support towards the achievement of the strategic objectives identified.

## **B. Less positive aspects**

42. Following the Human Rights Committee's consideration of its third periodic report on 4 and 5 March 2020, the Central African Republic failed to comply with the treaty body's request that it provide information on the implementation of certain recommendations by 20 March 2022.<sup>6</sup>

43. In 2018, in its concluding observations on the initial report of the Central African Republic, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights requested a follow-up report focusing on the measures taken by the Central African Republic to address the humanitarian challenges it faces. This follow-up report, which was due in September 2019, has not yet been submitted.<sup>7</sup>

44. The Central African Republic was reviewed on 9 November 2018 during the third cycle of the universal periodic review, but it did not submit an interim report and did not adopt a national plan for the implementation of recommendations.

45. The laws adopted in 2020<sup>8</sup> have not been duly implemented. However, the initiatives and sectoral plans developed around the law establishing the Child Protection Code are to be commended.

<sup>6</sup> CCPR/C/CAF/CO/3, para. 40.

<sup>7</sup> E/C.12/CAF/CO/1, para. 47. See also para. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Act No. 20.016 of 15 June 2020 on the Child Protection Code; Act No. 20.012 of 11 June 2020 establishing the pension scheme for former Presidents of the Republic; Act No. 20.009 of 7 April 2020 on the establishment, organization and operation of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission; and Act No. 20.008 of 7 April 2020 on the organization and operation of local government authorities.

## VII. Human rights situation

### A. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law

46. The Independent Expert was informed that, as of the last quarter of 2021, the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA had documented 363 incidents (many of them extremely serious) of human rights violations, abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law and had recorded 848 victims. Of these incidents, 59 per cent were attributed to armed groups that were signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and 40 per cent were attributed to national security forces and their allies, a sharp increase from the 23 per cent recorded in January 2021.

47. From 6 to 13 December 2021, approximately 240 assailants, identified as anti-balaka elements recruited, equipped and trained in Bambari by members of the country's armed forces and their Russian allies, from whom they reportedly received orders, attacked the village of Boyo with knives and firearms. Under the leadership of "General Edmond" and five other anti-balaka leaders, all former area chiefs in the prefecture of Ouaka, they targeted the Muslim community, which they believed to be colluding with the armed group *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique*, and executed 19 male Muslim civilians, some of whom were beheaded. The attackers displayed the heads and genitals of their victims as trophies. They also killed a 12-year-old girl, buried wounded people alive, held people for ransom in a mosque, seized motorcycles, looted, threatened residents at gunpoint, set up a manhunt extending as far as Komayé (12 km from Boyo), raped at least five women and girls, and destroyed and burned down 547 houses. On 10 December 2021, four assailants opened fire on a MINUSCA patrol in Tagbara. On 15 February 2022, the attackers protested in front of the base of the armed forces and their Russian allies in Bambari to demand fulfilment of the promises made to them at the time of the Boyo attack.

48. In January 2022, in the village of Aigbando, prefecture of Haute-Kotto, members of the armed forces and Russian allies participating in an anti-rebel offensive reportedly opened fire on civilians indiscriminately and committed extrajudicial killings, resulting in at least 17 deaths. A young girl was raped and houses and stores were looted and destroyed. At least 750 people have fled the area. Following this incident, Russian allies prevented MINUSCA from accessing the area, thereby impeding an urgent human rights investigation. Such obstruction of the protection work of MINUSCA human rights officers and other international and national actors is unacceptable and must cease immediately.

49. On 9 May, members of the armed forces supported by anti-balaka elements attacked the village of Bokolobo in the prefecture of Ouaka in retaliation for an attack by the *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique*. The MINUSCA Human Rights Division documented the killing of 9 Fulani civilians and the arbitrary arrest and detention of 15 civilians. The Government has not investigated these incidents.

50. On 17 June, members of the *Coalition des patriotes pour le changement* attacked Ouanda Djallé in the prefecture of Vakaga, near the border with the Sudan, and occupied it for ten days. They were driven out by an operation conducted by the country's armed forces and MINUSCA peacekeepers.

51. On 3 July, the *Coalition des patriotes pour le changement*, including elements of the *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique*, attacked Dimbi in the prefecture of Basse-Kotto. The *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* targeted armed forces positions. This attack was repelled and the rebels routed.

52. Over the first half of 2022, the MINUSCA Human Rights Division documented 451 incidents (involving 1,462 victims) of human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, many of which were of an extremely serious nature. These figures represent a decrease in the number of incidents and the number of victims compared with the second half of 2021, when the Division documented 761 incidents involving 1,746 victims. In the first half of 2021, just after the elections, MINUSCA had recorded 593 incidents involving 1,109 victims. Nearly half (47.68 per cent) of the incidents were attributed to State agents and allied security personnel.



53. Armed groups that are signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic were responsible for 44.49 per cent of the incidents and 48.9 per cent of the victims recorded in the first half of 2022, including 51 confirmed incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involving 83 victims. Many such abuses and human rights violations were committed in the prefectures of Haute-Kotto and Vakaga, owing to the renewed activity of the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique and the military operations conducted by State agents and their allies to counter it. In the first half of 2022, the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique was responsible for 35.81 per cent of the total number of victims of armed groups.

54. The armed forces of the Central African Republic and their allies, jointly or alone, were responsible for 76.21 per cent of the incidents and 76.15 per cent of the victims of State agents.

55. Several concordant testimonies received by the Independent Expert refer to abuses committed by the Russian allies against the civilian population, including sexual violence, acts of intimidation, destruction of homes, threats, extortion, acts of torture or cruel, humiliating, inhuman and degrading treatment. Some of these abuses were committed against State officials in several localities in the hinterland (Aigbando, Bambari, Beloko, Bossangoa, Boyo, Bria and Mouka).

## **B. Conflict-related sexual violence, violations and abuse**

56. Conflict-related sexual violence remains a major concern for the Independent Expert. Between 17 February and 15 June 2022, MINUSCA recorded allegations of 59 incidents, primarily rape, against 76 survivors (52 women, 23 girls and 1 unidentified person); 35 of these incidents, involving 48 victims, have been verified. Insecurity and inaccessibility hindered the investigation of all of these incidents and led to delays in reporting, as 88.57 per cent of the incidents occurred prior to the reporting period. Of these incidents, 31 were attributed to members of armed groups, 3 to elements of the national defence and internal security forces and 1 to other security personnel.

57. In 2021 and the first half of 2022, the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children referred numerous cases of conflict-related sexual violence to the public prosecutor. However, several challenges stand in the way of their judicial processing. The June 2022 criminal session of the Bangui Court of Appeal was unable to deal with cases of conflict-related sexual violence. The joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children has only one branch office, located in Bouar, although it was supposed to have another branch at the Bambari Court of Appeal. Some cases are settled out of court, sometimes simply by criminal investigation officers, even though this is prohibited by law. The many cases pending before the court and the lack of investigating judges have resulted in a large backlog of cases and a small percentage of enforced decisions, and are thus hindering the fight against impunity. As the joint rapid response unit operates under several ministries, issues of capacity-building and institutional coordination further complicate the situation.

58. The joint rapid response unit conducted a fact-finding mission in the sub-prefecture of Bakouma on conflict-related sexual violence committed by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique. It interviewed victims and witnesses and prepared reports in collaboration with the gendarmerie of Bakouma.

59. During the reporting period, national authorities opened an investigation into allegations of widespread conflict-related sexual violence in the sub-prefecture of Bakouma and the prefecture of Mbomou during the occupation by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique from December 2020 to March 2021.

60. In June 2022, MINUSCA issued a report on conflict-related sexual violence committed by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique, two armed groups linked to the Coalition des patriotes pour le

changement, in the towns of Bakouma and Bangassou and in the prefecture of Haute-Kotto.<sup>9</sup> According to the report, the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, under the command of General Mahamat Salleh, who was personally involved in documented sexual violence, and the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique, under the command of General Abdoulaye Machaï and Colonel Walchaï, were guilty of rape, sexual enslavement and attempted rape, primarily of girls between the ages of 11 and 17.

61. In September 2021, following allegations that five girls had been sexually abused by members of the Gabonese contingent of MINUSCA, the United Nations Secretary-General decided, on the basis of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) of 11 March 2016, to repatriate the entire Gabonese contingent. On 7 September 2021, he informed the Gabonese authorities of the need to appoint a national investigator within five working days and to complete the investigation within 90 days. In March 2022, at the forty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, the Independent Expert called on Gabon to provide appropriate responses to ensure the victims' access to justice. A reply from the Gabonese authorities is still pending.

62. The Independent Expert was informed that MINUSCA had recorded 76 cases of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse by its members between July 2021 and June 2022. Steps have been taken to hold these persons accountable in accordance with the zero-tolerance policy.

### C. Human rights and business

63. In August 2021, a non-governmental organization published a report describing the actions of the Castel Group, a French multinational sugar and beverage company, in financing armed groups in the Central African Republic.<sup>10</sup> Sucrerie africaine de Centrafrique, a subsidiary of the Castel Group, reportedly has a tacit security agreement with the armed group Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique. Under this arrangement, the armed group provides security for the factory and sugar cane fields, protects the free movement of carriers on key roads and helps ensure the company's monopoly on sugar distribution in several prefectures controlled by rebel groups. On its side, Sucrerie africaine de Centrafrique has reportedly funded the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique through direct and indirect cash payments and provided in-kind support in the form of vehicle repairs and fuel supplies.

64. All companies, national and international, are expected to operate in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the "Protect, Respect and Remedy" framework. In the context of conflict, companies' heightened due diligence obligation takes on an enhanced dimension.<sup>11</sup> This obligation is also incumbent on the State in which the companies operate and the home States of these companies.

### D. Ending impunity and achieving national reconciliation

#### 1. National courts

65. In May 2022, two years into its implementation, the justice sector policy was reviewed. From 29 April to 21 June 2022, the Bangui Court of Appeal held its first annual criminal session and tried several cases. The Bouar Court of Appeal, during its criminal session, found Illassa Ousman, a farmer linked to the armed group 3R, guilty of criminal

<sup>9</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Rapport sur les violences sexuelles liées aux conflits commises par le FPRC et l'UPC dans les Préfectures du Mbomou et de la Haute-Kotto – Décembre 2020 – mars 2022" (Report on conflict-related sexual violence committed by FPRC and UPC in the prefectures of Mbomou and Haute-Kotto, December 2020–March 2022).

<sup>10</sup> The Sentry, "Cultivating atrocities: French sugar and beverage giant Castel Group linked to the funding of brutal militias in Central African Republic", August 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Doing business in conflict areas: UN report details actions to avoid fuelling human rights abuse and stoking violence", press release, 27 October 2020. See also [A/75/212](#).

association in Bouar. In detention since 2021, he was sentenced on 22 June 2022 to 10 years of hard labour.

66. With the support of MINUSCA, the courts in the hinterland are receiving various types of support, including the rehabilitation of premises and the provision of computer and office equipment. However, there have been delays in the scheduling of criminal hearings, inter alia in the town of Bria. On 27 April 2022, the national authorities reported that an investigation into the events in Boyo had been opened by the prosecutor's office of the Bambari *tribunal de grande instance* (court of major jurisdiction). Judicial follow-up is under way on the report of the special investigation commission established by the authorities of the Central African Republic in May 2021 to investigate allegations of human rights violations uncovered in 2021 by the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA.

67. On 26 July 2021, the military court held hearings in Bangui under the Code of Military Justice and the Penal Code to address cases of human rights violations allegedly committed by members of the country's armed forces and defence and security forces. The court martial also held a session in August 2021. The Independent Expert calls on the international community to support the country's military courts to strengthen the fight against impunity.

## 2. Special Criminal Court

68. The investigating judge has opened about a dozen cases. On 19 April 2022, the Special Criminal Court began its first trial in the case of Issa Sallet Adoum, Ousman Yaouba and Tahir Mahamat, members of the rebel group 3R; they are being tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity for acts committed in Limouna and Koundjouli in May 2019.

69. On 19 November 2021, Hassan Bouba Ali, a former member of the armed group *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* and current Minister of Livestock and Animal Health, was arrested on the basis of a warrant issued by the Special Criminal Court. His appearance before the Court was scheduled for 26 November 2021. However, the Special Criminal Court unit responsible for escorting him was denied access to Mr. Bouba Ali's place of detention. Gendarmes took him back to his home, thus hindering the normal course of the proceedings. Mr. Bouba Ali must be handed over to the Court without delay.

70. Among the challenges faced by the Special Criminal Court is the fact that it does not have an enforcement unit to execute its arrest warrants. The support of State authorities and MINUSCA is therefore essential. Several investigations have not been completed because of an inability to access essential documents classified as confidential by the United Nations. Moreover, investigations cannot be conducted in areas under the control of armed groups.

## 3. International Criminal Court

71. On 14 March 2022, Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, former leader of the anti-balaka armed group and former Minister for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, was transferred to the International Criminal Court thanks in part to the cooperation of Chad. Mr. Mokom is being tried for crimes he allegedly committed in the Central African Republic between 2013 and 2014.

72. On 28 July 2022, the International Criminal Court published the arrest warrant for Mr. Nouredine Adam that had been issued under seal on 7 January 2019. His name was on the list of the relevant United Nations Security Council sanctions committee. This former Minister, founder of the armed group *Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix*, is suspected of crimes against humanity and war crimes (torture and cruel treatment) allegedly committed in Bangui, at least between 12 April and 27 November 2013.

73. The effectiveness of efforts to combat impunity also depends on subregional cooperation, particularly in executing arrest warrants issued by the Special Criminal Court and the International Criminal Court.

## 4. Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission

74. On 2 July 2021, the 11 commissioners, 5 of whom are women, of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission appointed by decree on 31 December 2020 were

sworn in at the Bangui Court of Appeal. The strong presence of women in the Commission, which is chaired by a woman, Marie Edith Douzima-Lawson, is to be welcomed.

75. With technical and financial support from MINUSCA and other partners, the Commission held two retreats in July and September 2021, during which it drafted its rules of procedure, communication strategy, investigation strategy and other documents necessary for the implementation of its mandate. The commissioners were supported by experts and commissioners from the Gambia, Libya, Mali, Peru, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. In September 2021, they conducted a study visit to South Africa to learn from the South African experience with the truth and reconciliation process.

76. The Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission has undertaken information, outreach and mobilization activities in all 20 prefectures of the country. On 20 and 21 June 2022, with support from the African Union, the Commission organized a capacity-building session for its members on the Union's transitional justice instruments.

77. As decided by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 48/19 of 11 October 2021, the high-level interactive dialogue on the Central African Republic held by the Council on 30 March 2022 during its forty-ninth session provided an opportunity to assess developments in the situation of human rights on the ground, placing special emphasis on the reconciliation process and the implementation of guarantees of non-repetition, including through the effective fulfilment of the mandate of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>12</sup> The Independent Expert stressed that the implementation of the Commission's mandate entailed respect for that mechanism's independence, the allocation of appropriate resources, including a dedicated headquarters, and the provision of the necessary logistics for its deployment throughout the national territory. He also emphasized the importance of taking the psychological dimension of the Commission's mandate into account. On 24 July 2022, the Commission moved into its temporary headquarters.

## 5. Reform of the justice sector

### (a) *Justice system*

78. The implementation of the justice sector policy adopted by the Government in 2019 for the period 2020–2024, which was designed as a strategy for reforming and strengthening the judicial system, has not progressed as planned. This is due largely to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to a lack of political will on the part of the Government to adopt the necessary measures to start the work of the steering committee. Nevertheless, modest progress has been made, with the first meeting of the steering committee, chaired by the Minister of Justice, on 16 May 2022, and the resumption of the work of the thematic groups involved in the justice sector policy.

79. By June 2022, 23 of the country's 30 courts were operational, and 73 per cent of court personnel were present in their positions. However, there is a significant gap between Bangui, where 96 per cent of personnel are present, and the regions, where the figure drops to 56 per cent. This low staff presence outside the capital is due in part to insecurity in some areas and the lack of oversight and accountability mechanisms for staff who are unjustifiably absent.

### (b) *Prison administration*

80. Overcrowding in detention facilities is a concern, particularly in Ngaragba prison, where the occupancy rate was over 230 per cent in February 2022 owing to unusually long periods of pretrial detention, the destruction or dilapidated state of prisons in the hinterland, which means that prisoners must be transferred from the hinterland to Bangui, and the considerable delay in preliminary investigations and social investigations. The limited use of non-custodial measures and the lack of rehabilitation programmes have worsened prison overcrowding and recidivism. Conditions of detention are poor.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 48/19, para. 38.

81. Overall, the women's prison in Bimbo is satisfactory in institutional and operational terms. However, a societal, legal, judicial and practical solution must be found urgently for women who are imprisoned on charges of witchcraft and are, in some cases, held for years.

82. The 2012 law establishing the fundamental principles of the prison system, its implementing decrees and the 2019 national strategy for the demilitarization of prisons provide for mechanisms and actions that can effectively address the challenges of prison administration. Although progress has been made through this normative and strategic framework, efforts are needed to ensure the safety of places of deprivation of liberty by providing them with trained and disciplined prison guards, humanizing conditions of detention, regularly inspecting places of deprivation of liberty, professionalizing the prison administration, ensuring the legal security of prisoners and reintegrating prisoners into society.

### **E. Follow-up of the State's commitments in the fight against impunity**

83. After his re-election, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra announced, in his inaugural address on 30 March 2021, that ending impunity was a government priority. Many of the recommendations that came out of the March 2022 republican dialogue confirm the public's expectations with regard to ending impunity. Political will in this area should be translated into effective action. The State has a duty to address allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by systematically conducting impartial investigations with the assistance of relevant national institutions and, where appropriate, with the support of the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA, including when the alleged perpetrators are State agents, whether military or civilian, high-ranking or not, or members of bilateral forces.

84. Many incidents have not been investigated by the State. Even when investigations are conducted, the process does not always ensure that victims have access to justice. The findings of the special investigation commission's inquiries into alleged abuses committed by the armed forces and their Russian allies have not been followed up in a timely manner to ensure accountability. The responsibility for addressing the violations committed by the Russian allies falls to the authorities of the Central African Republic, who must take the necessary measures.

85. The relevant Security Council sanctions committee has drawn up a list of individuals and entities alleged to have violated human rights and international humanitarian law in the Central African Republic. The list includes the names of several leaders of armed groups that sow insecurity and terror and inflict unnecessary suffering on the civilian population. Sanctions enforcement measures should be taken in cooperation with the Security Council's Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic, the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, and possibly the International Criminal Court.

## **VIII. Technical assistance and capacity-building**

### **A. General education, technical and agricultural education and vocational training**

86. The Independent Expert's recommendation that general education, technical and agricultural education and vocational training be prioritized on the Government's agenda was well received by the authorities and youth organizations. Education and training are a powerful lever for restoring State authority throughout the country and correcting existing disparities. The aim is to mobilize efforts for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The prioritization of this sector must promote the reorganization of the education system, which has suffered from the conflict, and encourage the participation of youth in decision-making processes and their contribution to civic space and the electoral

process.<sup>13</sup> Young people must be given renewed hope, full advantage must be taken of their potential for innovation and entrepreneurship, and children and youth must be offered opportunities for socioeconomic reintegration, as a means of combating unemployment. In this manner the State can provide a social, political and economic response to the current crisis.

87. Young people account for some 75 per cent of the population. The Central African Republic has strategic tools such as the second-generation national youth development policy, the national youth development strategic plan for 2021–2025 and the youth development operational plan for 2021–2022. These instruments reflect an assessment of the situation, including the problems of youth inactivity and unemployment, and identify strategic approaches and programmes for fully tapping the productive potential of young people. The Independent Expert calls on the authorities and on technical and financial partners to mobilize and coordinate efforts to achieve the strategic objectives.

## **B. Strengthening of national institutions**

88. Several national institutions have a mandate to promote social cohesion, human rights, the rule of law, good economic, financial and social governance, and the fight against impunity. These institutions are the guarantors of democracy; they are provided for by the Constitution or created by laws, decrees or orders. Examples include the National Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Commission, the High Authority for Good Governance, the High Council for Communication, the National Mediation Council and the National Committee for the Prevention of Genocide. Their mission is to contribute to the country's institutional recovery. They are expected to gradually take over from the various MINUSCA sections that carry out duties normally performed by State services, such as monitoring places of deprivation of liberty or building the capacity of certain State services. Their ability to fully perform the functions assigned to them is an objective indicator for assessing the status of democracy-building in the country.

89. It appears from the testimonies collected that the population is insufficiently familiar with these institutions in terms of their powers and fields of competence and the procedures for submitting matters to their attention. Few of them operate outside Bangui. Cooperation between these institutions and others such as the National Assembly and the ministries is still weak, yet their input, advice and technical and legal opinions could help the State to take more well-rounded decisions. Finally, the resources allocated to these institutions are often modest and not provided in a timely manner; this prevents them from following their intervention strategy.

## **IX. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **A. Conclusions**

90. **The solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic lies in a political approach based on a genuine and inclusive political dialogue that creates an environment conducive to peace and reconciliation. The military approach is limited and must be complemented by reforms in the areas of justice, security and citizen participation in decision-making processes.**

91. **The continued hostilities by armed groups are a serious threat to security and peace. They create an environment of terror conducive to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The Independent Expert strongly condemns the actions of the armed groups and calls on them to respect the ceasefire, to join the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme and the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission process, and to implement**

<sup>13</sup> Security Council resolution 2605 (2021) of 12 November 2021, paras. 7 and 9.

the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Luanda joint road map.

92. Ending impunity and ensuring victims' access to justice remain deep-seated aspirations of the population and are essential for avoiding the repetition of violence and tragedy.

93. The armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic are also responsible for multiple violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Military justice should be deployed to try members of the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces who are alleged to have violated human rights and international humanitarian law.

94. The allied Russian forces cannot operate outside the law and legality. They must refrain from obstructing the work of MINUSCA, including with the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic; respect human rights and international humanitarian law; avoid degrading and humiliating acts against the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic, which are vested with public authority; and refrain from using auxiliary forces to commit human rights violations.

95. The local elections scheduled for 2023 provide an opportunity to apply the law on decentralization<sup>14</sup> to ensure effective local governance throughout the country. A security plan and an agreed timetable should be established for the elections and should provide for a review of the electoral roll and the return of displaced persons to their places of residence so that they can take part in the exercise of democracy.

96. All State and non-State actors must refrain from hate speech, incitement to violence and the use of manipulation, misinformation and disinformation on the Internet, social networks and traditional media.

97. Young people in the Central African Republic, who have endured years of conflict, require general education, technical and agricultural education and vocational training in order to recover and develop their full potential. These sectors must urgently be prioritized on the Government's agenda.

98. It is important that the Special Criminal Court, the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, the International Criminal Court and national courts step up their institutional and operational cooperation. The Independent Expert calls on international partners to strengthen their technical and financial support for these judicial and non-judicial bodies in the fight against impunity.

99. Certain technical and financial partners' non-payment of budgetary support in 2021 and 2022 has limited the State's action, including the discharge of its sovereign and social duties. Sanctions, however justified they may be, should not affect social sectors, development projects or humanitarian projects.

## **B. Recommendations**

100. The Independent Expert recommends that the Government take the following specific measures:

(a) Mobilize the necessary efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the Luanda joint road map and the 217 recommendations of the republican dialogue, and coordinate such efforts at the central level to enhance their effectiveness, visibility and predictability;

(b) Accelerate the process of securing local elections and making technical and logistical preparations for them, with support from technical and financial partners;

<sup>14</sup> Central African Republic, Act No. 20.008 of 7 April 2020 on the organization and operation of local government authorities.

(c) Provide the High Council for Communication and other relevant national institutions with the financial, legal and technological means to monitor information and messages in the media and on social networks and to combat hate speech and incitement to violence;

(d) Mobilize the necessary resources to support general education, technical and agricultural education and vocational training, and address the challenges that prevent young people from developing their potential through vocational training or entrepreneurship;

(e) Reduce prison overcrowding by training and equipping the criminal investigation police and social services to conduct preliminary investigations and social investigations, respectively; setting up rehabilitation programmes; and giving priority to non-custodial measures, including for children who are in conflict with the law or deprived of liberty, who should be treated more in accordance with a restorative criminal justice approach;

(f) Take specific measures to give effect to the Child Protection Code provisions on the prohibition and punishment of the recruitment and use of children in hostilities, the prohibition of forced and early marriage and the fight against trafficking in persons, especially women and children;

(g) Ensure that the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission can function independently and provide it with the resources needed for its operations in the hinterland, and ensure that no amnesty is granted to perpetrators of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;

(h) Ensure effective coordination among United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations to prevent insecurity among internally displaced persons and refugees who have returned to the country or to their places of origin, in order to provide long-term services to refugees under a programme that clearly specifies the time frame for the handover of support between United Nations agencies and the Government;

(i) See to it that institutional and operational relationships are established between national courts, the Special Criminal Court and the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission to ensure the necessary collaboration between judicial and non-judicial bodies in combating impunity;

(j) Ensure that the Russian allies do not impede the collaboration and joint operations of the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic with MINUSCA, do not hinder the investigation of alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, designate their own focal points to maintain dialogue on measures to protect human rights and prevent violations, and are duly prosecuted by the authorities of the Central African Republic, as a principal party to the bilateral agreement between the allies and the State, when they are alleged to have violated human rights and international humanitarian law;

(k) Continue the reform of the security and justice sectors by strengthening the training, discipline, equipment and command of the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic and the deployment of judges, prosecutors and other actors needed to protect civilians, as well as the provision of local services and access to justice for victims of human rights violations;

(l) Take prompt and appropriate action to address the delay in the payment of salaries and food allowances to members of the armed forces and defence and security forces deployed in the field;

(m) Undertake a thorough reform of the system of administration of justice to provide practical responses to issues concerning the independence of judges and lawyers, executive branch interference in the judiciary and corruption, and to ensure the oversight and accountability of judicial and prison system personnel;



(n) **Hold hearings in military courts and in the court martial, in accordance with the Code of Military Justice, to try military personnel for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;**

(o) **Establish or operationalize oversight and accountability mechanisms in the judicial system, the army, the police, the gendarmerie and public services in general, ensure periodic monitoring, in particular by the National Assembly during question-and-answer sessions with the Government and the heads of the institutions concerned, and ensure that the population is duly informed of the existence of such controls, their results and the corrective measures taken;**

(p) **Finalize the national policy on human rights and fundamental freedoms without delay;**

(q) **Draw up a national plan for the reconstruction, rehabilitation and equipping of road, school, hospital, judicial and prison infrastructure.**

101. **The Independent Expert recommends that the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement and other armed groups take the following measures:**

(a) **Implement the ceasefire without delay and, for those armed groups that have withdrawn from the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, rejoin it as a framework for political exchange and consensus, cooperate in the implementation of the joint road map, and fully engage in the reconciliation process led by the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission;**

(b) **Immediately cease hostilities and attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian organizations and end violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;**

(c) **Refrain from disrupting the organization of the forthcoming local elections;**

(d) **Participate, without restriction, in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, as provided for in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and honour their commitments regarding the discharge, demobilization and reintegration of children serving in their ranks;**

(e) **Cease the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the areas that they still occupy and stop setting up roadblocks and collecting taxes.**

102. **The Independent Expert recommends that MINUSCA take the following measures:**

(a) **Draw up a three-year plan to strengthen the capacities of national institutions, with measures to monitor and evaluate its implementation in order to better assess the capacity of these institutions to serve as a source of proposals and advice and to support and sustain government action;**

(b) **Continue and intensify capacity-building for civil society organizations and plans for monitoring their implementation of the knowledge gained, including through the documentation of human rights violations, contributions to African and United Nations mechanisms that monitor respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the Central African Republic, and participation in the peace and reconciliation process and electoral processes;**

(c) **Strengthen the application of its zero-tolerance policy to prevent sexual violence, ensure that prompt sanctions, including preventive measures, are imposed on individuals or contingents that have violated the rules, and ensure that victims have effective access to justice;**

(d) **Strengthen collaboration with the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic, including through regular joint operations to secure areas that have been retaken from armed groups or**

where disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation operations have been carried out, and establish an early warning and response mechanism to avoid late interventions limited to noting violations that have already occurred;

(e) Strengthen coordination among the different components of MINUSCA to maximize the benefits for the population;

(f) Cooperate in executing arrest warrants issued by the Special Criminal Court.

103. The Independent Expert recommends that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa take the following measure:

(a) Develop, in partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States and the Peacebuilding Commission, a subregional strategy to promote judicial cooperation, particularly for the execution of arrest warrants issued by the Special Criminal Court and the International Criminal Court, address cross-border issues such as the proliferation of light weapons, seasonal pastoral migration and the voluntary, safe and sustainable return of refugees, and support the effective operation of the joint commissions established between the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries.

104. The Independent Expert recommends that the international community take the following measures:

(a) Provide the political, technical and financial support needed to implement the recommendations of the republican dialogue, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the joint road map;

(b) Continue and intensify long-term technical and financial support for general education, technical and agricultural education and vocational training to help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 and implement the relevant strategic and operational plans developed by the authorities of the Central African Republic;

(c) Support the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission in ensuring that the various forms of reparation are made, including the establishment of a rehabilitation and reparation fund for victims;

(d) Increase financial support for operations carried out by humanitarian organizations, including those aimed at combating the threat of food insecurity faced by the population, especially children, and responding to other humanitarian challenges;

(e) Continue to support the reform of the security and justice sectors by supporting the training, deployment and equipping of the armed forces, defence and security forces and internal security forces of the Central African Republic and the strategic organization needed for effective operational command;

(f) Increase support for the implementation of the transitional justice strategy, including by strengthening technical and financial assistance for the effective operation of the special joint security units, the prefectural implementation committees and the Executive Monitoring Committee, the financing of socio-vocational reintegration programmes and the effective functioning of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission;

(g) Continue to support the Special Criminal Court, including by establishing a victims' compensation fund, allowing access to classified documents and executing arrest warrants issued by the Court;

(h) Support national courts, particularly the courts of appeal in Bangui, Bouar and Bambari, in organizing extraordinary criminal sessions for the processing of cases involving conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, to address the victims' frustration at the slow pace of justice;

(i) **Safeguard the democratic space by promoting the training of civil society organizations, including those for journalists, women and young people, and ensuring their participation in the peace process, the elections and the country's recovery;**

(j) **Draw up a three-year technical support and capacity-building programme, together with a follow-up plan, for State institutions whose remits include combating impunity and corruption, promoting the rule of law and good democratic, economic and social governance, and protecting and monitoring human rights;**

(k) **Where necessary, continue to implement measures to prevent, report and punish acts of sexual exploitation and sexual violence committed by international forces, in accordance with the zero-tolerance policy;**

(l) **Continue efforts to support operations to remove children from armed groups, including by funding social and economic reintegration programmes;**

(m) **Provide all the technical, logistical and financial assistance necessary for the organization of the upcoming local elections and support the authorities of the Central African Republic in establishing appropriate mechanisms for consolidating local governance as a political solution to the crisis in the country.**

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