

President Touadera (*spoke in French*): This meeting of the Security Council is taking place at an opportune moment, in that it is focused on the question of peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians. I believe it affords us an opportunity to discuss the case of my country — the Central African Republic — which hosts an international peacekeeping operation on its territory that has ensured the protection of civilians for some time now.

With the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the European Union-led peacekeeping force in the Central African Republic, the European Union Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic and Operation Sangaris, the Transitional Government was able quickly to put an end to mass atrocities. The security environment was also conducive to the success of popular consultations, the Bangui Forum, the referendum and the parliamentary and presidential elections. I would especially like to thank MINUSCA and the entire United Nations system for its efforts to protect civilians throughout our territory — from Paoua to Obo and from Berbérati to Birao. The effects of those efforts are particularly evident in the return of displaced persons and refugees populations, which has accelerated in recent months, for example in Bangui, Berbérati and Kaga Bandoro.

In spite of that strategic success, the task remains enormous, while the capabilities of MINUSCA, combined with those of the security forces of the Central African Republic, are unfortunately to date insufficient to put an end to the violence affecting our citizens. The continued presence of armed groups — whether anti-Balaka or ex-Séléka — as well as that of the Lord's Resistance Army, poses a daily challenge to the security of civilians. Added to that are the ongoing inter-communal tensions, including with regard to herding migration, which are being fuelled by the presence of those groups.

The grass-roots consultations as well as the Bangui Forum accorded significant attention to the issue of victims, who were able to share their views and their expectations. Displaced populations and ethnic and religious minorities are at particular risk of violence, while women and children all too often suffer from gender-based violence and are victims of recruitment by armed groups. The refugees from the Central African Republic want to go back to their country, and they want there to be a return to justice, reconciliation among communities, freedom of movement and peace.

Against a backdrop of heightened vulnerability due to a drop in agricultural production, forced displacement, rampant crime and the still too great number of atrocities being committed by armed groups, we together must do more and better to protect the population throughout the breadth of the country. In the immediate term, and this is the number one priority of my Government, the Central African Republic needs the

unwavering support of the international community, particularly of MINUSCA, to protect populations sustainably. That is why the protection of civilians must remain the priority mandate of MINUSCA and be carried out in support of Government action.

In order to guarantee such protection, particular support from the international community is needed to equip and train our personnel and enable them to fulfil their primary responsibility in respect of protection and security. First and foremost, the Central African Republic must first rebuild its army, gendarmerie and police, in addition to its judicial and correctional system. This will require the establishment of professional, honest, equipped, trained operational structures that are representative of all segments of the population.

Coordination of security operations must be strengthened, and joint operations, particularly with the internal security forces, can enable our forces to benefit immediately from rapid response capacities and contribute directly to the security of the population. These operations will make it possible to apprehend the perpetrators of mass crimes, as well as criminals or even armed groups that continue to violate the rights of citizens. These security operations must be carried out in support of a political process focused on political solutions, disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, and security sector reform in order to contain and gradually reduce the presence and negative action of armed groups.

In order to have a lasting impact, our joint security efforts must, of course, be sustained and extended by continued work towards national reconciliation, justice and the fight against impunity and, more broadly, towards the restoration of State authority and the promotion of human rights throughout the country. These actions aimed at establishing a protective environment must remain a priority in the mandate of MINUSCA, and be undertaken primarily in areas where insecurity persists.

The deployment of administration throughout the national territory is absolutely vital to providing the population with basic social services so as to effectively contribute to national reconciliation and the restoration of State authority, as well as to respond to the marginalization that fuels the country's cycles of crises. The Government is resolved to undertake a major reform of the decentralization policy in order to help the population govern itself better, by asserting its presence throughout the entire country and meeting the basic needs of the citizens of the Central African Republic.

At this point, I wish to express the Government's gratitude to the international community for its support in restoring the authority of the State. This support has enabled the redeployment of 16 prefects, 71 sub-prefects and 174 special delegations, as well as of 425 staff professionals working in social services, 70 per cent of whom work in the

education sector. However, I note that, in the context of restoring the authority of the State and protecting civilian populations in the Central African Republic, strengthening the functional and operational capacities of the police and gendarmerie also remains a priority. In this context, the internal security forces, with the support of the MINUSCA police component, have developed a plan for capacity building and development that deserves to be implemented.

Here, I would like to highlight the Government's efforts to engage all Central Africans on the path of reconciliation and forgiveness, bearing in mind that justice must be served in order to combat impunity and promote human rights. By combining the referral to the International Criminal Court with the establishment of a strengthened specific national mechanism, the Central African Republic has recently blazed a new trail in the fight against impunity. However, it is important for the international community to provide us, as soon as possible, with experts and international judges with real experience in prosecuting the most serious crimes. Furthermore, the imminent establishment of a national human rights commission, in accordance with international standards, will enable my country to take a crucial step in this area.

In addition, the establishment of the Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission recommended at the Bangui Forum will also enable the country to lay the foundations of lasting peace. The consolidation of public finances and reform of the productive sectors will be among the major pursuits of this new presidential term. It will be a major reform of State-owned financial agencies to increase and secure State resources and contain public spending. A relentless battle will be waged against fraud, corruption, embezzlement and extortion.

In the same spirit, the Government will relaunch the productive sectors — agriculture, trade, energy, private foreign investment, public/private partnership — in order to stimulate growth and ensure not only food security but also increased exports and reduction of imports. Social measures to combat unemployment, improve the professionalization of the educational system and enhance access to health care, medication and housing are envisaged.

The various gains made have required the support and assistance of the international community. Such support should continue in a framework of mutual engagement with international partners in the Central African Republic to support its Government and people in implementing the nationally agreed priorities of peace and security, justice and reconciliation, the restoration of State authority, and social and economic development. Our hope is that the framework of mutual engagement focuses on the immediate challenges.

Priorities for recovery and long-term development will be taken into account in a framework in the style of the New Deal, of which the Central African Republic is a pilot country. The Government will undertake an assessment of recovery and peacebuilding with the joint support of the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank. The assessment will make it possible to formulate a priority national action plan for recovery and peacebuilding at the donor meeting to be organized by the European Union in Brussels in November.

These are the topics that I wanted to present to the Security Council. I express the hope that the international community will provide its support for the actions included in the Central African Republic's agenda for recovery.