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Executive Office of the Secretary-General
Cabinet du Secrétaire general

To: CDC (through ODSG),

Please find attached for clearance the draft SG report on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic, covering the period from January 2011 to December 2015. The report provides a detailed assessment of the extent of the six grave violations against children by all parties to the conflict during this period, including the extensive scale of recruitment and use of children by armed groups (estimated at btw 6,000-10,000). Under reporting is significant and the following figures should be considered in this light; 333 children killed; 521 cases of sexual violence; 131 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals; 257 cases of abduction and 298 incidents of denial of humanitarian assistance. Impunity for these crimes remains widespread.

Sexual violence by MINUSCA peacekeepers is mentioned in section G. This is the first time in an SG country-specific report on children and armed conflict that such cases, and the nationalities of TCCs involved, are referred to. The decision to do so follows extensive internal consultation, especially given the different positions on whether or not to report on SEA by peacekeepers as cases of sexual violence under the mandate of SRSG CAAC (and SRSG SVC). Subsequent to agreement by OCDC, as well as by the Legal Counsel and DPKO, the paragraph is retained given the gravity, scale and pattern of violations against children in the CAR. Whether or not forthcoming SG reports on children and armed conflicts will henceforth refer to SEA by UN peacekeepers (as sexual violence cases) is pending outcome of ongoing discussion in the context of follow-up to recommendations of the CAR Panel report.

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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Mr. Jan Eliasson
A: Deputy Secretary-General

DATE: 29 January 2016

REF: CAAC-16-012

THROUGH
S/C DE

FROM: Leila Zerrougui, Under-Secretary-General
DE: Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

SUBJECT **For clearance: Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed**
OBJET: **Conflict in Central African Republic**

1. Please find attached the above-mentioned report, which has been prepared for submission to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

2. This final draft is submitted for clearance by the Office of the Secretary-General. It would be greatly appreciated if this report could be cleared as soon as possible to allow editorial and translation processes.

3. Queries and/or comments regarding this report should be addressed to Ms. Nelly Sabarthes, political affairs officer, OSRSG/CAAC (sabarthes@un.org), cc: Ms. Sharon Riggle (riggle@un.org)

cc: Ms. Katarina Mansson

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To:
Cc:
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Subject: Fw: For clearance: Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (January 2011 -December 2015)

---- Forwarded by Jill Annitto/NY/UNO on 29/01/2016 02:09 PM -----

From: Roxana Garcia/NY/UNO
To: SGCentral/NY/UNO@UNHQ
Cc: Leila Zerrougui/NY/UNO@UNHQ, Sharon Riggle/NY/UNO@UNHQ, Nelly Sabarthes/NY/UNO@UNHQ, Anne-Lise Robin/NY/UNO@UNHQ, Katarina Mansson/NY/UNO@UNHQ
Date: 29/01/2016 01:58 PM
Subject: For clearance: Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (January 2011 -December 2015)

Dear colleagues,
For your kind processing please.

16.1.29 to Mr. Eliasson on report on CAAC in Central African Republic.pdf

160128 SG report on CAAC in CAR for EOSGs approval.docx

Roxana Garcia
Personal Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative
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Approved on behalf of the Secretary-General.
Chef de Cabinet

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic

(January 2011 –December 2015)

Summary

The present report is my third report on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR). It focuses on the six grave violations committed against children, and provides information on the perpetrators and the context in which these violations took place.

The report notes the devastating effect that the cycles of violence had on children in CAR between January 2011 and December 2015. It provides information on large scale recruitment and use of children, and on the continuing trends in killing and maiming, sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals throughout the reporting period. The document also highlights patterns of abductions and denial of humanitarian access by non-State armed groups. Furthermore, the report contains information on grave violations against children committed by international forces deployed in CAR.

At the end, the report provides a series of recommendations to end and prevent grave violations against children in CAR and to improve their protection.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions, and covers the period from January 2011 to December 2015. It highlights trends and patterns of grave violations committed against children since my last report (S/2011/241). It also outlines progress made and challenges encountered since the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (SCWG-CAAC), ~~which were~~ adopted on 6 July 2011 (S/AC. 51/2011/5). Where possible, the report identifies parties to conflict responsible for grave violations committed against children. In this regard, in the annexes of my most recent report on children and armed conflict that was published in June 2015 (A/69/926–S/2015/409), the ex-Séléka coalition and associated armed groups, and the anti-Balaka were listed for recruitment and use, killing and maiming and sexual violence. The ex-Séléka coalition and associated armed groups were also listed for attacks on schools and hospitals.

2. There were significant changes in the dynamics and nature of the conflict in CAR during the reporting period. The situation of children deteriorated throughout, particularly from December 2012 and March 2013, as the Séléka coalition ravaged the country ahead of and during their take-over, and later with the outbreak of intercommunal and interreligious violence that erupted in December 2013. The existence of multiple armed groups, active at different phases of the conflict, many of which ceased to exist or re-emerged under new names, or fragmented with unclear chains of command, has added to the complexity of the situation. In this context, monitoring and reporting on grave violations ~~was very~~has remained extremely challenging, compounded by political instability, insecurity, and logistical and capacity constraints. Consequently, some allegations of grave violations against children

could not be verified by the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR). The CTFMR met regularly until the end of 2012, but reduced its activities afterwards due to the evacuation of United Nations personnel. It was reactivated in February 2014 and has since been operational. In light of these limitations, it is important to note that the data collected is only indicative of the full extent of grave violations committed against children in CAR during the reporting period.

II. Overview of the political, military and security situation

A- January 2011 to December 2012

3. The presidential and first round of legislative elections were held on 23 January 2011 and on 12 February, the Constitutional Court declared the incumbent president, François Bozizé, the winner. The result of the presidential elections was rejected by the opposition who boycotted the second round of the legislative elections that took place in March of that year. On 6 January 2012, the leaders of four politico-military movements involved in the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, including the president of the *Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie* (APRD) and the leader of the *Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement* (UFDR), were arrested. During this period, the United Nations also noted a surge in reports of human rights violations perpetrated by CAR security and defense forces, particularly the Presidential Guard.

4. These developments prompted the opposition to attempt to rally the population against the Government. Failing to achieve this goal, armed groups already active in the northern part of the country resumed fighting against a weak Government who had little administrative or security presence outside of the capital, in particular in border areas. On 10 December 2012, a rebel offensive began when elements of the UFDR occupied the north-western towns of Ndélé, Ouadda and Sam Ouandja. The UFDR forces were later joined by three other movements: the newly created *Convention patriotique du salut du Kodro*, the already-existing *Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix* (CPJP Fondamentale) and the *Union des forces républicaines*. These movements organized themselves into a loose coalition, the Séléka, under the leadership of Michel Djotodia, and claimed that President Bozizé had failed to uphold the terms of the peace agreements signed in 2007 and 2008. Within a few months following the elections, these armed groups, with the support of foreign elements, took control of the northern and eastern parts of CAR. President Bozizé responded by calling on the population to resist, distributed machetes and used a youth militia, the *Coalition citoyenne d'opposition aux rébellions armées* (COCORA), to attack the Séléka and Muslim communities.

5. In this context, growing tensions between Christian and Muslim communities were fuelled and manipulated by political leaders. The Séléka coalition was a heterogeneous group comprised of former members of armed groups, disgruntled ex-combatants who had helped bring Bozizé to power, deserters from the ~~presidential~~ Presidential gGuard and foreign armed elements from neighbouring countries. This heterogeneity weakened an already tenuous chain of command and contributed to an atmosphere of impunity in which elements committed numerous and serious human rights violations.

B- January to December 2013

6. In order to bring the conflict with Séléka to an end, peace talks were held under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and resulted in the signing on 11 January 2013 of the Libreville Agreements, which provided for transition and power-sharing measures. These agreements were not implemented, however, and in March 2013, the Séléka coalition resumed fighting and moved through the country towards Bangui, burning villages, killing, looting, raping and forcibly enlisting children. On 24 March, Séléka seized Bangui, forcing President Bozizé to flee the country. The army [*Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA)], police and gendarmerie had deserted their positions, ~~taking away~~confiscating weapons which would be used months later by community-based armed militia to dislodge the Séléka coalition from Bangui and other parts of the country. On 13 April, the National Transitional Council was formed to replace the Parliament and on 18 August, Michel Djotodia proclaimed himself Head of State. The United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), in March and April respectively, condemned the unconstitutional seizure of power by the Séléka. ECCAS increased the size of its peace mission, la Mission de consolidation de la paix en Centrafrique (MICOPAX), which was present in the country since 2008. On 19 July 2013, the African Union Peace and Security Council ~~AUPSC~~ established the African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic (MISCA).

7. The Séléka's take-over plunged the country into a state of lawlessness as national security and defence forces disintegrated and the security situation significantly deteriorated. Members of the Séléka coalition, predominantly Muslim, committed large scale human rights violations and engaged in looting with total impunity. Their targeting of non-Muslims created resentment within Christian communities and fuelled religious tensions.

8. Persistent tensions between different factions of the Séléka risked a confrontation within the coalition. As a result, in September 2013, President Djotodia officially dismantled the coalition through presidential decree. However, Séléka units which refused to disband quickly re-organized themselves as the ex-Séléka and continued to commit widespread human rights violations.

9. During this same period, self-defence groups which had existed before the Séléka take-over, re-emerged in late 2013 as the anti-Balaka, and were organized and trained by former FACA, police and gendarmerie.

C- December 2013- September 2014

10. On 5 December 2013, the anti-Balaka attacked ex-Séléka positions in Bangui and in Bossangoa (Ouham prefecture), which triggered widespread violence between Christian and Muslim communities across the country. Close to 2,000 civilians were reportedly killed in Bangui in just a few days. On 9 December, France launched "Opération Sangaris" in support of MISCA and the disarmament of some groups, mostly ex-Séléka, commenced in Bangui. However, a wave of attacks by the Christian majority against the Muslim minority triggered massive population displacement in Bangui and in other parts of the country.~~, with b~~ Both communities reportedly committed~~ing~~ revenge killings and other human rights violations, reaching gruesome levels of cruelty. It is estimated that these attacks generated the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in the last decade with 435,000 IDPs and 450,000 refugees who fled to neighbouring countries between 2013 and 2014, the majority of whom were Muslims.

11. Under international and domestic pressure, President Djotodia was forced to resign on 10 January 2014. Catherine Samba-Panza was elected as Transitional Head of State on 20 January by a newly-established National Transitional Council. In the period that followed, the situation continued to be highly volatile, characterized by a cycle of ~~religiously-motivated~~ reprisal attacks, often religiously motivated, by armed groups and individuals. The situation was compounded by an absence of state authority outside Bangui, weak state institutions, as well as the fragmentation and internal leadership struggles within the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka. The vast majority of Muslims left Bangui and those who remained lived under international protection in the PK5 neighbourhood. Outside Bangui, violent clashes continued between ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka which progressively consolidated their control over parts of the country, particularly the North and the West.

12. On 23 July 2014, a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed in Brazzaville, which led to the gradual restoration of calm in Bangui, and set milestones for the completion of the transition process such as elections, DDR and national reconciliation.

D- September 2014- December 2015

13. The United Nations Multinational Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was deployed and ~~took over from~~replaced MISCA in September 2014. The Mission, ~~is~~ mandated to protect civilians and support the transition, ~~and it~~ has played a positive role, in collaboration with "Opération Sangaris" and the European Union Force (EUFOR), in stabilising the security situation in the months that followed its deployment.

14. The May 2015 Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation and the preceding nationwide popular consultations culminated in the signature of an agreement on the principles of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, and integration of armed elements into the uniformed State forces of CAR. The Bangui Forum represented an important event in the transition process and raised expectations that genuine reconciliation, social cohesion and durable stability was possible. Importantly~~Moreover~~, on 5 May, ten armed groups, including factions of ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka, signed an agreement to stop and prevent the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children[1]. However, attempts to destabilize the political transition resulted in an outbreak of violence in Bangui on 26 September which led to hundreds of civilians being killed and injured, and to further displacement of the population.

15. In a positive development, a referendum was held on 13 December which endorsed the new Constitution. Furthermore, over 95 per cent of eligible Central Africans registered to vote in the ~~upcoming~~ legislative and presidential elections. On 30 December, the first round of presidential and legislative elections was held, representing an important step in ~~concluding~~ toward ending the Transition.

III- Grave violations committed against children in armed conflict

[1] Anti Balaka, Front Démocratique pour le Progrès de la Centrafrique (FDPC), Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricains pour la Justice (MLCJ), Rassemblement Patriotique pour le Renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC), Révolution et justice (RJ), Séléka Rénovée, Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC), Union des Forces Républicaines (UFR) and Union des Forces Républicaines Fondamentales (UFRF).

16. Conflict and instability in CAR have had a ~~dramatic~~ devastating impact on children. Serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law were perpetrated by all parties to conflict, including the Séléka coalition, ex-Séléka and its subsequent factions, the *Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain* (FDPC), anti-Balaka, and unidentified armed men. Monitoring and verification by the United Nations and its partners remained difficult in conflict-affected areas during the reporting period. As noted in the introduction, ~~data~~ information presented in this report is only indicative of the full extent of grave violations committed against children.

A. Recruitment and use of children

17. During the reporting period, armed groups, including self-defence groups, recruited and used children in large numbers. In 2014, a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study estimated that between 6,000 and 10,000 children were associated with armed groups, a surge attributed to the increased activities by the anti-Balaka since 2013. From January 2014 to December 2015, CTFMR members separated 5,541 children (4,274 boys, 1,267 girls) from armed groups. However, the CTFMR was only able to document a total of 715 children, including 114 girls, as newly recruited and used. Ninety per cent of the total number of children recruited and used was documented from 2013 onwards. Children were recruited and used by all parties to conflict, including foreign armed groups such as the Chadian *Front populaire pour le redressement* (FPR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Not only were children brutalised by being used in combat and as sex slaves, but were also forced to perform ~~in~~ various support roles, including as informants. From 2014, children~~they~~ were increasingly used to commit violations against civilians.

18. From 2011 to December 2012, children were reportedly recruited and used to fight alongside armed groups active mostly in the northern part of the country, such as the *Convention des Patriotes pour la justice et la Paix* (CPJP), the UFDR, the *Mouvement des Libérateurs Centrafricain pour la Justice* (MLJC), the FDPC and the CPJP Fondamentale. Foreign armed groups including the FPR and the LRA also recruited and used children.

19. Children were recruited in high numbers, particularly after the emergence of the Séléka coalition and in support of the expansion of self-defence militias. As the situation deteriorated significantly ~~from~~ as of March 2013, reports of large scale recruitment and use of children were received by the CTFMR, although generalized insecurity did not allow for full verification. In 2013, the CTFMR documented the recruitment and use of 188 children (171 boys, 17 girls) by the anti-Balaka and the Séléka coalition, prior to and after its dismantlement. There were unverified reports of children in nearly every town under Séléka's control and of children manning anti-Balaka checkpoints, including in Bangui. The re-recruitment of separated children was also a common feature. For example, on 1 April 2013, 41 children (36 boys, 5 girls) separated from the CPJP in 2012 in the towns of Ndélé and Bria, and transferred to Bangui for their protection, were re-recruited by Séléka commanders who forced entry into a Transit and Orientation Centre (CTO). In December 2013, five boys separated from Séléka and reunified with their families, were re-recruited by anti-Balaka in Bangui.

20. From December 2013 throughout 2014, the CTFMR verified 464 cases of new recruitment, including 446 by anti-Balaka (360 boys, 86 girls) and 18 boys by ex-Séléka. In addition, 2,807 children (2,161 boys, 646 girls) were identified and verified amongst armed

groups including with the anti-Balaka (2,347), with different factions of ex-Séléka (446), with the LRA (13) and one ~~16-year-old~~ boy was separated from *Révolution et Justice* (RJ).

21. Children associated with anti-Balaka were seen manning checkpoints, but also reportedly trained in handling weapons and in combat, and used to fight against ex-Séléka. In one example, on 24 June 2014, children were seen amongst a group of anti-Balaka that were besieging the town of Bambari. During the screening of an anti-Balaka group in September 2014, several children declared to have been sent to spy on ex-Séléka's positions and on members of Muslim communities. In October 2014, several hundred children were observed amongst anti-Balaka elements and demonstrators in Bangui, many of whom were manning barricades. Children were also used by anti-Balaka to lure international forces into ambushes. For example, on 9 October 2014, anti-Balaka members in the *Combatant* neighbourhood of Bangui used children as decoys before attacking MINUSCA forces. With regards to the ex-Séléka, for example, on 9 June, members of a humanitarian mission visiting the locality of Bakala (Ouaka prefecture), observed several children with members of the Unité du Peuple centrafricain (UPC), one of the group's factions. An undetermined number of children were also reportedly sighted participating in attacks against non-Muslims in Bambari in June 2014.

22. In 2015, 39 children (28 boys, 11 girls) were verified as recruited, the majority by the LRA (21), but also by ex-Séléka factions such as *Unité du Peuple centrafricain* (UPC) (13). However, during the outbreak of violence that erupted on 26 September, hundreds of children were observed either manning check-points or erecting barricades in Bangui. On numerous occasions, armed men suspected to be anti-Balaka reportedly used children as shields as they were firing at MINUSCA forces. The use of children as shields by anti-Balaka was also documented by the CTFMR in June 2015 as the anti-Balaka fired at a MINUSCA patrol from the yard of Lycée Boganda, where dozens of children were taking part in a physical education examination. Recruitment was also documented outside of Bangui. In August, two male siblings ~~aged 15 and 17~~ were interviewed in the sub-prefecture of Mbres (Nana-Grebizi). They were carrying out domestic chores and serving at a checkpoint for FPRC and declared that they had joined the group in early 2014 after anti-Balaka members killed their parents in western CAR.

B. Killing and maiming

23. During the reporting period, the CTFMR documented the killing of 333 children (258 boys, 75 girls) and the maiming of 589 (452 boys, 137 girls). <u>These figures are believed to be highly underestimated.</u> Children were killed and maimed by anti-Balaka, the CPJP, the LRA, the MLJC and UFDR, and all groups that formed the Séléka coalition and the ex-Séléka. Children were killed and maimed during clashes between armed groups, in attacks on their communities, and, since December 2013, also targeted due to their religious affiliation. More than half of the total number of the children killed, and nearly 80 per cent of the children maimed, during the reporting period were documented in 2013 and 2014.

24. In 2011, 88 children (63 boys, 25 girls) were killed and maimed by armed groups. Children were mostly killed during armed confrontations between CPJP and UFDR. In 2012, 10 children were documented as killed although the number is estimated to be higher. For example, four children were killed and an unverified number injured during fighting between the FACA and the FPR in January in the Nana-Gribizi prefecture. The relatively lower numbers in 2012 are believed to be linked to the end of hostilities between the CPJP and UFDR and because insecurity impeded monitoring by child protection actors.

25. From December 2012 to the end of 2013, incidents of killing and maiming were verified during two major outbreaks of violence: the seizure of power ~~take-over~~ by the Séléka and the intercommunal and retaliatory attacks between ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka that spiked as of 5 December. Most incidents in 2013 indicated that children were killed and maimed in crossfire. The CTFMR documented 27 children killed and 115 maimed ~~in that~~during this period.

26. The upsurge of violence that followed the 5 December 2013 events in Bangui reached unprecedented levels in scale and claimed the lives of thousands of civilians. Amongst them, the killing of 146 children and the maiming of 289 were documented in 2014. It is believed that hundreds of children were killed and maimed, often brutally, by machete, firearm and other weaponry, in attacks against their communities. Targeted attacks were also reported. For example, four boys were beheaded by ex-Séléka in Bangui in January in retaliation for an attack against Muslims. Other examples include incidents between January and February, which claimed the lives of 22 children (13 boys, nine girls) during reprisal attacks by anti-Balaka against ex-Séléka and Muslim civilians in Baoro, Bangui, Boali, Boda, Bossamptele, Bossambele, Bossangoa, Carnot, and Yaloke. A failed reconciliation attempt between anti-Balaka and the residents of PK5 in Bangui resulted in confrontations on 25 July, which caused injuries to 16 boys and 13 girls. On 7 August, youths associated with ex-Séléka attacked the Saint-Joseph Cathedral in Bambari killing 20 children (19 boys, one girl) and injuring three girls and one boy. Street and unaccompanied children were also at particular risk of retaliatory violence because the shelters where they were usually assisted could no longer provide assistance and protection. Children were also victims of explosive remnants of war (ERW). For example, on 11 December, six children died while playing with a grenade that exploded in a village near Paoua.

27. Most of 2015 witnessed a period of relative calm until 26 September when a new outbreak of violence erupted in Bangui. The CTFMR verified the killing of 62 children (49 boys, 13 girls) and the maiming of 185 (155 boys, 30 girls) by anti-Balaka, the FPRC and unidentified armed men. Some of the children were killed in crossfire between anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka. In particular, the outbreak of violence in Bangui in September and October prompted by the beheading of a 16-year-old Muslim motorcyclist claimed the life of 28 children and injured 31 others, with 16 killed and 19 injured during the first four days of the confrontation only.

C. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

28. ~~Rape and other acts of sexual violence were prevalent during the reporting period.~~ The CTFMR verified a total of 521 children (513 girls, eight boys) victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence (three cases in 2011, 22 in 2012, 20 in 2013, 406 in 2014 and 70 in 2015). The substantial increase in the number of documented cases in 2014 is attributed to the surge in violence and armed confrontations countrywide from December 2013, but also by a greater presence of humanitarian actors in certain areas who could verify cases. Sexual violence was perpetrated by all parties to conflict. Sexual violence against children by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka formed part of a larger pattern of violations against civilians in areas under their control, particularly in 2014.

29. Although believed to be widespread, sexual violence remained underreported. It is believed that many survivors did not report due to stigmatization, shame, risk of rejection by the spouse or the family, or for fear of reprisals by suspected perpetrators. Indeed, reports indicated that survivors and their families were routinely threatened to keep silent. It has also

been compounded by the lack of trust in or access to the judiciary and the absence of state authority across the country. The disintegration of the judicial system and the security forces contributed to a widespread climate of impunity, as well as the absence of protective measures to separate survivors of sexual violence from perpetrators. Furthermore, chronic insecurity hampered access to assistance for survivors.

30. Approximately 50 per cent of the 406 cases documented in 2014 were perpetrated by the ex-Séléka (205 cases), 46 per cent by the anti-Balaka (187 cases), the remaining four per cent were attributed to members of the national police or unidentified individuals. Reportedly, in areas under ex-Séléka's control, armed elements went door-to-door looking for girls. On 16 November, a 13-year-old girl and her older sister were gang-raped by a group of 12 unidentified individuals who attacked their village on the road from Bria to Ndélé; both victims later died. On 14 November in Bangui, another ~~14-year-old~~ girl and her older sister were gang-raped at gunpoint by two anti-Balaka members. The suspected perpetrators were later arrested by MINUSCA and handed over to the Gendarmerie. As of December 2015, an investigation was yet to be conducted.

31. Parties to conflict continued to commit rape and other forms of sexual violence in 2015. For example, on 24 June, armed UPC elements in Mbrès raped two girls ~~aged 15 years~~ who were returning from the market. In a particularly stark example which took place in August, two street vendor girls ~~aged 14 and 17~~ were abducted by three armed anti-Balaka members in Bangui and taken to the village of Vodambola, where they were continuously raped for five days. Upon their release, the victims received medical support.

D. Attacks on schools and hospitals

32. Already fragile education and health systems were severely affected by the conflict and deprived hundreds of thousands of children of their fundamental rights to ~~from access to~~ education and basic healthcare. Schools and hospitals were attacked, destroyed, burnt, and systematically looted during armed confrontations between parties to conflict. Education and health personnel were threatened and killed. Schools and hospitals were also used for military purposes. The CTFMR verified a total of 131 incidents of attacks against schools (98) and hospitals (33) during the reporting period.

33. In 2011, 12 schools were attacked or damaged in crossfire by the APRD, CPJP, FPR, and the FACA. Schools were also attacked because they were being used by one of the parties to conflict. For example, on 5 January 2011, the Yangoudrondja primary school, located 135 kilometres from Bria, was destroyed by CPJP elements, and the headmaster and some of the teachers were severely beaten. Teachers living in CPJP-controlled areas and teaching in UFDR areas were accused of complicity with the UFDR and threatened by CPJP. In 2012, the CTFMR recorded 10 incidents of attack and two military use by the CPJP.

34. From December 2012 and through to the end of the reporting period, the CTFMR witnessed a surge in the number of attacks on schools (36), all perpetrated by ex-Séléka. Attacks on schools, teachers and students are believed to have been part of a pattern of violations committed by armed groups. The United Nations received reports of looting of schools by armed groups, including following their rehabilitation, which resulted in long-term closures. For example, three schools were looted in Damara, north of Bangui, in May 2013 and benches, doors, and windows were taken by members of the Séléka ~~c~~Coalition. In August 2013, in the Basse-Kotto region, two schools were repeatedly attacked by patrolling Séléka and two other were damaged during retaliatory attacks by Séléka on communities

accused of not being supportive. Three schools were also damaged during clashes between ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka in Ndélé and Bambari in the same period.

35. The CTFMR documented 36 cases of military use of schools mostly by factions of ex-Séléka, also from December 2012 onwards. For example, from December 2014 to January 2015, FPRC elements used the primary school of Boto (Nana-Grebizi prefecture) from where they launched attacks against anti-Balaka. The school was vacated following advocacy by the CTFMR. On 20 January 2015, anti-Balaka elements in Bangui expelled pupils from their classroom in three primary schools and used it as their base. Violence also hindered the return of both teachers and students to schools.

36. Hospitals, health centres and related protected personnel were also attacked, particularly from 2013 onwards. Medical facilities were looted by all parties in the turmoil leading up to March 2013 and during the months that followed. On 5 December 2013, ex-Séléka attacked the "Hôpital de l'Amitié", one of the main hospitals in Bangui, and summarily executed 10 patients. As a result, all medical personnel and patients fled and the hospital closed for a month until it reopened after MISCA introduced security measures. On 26 April 2014, an attack against a health centre in the village of Boguila by ex-Séléka resulted in the killing of 22 civilians including three humanitarian workers. The health centre closed thereby depriving around 5,000 children of medical services. On 27 February 2015, anti-Balaka carjacked a National Blood Bank vehicle in Bangui, depriving patients of blood in several hospitals in Bangui and neighbouring localities. On 15 March 2015, a nurse working in a dispensary in Bambari was abducted and killed by three members of anti-Balaka who accused her of having spread information regarding their plan to attack the village of Ngaluwa (Ouaka prefecture). Two suspects were arrested and handed over to the Gendarmerie.

37. Hospitals and health centres were also used militarily. In 2015, the CTFMR documented two cases of military use by factions of ex-Séléka.

E. Abduction

38. The CTFMR documented the abduction of 257 children (195 boys, 62 girls) aged between three and 17 during the period under review. Nearly seventy per cent of the documented abductions (180) were attributed to the LRA with a peak in 2011 (101), the year the LRA was most active. As the violence intensified from December 2012 onwards, other armed groups, including the Séléka coalition (and subsequently ex-Séléka), anti-Balaka and unidentified armed men, also abducted children.

39. Children abducted by the LRA were used as porters, to loot goods, and in other support roles. Abducted girls endured sexual violence while in captivity. In August 2011, four girls who were abducted and later released by the LRA reported they had been used as cooks but were also shared between commanders as 'forced wives'. In 2013 and 2014, the activities of the LRA decreased due to the military operations against them by the AU Regional Task Force (AURTF). Despite this, it was still reported that children were abducted to carry looted goods and kept in captivity for reduced periods of approximately two to three days. For example, in April 2015, MINUSCA interviewed once ~~16-year-old~~ boy who escaped from the LRA. The boy said he was abducted on 4 December 2014 together with 10 other children including seven girls in the village of Moroubanda (Nana-Grebizi prefecture) by 23 armed LRA members.

40. Children abducted by the Séléka coalition were used as combatants in addition to support roles. The abduction of children also increased and became a lucrative activity during the reporting period with children being abducted for ransom. On 4 August 2013, five children (three boys, two girls) aged one to six years were abducted near the town of Ndélé and a ransom demanded by Séléka elements. The children were rescued two days later by a rival group of Séléka combatants from Kaga Bandoro. In February 2014, two girls were abducted in Bangui allegedly by anti-Balaka who threatened to kill them if a ransom was not paid. The girls were later rescued and released by another group of anti-Balaka and handed over to the United Nations who facilitated their reunification. Criminal motivations behind abductions continued to be observed in 2015.

41. Children were also abducted by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka on the suspicion of being informants. In March 2014, four boys suspected of acting as informants for ex-Séléka were kidnapped by anti-Balaka elements in Bangui. The victims were held for four days before being released following pressure from the CTFMR. In June 2014, eyewitness reports implied that many adults and children suspected to be anti-Balaka informants were abducted by ex-Séléka in Bambari and later executed.

F. Denial of humanitarian access

42. Denial of humanitarian access was a concern with 298 incidents recorded by the CTFMR during the reporting period, affecting the delivery of assistance to hundreds of thousands of children. Twenty-four incidents were verified in 2011, 18 in 2012, 22 in 2013, 80 in 2014 and 150 in 2015. Humanitarian access was a challenge throughout the period because of the remoteness of affected areas, insecurity, lawlessness, and the targeting of humanitarian actors in the latter part of the reporting period.

43. In 2011 and 2012, humanitarian access was difficult and limited in the Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga, Haute-Kotto, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou, Basse-Kotto and Ouham prefectures due to the presence of armed groups. An incident of abduction of eight staff of an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) was documented in January 2011.

44. As insecurity spread across the country in December 2012, premises of INGOs were looted. Humanitarian organizations repeatedly highlighted security concerns as the most limiting factor for their operations. For example, in February 2013, two humanitarian convoys delivering aid to populations in Séléka-controlled areas were blocked by the FACA who believed the aid was destined for Séléka fighters. In the same month, Séléka prevented the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) plane from landing at the Bria airstrip (Haute-Kotto prefecture), leading to the delay and cancellation of humanitarian assistance destined for this region. On 24 August 2013, two national staff members of an INGO were killed by Séléka elements while returning from Bossangoa. They were seen using satellite phones and thus accused of spying for the anti-Balaka.

45. The events of December 2013 and the cycle of retaliatory attacks that followed, limited the ability of humanitarian organizations to assist displaced communities, even in IDP sites in Bangui. It is estimated that nearly 400,000 children were deprived of basic humanitarian assistance in that period. Negotiations for humanitarian access were challenging due to unclear chains of command within the armed groups.

46. On 13 April 2014, a truck loaded with 850 bags of food for IDPs was attacked and pillaged by anti-Balaka. On 23 June 2014, armed ex-Séléka stormed the office of an INGO in

Bambari and asked staff to hand over anti-Balaka members they believed the organization was sheltering. Following the incident, the INGO suspended its activities mainly benefiting children and all humanitarian staff were evacuated from Bambari.

47. In the course of 2014 and in 2015, the nature of incidents affecting humanitarian actors and access became increasingly criminal. Unidentified armed individuals or alleged affiliates of ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka impeded the provision of humanitarian assistance, often as a lucrative activity. For example, many humanitarian convoys were looted and pillaged goods were later found for sale in nearby markets. Armed robberies were committed at several INGO offices and staff residences, forcing them to suspend activities. On numerous occasions and across the country, humanitarian convoys were requested to pay a fee of passage at checkpoints. Several INGO vehicles were hijacked in Bangui, allegedly by anti-Balaka elements. By September 2015, over 200 humanitarian staff who had been victims of attacks were relocated to neighbouring countries. They have progressively returned to CAR since October.

G. Grave violations against children by international forces

48. During the reporting period, a number of international forces were deployed to CAR at different times and with different mandates. The United Nations documented grave violations against children committed by some of thoseese international forces. There were numerous cases documented of both United Nations and non-United Nations forces committing violations of rape and sexual violence against children, some on a repetitive basis, and the cases were sent to the appropriate authorities for action. Thise situation is the subject of ongoing, urgent discussion within the United Nations, with a focus on closing institutional gaps, ensuring prevention and protection, and very importantly, ensuring that all victims receive the necessary assistance. The conditions in the country, such anotablys Oongoing conflict, and the breakdown of law and order, and contributed to a climate of pervasive impunity, contributed to conditions for such horrendous acts to be committed across the country by these and other forces, favourable to their commission, particularly acts of sexual violence.

49. In 2014, the United Nations interviewed several boys aged between nine and 13 following allegations of repeated acts of sexual violence by elements of "Opération Sangaris" in and around the M'Poko IDP camp, reportedly committed between December 2013 and May 2014. The French authorities opened a judicial investigation in July 2014, which was ongoing as of December 2015.

50. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were also committed by members of other international forces. In 2013, two incidents of sexual violence were committed by the Uganda People's Defence Forces, deployed in CAR under the command of the AURTF in Obo. In one incident on 29 August 2013, a 17-year-old girl was raped by two UPDF soldiers, and on 10 October, another girl was sexually abused by three UPDF soldiers. UNICEF has advocated with the Ugandan authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice; however, to date, no action has been taken.

51. In January 2016, new allegations were received of cases that occurred during the reporting period involving elements of theGeorgia's contingent of European Union Force in CAR (EUFOR) and "Opération Sangaris".The allegations were under investigation at the time of writing.

52. In 2015, 105 allegations of sexual violence against children ~~girls aged 12 to 17~~ committed by MINUSCA peacekeepers were also reported as involving military personnel from the Democratic Republic of Congo (4), Morocco (1), Gabon (1), Burundi (1), and an unknown nationality (1), as well as police personnel from the Republic of Congo (1) and an unknown nationality (1). Some of the minors were sexually assaulted while others ~~The girls~~ were asked for sex in return for money, food and non-food items. As of December 2015, troop-contributing countries, as relevant, or the Office of the Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), with the support of MINUSCA, had started investigations into these allegations. The victims have received medical and psychosocial support. New allegations were received in January 2016 which are being investigated.

53. Following reports of enforced disappearance, MINUSCA documented the case of one child amongst the 11 victims allegedly killed in March 2014 by elements of the Republic of Congo contingent of MISCA. Although the victims' families lodged complaints with the CAR Gendarmerie in May 2014, an effective investigation is yet to happen.[2]

54. Furthermore, the military use of schools by international forces was also documented throughout the reporting period. In 2013, two contingents of the Multinational Force for Central Africa (FOMAC) used two schools in Sibut and Damara. In 2014, five schools were temporarily used by MISCA and "Opération Sangaris" and later vacated. MINUSCA Force Commander and Police Commissioner have issued standing orders to their forces to not use any school during the conduct of their activities.

55. In June 2015, I appointed an External Independent Review on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by International Peacekeeping Forces in the Central African Republic which will contribute to a review of United Nations procedures to support the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Panel handed over its report on 17 December and I am currently reviewing its recommendations.

III. Programmatic response

56. As noted in the section on recruitment and use ~~section~~, from January 2014 to December 2015, CTFMR members separated 5,541 children from armed groups, nearly 90 per cent from anti-Balaka. As the number of children associated with parties to conflict increased considerably with the advent of anti-Balaka, reintegration became challenging due to the sheer number of cases. UNICEF and its partners opted for community-based reintegration since a large proportion of the children lived with their families prior to their recruitment and were mobilized by the anti-Balaka on a needs basis. Only unaccompanied minors separated from anti-Balaka were provided care in host families supported by UNICEF partners. Children separated from ex-Séléka received care in transit centres and foster families through a partnership between UNICEF and INGOs. The services provided to children as part of the reintegration package included medical screening, family tracing and reunification, psychosocial assistance and kits for returning to school or undertaking vocational training. In December 2015, the Minister of Social and Humanitarian Affairs announced that a child DDR policy had been approved. However, ~~although~~ the United

[2] Press briefing notes on justice for rights abuses in Nigeria, Central African Republic and Bahrain, by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, 5 June 2015 - See more at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16043&LangID=E accessed on 8 January 2016.

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Nations was not aware of details at the time of writing in January 2016. I remain concerned by the immense challenges faced for the sustainable reintegration of these children in an environment where armed groups are still active, and reintegration opportunities are limited.

IV. Engagement with Transitional Authorities and Global Advocacy

57. From 2011 to 2012, the United Nations attempted to introduce mechanisms for the protection of children within the state institutions, and to sensitize and build the capacity of security forces. However, all efforts stalled following the Séléka take-over and disintegration of security forces, but resumed in late 2014. In 2015, MINUSCA provided training on child protection to 650 FACA officers and soldiers and 94 gendarmes and 52 Ssous-pPréfets (Heads of local authorities) in Bangui.

58. Owing to the collapse of the judicial system and other core functions of the Statestate institutions, the Security Council mandated MINUSCA to assist the transitional authorities to arrest and bring to justice those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. A memorandum of understanding establishing urgent temporary measures (UTMs) to restore law and order and fight impunity was signed in August 2014. On 3 June 2015, the Transitional Head of State promulgated the Statute creating a Special Criminal Court to be composed of national and international judges. As noted earlier in the report, two anti-Balaka members who allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl in November 2014 were arrested by MINUSCA and handed over to the national Gendarmerie within the UTMs framework. However, no other individuals have been arrested for grave violations against children amongst the over 300 individuals arrested under the UTMs.

59. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited CAR in December 2013, jointly with my Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide, to assess the impact of the conflict on children, advocate for the cessation of violence, and hold discussions with the then transitional authorities, MISCA and "Opération Sangaris". In those discussions, she focused on the protection for civilians and safe access to cantonment sites to allow for the identification and handover of children associated with armed groups. Following the visit, my Special Representative briefed the Security Council on 22 January 2014 and advocated for sustained engagement and attention from Council members, particularly on accountability and support to child reintegration. On 5 May 2014 and 3 December 2015, my Special Representative also briefed the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) to provide information on the grave violations committed against children.

60. Advocacy was undertaken in 2014 with the Security Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry (COI) in order to highlight concerns about the situation of children affected by armed conflict in CAR. The final report of the COI was released in January 2015 and highlighted in particular grave violations against children. My Special Representative also interacted with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in CAR, particularly after the latter's visits to CAR in February and June 2015.

61. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict advocated for the inclusion of child protection in the discussions for the cessation of hostilities. The Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed on 23 July 2014 in Brazzaville incorporated child protection provisions and commitments from the parties to end and prevent grave violations against children, particularly killing and maiming, recruitment and use and sexual violence. The Brazzaville Agreement created momentum for the CTFMR to intensify its engagement with

the armed groups on the ground and to turn commitments into concrete gains, particularly the release of children. Prior to the Bangui Forum, the CTFMR engaged in intensive dialogue with the armed groups during negotiations held between the groups and the government. During the negotiations, armed groups were sensitized on children's concerns in armed conflict situations and requested to take measures to mitigate the impact of armed conflict on children.

V. Engagement with armed groups

62. There were many challenges in engaging armed groups during the reporting period, owing to the evolution of conflict, the multiplication and fragmentation of the groups themselves, the fluidity of chains of command and the frequent changes in leadership. Nevertheless, in 2011, the CTFMR engaged several of them, which led to the adoption of action plans by the APRD and the CPJP, in October and November 2011 respectively, to end and prevent recruitment and use of children. These groups have since ceased to exist.

63. Following a return to relative calm in 2014, the CTFMR was able to engage in dialogue with the military leadership of the RPRC and UPC factions of ex-Séléka, which led to the signature of a command order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children by RPRC "General" Joseph Zoundeiko on 4 July 2014. The command order enabled the separation of 60 children (59 boys, one girl) who were handed over to a UNICEF partner. Similarly, UPC military leader Ali Mahamat Darassa also issued a command order on 14 October 2014 leading to the release of 77 children, who were later reunited with their families. As part of these orders, UNICEF was able to provide training to over 400 combatants and officers of these two factions in the Ouaka prefecture. Since then, the CTFMR has continued its engagement with both factions for the adoption of action plans but this has been hampered by the relapse into violence in September and October 2015.

64. With regards to the anti-Balaka, the CTFMR has yet to establish a formal dialogue because of their unstructured nature and unclear chain of command. However, in early 2014, the CTFMR identified entry points to engage the anti-Balaka and in April 2014, initial contacts enabled the CFTMR to provide training to 79 commanders based in Bangui on child protection. In 2015, 145 members and commanders of anti-Balaka received similar training in Kaga-Bandoro. The training enabled the CTFMR to approach local commanders who cooperated for the separation of 2,347 children, as mentioned above.

65. On 22 October 2014, UNICEF signed a Protocol with "Opération Sangaris" for the transfer of children in its custody to UNICEF and its partners.

66. On 5 May 2015, 10 armed groups signed an agreement committing to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children. Since the agreement, 1,475 children (1,197 boys, 224 girls) have been separated. The agreement also further opened the space for the CTFMR to continue and consolidate its dialogue with the parties with the view of adopting action plans.

VI. Observations and recommendations

67. I am deeply troubled by the scale and nature of violations endured by the children in the CAR~~, as described in this report and~~ I urge all parties to conflict in the Central African Republic to immediately halt grave violations against children and

abide by international humanitarian and human rights law, ~~, and I call on~~ All armed groups are urged to implement their commitments to release all children in their ranks.

68. As widespread impunity continues to prevail ~~in CAR, including~~ for perpetrators of grave violations against children, I urge the CAR authorities to take immediate steps to ensure accountability ~~that all perpetrators are held accountable. In this regard,~~ I call upon the national authorities to strengthen the country's justice system and end the culture of impunity, including through the establishment and operationalization of the Special Criminal Court. I appeal ~~t is essential for~~ to donors to provide financial and technical support to the ~~CAR~~ national authorities ~~' initiatives to strengthen its justice system~~in this regard.

69. I encourage the CAR authorities to sustain their commitment to the urgent temporary measures established in accordance with Security Council resolution 2149 (2014) and to continue to work with the United Nations to restore law and order. I also call for the criminalization of the recruitment and use of children, the expeditious ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the implementation of policies to create a more protective environment for children.

70. I ~~encourage~~ call on the CAR authorities and international partners to ensure that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reform take into account the rights, specific needs and protection of children affected by the armed conflict. In particular, I urge Member States and the donor community to support reintegration efforts to benefit thousands of children currently associated with armed groups in CAR. I also encourage the CAR authorities, with the support of the CTFMR and relevant international partners, to establish clear recruitment procedures and age verification mechanisms to ensure that children are not recruited into armed and security forces.

71. Considering the extreme fragility of the education and healthcare systems, I urge all parties to conflict to immediately take measures to protect schools and hospitals. In this regard, I commend the commitment and efforts by the transitional authorities and welcome the signature of the Safe School Declaration. I encourage the authorities to take further steps to ensure that schools are protected from the effects of conflict and call on relevant international partners to assist these efforts.

72. I welcome commitments made during the Bangui Forum by a number of armed groups to end grave violations against children, particularly recruitment and use. I urge the signatories to respect and implement their commitments and to engage in dialogue with the United Nations to develop and adopt actions plans in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

73. In light of the ~~deeply concerning behaviours~~unacceptable allegations of grave violations against children, including acts of sexual violence, committed by ~~of~~ some elements of international forces deployed ~~to protect a vulnerable population~~in the CAR, including United Nations peacekeepers ~~who have committed grave violations against children, including acts of sexual violence~~, I reiterate my unwavering commitment to redoubling efforts to prevent and respond to these reprehensive crimes. I am strongly committed to ensure that all United Nations personnel comply with the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on misconduct, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

In response to the allegations that have been brought to my attention, I urge concerned Member States to conduct thorough and prompt investigations, which the United Nations stands ready to support.

74. **I have taken serious note of the report produced by the External Independent Review of the United Nations response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and other serious crimes by members of international forces not under United Nations command in the Central African Republic. I am currently reviewing their recommendations in order to identify the necessary actions to be taken to improve the prevention and response to such violations.**