



Security Council

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Letter dated 26 July 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In paragraph 10 of its resolution [2454 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council requested the Secretariat to assess the progress achieved on the key benchmarks it established on arms embargo measures in the Central African Republic. Those benchmarks were detailed in presidential statement [S/PRST/2019/3](#), wherein the Security Council noted that they could serve as a basis to assess the contribution and relevance of the arms embargo to support the relevant aspects of the security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process and the management of weapons and ammunition. The Security Council further noted that those benchmarks could also promote greater understanding among the Central African Republic authorities of the arms embargo, in particular its exemption provisions, and contribute to closer collaboration between Central African Republic authorities and the Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#). In the same presidential statement, the Security Council also expressed its readiness to review the arms embargo measures on the Government of the Central African Republic, through, inter alia, suspension or progressive lifting of these measures, in the light of progress achieved on the benchmarks.

The present letter, submitted pursuant to resolution [2454 \(2019\)](#), reflects the consultations of the Secretariat with the Central African Republic authorities, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Mine Action Service, the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Bangui-based diplomatic community and civil society in the Central African Republic.

Context

Since my letter dated 31 July 2018 to the President of the Security Council ([S/2018/752](#)), the Government of the Central African Republic and other national actors have continued to call for the lifting of the arms embargo, which they consider essential for arming the Central African Armed Forces, which have been progressively deploying throughout the country. In November, the President of the National Assembly sent a letter to the Council and the Committee requesting that the arms embargo be lifted. On 14 December, a similar declaration, signed by the presidents of several national institutions of the Central African Republic, was submitted to MINUSCA for onward transmission to the Council and the Committee.



Those requests argued that the national context had changed since the embargo was first established and that the Government had made progress in the dialogue with armed groups and in security sector reform. They emphasized the importance of arming armed forces so that they could protect civilians. Central African Republic authorities, some members of the diplomatic community, and the civil organizations that met with the assessment team echoed those points.¹

During this period, the political situation in the Central African Republic was also marked by a major milestone in the context of the peace process. On 6 February 2019, the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (see [S/2019/145](#)) was signed in Bangui by the Government and 14 armed groups. The Agreement provides the unique momentum necessary for an inclusive peace process and framework aimed at supporting the ongoing efforts of the Central African Republic authorities to bring the country back to the path of sustainable stability and recovery and to create the conditions for the progressive redeployment of State authority throughout the territory in order to facilitate the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, security sector reform, including through the redeployment of defence and internal security forces (such as the armed forces, the police, the gendarmeries, water and forests, corrections and customs) and the fight against impunity.

The Central African Republic authorities have demonstrated their commitment to implementing the key provisions of the Political Agreement. This includes the formation of an inclusive Government, the operationalization of the Political Agreement's follow-up and security mechanisms at the national and local levels and the establishment of an inclusive commission comprising the signatory parties, which is tasked with reviewing conflict-related issues of justice and submitting its recommendations to the future Commission on Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation. The Central African Republic authorities have also established the legal framework and the operational concept for the creation of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, a transitional security arrangement provided for in the Political Agreement. These units will comprise members of the national defence and security forces as well as eligible members of armed groups who have disarmed, demobilized and undergone human rights vetting. They are intended to contribute to security for transhumance corridors and mining sites. The operationalization of these units is taking place in the context of ongoing efforts to move forward with the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme as well as the reform and reoperationalization of inclusive and professional defence and internal security forces.

As indicated in my last report ([S/2019/498](#)), while military confrontation has subsided since the Political Agreement, armed groups have continued to show a lack of adherence to its security provisions. In this context, the guarantors and facilitators of the Political Agreement have continued to engage closely with armed groups, including by responding to the killing on 21 May 2019 by Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation fighters of 39 persons, mostly civilians, in several villages near Paoua. As a result, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation publicly condemned the attack, handed over to the Government three suspected perpetrators of the attack, reiterated its commitment to peace and reconciliation and withdrew from its bases in Bohong, Bokaya and Létélé. On 31 May and again on 18 June, the Central African Republic authorities, MINUSCA, the African Union and ECCAS conducted joint missions to Kouï, Ouham-Pendé prefecture, to engage the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation

¹ See also the final communiqué of the forty-eighth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Kinshasa from 26 to 31 May, where the States members of the Committee also supported the call of the Central African Republic authorities for the lifting of the arms embargo.

leader, Abbas Sidiki, and seek his commitment to starting the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of members of his armed group so that they could participate in the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, as well as to hand over to justice the remaining suspected perpetrators of the attack.

In a related development, the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique have shown some signs of commitment to the Political Agreement. On 18 May, 108 members of the armed forces were able to be redeployed to Kaga Bandoro, Nana-Grebizi prefecture. Despite initial resistance, the Mouvement patriotique leader welcomed the deployment of the armed forces and contributed food for a welcoming ceremony. On 19 June, in Ndélé, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, the Front populaire issued a communiqué to affirm the dismantling of all illegal barriers and the release of public buildings in the areas under its control in accordance with the provisions of the Political Agreement. The communiqué also stated that the Front Populaire intended to reaffirm and consolidate the fundamental principles of peace and national reconciliation and asked the guarantors to immediately implement the transitional security arrangement provisions of the Political Agreement.

Developments in cross-border collaboration between the Central African Republic and its neighbours were also noteworthy. On 6 April, local authorities in Chad and the Central African Republic agreed to the partial reopening of the border in Bembéré, which had been closed since 2015. They also agreed to the creation of mechanisms to improve security collaboration and reduce transhumance-related violence, including by accelerating the deployment of Central African armed and internal security forces and judiciary to the border. On 6 and 7 May, the Cameroon-Central African Republic mixed commission on cooperation held its first meeting since 2010 to discuss cross-border security and cooperation in areas such as trade, culture and technology. Regional countries, including through the respective mixed commissions, have an important role to play in stemming the flow of weapons and ammunition to the various armed groups, which, the assessment team was told, are far more heavily armed (and with larger-calibre weapons) than the Central African Republic defence and security forces. The Republic of the Congo-Central African Republic mixed commission is also scheduled to meet from 1 to 3 August in Bangui.

Arms embargo

Since July 2018, the provisions of the arms embargo and its exemption provisions have remained unchanged. Currently, the Committee's sanctions list contains the names of 11 individuals and 2 entities and was last updated on 18 April 2019.

Under the arms embargo exemption provisions, the Government of the Central African Republic may submit requests to the Committee to receive arms and related materiel, and support has been provided to the Government in this regard. I note that MINUSCA continues to play an essential support role in assisting the Central African Republic authorities with their exemption requests, over and above the other tasks of the Mission.

Since the imposition of the arms embargo on 3 December 2013, the Government has submitted a total of 15 exemption requests, of which 14 have been approved by the Committee, with one remaining under consideration. Since my letter of 31 July 2018, the Government of the Central African Republic has submitted two additional exemption requests, both of which were approved by the Committee.

Since the imposition of the embargo, the Government of the Central African Republic has also submitted a total of 10 notifications, three of which were submitted since my letter of 31 July 2018. Since the imposition of the arms embargo, the

Committee has received a total of 62 exemption requests and 66 notifications from Member States and international organizations (including MINUSCA, the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union). Of these totals, 8 exemption requests and 22 notifications were submitted since my letter of 31 July 2018 by Member States and international organizations to the Committee for its consideration.

This brings the total number of weapons and ammunition approved by the Committee since 2015, to approximately 10,000 weapons and 16,000,000 rounds of ammunition. The armed forces remain the primary recipient of weapons and ammunition, followed by the internal security forces (police and gendarmerie).

Since August 2018, the Committee convened one meeting on the arms embargo in January 2019, with the participation via videoconference of the Minister of Defence of the Central African Republic, which strengthened the dialogue between the Committee and the Government and facilitated a better understanding of the regime, including its notification and exemption procedures. I also note that the Chair of the Committee visited the Central African Republic from 1 to 4 October 2018, which provided another opportunity for closer dialogue between the authorities of the Central African Republic and the Committee on the arms embargo measures.

Progress achieved on the benchmarks

The present section provides the Security Council with an update on the progress against each of the five key benchmarks enumerated in [S/PRST/2019/3](#), for the Security Council to assess and adjust, as appropriate, the arms embargo in the Central African Republic.

Benchmark (a). Progress on the effective implementation, by the Government of the Central African Republic, and within sustainable budgetary resources, of the national programme for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, and in particular the socioeconomic reintegration of former members of armed groups and the integration of vetted former members of armed groups into all uniformed personnel.

The Central African Republic authorities, with the support of international partners, have undertaken several disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives since 2015, including a pilot programme,² which informed the establishment of the national programme for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation in April 2017. The eligibility criteria of the national programme is in line with the agreement on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration principles made on 10 May 2015 during the Bangui Forum. These initiatives were complemented by a community violence reduction programme.

The Government has put in place the legal framework, institutional mechanisms and financial support to enable the operationalization of its national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, which was developed in consultation with the armed groups. This national programme aims to disarm and demobilize 5,000 ex-combatants from the armed groups and 1,500 children associated with the armed

² The pilot programme planned for the participation of 560 combatants from all 14 armed groups in 7 locations. At the end of this pilot process, 438 combatants, including 18 women, were disarmed and demobilized from 12 of the 14 armed groups (with the exception of the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain and Révolution et justice, Sayo Branch) and 309 weapons, 7,257 rounds of ammunition and 499 pieces of explosives were collected. Of those disarmed and demobilized, 198 ex-combatants, including 18 women, were processed for socioeconomic reintegration while 232 (including six women) were integrated into the armed forces. Three failed the vetting exercise, one was declared unfit and four failed to appear. The socioeconomic reintegration of the demobilized combatants has been completed.

groups and fighting forces and repatriate an estimated 500 ex-combatants. To promote the political, strategic, technical and operational dimensions of the programme, the Government established a strategic committee on national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, security sector reform and national reconciliation, chaired by the President, Faustin Archange Touadera; a technical committee for coordination of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation/security sector reform/national reconciliation; and the Unité d'exécution and the Advisory and Monitoring Committee for National Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation,³ and appointed a special coordinator under the authority of President Touadera. The national programme, which is estimated to cost \$45 million, is almost fully funded with support from ECCAS, the World Bank, the United States of America, France, MINUSCA and the Government.

On 17 December 2018, the President officially launched the national programme for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation in Paoua (Ouham-Pendé prefecture, in the north-western part of the country). Between 18 December 2018 and 18 January 2019, 137 combatants (including two women) were disarmed and demobilized, including 61 from Révolution et justice, Sayo Branch (including one woman), 58 from Révolution et justice, Belanga Branch (including one woman) and 18 from anti-balaka. A total of 103 weapons, 93 grenades, 7 rockets, 2 mortars and 3,199 rounds of ammunition were collected.

Owing to the peace talks between the Government and the armed groups, disarmament and demobilization activities were put on hold at the end of January 2019. On 30 May, disarmament and demobilization activities resumed in Paoua, where 90 additional combatants (including two women)⁴ eligible for the national programme for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation were disarmed and demobilized. While the assessment team was in Bangui, another round of disarmament and demobilization activities commenced in the west of the country from 30 June, addressing combatants from Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC), the Union des forces républicaines-fondamentales (UFR-F) and anti-balaka.

In terms of socioeconomic reintegration, the Government has signed contracts worth approximately \$12 million with IOM⁵ and ACTED (an international non-governmental organization)⁶ to provide socioeconomic reintegration for 1,000 ex-combatants and to undertake community support projects. The planned year-long socioeconomic integration activities, which are fully funded by the World Bank, benefited from lessons learned from the pilot disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, resulting in the strengthening of the Unité d'exécution with additional reintegration expertise. IOM has also established five training centres in Paoua (two centres), Bavara, Taley and Bozoum, in line with the programme it signed with the Government.

In April 2019, socioeconomic reintegration commenced, in Paoua, for the 137 ex-combatants (including two women)⁷ disarmed between December 2018 and January 2019. Meanwhile, data profiling for the 90 ex-combatants disarmed in May and June has been completed in preparation for their participation in socioeconomic

³ This Committee also includes representatives from the 14 armed groups.

⁴ Eighty-nine of these were from Révolution et justice, Sayo/Luther Branch, and one from Révolution et justice, Belanga Branch.

⁵ Those contracts were for Paoua and Ndelé.

⁶ To cover areas in Bouar, Kouï, Bria, and Birao.

⁷ Sixty-two of the 137 had expressed their candidacy for integration into the armed forces, the police and the gendarmerie. While waiting for their candidacies to be processed, they were offered, and they accepted, inclusion in the socio-reintegration programme.

reintegration activities. Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation started to disarm and demobilize its combatants in Mambéré-Kadéï on 29 June and is scheduled to continue to do so in Nana-Mambéré and Ouham-Pendé in July. FDPC and Révolution et justice (RJ) completed the disarmament of their combatants in June and July. As at 26 July, 494 combatants from anti-balaka/Ngaïssona, anti-balaka/Mokom, RJ-Sayo, RJ-Belanga, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, FDPC and UFR-F have disarmed and demobilized and are preparing for their socioeconomic reintegration in the framework of the national programme, or, alternatively, the integration into the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité or the defence and security forces.

The implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme is also taking the Political Agreement into account. As a result of the formation of the new Government, there are currently two Ministers for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration issues, one of whom was appointed from the armed groups. Two meetings of the Advisory and Monitoring Committee have been held (on 30 April and 17 May 2019), during which it was stressed that members of armed groups seeking entry into the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité will be subject to disarmament and demobilization as well as human rights vetting. Armed groups agreed to submit their lists of eligible combatants (in line with the Political Agreement). Almost all the armed groups submitted lists, although they are still incomplete. During the assessment mission, the team had the opportunity to discuss the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme with armed group representatives who have taken up ministerial positions in the Government. These representatives noted their support of the Government's approach and plans for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, while providing input on implementation challenges, such as the need for greater awareness-raising of the programme among members of the armed groups, and the need for the programme to be expedited.

Complementary to the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the Government also established a community violence reduction programme,⁸ which has become very important as a stabilization tool in local conflict situations. Community violence reduction focuses on elements of armed groups who are not eligible for the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and other community members, including women and youth. The national community violence reduction strategy was developed by the Government with the support of MINUSCA and in consultation with the United Nations country team and other national and international stakeholders. Although the national strategy has yet to be formally endorsed, it serves as a framework for implementation, which is taking place in nine locations across the country with the support of MINUSCA and in partnership with the United Nations Office for Project Services and IOM.

With the financial support of MINUSCA, the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, Canada and the United States, a total of 22,000 beneficiaries have participated in the community violence reduction programme. From July 2018 to May 2019, 6,850 beneficiaries, including 1,462 women, were engaged in community violence reduction activities undertaken with the support of MINUSCA.

The Government is in the consultation and conceptual design phase of the integration of vetted former members of the armed groups into all uniformed personnel. In February 2018, following the Bangui Forum, the Presidency of the Central African Republic established the Groupe de réflexion stratégique sur la question d'intégration des éléments des groupes armés dans les forces de défense et

⁸ The community violence reduction programme provides short-term training, income-generating activities and seminars to promote social cohesion and reconciliation, as well as a programme for the rehabilitation of community infrastructure.

de sécurité intérieure. The group is chaired by the Inspector General of the Central African Republic Armed Forces and is composed of 20 members, representing all components of the Central African Republic security and defence forces, as well as the national security sector reform pillar, MINUSCA and the European Union Military Training Mission. The group is responsible for developing proposals to address the issue of integrating ex-combatants into Central African Republic defence and security forces.

On 18 June and 24 August 2018, the strategic committee on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, security sector reform and national reconciliation endorsed different proposals comprising the strategy of the Groupe de réflexion stratégique. The endorsed strategy consists of (a) the limited integration of individuals from the 14 armed groups who will be disarmed and demobilized and who meet strict eligibility criteria;⁹ (b) an integration quota of 10 per cent (1,087) for eligible and demobilized former combatants within the framework of the planned recruitment of 10,873 new personnel to the Central African Republic defence and security forces over a five-year period (2019–2023); (c) the political integration of some armed group leaders; and (d) socioeconomic reintegration for the majority of their elements. This strategy was presented to the armed groups at the two Advisory and Monitoring Committee meetings referred to above.

On 18 January 2019, following the endorsement of the strategy, President Touadera requested the establishment of a comité de suivi-évaluation de l'intégration d'ex-combattants dans les forces de défense et de sécurité. The Committee held a workshop in February 2019 that resulted in the formulation of detailed proposals on integration mechanisms, criteria, quotas and rank harmonization.¹⁰

On 29 March and 7 April, respectively, President Touadera issued two decrees to establish the legal framework for the establishment of the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité. Those decrees specified that disarmament, demobilization and vetting are preconditions for the integration of armed groups; that only members of the internal security forces within the Unités spéciales are authorized to carry out arrests; and that the military code of justice applies to all defence and security forces in the Unités spéciales, while a separate regulatory framework will be developed for former members of armed groups. The decrees also specified that guarding mining sites is among the tasks of the Unités spéciales. The concept of the Unités spéciales proposes the establishment of a 2,000-strong force, with 660 members deployed in each of the three defence zones outside of the Bangui autonomous zone. Sixty per cent of the Unités spéciales is foreseen to come from the armed groups, with the rest from the defence and security forces.

The Government also appointed three armed group leaders as military advisers to the Prime Minister on the Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité, and the Chief of Staff of the armed forces has put in place a working group to reinforce coordination on the operationalization of the Unités spéciales. On 4 July the Prime Minister issued

⁹ The eligibility criteria are as follows: the candidates must speak and write French and Sango; be 18 to 25 years old, hold Central African citizenship, be of good health and physically fit and undergo human rights vetting.

¹⁰ A workshop was held from 4 to 15 February 2019 with the aim of drafting a reference document for the promotion of peace, reconciliation and social cohesion through the integration and harmonization of ranks. While considering specific cases of integration, the document presents three options for integration and harmonization of ranks, as well as the associated challenges and opportunities. Option 1 proposed the integration and harmonization of 5 to 10 per cent per category into the armed forces and the gendarmerie. Option 2 proposed the integration and harmonization of 10 per cent of the total number of ex-combatants as commissioned and non-commissioned officers, to be integrated in all corps. Option 3 proposed integration by unit for the armed forces and the gendarmerie.

a decree to establish the Comité stratégique de pilotage des unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité to establish the political and strategic orientations for the implementation and operations of the Unités spéciales. The Government intends to launch training activities in Bouar in August 2019 for deployment of the first Unités spéciales in October. The Government also plans to launch the Unités spéciales in the central region as soon as the armed groups in those areas are ready for disarmament and demobilization.

With the support of the European Union Military Training Mission, the Government also intends to deploy 90 armed forces and internal security forces trainers for the Unités spéciales, 30 trainers per deployed unit.¹¹ The budget required for the Unités spéciales is \$15 million, which is being provided by the Government (which will cover the salaries of the defence and security forces in the Unités spéciales), the Peacebuilding Fund (\$3 million for the initial operations) and the European Union (\$5.6 million for the first year with additional funds to be mobilized for the programme, as well as the funding of the deployment of 45 African Union observers).

Benchmark (b). The establishment, by the Government of the Central African Republic, of a planning document detailing the needs of the Central African Republic authorities in terms of weapons and ammunition storage facilities and in terms of training and vetting of defence and security forces for the management of these weapons and ammunition and facilities, as well as working effectively towards the increase in adequate storage and management capacity and towards the effective training of Central African Republic defence and security forces, consistent with the final needs of the Central African Republic authorities identified in the planning document.

While the assessment team was in Bangui, the Government provided it with a copy of its planning document, which details the needs of the Central African Republic with respect to weapons and ammunitions storage facilities, the training of personnel assigned to the management of weapons and ammunition and vetting procedures for those personnel. The document covers the needs of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Water and Forestry, the Ministry of Finance and Budget (for Customs) and the Ministry of Mines. The planning document contains the weapons and ammunition storage requirements for each of these entities, broken down by defence and security forces, location, organizational units and personnel. As stated in the planning document, the formulation of these storage needs is based on existing laws and national plans applicable to the respective entities. The Government has also submitted this document to the Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#).

The Government stressed that the planning document is guided by the principle that a storage-focused approach should be replaced by an approach that prioritizes management of weapons and ammunition by trained and vetted personnel in line with a transparent institutional and regulatory framework. Such a transformation in approach will depend on acquiring sufficiently trained personnel as well as the projected storage facilities. The document also takes into account the importance of acquiring property titles to build new storage capacities.

Based on the initial review of this document by the assessment team in consultation with Central African Republic authorities, the Government has projected through 2023 an overall future requirement of 295 storage facilities of different

¹¹ The Government has appointed 20 members of the armed forces, 5 police officers and 5 gendarmes to train the first Unités spéciales mixtes de sécurité in sector West. The European Union Military Training Mission will conduct a two-week train-the-trainer course for these appointed officials, which is expected to begin at the end of July.

armoury classes for 28,826 weapons. For the armed forces, a total of 75 armouries are planned for a projected 11,024 weapons. For the police, a total of 67 armouries are projected for 7,142 weapons (including non-lethal weapons), while for the gendarmerie, a total of 120 armouries are projected for 9,121 weapons (including non-lethal weapons). The Ministry of Water and Forestry requires storage for a projected 641 weapons. This Ministry will develop eight storage facilities of its own, the rest of its storage needs being accommodated within the planned capacities of the Ministry of the Interior (police and gendarmerie). The Ministry of Mines has projected storage needs for 600 weapons, which are also planned to be accommodated within the overall capacity of the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry of Finance and Budget has projected that customs officials will require 25 armouries for storage of 298 weapons.

In the planning document, a minimum future requirement of 9,492,562 rounds of ammunition is projected to be required until 2023.¹² This is broken down to include 8,417,132 rounds of ammunition (with supply requirements itemized down to the unit level) for the armed forces, 324,600 for the police, 618,580 for the gendarmerie, 83,190 for the Ministry of Water and Forestry, 33,600 for the Ministry of Mines, and 15,460 for the Ministry of Finance and Budget. The Government informed the assessment team that, owing to time and capacity constraints, it has not yet determined the requirements for ammunition storage capacity in the different defence zones according to the projected deployments of the armed forces. The Ministry of the Interior also has yet to estimate the ammunition supply requirements for each of the gendarmerie and police units to be deployed. For the other ministries, given the smaller volumes of ammunition involved, a breakdown of ammunition storage needs was not provided since, in their plans, such ammunition stocks could easily be accommodated within the projected weapons storage facilities.

The planning document also contains a projected overall requirement of 1,180 trained and vetted personnel responsible for weapons and ammunition storage and management. In terms of training needs, the armed forces require 368 specialized personnel for weapons management and 192 for ammunition management. The police require 190, while the gendarmerie needs 247, the Ministry of Water and Forestry needs 64, the Ministry of Mines needs 68 and Customs needs 51. According to the planning document, personnel trained in weapons and ammunition management must also be entered in the human resources database for close monitoring.

The Central African Republic authorities decided to adopt a standardized procedure across all defence and security forces for the authorization of personnel dedicated to the management of weapons and ammunition, which involves a vetting process. The Ministers of Defence, the Interior and Finance and Budget (for Customs) respectively have the capacity to provide these authorizations. Given limited capacity at the Ministries of Mines, and Water and Forestry, those ministries will delegate the issuance of these authorizations to the Ministry of the Interior.

Since 2014, the Central African Republic authorities, with the support of international partners, have been able to rehabilitate and build physical storage infrastructure for weapons and ammunition. From 2015 to 2018, the Mine Action Service built 17 armouries and rehabilitated 32 others in different regions, while 3 armouries were rehabilitated through the budget of the Ministry of Defence.

The assessment team was afforded an opportunity to observe, in Bangui, the preparation of 20 temporary storage kits (10 containers for 9,600 weapons and 10 containers for 15 million rounds of ammunition). These temporary storage kits are financed by the Ministry of Defence and are planned for deployment in the three

¹² The projected ammunition is predominantly for small arms and light weapons.

different zones of defence. The assessment team also travelled to Bouar, where it observed that the Mine Action Service, in support of the national defence plan, is finalizing the construction of an armoury with a 600-weapon capacity, two armouries with a 220-weapon capacity and an armoury built for the training centre with a capacity of 600 weapons. In addition, an ammunition storage facility is under construction that will store 4 million rounds of ammunition and 3,200 kg of explosive material.

The Government believes that these current facilities can provide its defence and security forces with overall storage capacity for more than 23,150 weapons and 22.5 million rounds of ammunition. The Government is therefore confident that it has the capacity to store additional weapons, including the second delivery of weapons from the Russian Federation, as approved by the Committee in January 2019. In terms of training, more than 300 personnel of the Central African Republic national defence and security forces have received capacity-building and training from the Mine Action Service/MINUSCA, China, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, the European Union, France, Morocco, Rwanda, the Russian Federation and the United States, including on weapons and ammunition management.

The Government informed the assessment team that lack of control over its territory and lack of funding impede progress on this benchmark. The lack of specific infrastructure also constrains the ability of trained personnel to fully utilize their training in weapons and ammunition management. The Government is requesting international support to complement its efforts in meeting this benchmark, in particular for the establishment of a school on weapons and ammunition management that may be used by the different ministries. Such a school could contribute to the dissemination of common standards across the defence and security forces.

Benchmark (c). The finalization, by the Government of the Central African Republic, of an arms registration and management protocol for Central African Republic defence and security forces, covering small arms, light weapons and ammunition, including hunting weapons and ammunition, delivered to the Central African Republic authorities, and the establishment of a system of individual receipt of weapons and of a system for applying individual accountability measures in case of loss, theft, or diversion of weapons, as well as working effectively towards proficiency in arms registration and management and towards investigating when weapons were inappropriately managed, in line with national law.

The Government informed the assessment team that it had developed interim protocols to manage the recent deliveries of weapons approved by the Committee. It also indicated that it will commence work on a standardized registration and management protocol for its defence and security forces based on the experience of those recent deliveries. The defence and security forces have developed, or, as in the case of the police and gendarmerie, are in the process of completing, directives on arms registration and management which detail overall responsibility for the weapons and ammunition for these institutions. Those directives also outline the policies and principles for the management of weapons and ammunition at the respective defence and security forces, as well as internal controls and security for armouries. The Government informed the assessment team that it will develop further procedures to operationalize the directives.

Those directives, however, do specify the procedure for the individual receipt of weapons. In terms of individual accountability, the Government pointed out that, in the event of loss or theft of weapons, the penal code, the military justice code and the military disciplinary rules will apply, as appropriate. For example, article 110 of the 2017 military justice code provides that a sentence of 2 to 20 years may be

imposed for the loss or misuse of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, funds or material provided for the use of the military. The individual penalty may include life imprisonment, depending on the value of the material lost or misused. In its visit to Bouar, the assessment team also observed that an individualized system was in place for the drawing from and returning of weapons to the armoury on a daily basis.

Benchmark (d). The completion, by the Government of the Central African Republic, of the operationalization of the Commission nationale de lutte contre la prolifération des armes légères et de petit calibre and the beginning of the work of the Commission.

The Commission was established by presidential decree on 14 February 2017. Since then, its organization and functioning, the appointment of a president and executive secretary, the nomination of eight officers, and a budget allocation for its permanent technical secretariat have been completed. The eight officers have assumed their functions and are funded by their respective parent institutions, while 5 of the 15 support staff have been recruited (a number deemed sufficient for the Commission at this time). A budget allocation of 40 million CFA francs (approximately \$69,000) has been placed at the disposal of the Commission. The Commission informed the assessment team that it expects to receive an annual budget allocation of 1 billion CFA francs (approximately \$1.7 million) from the Government over the next five years. By the end of 2018, the Commission had also acquired a headquarters equipped with 10 computers and other office furniture.

A road map for the operationalization of the Commission was established in July 2017. Within the road map, a baseline report on the management of weapons and ammunition was completed in 2017 and a national strategy for the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons for the period 2019–2023 was developed and subsequently validated by the strategic committee on 18 January 2018. To implement this national strategy, the Commission has developed a draft national action plan, which still needs to be endorsed by its plenary assembly and approved by the strategic committee.

Benchmark (e). The establishment, by the Government of the Central African Republic, of a protocol for the collection and destruction or transfer to the Central African Republic armed forces and internal security forces of surplus, unregistered or illicitly held weapons and ammunition seized by the Central African Republic authorities with the aim, in particular, of fighting against the illicit dissemination of weapons and ammunition into the Central African Republic, and working effectively towards implementing such a protocol.

A protocol for the collection and destruction of or transfer to the Central African Republic armed forces and internal security forces of surplus, unregistered or illicitly held weapons and ammunition seized by the Central African Republic authorities has yet to be completed. The work required for the protocol is included in the draft national action plan of the Commission. Nevertheless, the Commission has started work towards this priority with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). A workshop was held on the development of such a protocol from 22 to 28 June 2019, in Bangui, and the basis of a draft protocol established.

In lieu of the protocol, the Central African Republic has some legal frameworks related to the obligations of this benchmark. Those legal frameworks need to be updated in accordance with the international agreements and conventions that the country has signed, so that the country's laws are in line with international standards and obligations related to the management and storage of weapons and ammunition. The assessment team was informed that an interministerial working group under the auspices of the Commission, with the support of the European Union and UNODC, has been established to complete these updates. The United Nations Regional Office

for Central Africa and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in coordination with ECCAS, are also providing support to national and regional capacities for small arms control within the framework of the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative.

In addition, the Government informed the assessment team of existing administrative practices, including in the context of judicial proceedings to manage weapons seizure, collection, destruction or transfers. In the case of seizures by the armed forces, administrative procedure requires that a report be made to the Chief of Staff of the armed forces, followed by the registration of the weapons at the central armoury before the weapons are returned to the unit that seized them and placed under the responsibility of the unit armourer.

The Government and the Mine Action Service also informed the assessment team that a concept note had been drafted to support the Commission in developing a national arms management database and undertaking the marking of weapons for a certain number of weapons with the adopted arms marking system and trained personnel. The concept note has been validated by the Commission but will require financial support from donors to proceed to the programme development and implementation stages.

Conclusion

The Government and its partners have demonstrated commitment to achieving the necessary progress against the benchmarks. They should be encouraged to continue their efforts, although the needs of the Government are significant and considerable challenges remain. The above evaluation of progress against the benchmarks identifies the areas where the Government can most immediately benefit from transparent, coherent and coordinated assistance from partners. International partners have a critical role to play in providing financial, technical and other assistance to help the Government to make further progress on the benchmarks.

There is a perception, both in the Government and on the part of some of its partners, that the process of securing approvals for weapons and ammunition through the Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) and, thereafter, the delivery of those weapons and ammunition, is cumbersome and time-consuming, which has negative operational consequences. The assessment team was informed that while the Government, within the provisions of the arms embargo, can receive weapons and ammunition for its forces and the armed groups cannot, the armed groups continue to receive weapons trafficked illegally through regional countries. These include new and higher-calibre weapons than those possessed by the Government. This disparity in weaponry contributes to a perception in the country that the arms embargo is prejudiced against the Government and is limiting its ability to effectively extend State authority and protect its population. The armed groups, in the meantime, continue to operate with impunity in certain regions, with consequences not only for the civilian population but also the staff of international and non-governmental organizations. Such a perception, regrettably, may also have political consequences, especially as the country prepares for its upcoming elections and continues its implementation of the peace agreement.

The effectiveness of the arms embargo on the armed groups should also be closely monitored by the Security Council, together with progress on the five established benchmarks. In this regard, greater efforts should be undertaken to enhance the effectiveness of the arms embargo on the armed groups. Suppliers and facilitators of the illegal transfer of arms to the armed groups in the Central African Republic should be identified and designated by the Committee for targeted sanctions. In this regard, the Panel of Experts has an important role to play in tracing seized

weapons and identifying their sources (individuals and entities) of financing, production and supply, including trafficking routes, in collaboration with other sanctions expert panels, as appropriate. Priority should be given to investigating the armed groups in possession of higher-calibre weapons.

The region has an essential role to play in the effective implementation of the arms embargo against the Central African Republic. It is important that all bilateral commissions with neighbouring countries are re-established and focus on ending the illicit trafficking of weapons into the Central African Republic as a matter of priority. The recent re-establishment of the bilateral commission with Cameroon is a welcome development in this respect and other neighbouring countries need to follow suit. The re-establishment of the trilateral force with Chad and the Sudan could also contribute towards the implementation of the arms embargo. It is also important that the Central African Republic have the requisite capacity to adequately contribute to these mechanisms.
