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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Visit to the Central African Republic

Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally*, **

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally, undertook a country visit to the Central African Republic from 24 to 30 November 2023. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the political will of the President and the Government to combat trafficking in persons and to strengthen prevention, protection and accountability. In the present report, she sets out recommendations to ensure the human rights of trafficked persons and to strengthen prevention and accountability measures for all forms of trafficking in persons.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present document after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

** The summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in the language of submission and French only.



Annex

Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally, on her visit to the Central African Republic

I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally, is grateful to the Government of the Central African Republic for its willingness to facilitate her visit from 24 to 30 November 2023. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the political will of the President and the Government to combat trafficking in persons and to strengthen prevention, protection and accountability. She particularly thanks the Ministry of Justice for its support and engagement in advance of the visit. She commends the Government's engagement in an open and constructive dialogue on the challenges faced in combating the serious human rights violation of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Special Rapporteur is grateful to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations country team for their assistance and expert support in facilitating the visit.

2. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur visited Bangui and Bria and held meetings with government ministers and officials, including the Minister of Justice, the Minister for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection and the Minister for Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation. She met with the President of the National Assembly, the Minister-Counsellor to the President on Sexual Violence and the Minister-Counsellor for Human Rights.

3. The Special Rapporteur met with representatives of the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties and the High Authority for Good Governance. She also met with representatives of the Prosecutor's Office of the Special Criminal Court, the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission and the Office of the Public Prosecutor for the Bangui Court of Appeals, the Prosecutor General and the President of the Bar Association. She further met with representatives of the diplomatic community and of international and regional partners of the Central African Republic and is grateful for the opportunity for engagement with MINUSCA, the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic and the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic.

4. In Bria, the Special Rapporteur met with the Prefect, the Mayor, members of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, gendarmerie and police, and the President of the District Court. She met with displaced women, and youth and community leaders and observed the devastating impacts of conflict, displacement, climate change, extreme poverty and gender inequality.

5. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur met with representatives of the United Nations country team, United Nations agencies, MINUSCA and development partners. She also met with representatives of civil society organizations and is particularly grateful to those organizations for their engagement on and in-depth analysis of trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic and the challenges in ensuring prevention, protection and accountability.

II. Conflict and the peace process

6. Achieving peace, justice and accountability is essential to combating trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic. Against a background of continuing conflict and violence, trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for purposes of all forms of exploitation persists with impunity.

7. Conflict-related trafficking, which is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, includes trafficking for purposes of sexual violence and sexual slavery, child and forced marriage, recruitment and use of children by armed groups and armed forces, and forced labour. Trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual violence or sexual exploitation is a form of conflict-related sexual violence. Conflict-related trafficking in persons may also constitute a violation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, specifically the crimes against humanity of enslavement, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity, and the war crime of sexual slavery. Conflict-related trafficking in persons may also be closely linked to the crimes against humanity of enforced disappearance and deprivation of liberty and is closely linked to and overlaps with the grave violations against children affected by armed conflict.

8. The signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic by the authorities of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups in Bangui on 6 February 2019, within the framework of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and under the auspices of the African Union, is a welcome and critically important development. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the continued engagement of regional and international partners in the peace process, following the adoption of the road map by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Luanda on 16 September 2021 under the leadership of Angola and Rwanda, and notes ongoing efforts to coordinate the implementation of the Political Agreement through the road map.

9. However, violations of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and violence perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, in particular armed groups, persist throughout the country, resulting in displacements, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses, including those committed against children and those involving conflict-related sexual violence.¹

10. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes the important role of the guarantors and facilitators of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and neighbouring States, and the importance of their role in securing adherence by armed groups to their commitment to the Political Agreement and in preventing all forms of conflict-related trafficking in persons.

11. The Special Rapporteur highlights the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and the consequences of the security situation for humanitarian access, which hinder the implementation of measures to prevent trafficking in persons and to assist and protect victims and persons at risk of trafficking, especially women and children. The Special Rapporteur calls for the implementation of an inclusive, gender-sensitive and effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

12. The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned about the use of mercenaries and about the alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses perpetrated by them,² potentially including trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for purposes of sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and child and forced marriage, and about the limited investigations into and accountability for such violations.

13. The Special Rapporteur regrets that trafficking in persons is not referenced in the mandate renewal of MINUSCA, despite the link between trafficking in persons and conflict situations. Requests for reports from MINUSCA should cover information related to trafficking in persons in the context of armed conflict and recommendations to address it. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of taking steps to improve the collection of data, monitoring and analysis of trafficking in persons in the context of armed conflict, in order to better identify and prevent it.

14. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the continuing engagement of the Central African Republic with the Peacebuilding Commission and notes its important role in supporting

¹ Security Council resolution 2709 (2023), seventh preambular paragraph.

² *Ibid.*, sixteenth preambular paragraph.

capacity-building to prevent trafficking in persons as part of the peace process. She highlights the potential role of the Peacebuilding Fund in strengthening human rights-based responses to trafficking in persons.

III. Children and armed conflict

15. Conflict-related trafficking in children is closely linked to the six grave violations against children. As such, the links between such trafficking and the grave violations should be documented when monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic.

16. Recruitment and use of children (for use in direct combat, support roles, child labour, servitude or child marriage) is a form of trafficking in children. Trafficking for purposes of sexual violence and sexual slavery and abductions for purposes of exploitation are also grave violations against children in armed conflict.

17. Progress has been made in responding to conflict-related trafficking in children in the Central African Republic. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the Government's development of interministerial plans to implement the Child Protection Code.³ However, the high numbers of violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights against children remain a serious concern. Continued challenges are faced in ensuring effective implementation in practice of the national plan to prevent and eliminate the six grave violations against children recognized by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. Despite significant progress made at the policy level, the recruitment and use of children remains prevalent: 42 per cent of all children against whom grave violations were identified in 2022 had been recruited and used by armed groups.⁴ Girls continue to be used for sexual purposes and children are also used as combatants and in support roles such as acting as bodyguards, spies, messengers and porters, manning checkpoints and carrying out domestic tasks.

18. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that the implementation of reintegration programmes for children affected by armed conflict, in particular in areas with a limited State presence, remains weak, with continuing risks of re-recruitment and re-trafficking in children.

19. The Special Rapporteur highlights the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking, which is essential to ensuring the recovery of victims, and to a human rights-based response to trafficking in children. In the context of conflict-related trafficking, given the trauma endured and the serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, the application of the principle of non-punishment to children affected by armed conflict, who may be victims of trafficking, must be ensured. During the visit, concerns were raised that children were at risk of being arrested and detained for their association with armed groups and not recognized or assisted as children who are victims of trafficking, in contravention of the non-punishment principle and the State's obligations to trafficking victims under international law.

20. The Special Rapporteur highlights the State's obligation to ensure that children associated with armed forces or armed groups are treated primarily as victims, in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, which have been endorsed by the Central African Republic. The Special Rapporteur also highlights the Safe Schools Declaration, also endorsed by the Central African Republic, and calls for further action to ensure its implementation in practice.

21. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the appointment of a human rights focal point at the État-major of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic with whom the country task force can liaise to address child protection concerns and accountability for grave violations against children committed by the Armed Forces.⁵ The Special Rapporteur highlights the need for continuing measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children by

³ S/2021/882, para. 52.

⁴ A/77/895-S/2023/363, paras. 26 and 27.

⁵ S/2024/93, para. 37.

international security actors, bilaterally deployed security actors, mercenaries and armed groups.

22. The protection of children must remain central to the peace process, including in the framework of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and the implementation of the road map. A strong child protection capacity throughout the country is crucial to facilitate the ongoing engagement with parties to the conflict, to support reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for children associated with armed conflict and to prevent child trafficking and re-trafficking by armed groups and armed forces. Currently, child protection capacity is extremely weak, in particular outside of Bangui. The adoption of a handover protocol for children associated with armed conflict and the development of a national prevention plan to prevent children from becoming victims of the armed conflict should be prioritized. Further action to support gender-sensitive and survivor-centred reintegration programmes and child-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is urgently required, with recognition of the rights to specialized assistance and protection of children who are victims of trafficking. The Special Rapporteur highlights in particular the rights of children with disabilities and the obligation to ensure assistance for and protection of such children who may be at risk of trafficking or who are victims of trafficking, through disability-inclusive measures and programmes, in accordance with the State's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

23. Continued measures are needed to reunite with their families children affected by armed conflict who are separated from their families, while ensuring the best interests of these children and a protective environment and taking into account the continuing risks of trafficking and re-trafficking and the potential for complicity or involvement by family or community members and risks of reprisals against families and communities.

IV. Humanitarian-development-peace nexus

24. Conflicts, transhumance and seasonal floods have led to large internal and external displacements and movements of people and increased vulnerability to trafficking in persons, especially children, adolescents, women, youth, persons with disabilities and persons belonging to minority groups. It is currently estimated that 3.1 million persons, or more than half of the population of the Central African Republic, including 12,000 refugees and 580,000 internally displaced persons, need humanitarian assistance.

25. Despite possessing significant natural resources, the Central African Republic remains one of the poorest countries in the world. The continuing impact of conflict, climate change and displacement, combined with food insecurity and limited access to education, greatly increases risks of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Central African Republic is ranked 188 out of 191 on the human development index; 68.8 per cent of the population live under the national poverty line, 54.9 per cent live under the threshold of food poverty and about 90 per cent are at risk of falling into – or even further into – poverty.⁶ Against this background, achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and recognition of the need for sustained action to address the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is critical to the prevention of trafficking in persons and to assistance, protection and accountability in relation to such trafficking.

26. Prevention of trafficking, protection of victims and accountability are deeply rooted in development and socioeconomic rights concerns, including poverty and inequality, education, child labour, decent work, gender inequality and discrimination, migration and the effects of climate change, and respect for rule of law and human rights. Of particular relevance to action to combat trafficking are Sustainable Development Goals 5 (on gender equality), 8 (on decent work and economic growth) and 16 (on peace, justice and strong institutions). Trafficking in persons is specifically mentioned in three targets of the Goals: targets 5.2 (Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and

⁶ World Bank Group, *Central African Republic Poverty Assessment 2023: A Road Map Towards Poverty Reduction in the Central African Republic* (Washington, D.C., 2023).

private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation), 8.7 (Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms) and 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children). Goal 16 also includes targets on promoting the rule of law, reducing corruption, developing effective and accountable institutions and ensuring a legal identity, including birth registration, for all. Also directly relevant to the prevention of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, are targets 5.3 (Eliminate harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation) and 10.7 (Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies).

27. The Special Rapporteur notes the limited progress made by the Central African Republic towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (2017–2023) under its three pillars relating to: (a) supporting peace, security and national reconciliation; (b) renewing the social contract between the State and the population; and (c) ensuring economic recovery and the revival of productive sectors.⁷

28. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and making progress towards achieving Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want require prioritization of a human rights-based response to all forms of trafficking in persons, including internal trafficking, trafficking in the context of mixed migration and displacement, and conflict-related trafficking.

V. Security sector reform

29. The limited presence of State authorities outside of Bangui continues to hinder security sector reform and capacity to combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and to ensure prevention, protection and accountability.

30. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the ongoing work carried out by MINUSCA, the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic and the European Union Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic, and notes the support of the country's other international and regional partners in training and enhancing the capacities of its defence and security forces. However, the Special Rapporteur highlights continued serious concerns in relation to compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, international security actors and mercenaries.

31. The Special Rapporteur highlights the urgency of holding accountable all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights, irrespective of their status or political affiliation, and emphasizes that some of those acts may amount to crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which the Central African Republic is a State party.

VI. Conflict-related trafficking in persons, especially women and children

32. The levels of conflict-related sexual violence and continuing impunity are alarming. Signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation continue to use sexual violence as a tactic to terrorize and displace communities, in violation of the terms of the agreement, and continue to engage in trafficking of women and girls, in particular for purposes of sexual exploitation, sexual violence and sexual slavery, and child and forced marriage.

⁷ See <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2023/VNR%202023%20CAR%20Report.pdf>.

33. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the national action plan to prevent and respond to gender-based violence linked to conflict,⁸ the appointment of a dedicated special adviser to the President on conflict-related sexual violence and the commitment of the Central African Republic to addressing conflict-related trafficking, including for purposes of sexual slavery and sexual violence.

34. During her visit, concerns were raised with the Special Rapporteur in relation to the continued stigma, discrimination and marginalization faced by survivors, in particular women, of conflict-related trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and child and forced marriage. Survivors experience rejection by their families and communities, in particular when the perpetrators are from a foreign armed group or are armed group members from a different ethnic or religious group.

35. The Special Rapporteur heard reports of the stigmatization, isolation and intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination faced by children born of rape and their mothers, including in the context of conflict-related trafficking. Such stigma and discrimination increase the risk of trafficking of children born of rape, in particular in the absence of child protection services.

36. The Special Rapporteur was informed that members of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and international security actors, including mercenaries, were responsible for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including enforced disappearances and sexual violence. Some victims of enforced disappearance may also be victims of trafficking.

37. The Lord's Resistance Army continues to abduct women and girls in the Central African Republic for purposes of sexual slavery, as a result of which victims and their children, including those who are born to women who are victims of sexual slavery and other forms of trafficking, suffer devastating physical and psychological repercussions.

38. In an encouraging development, in October 2022, the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic delivered its first verdict, convicting a commander of the armed group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation for rape perpetrated by his subordinates, on the basis of command responsibility.

39. A national action plan for the eradication of statelessness has been adopted. However, concerns remain about the situation of certain groups, such as the Mbororo, who face increased risks of statelessness, and about the destruction of the majority of civil registry centres as a result of the conflict, combined with the centralization of document issuance procedures in Bangui, which does not facilitate access to administrative documents.

VII. Trafficking in children

40. To prevent trafficking in children, urgent measures are required to expand access to education, in particular for girls, and to develop an effective, functioning child protection system across the country, in particular in conflict-affected areas.

41. Of the 3 million children in the country, who make up 50 per cent of its population, only half have access to health services. Moreover, only 37 per cent of children attend school regularly, with half of children not returning to school after the conflict; only 27 per cent of children (24 per cent girls) complete primary school and 12 per cent (10 per cent girls) complete secondary school; and 61 per cent of girls aged between 20 and 24 were married before their 18th birthday.

42. Children in street situations are at particularly high risk of trafficking, with limited access to protective environments. The Special Rapporteur commends the ongoing work to support the rights of children with disabilities and calls for continued attention to be paid to the risks of trafficking for children with disabilities, including through exploitation in begging.

⁸ See https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/PAN-2-R1325-RCA_2019-002.pdf.

43. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the continuing delays in updating and implementing the national child protection policy.

44. Concerns remain that the Criminal Code does not align with the Child Protection Code, further weakening responses to trafficking in children.

45. The technical and operational capacities of child protection officers remain very weak, and as yet there is no functioning body of social workers to prioritize the prevention of trafficking in children and protection of victims.

46. The prevalence of child labour in the Central African Republic, combined with limited child protection services and limited access to education, increases risks of trafficking in children for purposes of forced labour, in particular in high-risk sectors such as agriculture, extractive mining, domestic work and construction. The Special Rapporteur highlights in particular the risks of exploitation of girls trafficked for purposes of domestic servitude, and the lack of investigations or accountability.

VIII. Internal displacement, refugees, forced migration and trafficking in persons

47. The Special Rapporteur commends the Central African Republic for the reception of refugees fleeing conflict and persecution and calls for increased support to strengthen child protection and action to prevent gender-based violence and all forms of trafficking among refugees and returnees. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the risks of exploitation for female-headed households among refugees and displaced persons in particular. Further support is needed for host communities and host families to address extreme poverty and the risks of trafficking in persons that arise.

48. Displacement, primarily due to conflict, has left a devastating impact on the Central African Republic and the potential of its people to enjoy a dignified life. An estimated 751,000 persons from the Central African Republic are hosted as refugees, primarily in neighbouring countries. Refugees from the Central African Republic are hosted by Cameroon (354,000 individuals), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (212,000 individuals) and Chad (130,000 individuals), with smaller numbers in the Sudan and South Sudan.⁹ Ongoing programmes to support voluntary and safe returns require significant additional resourcing and support to ensure that returnees can live dignified lives in safety.

49. Currently, the Central African Republic is host to more than 500,000 internally displaced persons and an estimated 145,000 refugees and returnees. It is also host to asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees from Chad and the Sudan, thousands of whom are living in host families in over 50 villages in the north-west of the country. Humanitarian partners have mobilized emergency assistance to the displaced and to the host communities, but support remains inadequate and women and girls are particularly at risk of trafficking in persons.¹⁰

50. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the measures taken by the Government to assist Sudanese refugees, in particular the signing of a decree granting prima facie refugee status to Sudanese nationals who fled the Sudan following the outbreak of violence and conflict in April 2023. However, the Special Rapporteur was informed of serious risks of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for purposes of child and forced marriage, sexual slavery and sexual exploitation, affecting asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees from Chad and the Sudan, who are in urgent need of protection and assistance. While the National Act on Refugees provides for equal access to judicial, administrative and social services for refugees and asylum-seekers, in practice, a large majority of refugees continue to rely on humanitarian actors for assistance.

⁹ See <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/car>.

¹⁰ [S/2023/769](#), paras. 10 and 59.

51. Continued strengthening of the refugee status determination procedures and measures to identify and assist victims of trafficking who are seeking asylum, or who are granted refugee status, would safeguard against risks of re-trafficking.

IX. Statelessness

52. The Special Rapporteur remains concerned about low rates of birth registration, with high risks of de facto statelessness and consequent increased risks of trafficking in children. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the N'Djamena Initiative on the Eradication of Statelessness in Central Africa, launched by States members of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community. In particular, under the Initiative, States called for the strengthening of civil status systems, including to make them more accessible to persons at risk of statelessness, and ensuring that every child is registered immediately at birth and that every child possesses a birth certificate. They also recognized the importance of a coordinated regional approach in the fight against statelessness. An estimated 1.1 million persons in the Central African Republic are at risk of statelessness. Continued delays in securing identity documents and civil status, in particular for internally displaced person returnees, pastoralists and persons belonging to minorities and Indigenous Peoples, increase the risks of statelessness and of trafficking in persons.

X. Trafficking in persons at borders and border management policies

53. The Special Rapporteur notes the adoption of the national border management policy and the bilateral engagement between the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries.¹¹ While attention is paid to cross-border criminal activities, such as trafficking in arms and trafficking in natural resources, limited attention is paid to the serious human rights violation and serious crime of trafficking in persons and to the human rights of victims of trafficking and persons at risk of trafficking. The Special Rapporteur highlights in particular the lack of identification, referral and protection procedures and accommodation facilities and specialized assistance at borders, and the urgent need for particular attention to be paid to the risks of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for all purposes of exploitation.

54. The Special Rapporteur notes that cross-border criminal activities by all parties, in particular armed groups, such as trafficking in arms, and the resulting destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, threaten the peace and stability of the Central African Republic and contribute to a climate of impunity concerning trafficking in persons, also hindering the prevention of trafficking measures and the protection of victims.

XI. Sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation

55. Sexual and gender-based violence continues to be prevalent and affects women and girls in particular. Alleged perpetrators include members of armed groups that were signatories to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and national security forces and other security personnel.

56. Discriminatory laws and systemic gender inequality continue to hinder access to justice for women and girls who are victims of trafficking. Such systemic inequality also contributes to increased risks of trafficking in persons. The Special Rapporteur notes the commitment to revisions of discriminatory provisions in domestic law.¹² Progress, however, is slow.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 82.

¹² [CEDAW/C/CAF/6](#), para. 250.

57. The Special Rapporteur notes the establishment of the National Committee to Combat Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Gender-Based Violence including Child Marriage.¹³

58. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the commitment of traditional leaders to working together to combat gender-based harmful practices, including child and forced marriage, and related forms of trafficking in persons that affect women and girls in particular. Continued engagement with traditional leaders and traditional justice processes to strengthen human rights-based responses to trafficking in persons and ensure effective access to remedies is essential to effective prevention, protection and accountability, in particular in communities and regions where State presence is limited.

59. The different forms of trafficking that affect women and girls in particular include trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, domestic servitude and forced labour in agriculture, mining and street vending. At least 31 per cent of children aged between 5 and 17 years involved in child labour are girls.

60. The Special Rapporteur was informed of the risks of trafficking in women and girls in the so-called houses of joy in and around Bangui, with limited oversight by law enforcement authorities, despite credible evidence of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation.

61. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the commitment in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2027) to strengthening quality services for and providing a holistic response to gender-based violence with the goal of ending gender-based violence, and emphasizes the importance of ensuring that comprehensive human rights-based responses to trafficking in persons, especially women and children, are incorporated into such measures.

62. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the high rates of violence against sex workers and the limited attention paid to the risks of trafficking in and protection needs of sex workers. Further attention is needed to prevent trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, in particular of women and girls, along transport routes and across borders, with priority given to the provision of assistance to and the protection of victims and persons at risk of trafficking.

63. Persistent stereotyping, discrimination and violence against sex workers prevent access to assistance and protection from law enforcement authorities. Limited investigations and prosecutions contribute to a climate of impunity and lack of protection against the risks of trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation. The Special Rapporteur commends the measures taken by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and others to combat stigma and provide human rights training, also for health service providers. For health service providers, the focus is on raising awareness and providing training on the provision of friendly, stigma-free services.

64. Concerns have also been raised in relation to reports of attacks and physical and verbal violence against and rape and the confiscation of private property of transgender women in sex work, who may be at increased risk of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation.

65. Sex workers in the Central African Republic have a high prevalence of HIV and are very likely to be subjected to rape and physical violence by clients, who include members of the armed forces and international security actors. According to a survey of sex workers conducted by the National Committee for Combating HIV/AIDS in the Central African Republic in 2019, about 15 per cent of sex workers travel outside of the country and 40 per cent travel within the country to visit existing clients or to seek new clients. The high levels of violence and mobility, coupled with the high prevalence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, suggests that sex workers are often unable to negotiate condom use with clients.

¹³ Ibid., para. 54.

XII. Trafficking in persons for purposes of forced labour

66. During her visit, serious concerns were raised with the Special Rapporteur about the prevalence of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, for purposes of domestic servitude. Persons belonging to minorities and Indigenous Peoples, including children, are also particularly vulnerable to trafficking for this purpose, which continues with impunity. The Special Rapporteur highlights that such practices are serious crimes and serious violations of human rights and often result in other related violations, including sexual violence.

67. The Central African Republic is a country with significant natural resources, in mining, agriculture and forestry. However, action is needed to ensure the protection of labour rights, effective labour inspections and enforcement and the prevention of trafficking for purposes of child or forced labour, in particular in high-risk sectors such as mining, forestry and agriculture.

68. Limited measures have been taken to strengthen the roles and capacity of the labour inspectorate, to identify victims of trafficking and persons at risk and to enable referrals for assistance and protection. Concerns were raised during the visit in relation to allegations of a lack of independence and impartiality within the labour inspectorate, insufficient reporting and oversight, and a lack of resources.

69. The security situation and the limited presence of State authorities hinder effective action by the labour inspectorate in sectors such as extractive mining. The Special Rapporteur was seriously concerned at reports received of child labour, with risks of trafficking in children for purposes of child labour in the mining sector. Concerns were also raised that trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation of women and girls occurs in the areas where extractive mining is ongoing, and that such trafficking continues with impunity.

XIII. Legislative, policy and institutional framework on trafficking in persons

70. With the exception of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Central African Republic has ratified the core United Nations human rights treaties and has also acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Central African Republic is also a party to several International Labour Organization conventions, including the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). The Special Rapporteur welcomes the State's engagement with human rights treaty body reporting, including most recently with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and with the universal periodic review process, and its commitment to implementing the recommendations received.

71. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the significant developments that have been made in the legislative and policy framework for the protection of human rights, including the adoption of the national policy on human rights, the Act on Trafficking in Persons of 2022 and the decree establishing the Office of the Special Prosecutor on Conflict-related Sexual Violence and Trafficking in Persons. At the level of national coordination, the establishment of the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the adoption of the national action plan to combat trafficking in persons in Central African Republic for the period 2022–2023 are welcome developments. The Special Rapporteur learned about the recently established early warning and monitoring committee, made up of focal points within seven ministries, to act as an early warning mechanism and watchdog for trafficking in persons cases.

72. The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons is chaired by a coordination Bureau that is headed by the President of the Republic and includes the Minister for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection and the Minister for Labour. The Committee includes two focal points from each ministry who receive training

from the International Organization for Migration and oversee aspects of the national action plan to combat trafficking in persons in Central African Republic for the period 2022–2023, including on actions to prevent labour exploitation and human rights abuses linked to trafficking in persons.

73. Positive steps include the issuance of a circular note by the Ministry of the Interior banning children from the vicinity of military infrastructure, which came about following a field mission organized by the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons in response to allegations of the use of children. The mission was carried out with the Inspector of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the Battalion Commanders of the gendarmerie, the police and defence forces to training camps. The Special Rapporteur took note of awareness-raising campaigns on trafficking in persons carried out in camps for defence and security forces and for foreign security forces, including at the Russian Instructor Training Centre in Berengo. The campaigns were targeted at young recruits and instructors.

74. The Special Rapporteur notes the establishment and the important work of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children. It was established under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior and national security forces and is composed of gendarmes, police officers and civilian personnel.

75. In 2020, the mandate of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children was expanded to include the identification of victims of trafficking and the prosecution of traffickers. Its headquarters are in Bangui and it has a branch in Bouar, with plans to open further branches in Bambari and Berberati. Branches are composed of gendarmerie and police officers who carry out the mandate of the unit and relay information to the headquarters in Bangui. The unit can receive reports directly from victims; those reports are then processed by investigators. It may also provide psychosocial support for victims of trafficking. In practice, however, the availability of such support is very limited.

76. The Special Rapporteur highlights the significant developments relating to the rights of the child, specifically the adoption of Act No. 20.016 of 15 June 2020 on the National Child Protection Code and the adoption of the action plan against the trafficking of children in the Central African Republic. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the commitment to ending child and forced marriage and the associated risks of trafficking, including for sexual exploitation. Ongoing work is needed to strengthen the implementation of the action plan and engagement by the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons with civil society organizations and victims.

77. Despite such important legislative and policy developments, implementation remains a challenge. The presence and functioning of the State outside of Bangui is very limited, with consequent failures to prevent trafficking in persons and to protect persons at risk, in particular displaced and refugee women and children and children in street situations.

XIV. Assistance for and protection of trafficked persons

78. The Special Rapporteur highlights the positive obligation on the State to identify, assist and protect victims of trafficking and to prevent trafficking in persons. Currently, identification is weak and the scale and incidence of trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation are seriously underreported.

79. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the finalization of the standard operating procedures for the identification and protection of and assistance for victims of trafficking. The standard operating procedures support the work of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children and focal points within the national security forces, including police and gendarmerie directly involved in identifying victims of trafficking. The standard operating procedures also guide the work of social workers, labour inspectors, members of the judiciary and those working with non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies in processes linked to the identification and protection of and assistance for victims of trafficking.

80. The joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children or associated entities can interview and identify a victim of trafficking under three pathways:

(a) enquiry and investigation; (b) medical and psychosocial support; and (c) legal and judicial assistance. A non-exhaustive list of indicators supports the identification process of victims of trafficking; the provision of assistance and support to victims is guided by their explicit consent. Minimum assistance services to be provided for victims of trafficking include housing, medical services, psychosocial support, legal services and access to education, training and employment. All support is aimed at reintegration, with provision for family reunification, access to health services, financial and legal services, training and education, income-generating activities and safety and security. The main actors include the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security, the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Social Protection and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Health and Population, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, the National Young Pioneers, a national institution for the training of young adults who are out of school, including former child combatants, and United Nations and national and international non-governmental organizations. For victims of trafficking who have foreign nationality and may have irregular legal status in the Central African Republic, the principle of non-punishment for the illegal status acquired as a result of being trafficked is noted in the standard operating procedures. Furthermore, it is provided that all means should be explored to regularize victims' legal status, and that information and legal advice on the right to seek asylum should be provided.

81. The Special Rapporteur notes, however, that awareness of the Act on Trafficking in Persons and of the standard operating procedures is limited, and capacity for identification, referrals for assistance and protection is weak or, in many parts of the country, non-existent.

82. Victims remain without access to safe accommodation, psychosocial assistance or medical assistance. Longer-term measures, including access to education, training and employment, are urgently required, as is legal assistance to secure access to remedies and to reparation. Identification procedures are weak, and there is limited knowledge among justice sector actors, health-care workers and personnel involved in child protection, education or health care of the Act on Trafficking in Persons.

83. United Nations entities, in coordination with government counterparts, continued to deliver services, such as remote case management and psychosocial support, including through a toll-free hotline. However, serious gaps in the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking persist in terms of sexual and reproductive health care, HIV prevention, mental health care and access to justice and livelihood support, in particular in rural and remote areas. Access is constrained by limited infrastructure and by ongoing conflict and violence.

84. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the establishment of temporary shelters in Bangui for victims of gender-based violence. However, as yet, no dedicated shelters are available for victims of trafficking, including for victims of conflict-related trafficking. This lack of safe, long-term accommodation hinders the recovery and protection of victims.

85. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of resourcing and support for the operationalization of the Act on Trafficking in Persons, the action plan and the standard operating procedures, and notes that a key strategy to strengthen prevention of trafficking in persons and assistance for victims will be support for the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children in Bangui, its office in Bouar and its planned offices in Bambari and Berberati.

XV. Administration of justice

86. Access to justice, including to effective remedies and reparation, remains very limited. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that the lack of investigating judges and the minimal administration of justice outside of Bangui have resulted in a large backlog of cases and insufficient justice proceedings and enforcement.

87. The strengthening of the formal justice system, in particular outside of Bangui, is essential to prevention, protection and accountability. Continued support for the functioning

of mobile courts, access to legal aid and the strengthening of the police and the rule of law capacity are critical.

88. The Special Rapporteur was informed that, for the first time, hearings related to sexual violence in the Bangui Court of Appeal in August 2023 had been closed or partially closed to the public and had included measures to protect the identity of victims and witnesses.

89. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at continuing allegations of corruption in the administration of justice. During her visit, concerns were raised in relation to the lack of independence of the judiciary and other justice sector actors, and ongoing political interference. The lack of security and risks of violence and intimidation impede the administration of justice.

90. The Special Rapporteur welcomes continued the engagement with traditional leaders and traditional justice processes and emphasizes that such processes must ensure gender equality and access to justice, including effective remedies, for victims of trafficking for all purposes of exploitation.

XVI. Effective investigations and accountability

91. Capacity for effective investigations into trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation is minimal. Lack of awareness of the Act on Trafficking in Persons and of the standard operating procedures among police and prosecutors and the insufficient capacity of justice sector actors limit accountability. Violence, intimidation, continuing conflict and weak infrastructure create obstacles to investigations. The Special Rapporteur noted the insufficient capacity to undertake investigations into technology-facilitated trafficking, which may affect children and young people in particular.

92. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that obstacles to reporting and filing complaints in cases of trafficking in persons remain, including due to fear of reprisals and barriers to accessing justice, minimal access to legal aid and the limited presence of State authorities in rural and remote areas and in conflict-affected areas. Stigma and discriminatory attitudes among police and armed forces also hinder reporting, in particular of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. Given the alleged involvement of armed forces in conflict-related sexual violence, including conflict-related trafficking in persons, opportunities for safe reporting and referrals for assistance and protection are limited. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the continuing backlog of investigations related to conflict-related sexual violence, the lack of enforcement of judgments and the prevalence of out-of-court settlements in cases of sexual violence, noting that such lack of enforcement also hinders effective investigations and accountability for trafficking in persons, including conflict-related trafficking.

93. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen the rule of law and the security and justice sectors, including through strengthening capacity for effective investigations and prosecutions and protection of victims by means of trauma-informed, gender-sensitive justice procedures and protection measures. Given the prevalence of trafficking in children, it is urgent that child-friendly justice procedures are developed to strengthen access to justice and a protective environment for children who are victims of trafficking and for witnesses.

94. The Special Rapporteur met with lawyers and was impressed by the important work undertaken by women lawyers in supporting access to justice for victims, despite the obstacles and risks of intimidation they faced.

XVII. International justice and transitional justice processes

95. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur had the opportunity to visit the Special Criminal Court and was encouraged by the commitment to and understanding of trafficking in persons in situations of conflict and the importance accorded to ensuring accountability for such crimes and reparation to victims, in particularly victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual slavery, sexual exploitation and child and forced marriage.

96. Continued support for the effective functioning of the Special Criminal Court is essential to ensure accountability for conflict-related trafficking in persons, including as a war crime and a crime against humanity. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of accountability measures and the rights of victims of conflict-related trafficking to reparation. On 28 December 2022, the mandate of the Court was renewed for another term of five years, expiring in 2028. The Court, however, continues to struggle, with inadequate financial and political support. A key challenge will be the provision of reparation to victims and securing resources to support the implementation of orders for reparation, which may include collective reparation. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of engaging with the experiences and practices of other reparation programmes in post-conflict jurisdictions.

97. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the engagement of the International Criminal Court in the Central African Republic, which has focused on alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the context of the conflict in the Central African Republic since 1 July 2002, with the peak of the violence in 2002 and 2003. Alleged crimes include forced displacement and sexual violence. The Special Rapporteur highlights the need for greater attention to conflict-related trafficking in persons, especially women and children, related to the crimes against humanity of enslavement and sexual slavery, and the war crime of sexual slavery.

98. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission and highlights its important role in addressing the calls for justice for victims of all forms of conflict-related trafficking in persons and in truth recovery, memorialization and ensuring guarantees of non-recurrence. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the roll-out of awareness-raising campaigns and preparations for public consultations.

99. The Special Rapporteur notes the importance of assistance, support and capacity-building to ensure that the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission can play an effective role in the provision of reparation and make possible the participation of victims in proceedings, in particular those relating to trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and the recruitment and use of children.

100. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the work of the Trust Fund for Victims.¹⁴ Through partnerships with national implementing partners, the Trust Fund has provided medical and psychological assistance to victims, including children aged under 15 trafficked for purposes of use in armed combat, and school equipment and fees for their reintegration in schools. Further programmes are envisaged to support victims of conflict-related sexual violence and to address continuing challenges of stigma, marginalization and discrimination, in particular against children born of rape. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes the importance of continued support for reparation, including collective and individual reparation, addressing the serious human rights violation of trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation, and highlights the potential role of reparation for conflict-related trafficking in supporting human rights and victim-centred measures in the post-conflict and transitional society.

XVIII. Prevention of trafficking in the context of United Nations peacekeeping

101. The Special Rapporteur recalls that the presence of United Nations peacekeeping missions may increase the risks of trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation. Given the incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse that have already occurred and have been identified by MINUSCA, it will be important to ensure that there is awareness of the risks of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, and capacity to identify victims and persons at risk of trafficking.

102. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the continued work of the Senior Victims' Rights Adviser and urges the strengthened commitment of MINUSCA to preventing sexual

¹⁴ See <https://www.trustfundforvictims.org/index.php/en/locations/central-african-republic>.

exploitation and abuse. In the Central African Republic, over 400 cases of sexual exploitation and abuse have been recorded in relation to MINUSCA since 2015.¹⁵

XIX. Rights of persons with disabilities

103. Internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants with disabilities suffer disproportionately from limited access to basic services including shelter, water and sanitation and education, despite provisions under the National Act on Refugees to ensure access to such services. In practice, implementation is weak and the risks of trafficking in persons and other forms of violence against people with disabilities are great.

104. The Special Rapporteur was informed of programmes to address the rights of children with disabilities. Urgent action is needed, however, to address the risks of exploitation of children with disabilities through exploitation in begging, sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that limited attention is paid in development, humanitarian and protection programming to the situation of children with disabilities, who continue to have difficulty accessing education, rehabilitation, health services and long-term social inclusion measures.

XX. Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons

105. The Special Rapporteur is concerned about the continuing discrimination and violence against and arbitrary arrest and detention of sexual and gender minorities in the Central African Republic, as well as reports of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in access to health-care services, employment, work, justice and education. Against this background, the risks of trafficking in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons for purposes of sexual exploitation remain, and access to assistance and protection is hindered.

XXI. Role of civil society

106. The Special Rapporteur met with representatives of national civil society organizations, who gave her briefings about cases of trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of strengthening civil society and of ensuring an enabling environment for civil society, which plays a critical role in identifying and assisting victims of trafficking and, critically, in preventing trafficking in persons.

107. Long-term sustainable funding and capacity-building are required to support the work of civil society as an essential partner in actions to combat trafficking in persons, including in the provision of accommodation and specialized assistance to victims and in the important work of combating stigma, discrimination and violence against victims of trafficking.

XXII. Women and peace and security

108. The women and peace and security agenda is essential to sustainable peace and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as reflected in Security Council resolution 2709 (2023), in which the Council extended the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 November 2024.

109. In that resolution, the Security Council requested MINUSCA to continue strengthening its sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response activities. Given the prevalence of conflict-related trafficking and the potential for trafficking in persons to undermine peacebuilding processes, it is essential that the prevention of trafficking in women and girls and the protection of victims is incorporated into the women and peace and security

¹⁵ See <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

agenda. The leadership and participation of victims in the design of prevention and protection programmes and in women and peace and security action plans and programmes are essential. The Special Rapporteur highlights the need for a gender equality perspective in security sector reform programmes.

XXIII. Youth and peace and security

110. Trafficking in persons particularly affects young people, in both conflict and post-conflict situations, and hinders the realization of human rights and the achievement of peace and sustainable development. Limited attention is currently paid to the prevention of trafficking in youth and peace and security measures.

XXIV. Conclusions and recommendations

111. **Trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation is a serious human rights violation, an international crime and a violation of international humanitarian law. While efforts have been made to combat trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic, urgent action is needed to progress a human rights-based response to trafficking, prioritize effective prevention and ensure the rights of victims to assistance and protection. Accountability and effective measures to combat impunity will be essential to the peacebuilding process. The Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned at the devastating impact of trafficking in persons on children and young people. The prioritization of gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women and girls is critical to combating trafficking in persons.**

112. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that all parties to armed conflict in the Central African Republic, including armed groups, end all forms of conflict-related trafficking in persons, end and prevent grave violations against children, including by engaging with the United Nations to sign and implement action plans to end and prevent all six grave violations against children, and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law to combat trafficking in persons.**

113. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that the authorities of the Central African Republic:**

(a) **Strengthen efforts for the rehabilitation and social integration of children associated with armed conflict and to ensure that all persons, including members of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, who recruited children for use in armed conflict are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive penalties are imposed in practice, in particular within the framework of national jurisdictions and the Special Criminal Court;**

(b) **Increase resources and capacity for reintegration programmes for children affected by armed conflict and expand access to education and training and protection against reprisals;**

(c) **Fully implement all aspects of the Child Protection Code and ensure that children who are victims of trafficking have access to comprehensive, gender-sensitive and age-appropriate response systems and services;**

(d) **Continue to strengthen measures, in cooperation with the United Nations, to end and prevent grave violations against children by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and other security personnel, including through the adoption of a national prevention plan;**

(e) **Adopt and implement a handover protocol to facilitate the release of children to civilian child protection actors, prioritizing their reintegration in line with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups;**

- (f) Strengthen awareness of the risks of trafficking in boys, including for purposes of sexual exploitation, and incorporate prevention measures into child protection programmes;
- (g) Strengthen efforts to combat trafficking for purposes of child and forced marriage and combat gender stereotypes and discrimination against women and girls, including through education programmes at all levels;
- (h) Fully resource and implement the national strategy to combat child marriage, prioritizing in particular programmes in rural and conflict-affected areas;
- (i) Strengthen measures to prevent trafficking in children through expanding access to education, in particular in rural and conflict-affected areas and among internally displaced persons, prioritizing education for girls;
- (j) Continue strengthening access to specialized assistance and services for victims of trafficking throughout the country, including mental health and psychosocial services, reproductive and sexual health services, safe accommodation, legal aid, compensation and long-term social inclusion measures;
- (k) Decentralize services for all victims of trafficking and ensure that such services are accessible in remote rural areas and in conflict-affected areas and that victims of trafficking in persons are supported in leading the design and implementation of prevention and protection measures;
- (l) Provide comprehensive training and capacity-building to health-care workers to identify, assist and refer for protection victims of trafficking;
- (m) Strengthen support for and increase the financing and resources of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children to enable its effective functioning throughout the country, with the support of international partners;
- (n) Take urgent action to facilitate access to justice in all parts of the country, with the restoration of regular court hearings, the expansion of legal aid and the strengthening of mobile courts and court infrastructure across the country;
- (o) Ensure that training on trauma-informed, gender-sensitive and child-friendly procedures is provided for police officers, prosecutors and members of the judiciary to allow for effective investigations into and accountability for trafficking in persons;
- (p) Ensure the effective implementation of the non-punishment principle for victims of trafficking, including victims of conflict-related trafficking;
- (q) Provide training to prosecutors and to the judiciary to ensure that proportionate and dissuasive sanctions are applied for trafficking in persons, in particular in relation to allegations of complicity in trafficking in persons;
- (r) Strengthen the capacity of lawyers and prosecutors to secure compensation for victims of trafficking;
- (s) Strengthen the procedures for the protection of victims and witnesses of trafficking in persons;
- (t) Take continued action to combat corruption in the armed forces, the police and the judiciary and within the labour inspectorate;
- (u) Take steps to ensure that those responsible for trafficking in persons for all purposes of exploitation are excluded from the security sector and held accountable;
- (v) Strengthen the capacity of all justice sector actors for the implementation of the new Act on Trafficking in Persons and the new standard operating procedures;
- (w) Strengthen, with the support of international partners, the capacity of the Special Criminal Court and the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission to address conflict-related trafficking in persons and provide for access to reparation for victims;

- (x) Increase and strengthen the resources, capacity and independence of the labour inspectorate to prevent trafficking in persons for purposes of forced labour, including through oversight of high-risk sectors such as mining and agriculture;
- (y) Strengthen effective investigations of trafficking for purposes of forced labour in the mining sector, including of children, and ensure access to justice for victims, recalling the need for protection against reprisals;
- (z) Take effective action to combat trafficking for purposes of domestic servitude and ensure that victims have access to compensation and justice;
- (aa) Take action to combat trafficking in persons from minority groups and Indigenous Peoples for all purposes of exploitation, in particular forced labour and slavery-like practices;
- (bb) Ensure that border management policies respect and fulfil human rights obligations, including through procedures for identification, assistance and protection of victims of trafficking, and also ensure protection against refoulement;
- (cc) Take action to prevent trafficking in persons, especially women and children, among internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees;
- (dd) Strengthen national and local coordination for action against trafficking, including through anti-trafficking committees, with participation by victims;
- (ee) Provide sustainable resources to civil society to allow for the creation of an enabling environment for long-term partnerships to combat trafficking and assist victims;
- (ff) Combat stigma, discrimination and violence against sex workers, provide for the safe reporting of risks of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and ensure access to protection, including by decriminalizing sex work and supporting exit programmes;
- (gg) Ensure that the prevention of trafficking includes measures targeting girls, Aka (Pygmy) women and rural women; programmes to address economic and sociocultural factors, including poverty, related to trafficking; oversight of the so-called houses of joy; child- and gender-sensitive reporting procedures for women who have been subjected to trafficking; and information in accessible formats for women and girls about the risks of trafficking and mechanisms to file complaints;
- (hh) Combat discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and ensure access to assistance and protection against trafficking in persons;
- (ii) Ensure that measures to combat trafficking in persons respect and guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular children with disabilities, and are designed and led by persons with disabilities;
- (jj) Take measures to combat all forms of trafficking in persons, in particular that affecting minorities and Indigenous Peoples;
- (kk) Strengthen data collection on and monitoring of trafficking in persons;
- (ll) Amend the Nationality Code of 1961 to comply with international standards on the prevention and reduction of statelessness and fully implement the Global Refugee Forum pledges to eradicate statelessness, thereby establishing a national legal framework for the protection of stateless persons in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, reinforce civil registration centres and decentralize document issuance procedures to enable undocumented nationals to secure civil registration documents;
- (mm) Finalize the process of ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa and disseminate plain-language versions of all legal texts on the rights of persons with disabilities;

(nn) **Take effective measures to implement the National Gender and Climate Change Strategy (2023–2030), thereby empowering women in decision-making related to climate change and preventing climate-related displacement and disasters.**

114. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that the authorities of the Central African Republic, United Nations entities and development partners:**

(a) **Incorporate the prevention of trafficking in women and girls, the protection of victims/survivors and effective access to reparation for conflict-related trafficking into the women and peace and security agenda and ensure the leadership and participation of victims/survivors in the design of women and peace and security action plans and implementation measures;**

(b) **Integrate a gender perspective into and ensure women’s equal participation in the implementation of the national security sector reform strategy and adopt gender-responsive guidelines for addressing the situation and needs of women and girls in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategies.**

115. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that all United Nations entities and international partners:**

(a) **Prioritize the implementation of a human rights-based response to trafficking in persons by providing resources to strengthen capacity for the prevention of trafficking, in particular in women and children, and ensuring effective access to protection;**

(b) **Integrate effective measures to combat conflict-related trafficking in persons, in particular in women and children, into peacebuilding measures to ensure prevention, protection and accountability.**

116. **The Special Rapporteur repeats the call of the Secretary-General for all parties in the conflict to cease all forms of sexual violence and to recommit to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation¹⁶ and urges the authorities to effectively address conflict-related sexual violence within national defence and security forces through effective accountability measures.**

117. **The Special Rapporteur urges troop- and police-contributing countries to continue taking appropriate action to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including through the vetting of all personnel and predeployment and in-mission awareness training, and to ensure full accountability in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and trafficking in persons, in particular for purposes of sexual exploitation.**

¹⁶ [S/2023/413](#), para. 27.