

Speech: Protecting Civilians in Central African Republic

Thank you Mr President, and may I start by thanking our briefers, Special Representative and Under Secretary-General Onanga, Special Representative Nebie, and General Maio for your briefings and also for your and your teams' continued efforts in the Central African Republic. We know how difficult and challenging your missions are, as is the context you are operating in.

And let me then also take this opportunity to offer my condolences, on behalf of the British government, to the family of the peacekeeper who lost his life in Bambari last week.

This senseless death, one of three in the past five weeks, serves to illustrate the deteriorating security situation in the Central African Republic, which concerns the United Kingdom, like other Security Council members, very deeply.

Security in areas that were once considered relatively stable, for example in Bambari and Bangui, has deteriorated. And we commend MINUSCA's efforts to respond to and quell the violence and uphold their mandate to protect civilians.

Mr President, today, as the Secretary-General's report states, a quarter of the population have been driven from their homes as they seek safety. There are now more internally displaced people in Central African Republic than at any other point in the country's history.

And over half the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. 70 per cent of families do not have access to clean water, and 80 per cent of families do not have access to latrines. Despite this, only 20 per cent of the humanitarian response plan has been funded. The UK has given \$9 million so far in 2018, and we encourage all member states to respond to this appeal.

Mr President, we call on all armed groups, in Bangui and throughout the country, to immediately cease all forms of violence. But we also urge political, religious and community leaders to stop incitement to violence on religious and ethnic grounds. We have seen the tragic consequences of such calls to violence over the last few months. Those in positions of leadership have particular responsibility for their words.

The authorities and the international community must hold accountable those involved in attacks, violations of international humanitarian law, and abuses and violations of human rights. We must send a clear message: this behavior is not acceptable and there will be consequences, as the national justice system continues to develop and the Special Criminal Court makes progress towards operationalisation through the enactment of a new legal framework and the appointment of judicial police officers.

Mr President, we welcome the progress made to extend state authority to all areas of the country, including through the recent redeployment of civil servants and justice representatives, and we recognise the real challenge of doing so.

The deployment of the FACA units trained by European Union Training Mechanism in CAR is an important step. We commend the EUTM's efforts to support the reestablishment of a cohesive and well-trained national security force. This is not only essential for peace and security in the short term. A well-trained force which respects human rights will help to build trust between civilians and the government of the Central African Republic and thereby help to mend the social fabric which has been so deeply damaged by the conflict.

Mr President, as we have discussed in this Council many times, an inclusive political peace process is the best way to address the grievances of all parties to ensure long-term peace and security.

We very much welcome and support the African Union's leadership on this issue, through the African Peace Initiative. The visit to take stock of armed groups' grievances was a good step. The regional credibility of the African Union allows it to positively engage with all groups and we strongly encourage the AU to continue their good work.

Indeed, we should reflect on how we, the Security Council, and the international community, can best support the African Union and enhance and support the peace initiative. The UK is open to the African Union's suggestions on how the Council and the international community can play a more supportive role, and we look forward to the interactive dialogue later.

Thank you Mr President.