



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
30 June 2020  
English  
Original: French

---

## Letter dated 29 June 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In paragraph 13 of its resolution [2507 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council requested that I provide a further update on progress achieved by the authorities of the Central African Republic on the key benchmarks established in its presidential statement of 9 April 2019 ([S/PRST/2019/3](#)). The benchmarks had been established to serve as a basis for the Council to assess the contribution and relevance of the arms embargo in supporting the relevant aspects of the security sector reform process, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, and the management of weapons and ammunition.

Over the past year, in response to appeals from the Government of the Central African Republic and in the light of the progress achieved against the benchmarks, the Council has progressively adjusted the embargo measures. Following my letter dated 26 July 2019 ([S/2019/609](#)), the Council, in its resolution [2488 \(2019\)](#), decided that:

(a) The arms embargo approval process would no longer apply to supplies of weapons with a calibre of 14.5 mm or less, as well as ammunition and components specially designed for such weapons, to the country's security forces. Instead, such deliveries needed only to be notified in advance to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) concerning the Central African Republic;

(b) Member States or international, regional or subregional organizations supplying arms and related materiel would be primarily responsible for notifying the Committee and that such notification must be at least 20 days in advance of the deliveries. The Council further stressed the importance of the notifications including detailed explanations for how the requested equipment would support security sector reform in the country;

(c) The authorities of the Central African Republic would still be able to obtain weapons and ammunition with a calibre of more than 14.5 mm, subject to approval by the Committee under the relevant provisions of the arms embargo;

(d) Supplies of non-lethal military and police equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use, and related technical assistance or training, would no longer require advance approval by the Committee, only advance notification.

Following my letter dated 31 December 2019 ([S/2019/1008](#)), in resolution its [2507 \(2020\)](#), the Council further adjusted the arms embargo measures by deciding that the arms embargo approval process shall no longer apply to supplies of unarmed



ground military vehicles and ground military vehicles mounted with weapons with a calibre of 14.5 mm or less, to the security forces of the Central African Republic. Instead, such deliveries would only need to be notified in advance to the Committee.

The Committee plays an important role in the management of the above-mentioned adjustments and other exemptions applicable to the arms embargo. Since the imposition of the embargo, the Government of the Central African Republic has submitted a total of 19 exemption requests and 14 notifications. The Committee has received a total of 70 exemption requests and 84 notifications from Member States and international organizations, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union. This brings the total number of weapons and ammunition approved by the Committee since 2015 to approximately 14,703 weapons and 17,432,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>1</sup> The armed forces remain the primary recipient of the weapons and ammunition, followed by the internal security forces (police and gendarmerie).

In the following section, I provide an update on progress made against each of the five key benchmarks since my letter dated 31 December 2019. The progress made by the authorities of the Central African Republic on these benchmarks should be assessed in the light of other political and security developments in the country, in particular the status of implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 and preparations for the upcoming general elections to be held in 2020/21 (see S/2019/145 and my most recent report on the Central African Republic, S/2020/545). It is also important to take into consideration the impact of the global pandemic caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which was officially declared in the country on 14 March. This global pandemic has limited the capacities of both the Government and its international partners, which in certain cases have had to focus their attention and resources on the pandemic.

#### **Update on progress achieved on benchmark A**

The national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme aims to disarm and demobilize 5,000 ex-combatants from the armed groups and 1,500 children associated with the armed groups and fighting forces and to repatriate an estimated 500 ex-combatants. The programme was estimated to cost approximately \$45 million. In terms of socioeconomic reintegration, the Government has signed agreements worth approximately \$12 million with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (an international non-governmental organization) to provide reinsertion for 1,000 ex-combatants and to undertake community support projects (see S/2019/609).

Since the official launch of the programme on 17 December 2018, a total of 1,321 combatants, including 81 women, have been disarmed and demobilized, and 802 weapons of war, 1,239 unexploded ordnances and 67,537 rounds of ammunition have been collected, as reflected in my letter dated 31 December 2019. Since my last update in December 2019, there have been no disarmament and demobilization operations. However, since May 2020, the unit responsible for the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration programme and the Ministry for Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation and Reintegration have been planning the launch of disarmament and demobilization operations in Ndélé, in the central region of the Central African Republic, following the agreement

---

<sup>1</sup> This represents an increase of 4,703 weapons and 1,432,600 additional rounds of ammunition since July 2019 (see S/2019/609).

by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique to move forward with the process. The planned operations would also facilitate the establishment of the joint security units in Ndélé. There are also plans to continue the disarmament and demobilization operations in the west, as well as in other locations in the centre-east.

Some further progress has been made in relation to reinsertion and reintegration activities for demobilized ex-combatants, while community support projects have continued in areas where the reintegration of ex-combatants is ongoing or planned,<sup>2</sup> as part of the project for the reintegration of ex-combatants carried out by the unit responsible for the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, through its implementing partners (IOM and the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development), and with the financial support of the World Bank. To date, 839 ex-combatants have participated in reinsertion activities and 295 in reintegration activities.<sup>3</sup>

Since the last cycle of disarmament and demobilization operations, which took place from 14 October to 14 November 2019, 413 ex-combatants, including 25 women, have been registered in reinsertion training programmes in Bouar and Kouï. In Bouar, 121 ex-combatants, including 2 women, who have completed their three-month reinsertion training cycle, have begun their three-month vocational training cycle for their socioeconomic reintegration. In Kouï, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development has begun reinsertion training sessions for 166 demobilized ex-combatants (all men), including 124 ex-combatants from the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation armed group who had not been admitted into the joint security units.<sup>4</sup>

In Paoua, IOM completed the vocational training of 176 ex-combatants in January 2020 (see [S/2019/1008](#)); these ex-combatants, who had opted for socioeconomic reintegration into civilian life, were part of a cohort of 227 disarmed and demobilized combatants. The remaining 51 had chosen to join the joint security units.<sup>5</sup> Following the last disarmament and demobilization operations of October and November 2019, an additional 67 ex-combatants were admitted into socioeconomic reintegration programmes implemented by IOM. The activities of this group will start following the signing of the extension of the contract between IOM and the unit responsible for the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

In my letter dated 26 July 2019, I reported that the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme was almost fully funded with support from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the World Bank, the United States of America, France, MINUSCA and the Government of the Central African Republic. Unfortunately, the slower-than-anticipated pace of progress has had a heavy impact on resources. With the support of MINUSCA, the World Bank and the United States, the authorities of the Central African Republic are currently taking measures to address a possible funding shortfall and to avoid deficits. I call upon current donors to continue to support these operations and upon potential

<sup>2</sup> In Paoua and Bouar (west), where disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation operations have begun, and in areas where disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation operations have yet to begin, namely Ndélé (centre), Bria (east) and Birao (east).

<sup>3</sup> Prior to the start of the reinsertion and reintegration activities, all demobilized ex-combatants receive “reinsertion allowances” for three months, beginning on the day of the disarmament and demobilization. To date, 1,321 demobilized combatants have received such allowances.

<sup>4</sup> On the basis of the criteria for admission into the joint security units (age, physical condition and health status).

<sup>5</sup> On 5 June 2020, the members of the first batch of joint security units were deployed and settled in their camp in Paoua, after completing their training at the Bouar training site.

donors to help the authorities of the Central African Republic in their efforts to raise funds for their national programme.

Alongside the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, the Government has also established a community violence reduction programme, which has become an important stabilization tool in localized conflict situations.

International partners, namely MINUSCA, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Peacebuilding Fund, help the authorities of the Central African Republic by implementing such programmes in Bangui, Bangassou, Bossangoa, Bouar, Bria, Kaga Bandoro and Bambari.

Their aim was for these programmes to benefit 4,000 people during the period 2019–2020. To date, a total of 4,014 beneficiaries, including 1,570 women, have had income-generating activities and participated in local projects under the community violence reduction programme. In addition, 41 weapons of war, 1,640 artisanal weapons, 913 rounds of ammunition and 3 unexploded ordnances have been collected.

Since the pilot disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme implemented in 2018, under which 232 ex-combatants, including 6 women, had been integrated into the armed forces (see [S/2019/609](#)), no further progress has been made on the integration of vetted former armed group members into uniformed services. The Government has also not applied the 10 per cent quota for armed group members in the internal defence and security forces in its recruitment activities, including in its campaign to recruit 2,600 soldiers for the armed forces which began in February 2020. Similarly, much work remains to be done with regard to the establishment of a commission on the harmonization of ranks to facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants and the reinsertion of former armed forces personnel who had joined the armed groups. The decree establishing the joint commission for the harmonization of ranks, as stipulated in the Political Agreement of February 2019, has yet to be adopted.

During the period under review, the guarantors of the Political Agreement (the African Union and ECCAS) and other international partners made considerable efforts to ensure that the armed groups that are signatories to the Political Agreement continue to adhere to the Agreement, including by doing their utmost to be admitted into the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. The Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation held its most recent meeting with representatives of the armed groups on 29 May 2020, with the participation of MINUSCA and other international partners. I am encouraged by the launch, on 22 June, of disarmament and demobilization operations in Ndélé, Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, and by the plans of the authorities of the Central African Republic to learn lessons from the latest disarmament and demobilization operations, including the need to address the low rate of surrender of weapons of war and to enhance the coordination between the unit responsible for the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme and the parent ministry.

It is important that all parties continue to participate in good faith in the implementation of the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, which is a core requirement of the Political Agreement.

It is also necessary to redouble efforts to ensure a common understanding among the parties of the linkage between the national programme, the establishment of the

joint security units and the integration of ex-combatants into the security sector, as well as the harmonization of ranks.

### **Update on progress achieved on benchmark B**

One year ago, the authorities of the Central African Republic shared with my assessment team visiting the country a planning document showing the projected needs in terms of weapons and ammunition storage and management. According to the document, the Government estimated that by 2023 it would need 295 facilities for the storage of 28,826 different categories of weapons and at least 9,492,562 rounds of ammunition, as well as 1,180 trained and vetted personnel responsible for the storage and management of these weapons and ammunition.

Since 2014, with the support of international partners, the authorities of the Central African Republic have been able to rehabilitate and build physical infrastructure for the storage of weapons and ammunition. This was achieved owing in part to the support provided by MINUSCA, through the Mine Action Service, to help strengthen the Government's capacity in weapons and ammunition management through the construction and rehabilitation of storage facilities and the provision of specialized training in weapons and ammunition management, in accordance with the armed forces and internal security forces deployment plans. To date, the Mine Action Service/MINUSCA have built 20 armouries and rehabilitated 41 others, in addition to the three rehabilitated by the national authorities. The Mine Action Service/MINUSCA have provided capacity to the armed forces for their deployment in Bouar, including the regional armoury used to store ammunition for two battalions, one armoury with a 600-weapon capacity, two armouries with a 220-weapon capacity and a training centre armoury with a 600-weapon capacity. However, the delivery of the regional armoury to the national authorities has been delayed owing to COVID-19.

The Government has also requested the Mine Action Service/MINUSCA to support the deployment of the joint security units by providing four temporary storage facilities for weapons and ammunition and organizing training on weapons and ammunition management.

In terms of training, more than 300 members of the defence and security forces of the Central African Republic have received capacity-building support and training from the Mine Action Service/MINUSCA, China, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, the European Union, France, Morocco, the Russian Federation, Rwanda and the United States, including on weapons and ammunition management.

During the period under review, the Mine Action Service/MINUSCA provided training for new defence and internal security forces in weapons and ammunition management, including a training session on explosive ordnance disposal. With financial support from the United States, the Mine Action Service/MINUSCA launched a project in February 2020 to support the development of national capacity for the destruction of obsolete ammunition within the armed forces.

As part of that project, two specialized explosive ordnance disposal teams will be created. They will be composed of trained members of the armed forces who will receive specialized refresher training and mentoring so that the Central African Republic has explosive ordnance disposal capacity, in particular in support of disarmament activities undertaken by the country. It is important that these trained personnel be productively utilized in these specialized functions. However, the project is presently suspended owing to COVID-19.

In my letter dated 26 July 2019, I indicated that the Central African Republic authorities had 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. Recruitment into the armed forces and the internal security forces now regularly includes a vetting process for roles in weapons and ammunition management, and a national seminar on vetting was held on 27 February 2020. The Government is currently planning to establish a national mechanism and to develop a national policy on the issue.

#### **Update on progress achieved on benchmark C**

This benchmark relates to the finalization by the Government of an arms registration and management protocol for weapons delivered to its armed forces and internal security forces, and the establishment of a system of individual receipt of weapons and of a system for applying individual accountability.

The Government continues to apply interim protocols and technical guidelines for the receipt and management of weapons and ammunition for each shipment of weapons notified to or approved by the Committee. A national protocol outlining the process for the delivery and verification of weapon and ammunition shipments in the country has yet to be developed. Likewise, each entity of the armed forces and internal security forces maintains its own internal documentation and procedures for weapons registration.

#### **Update on progress achieved on benchmark D**

This benchmark relates to the operationalization of the Commission nationale de lutte contre la prolifération des armes légères et de petit calibre (national commission to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons), which continues to implement its national action plan on small arms and light weapons, including by holding the fourth session of its plenary assembly on 6 January 2020.

In addition, a law on the general regime for conventional weapons and their parts, components and ammunition, drafted in 2019 with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), was approved on 12 March 2020 by the Cabinet and sent to the National Assembly.

An initiative to develop weapons marking and tracing capacity has been included in the national action plan to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The Government has not yet decided on a national marking format or on a national plan and standards for the marking and tracing of State-owned weapons. It is important that weapons be marked and registered properly in order to be able to monitor the weapons transferred to the security forces and the joint security units of the Central African Republic. I note that the Central African Republic is a signatory to the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and all Parts and Components That Can Be Used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention) and the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, and is a member of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, which has approved a regional weapons tracing format. In line with the Government's treaty obligations,<sup>6</sup> no weapons and ammunition with partial or

---

<sup>6</sup> According to article 14, paragraph 2, of the Kinshasa Convention, "all small arms and light weapons and all ammunition which is not marked in accordance with this Convention shall be considered illicit. Unless marked for use under the conditions defined by national laws and regulations and this Convention, such weapons and ammunition must be duly recorded and destroyed".

illegible serial numbers can be transferred from the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme to the joint security units.

UNODC has launched the procurement process to provide weapon marking machines and record-keeping kits, as well as appropriate training, to the Commission and to the armed forces and the internal security forces. The delivery of the two marking machines is expected by the end of 2020. With financial support from Member States, this positive step may be complemented by a marking training programme and the purchase of additional marking machines by the Government, which would help in the establishment a national marking programme.

Such a programme would help to ensure the proper marking of weapons provided to the armed forces and the internal security forces and, with proper record-keeping, to facilitate the tracing of weapons in the event that they fall into the hands of armed groups.

The Commission is financed through an allocation from the national budget, which for 2020 stands at 75 million CFA francs, an amount that covers the operational costs of the office and the payment of salaries, but is insufficient to finance the operational activities set out in the national action plan.

The amount allocated to the implementation of the operational activities of the plan is approximately \$1.7 million per year over the next five years, but the Commission is not receiving the full amount needed. MINUSCA, including the Mine Action Service, and UNODC continue to support the implementation of the plan.

#### **Update on progress achieved on benchmark E**

The protocol on the collection, 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 authorities of the Central African Republic is being developed. I would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to information provided to my assessment team one year ago to the effect that administrative practices were in place, including in the context of judicial proceedings, to manage the seizure, collection, destruction or transfer of weapons. In the case of seizures by the armed forces, administrative procedure includes the transmission of a report to the Chief of Defence Staff, followed by the registration of the weapons at the central armoury before they are returned to the unit that seized them and placed under the responsibility of the armourer.

The Central African Republic also has legal frameworks relating to the obligations of this benchmark. The Commission has continued to work with UNODC to strengthen the legislative framework for combating illicit trafficking in weapons in the country, including preventive and security measures, criminal justice provisions and mechanisms for international cooperation and information-sharing. The Government has submitted the bill on the general framework governing conventional weapons and their parts, components and ammunition to the National Assembly for review and adoption. UNODC is currently completing the drafting of general instructions for the management of weapons and ammunition, in particular weapons seized in Africa. Once completed, these instructions will be shared with and operationalized by various countries, including the Central African Republic.

At the regional level, efforts to reactivate the bilateral commissions between the Central African Republic and its neighbours have continued to yield results. On 20 and 21 December 2019, the Central African Republic and Chad held the fourteenth meeting of their joint bilateral commission.

The discussions centred on security along their common border and cooperation in justice and economic matters. The Ministry of Defence has also participated in several bilateral meetings with Chad, the Congo and the Sudan.

### **Conclusion**

With the support of international partners, the Government has remained committed to achieving the benchmarks in order for the arms embargo to be further eased or lifted. Continued support from the Security Council and international and regional partners is necessary for further progress to be made.

I continue to believe that it is important to also pay careful attention to the arms embargo imposed on the armed groups, which remains in full effect, and to ensure that it yields the necessary and desired outcomes, with a view to improving the security and political situation in the country. In this connection, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) concerning the Central African Republic and its Panel of Experts can help the Central African Republic and the States in the region to adopt the necessary measures against arms traffickers, some of whom have been named in the reports of the Panel of Experts since 2017. The regional bilateral commissions (and the implementation of their recommendations), as well as the revitalization of the interministerial committee on border management, can also make a difference on this issue.

A well calibrated and efficiently implemented arms embargo, along with other sanctions measures, can reinforce the positive political progress being made in the country. It can also support my call for a global ceasefire. The armed groups in the Central African Republic that hear my call must urgently translate it into action by putting an end to the violence, and all the parties must agree to adhere to the global ceasefire, especially at a time when the country and the region are grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**

---