



# Security Council

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## The situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 10 August 2018 ([S/PRST/2018/17](#)), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed about the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) every six months. It provides an assessment of the major political and security trends in Central Africa since the report dated 26 May 2022 ([S/2022/436](#)). It also provides an update on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region, pursuant to Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#).

#### II. Major developments in the Central Africa subregion

##### A. Political, peace and security developments and trends

2. The period under review was marked by electoral processes in Angola, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe, the ongoing transition in Chad and continued violence in Cameroon and the Lake Chad basin. While elections were generally peaceful and orderly, the subregion faced serious electoral governance challenges. Revisions of voters' lists were a particular source of tensions. Low voter turnout, boycott of the elections in some countries and requests for further independent and credible verification and tabulation of elections results underlined a general mistrust of the electoral systems in the subregion.

##### Political development and trends

3. In Angola, general elections were held on 24 August. On 26 August, the electoral observation missions of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries noted that election day was peaceful and orderly, while also pointing out some irregularities in the electoral process, including the low number of national and international observers, insufficient independence of the National Electoral Commission, poor voter education and unequal media coverage. Prior to the elections, the opposition and civil society groups claimed that voters' lists included



2 million deceased citizens and expressed concerns that this could lead to fraud. On 29 August, the commission announced that the ruling Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) had won, with 51.17 per cent of the vote, followed by União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), with 43.95 per cent. From 1 to 8 September, UNITA and Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola - Coligação Eleitoral filed legal complaints with the commission and the Constitutional Court to contest the official result. Both ruled against the complaints, and on 8 September the Court declared that the results announced by the commission were final. On 15 September, João Lourenço and Esperança da Costa were inaugurated as President and Vice-President respectively. On 16 September, 220 members of the National Assembly – more than 30 per cent of them women – were sworn in. An MPLA member was elected as the first woman President of the National Assembly. On 24 September, more than 2,000 supporters of the opposition demonstrated in Luanda against alleged electoral fraud. On 6 October, President Lourenço met the leader of UNITA, who stated that the meeting was dedicated to understanding the vision, perspective and concerns of the Angolan people, adding that it was always possible to collaborate for the national interest.

4. Burundi saw increased engagement with regional organizations, increased engagement with neighbouring countries and a change in several key government positions. The Prime Minister, Alain Guillaume Bunyoni, was replaced by the then Minister of the Interior, Gervais Ndirakobuca. On 22 July, the President, Evariste Ndayishimiye, was elected Chairperson of the East African Community for a one-year term. On 15 August, Burundi announced the deployment of military troops to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of a bilateral agreement between the two countries. The troops continued to operate under the framework of an EAC regional force.

5. The situation in Cameroon was marked by continued violence in North-West and South-West Regions, a refugee crisis in East and Adamawa Regions and continued terrorism and intercommunal conflicts in Far North Region. These crises had a profound impact on women and girls. Separatist armed groups in North-West and South-West Regions carried out several attacks in West Region. On 4 August, the Government convened the follow-up committee on the Major National Dialogue in Yaoundé. A subsequent virtual conference was held on 11 September, attended by representatives of diaspora groups. Efforts to encourage inclusive dialogue between key stakeholders in the North-West and South-West crisis continued.

6. In Chad, the political transition passed some critical milestones, but tensions increased relating to the initially envisaged end date of the transition. On 8 August, the transitional authorities and 34 of the 52 politico-military groups that had been participating in the Doha pre-dialogue since 13 March signed the Doha Agreement for Peace and the Participation of the Politico-Military Groups in the Inclusive, Sovereign National Dialogue. Only one woman representative participated in the pre-dialogue. Eighteen rebel groups, including the Front pour l'alternance et la concorde au Tchad (FACT), did not sign the agreement, citing grievances pertaining to participation quotas in the national dialogue, the release of prisoners of war and the eligibility of transitional authorities to run in post-transition elections. Many of these grievances were echoed by segments of the political opposition and civil society organizations in N'Djamena.

7. On 20 August, the Inclusive, Sovereign National Dialogue was launched in N'Djamena in the presence of key national, regional and international stakeholders. Participants included representatives of political parties, Doha Agreement signatories, civil society organizations, including women's and youth organizations, traditional leaders, members of the diaspora, provincial authorities, defence and security forces and the Government and State institutions, inter alia. FACT, the

coalition of civil society organizations Wakit Tama and the opposition party Les Transformateurs boycotted the dialogue, citing concerns over representation and methodology. On 19 September, the Catholic Church, which had been involved in mediation efforts with the political and armed opposition, withdrew from the dialogue. In a communiqué issued following its session of 19 September on the ongoing political transitions on the continent, the African Union Peace and Security Council reiterated the main points of its decision of 14 May 2021 calling on transitional authorities to respect the 18-month transition timeline and for transitional authorities to be ineligible to run in the elections.

8. On 1 October, the participants in the national dialogue in Chad adopted by acclamation recommendations on the way forward with the transition for the dissolution of the Transitional Military Council and the appointment of the President of the Council as Transition President for a “second transition” lasting up to 24 months, the holding of a referendum on an adjusted version of the 1996 Constitution and the form of the State, the doubling of the number of seats in the National Transition Council and the establishment of a second chamber of Parliament. Notably, the dialogue recommended that all Chadians who meet legal requirements be allowed to run in the next election, including members of transitional institutions. In a communiqué issued on 5 October, ECCAS took note of the recommendations from the dialogue on the timetable for the transition and encouraged authorities to pursue dialogue in view of encouraging hold-out groups to join the process. On 10 October, the President of the Transitional Military Council, Mahamat Déby Itno, was sworn in as Transition President. On 14 October, he appointed a Government of National Unity led by former opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo. Members of the former Cabinet maintained strategic portfolios, including the Ministries of Defence and Public Security and Finance and Hydrocarbons, while several opposition figures and members of the politico-military groups that signed the Doha peace agreement were included in the Government. Women make up slightly less than 30 per cent of the new Government.

9. On 20 October, the initially envisaged end date of the political transition in Chad, opposition segments protested in N’Djamena and a few other locations, mostly in the south of the country, despite a prohibition by the Government. Some protestors engaged in violence, including in N’Djamena, where the headquarters of the party of the recently appointed Prime Minister were attacked. Security forces intervened with tear gas and live ammunition. According to the Government, about 50 people were killed during these events, including at least 10 police officers, and 300 others were injured. The Prime Minister accused the opposition of mounting an armed insurrection and announced a curfew in N’Djamena and three other locations, as well as the suspension of the activities of Les Transformateurs, Wakit Tama and the Parti socialiste sans frontières. On 25 October, an extraordinary ECCAS summit on Chad was convened in Kinshasa and resulted in the appointment of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chairman of ECCAS, Félix Tshisekedi, as facilitator for the Chadian transition. Participants at the summit further urged bilateral and multilateral partners to strengthen their diplomatic, financial, material and technical support for the transition. On 11 November, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission gave a briefing to the African Union Peace and Security Council on the situation in Chad. The Council did not take a decision on the matter.

10. In the Congo, the reporting period was marked by the holding of legislative and local elections on 10 and 31 July. According to the results validated by the Constitutional Court on 14 August, the ruling Parti congolais du travail secured 111 out of 151 seats in the National Assembly. The representation of women increased from 17 seats in 2017 to 20 in the current legislature. The main opposition parties, Union panafricaine pour la démocratie sociale and Union des démocrates humanistes,

won seven seats each. Although a large segment of the opposition boycotted the elections, citing irregularities, African Union and ECCAS observation missions noted that the elections were held in an improved environment compared with that of the 2017 legislative elections, in part owing to the economic recovery and an overall stable internal security context. Their recommendations were focused on the need to maintain and strengthen permanent and inclusive dialogue, in particular elections, and to enhance the autonomy of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

11. In Equatorial Guinea, the reporting period was marked by preparations for elections. On 20 September, based on a related recommendation from the Senate and citing financial reasons, the President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo decreed that presidential, legislative and local elections would be held simultaneously on 20 November. This advanced the date of the presidential election, which was previously scheduled for the first quarter of 2023. On 23 September, on behalf of the Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE), the Vice-President, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, announced that the ruling party had nominated the incumbent President as its candidate for the presidential election. Buenaventura Monsuy Asumu of the Partido de la Coalición Social Demócrata (PCSD) and Andrés Esono Ondo of the Convergencia Para la Democracia Social (CPDS) were also nominated by their parties. The campaign period lasted from 3 to 18 November. Although no violent incidents were reported on voting day, the CPDS candidate alleged massive fraud, irregularities and cases of forced public voting on the part of PDGE, which rebutted the allegations. According to preliminary results announced on 26 November by the Minister of the Interior, who is also the President of the Electoral Commission, Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo was re-elected for a sixth term, with 94.9 per cent of the votes cast and voter participation of 98 per cent. The ruling PDGE and 14 allied parties also won all seats in the two chambers of Parliament, where the opposition had held one unoccupied seat during the previous legislature. The final results will be announced by the Constitutional Court.

12. In Gabon, developments revolved around the country's international positioning and high-profile corruption cases. On 25 June, Gabon officially joined the Commonwealth of Nations during the organization's twenty-sixth summit of Heads of States and Governments, held in Kigali. In July, several senior executives of the Gabonese administration and national hydrocarbon company were convicted of embezzlement of public funds and money-laundering. Their lawyers denounced political motivations behind the trials. On 13 August, a former opposition member of parliament, who had joined the opposition just before the 2016 presidential election, was released after six years in prison for instigating violence.

13. In Sao Tome and Principe, overall developments revolved around the legislative, regional and local elections, which were held on 25 September. On 14 September, President Carlos Vila Nova promulgated a gender parity law requiring a minimum representation of 40 per cent of women on lists of candidates for elections and in the composition of the new Government, which entered into force on 19 November. On 18 September, a former Prime Minister and leader of the opposition party *Acção Democrática Independente* (ADI), Patrice Trovoada, returned to the country, following four years spent in self-imposed exile. The decision of the National Electoral Commission not to update the electoral roll sparked tensions and criticism, as it effectively excluded some 10,000 young citizens who had recently turned 18 years of age from exercising their right to vote. According to observers of the European Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries and ECCAS, the electoral operations were well organized, and the country was praised for the peaceful nature of the vote; however, they pointed out weaknesses in election administration owing to the temporary and politicized nature of the National Electoral Commission. Final election results were announced by the Constitutional Court on 3 October,

which confirmed the absolute majority of ADI in the National Assembly, with 30 out of 55 seats. ADI also won 42 out of 68 local council seats. In total, eight women were elected to the National Assembly. On 11 November, Patrice Trovoada took office as Prime Minister. On 14 November, the eighteenth constitutional Government was sworn in, comprising 11 ministers, including four women (36 per cent). The new Government includes a Ministry of Women's Rights.

### **Security development and trends**

14. In Cameroon, on 7 June, security forces reportedly killed nine civilians in Missong, North-West Region. On 8 June, separatists destroyed the Mamfe district hospital, South-West Region, causing 45 patients to be relocated. On the same day, an attack on a gendarmerie outpost in Njitapon, West Region, led to the killing of five and injury of six members of the security forces, the looting of military supplies and the abduction of 12 civilians. On 16 September, separatists reportedly abducted eight civilians, in Nchang, South-West Region. The perpetrators burned down the village church and demanded \$90,000 for the release of their captives. On 24 October, the diocese of Mamfe announced the release of the captives. On 25 and 26 June, 32 villagers, including six Nigerians, were reportedly killed in separate attacks in Akwaya district, South-West Region. According to local sources, non-State armed groups fired indiscriminately at mourners during a funeral vigil and burned a local health centre.

15. The Adamawa, North and Far North Regions of Cameroon suffered rampant cross-border criminality, kidnapping for ransom, cattle theft and illegal exploitation of resources. In addition, rebels from the Central African Republic were alleged to be regularly crossing over to abduct civilians for ransom. On 22 June, officials from Cameroon and the Central African Republic met to discuss security at their common border and curb the activities of criminal gangs, armed groups and highway robbers involved in weapons and natural resources trafficking.

16. In Chad, the trend of increasing intercommunal conflicts continued. On 15 September, local authorities announced that 10 people had been killed and 20 injured in Moyen-Chari Province in clashes between farmers and herders. Security forces arrested 18 people from both communities. On 30 September, 11 people were killed in fighting between herders and farmers in Guera Province. Overall, violent clashes between herders and farmers caused some 50 fatalities in August and September alone. Intercommunal clashes have left over 500 dead and about 7,000 displaced since the beginning of 2022.

#### *Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin*

17. From 1 June to 31 October, there were 84 Boko Haram-related security incidents confirmed and reported by the United Nations in Cameroon, with 36 civilian fatalities, and 37 incidents confirmed and reported by the United Nations in Chad, with 34 civilian fatalities. On 7 June, the Multinational Joint Task Force announced that it had killed or arrested more than 800 members of Boko Haram-affiliated groups and the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) from 28 March to 4 June as part of Operation Lake Sanity, carried out on the islands of Lake Chad and surrounding areas. The operation, which involved soldiers from all four affected States in aerial, land and naval actions, allowed the destruction of terrorist encampments, explosive production facilities and assets.

18. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, several attacks in the Mayo Tsanaga District against security forces and civilians were attributed to Boko Haram-affiliated groups, while criminal gangs were reported to be behind the recent increase of

abductions for ransom in the area. The Government assessed that the recent uptick in violence had caused 40,000 people to be forcibly displaced.

*Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea*

19. The positive downward trend in acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea was sustained. According to the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, no incident was reported in Central African waters during the reporting period. Zone D of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre (Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe), was operationalized and included a naval task group comprising patrol vessels from Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Efforts by the ECCAS Commission, the Interregional Coordination Centre and relevant countries continued towards the operationalization of Zone A (Angola, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

*Effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters on regional stability, including farmer-herder dynamics in Central Africa*

20. In Chad, violent clashes between farmers and herders owing to competition over grazing, farming land and water continued to intensify across the eastern, central and southern provinces of the country, while extreme flooding impacted more than 1 million people. In the Central African Republic, in July, heavy torrential rains destroyed the homes of almost 22,000 people and added to an already dire humanitarian crisis. Seasonal migration, with pastoralists moving earlier and further into the Central African Republic, led again to tensions with agricultural communities.

21. From 29 August to 2 September, Gabon hosted Africa Climate Week, bringing together more than 2,300 stakeholders. On 12 October, Gabon hosted an open Security Council session on “Threats to international peace and security: climate and security in Africa”.

## **B. Humanitarian developments**

22. The humanitarian situation in the subregion continued to deteriorate, with violent clashes and activities of armed groups. Vulnerabilities were aggravated by the effects of climate change, natural disasters and food insecurity, with a particular impact on women and girls.

23. Some 256,545 Burundians were refugees as at 31 October, mostly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. More than 206,000 Burundian refugees have returned to their home country since September 2017, including 20,348 from January until October 2022.

24. Cameroon continued to be affected by three concurrent, complex humanitarian situations and protection crises caused by the conflict and violence in Far North Region, hostilities in North-West and South-West Regions and the presence of more than 350,000 refugees from the Central African Republic in the eastern regions as at 31 October. As at mid-October, there were 592,600 internally displaced persons and 417,516 returnees because of the conflict in the North-West and South-West Regions. In 2022, 3.9 million people have needed humanitarian assistance, with more than 1.5 million people either internally displaced, returnees or refugees.

25. In Chad, the humanitarian context further deteriorated. As at 31 October, the country hosted more than 576,645 refugees, an increase from 500,000 refugees as at mid-2021 due to new arrivals from Cameroon and Nigeria. The number of internally displaced persons almost tripled from 169,000 in 2020 to 381,000 in 2022 largely

owing to attacks by non-State armed groups and military operations against those groups in Lac Province. Overall, there were 1.06 million internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees in Chad as at mid-October. In June, the Government declared a food and nutrition emergency, with 2.1 million people food insecure during the year's lean season, a record high for several years. In 2022, heavy rainfall caused devastating flooding in 18 out of 23 provinces, affecting more than 1 million people as at October, compared with 256,000 people in 2021. As at early October, the humanitarian response plan, for which \$510.9 million was sought to assist 3.9 million of the 6.1 million people in need, was funded at 40 per cent. The Central Emergency Response Fund released \$5 million in September and \$4 million in November for the flood response.

26. The Congo hosted more than 65,075 refugees and asylum-seekers, while Angola hosted almost 55,980 refugees and asylum-seekers as at 31 October.

#### *Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin*

27. Violence and conflict in the Lake Chad basin continued to take a heavy toll on communities across border areas of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. In 2022, 9.7 million people need humanitarian assistance across the Lake Chad basin. Some 5.5 million people are projected to be severely food insecure during the lean season – the highest figure in four years – and 300,000 children are severely malnourished. A total of 1,037 schools are non-functional across the Lake Chad basin because of insecurity and violence. About 2.8 million people are internally displaced and 281,000 are refugees. To adequately address the region's most pressing humanitarian needs and assist 7.5 million people, response plans in the region require \$2.57 billion, with only 37 per cent received as at mid-September.

28. The Far North Region of Cameroon hosted 378,000 internally displaced persons and 134,000 refugees as at mid-October. The Lac Province of Chad hosted almost 381,290 internally displaced persons and more than 20,400 refugees as at 31 October.

### **C. Human rights trends**

29. In Burundi, a United Nations scoping mission on the rights of the indigenous Batwa community deployed in June at the request of the Government. On 22 September, the Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi. The Special Rapporteur called on the Government to commit itself more effectively to advancing human rights, including by engaging in deeper institutional reforms and establishing accountability mechanisms aimed at the protection of victims and witnesses of human rights violations. Burundi rejected those recommendations and requested that the Council terminate the Special Rapporteur's mandate. On 27 and 28 September, the United Nations and the Government launched the national process for the preparation of the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review of Burundi, scheduled for May 2023.

30. In the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, the security and defence forces and the armed separatist groups continued to perpetrate human rights violations and abuses. Armed separatist groups in the two regions used violence to enforce a 10-day lockdown from 5 to 16 September aimed at disrupting the official start of the school year, with the kidnapping of schoolchildren and teachers reportedly on the rise.

31. In Chad, on 6 June, six political, civil society and union leaders received one-year suspended sentences and fines for their role in a violent demonstration on 14 May. According to reports by human rights organizations, government forces

reportedly<sup>1</sup> injured scores of people protesting against the national dialogue in N'Djamena during the first 10 days of September. According to the same reports, more than 220 people were reportedly arrested, several of whom subsequently reported harsh detention conditions. On 2 September, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Government launched a mapping of human rights violations and verification of illegal detentions. Acts of violence and human rights violations were also reported in various cities during protests on 20 October, which led to the deaths of at least 50 protesters and members of security forces and the detention of several hundred people. On 21 October, the Government announced the opening of investigations into violence surrounding the events. The National Commission on Human Rights condemned the violence and called upon the Government to establish an independent and credible commission of inquiry to determine responsibilities and bring perpetrators to justice while announcing the launch of its own investigation.

32. With regard to the Congo, reports received<sup>2</sup> indicated that no serious incident affecting journalists was documented during the reporting period, and fewer sentences or bans were imposed by the High Council for Freedom of Communication in 2022 as compared with 2021. Civil society organizations continued to advocate for the release of political prisoners and the protection of human rights following the arrest and disappearance of several young Congolese. Meanwhile, the revised law aimed at ensuring compliance of the National Human Rights Commission with international standards was finalized for submission to the Government and Parliament.

33. In Equatorial Guinea, on 17 August, the President promulgated a Penal Code that abolished the death penalty, which, however, remains applicable under the Military Code and the Constitution. On 22 August, the Government announced that all migrants with irregular residency status had to regularize their stay before the end of the month. In the same period, the Vice-President launched a security operation in response to an alleged increase in crimes committed by youth gangs in Malabo, which was criticized by human rights organizations as leading to an egregious violation of human rights. On 28 September, 185 men and women, including minors and opposition leader Gabriel Nzé Obiang of the banned political party Ciudadanos por la Innovación, were detained after a siege at their party headquarters that turned violent and resulted in at least five deaths and numerous injuries. The Government subsequently announced the release of about 121 individuals. Mr. Nzé Obiang and about 50 supporters remained in detention.

34. In Gabon, on 22 June, the Senate adopted a law on the reorganization of the National Human Rights Commission, with the aim of ensuring compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the “Paris Principles”).

35. In Sao Tome and Principe, for the first time, people with disabilities received support to enable them to exercise their right to vote. With the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and organizations of people with disabilities, exhaustive mapping was carried out throughout the country, and on voting day free transportation was provided in partnership with the national association of taxi drivers.

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Chad: security force abuse amid national dialogue”, 23 September 2022. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/23/chad-security-force-abuse-amid-national-dialogue>.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Reporters Without Borders.



## **D. Socioeconomic trends**

36. During the reporting period, global inflation, intensified by the conflict in Ukraine, continued to impact the economies in the subregion. This also took place in oil-exporting countries despite the rise of oil prices at the global level, which had stimulated exports and revenue. While a relative reduction in the rate of inflation was observed in some countries, including Angola, Burundi, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, food and fuel import prices continued to rise, particularly in countries in the CFA franc zone owing to exchange rate pressures from the relative strength of the United States dollar. As most of these economies rely heavily on imported goods, consumer prices soared. Price hikes particularly affected refined oil products, rice, sugar, cooking oil and wheat flour, as well as dairy, poultry and meat products and vegetables, including those produced locally.

37. Governments took measures to support the purchasing power of consumers. During the reporting period, in the Congo and Gabon, the Governments disbursed more than \$182 million and \$123 million respectively to cushion households against the effects of inflation, while in Cameroon, government subsidies amounted to 4 per cent to 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Other countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, suspended or reduced taxes on various basic products, including fuel.

## **III. Activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa**

### **A. Good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation**

#### **Angola**

38. UNOCA worked with the United Nations country team to promote the political participation of women in the elections, in partnership with the Angola Women's Network (Rede Mulher Angola), a civil society organization comprising women from the main political parties. Inclusive planning meetings, a training course and a national conference followed by thematic round tables were organized for women members of political parties from July to November.

39. On 15 September, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa attended the inauguration ceremony of the President, João Lourenço, of Angola. On 16 September, he met with the Minister for External Relations of Angola and discussed key peace and security issues in Central Africa.

#### **Cameroon**

40. On 2 June, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, met with the President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, in Yaoundé and updated him on progress in his efforts to encourage dialogue between the Government of Cameroon and stakeholders in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon. He encouraged the Government to seize the momentum for a peaceful resolution of the crisis and pledged the continued support of the United Nations in that regard.

#### **Chad**

41. From 18 August to 7 October, UNOCA deployed personnel to Chad to assist the United Nations country team in its support for and observation of the proceedings of

the Inclusive, Sovereign National Dialogue. UNOCA also provided support to women representatives participating in the dialogue. From 28 September to 2 October, the incoming Special Representative, Abdou Abarry, conducted an introductory mission to N'Djamena, during which he met with the President of the Transitional Military Council, the Prime Minister, other senior Chadian officials, the High Representative of the African Union for Chad, the Special Envoy of the President of the ECCAS Commission to Chad, the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and members of the diplomatic corps.

### **Congo**

42. From 27 June to 1 July, UNOCA carried out a mission to Brazzaville to assess the political situation ahead of the legislative and local elections and suggest avenues for United Nations engagement towards a peaceful electoral process. The mission met with government officials, political parties, civil society organizations, the United Nations country team and the diplomatic community. It recommended that all actors capitalize on the post-legislative electoral dispensation and the improved socioeconomic context to strengthen social cohesion, including by considering some of the recommendations of earlier political consultations.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

43. On 18 November, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa met with President Tshisekedi in Kinshasa. They discussed regional dynamics and the role of UNOCA in support of regional prevention and peace consolidation efforts, including by ECCAS.

### **Equatorial Guinea**

44. From 3 to 8 October, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa undertook a visit to Malabo, where it met with the Government and other national and international stakeholders. The mission discussed priorities for further United Nations support for the promotion of human rights in the country, including in the context of the implementation of the recommendations from the universal periodic review.

### **Gabon**

45. In the context of the upcoming elections in Gabon, UNOCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the office of the resident coordinator, organized capacity-building events for 40 judges and law enforcement officials from the nine provinces of Gabon from 22 to 26 November to enhance their knowledge of international and regional standards for the freedom of expression, access to information and safety of journalists.

### **Sao Tome and Principe**

46. From 2 to 4 October, the Special Representative undertook a good offices mission to the country following the elections. He met with the President, Carlos Manuel Vila Nova, twice, including in a joint meeting with the Minister for External Relations of Angola, who was representing the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. He also met with the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the leadership of the security forces, the main political parties and the Attorney General. The Special Representative discussed with the United Nations country team, international financial institutions and the diplomatic community ways to strengthen political and security governance in the country, appealing for continued support for its sustainable development.

47. Ahead of the elections, UNOCA worked closely with the United Nations country team and women leaders from all political parties to promote the civic, political and electoral participation of women, including the publication of a national women's website to introduce women leaders in different domains and showcase their professional competencies and a guide on political participation. On 13 July, UNOCA participated virtually in a donors' meeting co-organized by the Government of Sao Tomé and Príncipe and the office of the resident coordinator.

## **B. Enhancing subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation**

### **Collaboration with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations, including support provided to the Economic Community of Central African States**

48. Throughout the reporting period, UNOCA and ECCAS met at the technical and strategic levels on a regular basis to discuss issues pertaining to peace and security and the need for enhanced efforts for conflict prevention and regional stability.

49. From 21 to 24 June, UNOCA and ECCAS, with the support of several United Nations entities, co-organized a forum in Kinshasa at which a draft regional strategy and action plan was adopted to prevent and combat hate speech in Central Africa. The forum built on a series of regional meetings to raise awareness, share experiences and build the capacities of professionals in the communications and information sector, including web journalists, bloggers and heads of media regulatory bodies. The forum was organized with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), OHCHR, UNESCO, the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and the International Organization of La Francophonie.

50. On 13 July, UNOCA met with the ECCAS Commissioner for Gender, Human and Social Development to discuss the opportunities for the establishment of a youth, peace and security coalition for Central Africa. They also discussed the efforts of the Network of Women Mediators in Central Africa, which was engaged in advocacy efforts, led by the former President of the Central African Republic, Catherine Samba Panza, for a peaceful and gender-inclusive resolution of tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

### **United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa**

51. From 9 to 16 October, the Bureau of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa conducted a field visit to the East Region of Cameroon. The visit was aimed at collecting and analysing information about displaced persons hosted in sites in eastern Cameroon and the peace and security threats that they faced, as well as at discussing the efforts of the Government of Cameroon and its partners to address their needs.

### **Partnerships with civil society and support to civil society networks**

52. From 30 July to 5 August, UNOCA attended the thirteenth edition of the Central Africa Annual Cross-Border Fair, which was held in Kye-Ossi, Cameroon, near the borders with Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The event brought together the Governors of the South Region of Cameroon, the Woleu-Ntem Province of Gabon and the Kye-Ntem Province of Equatorial Guinea. Administrative authorities, traditional leaders

and women from the tri-border area and beyond attended. For the first time, participants from West Africa were invited to highlight cross-regional integration.

53. From 12 August to 25 November, UNOCA, UNESCO and the Pan-African Youth Network for a Culture of Peace implemented an initiative to strengthen youth civic and political participation in Gabon. Four regional consultations with youth and local opinion makers and workshops with community radios were held, engaging all political parties to create awareness and engagement and promote messages against hate speech, in view of securing peaceful and credible elections in 2023. On 10 and 11 October in Kinshasa, UNOCA and ECCAS organized the first in-person meeting of the working group for the establishment of the Youth, Peace and Security Coalition in Central Africa. The main goal of the Coalition is to promote the active participation of youth in peace processes in the subregion in line with Security Council resolutions [2250 \(2015\)](#) and [2419 \(2018\)](#).

54. From 25 to 27 October, UNOCA and the women's civil society network Réseau Femme Lève-Toi, in coordination with the office of the resident coordinator in Gabon and local civil society organizations, organized in Libreville the first interparty workshop to strengthen women's political participation and the full implementation of the national quota law, as well as increase women's and youth engagement during electoral periods. The workshop brought together 65 participants, including 41 women, representing political parties and civil society organizations.

### **C. Support to the United Nations, regional and subregional initiatives on peace and security**

#### **Lake Chad basin crisis**

55. On 10 June, UNOCA participated in the third Steering Committee meeting for the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region in Douala, Cameroon. Participants at the meeting reviewed progress made over the previous two years in the implementation of the Regional Strategy and the operational context in the four affected countries.

56. From 30 June to 1 July, UNOCA attended the preparatory workshop for the Fourth Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum in N'Djamena. The dates of the Forum are yet to be decided.

57. In partnership with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Department of Peace Operations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs completed a regional study on weapons and ammunition dynamics in the Lake Chad basin in consultation with key stakeholders. The report presents key findings and recommendations in support of national, regional and international arms control and gender-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration interventions.

58. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Office on Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate continued to help the authorities in Lake Chad basin States to develop regionally coherent strategies to prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals associated with Boko Haram and ISWAP. In July, a planning mission took place in Chad to finalize a national action plan on screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of those persons.

### **Regional integration**

59. From 30 August to 2 September, UNOCA participated in a conference organized by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) in Libreville, to assess the dynamics, functioning and financing of the CEMAC institutional system 15 years after its reform, and to discuss the rationalization process of CEMAC and ECCAS.

### **Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea**

60. In line with Security Council resolution [2634 \(2022\)](#), UNOCA contributed to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and its underlying causes.

61. On 15 September, UNOCA participated virtually in a workshop organized by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) entitled “Strengthen the legal framework in the fight against piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea”. The workshop was aimed at raising awareness regarding new legal instruments and at strengthening the maritime security legal framework of countries in the region.

### **Climate security**

62. On 30 June, UNOCA, jointly with the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Climate Security Mechanism, convened virtually their second expert workshop, to discuss climate, peace and security risks in Central Africa and explore risk management strategies. UNOCA presented a report prepared jointly with ECCAS and the climate security mechanism on “Sustaining peace in Central Africa through addressing the adverse impact of climate change on peace and security”. The report concludes with recommendations to prevent, mitigate and manage resulting security risks with the aim of reinforcing adaptation capacities and strengthening the link between climate action and peacebuilding in the subregion. Attended by a diverse group of representatives from the United Nations, ECCAS, the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon and the research community, the workshop yielded a commitment for intersectoral collaboration and identified steps to develop a joint regional vision for climate, peace and security, promote coherence between peacebuilding and climate action policies and strengthen the availability of relevant data.

63. On 1 September, as part of Africa Climate Week, UNOCA, UNESCO, UNODC and the African Development Bank jointly organized a side event on “Roles of the Congo Basin rainforest, biosphere reserves and World Heritage Sites in climate change resilience and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Central Africa”. UNOCA joined the co-organizers in highlighting the critical importance of the Congo basin rainforest for global climate action, calling for sustainable climate financing for Central Africa. It also called for inclusive and comprehensive climate action that integrates aspects conducive to sustaining peace. The event was attended by, inter alia, representatives of the Government of Gabon, the diplomatic corps and representatives of local and international non-governmental organizations.

64. From 7 to 12 November, UNOCA participated in a side event at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) to showcase its work on the linkages between climate change, peace and security in Central Africa. The event was also an opportunity to discuss the modalities

for the development of a regional strategy on the impact of climate change and climate-resilient development under the leadership of ECCAS.

#### **Transhumance and farmer-herder dynamics**

65. UNOCA continued cross-regional work on farmer-herder dynamics in Central and West Africa in collaboration with UNOWAS and the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel. A good practices workshop was held in Yaoundé on 29 and 30 September, during which local authorities, farmer and herder associations and women and youth representatives from both subregions, as well as representatives from the Government of Cameroon and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) shared good practices to prevent and resolve related tensions and formulated recommendations to promote local-level initiatives to drive regional action. The workshop is to be followed by four field visits and the creation of a community of practice to enhance continued exchange on good practices between both subregions.

### **D. Enhancing United Nations coherence and coordination in the subregion**

#### *Internal United Nations exchanges, collaboration, coordination and joint initiatives*

66. From 22 to 24 June in Dakar, UNOCA participated in the West Africa and Sahel Peace and Development Advisers Forum, organized by UNOWAS. The meeting was attended by peace and development advisers from West Africa and the Sahel, UNOWAS, UNOCA, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs-UNDP Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and the Government of Switzerland. Participants reviewed the political and security situation in West Africa and the Sahel and discussed United Nations responses to peace and security challenges in the subregion.

67. From 4 to 7 October in Nairobi, UNOCA participated in the United Nations meetings of political departments/units and peace and development advisers and on the threat of violent extremism and terrorism in the Great Lakes Region. The purpose of the former was to ensure increased coordination and strengthen collaboration among the United Nations actors in the region. At the second meeting, participants discussed a shared understanding of the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in the region and developed recommendations for preventive action by United Nations senior leadership.

#### *Partnerships with and support to United Nations resident coordinators and country teams*

68. On 2 September, UNOCA held a virtual meeting with peace and development advisers and political affairs components of United Nations presences in Central Africa to discuss the mapping of existing national frameworks and strategies to further strengthen efforts on the prevention agenda, explore ways to increase information-sharing practices and discuss planned activities and cross-cutting issues.

69. On 21 September, the Special Representative held his first virtual meeting with resident coordinators and heads of regional presences in Central Africa. Participants underlined areas where the good offices of the Special Representative might be needed, in line with the strategic vision of the Regional Conflict Prevention

Framework for Central Africa to enhance coherence and maximize the impact of prevention efforts.

#### **IV. Observations and recommendations**

70. The reporting period saw the holding of peaceful elections in Angola, the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe. I commend the Governments and peoples of the countries concerned for their efforts and encourage all countries of the subregion to promote free, credible and inclusive elections as the only means for the devolution and exercise of political power in the subregion.

71. The recent electoral processes exposed some challenges facing democratic governance in the countries concerned, in particular, issues related to independence and capacities of electoral management bodies, as well as voter registers. Addressing those issues is key to the credibility of electoral processes. They should be tackled in a timely, inclusive and consensual manner ahead of future elections.

72. The situation in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon continues to be of concern, in particular with regard to attacks against schools, children, teachers and humanitarian personnel. I strongly condemn such attacks and urge all stakeholders to bring an end to violence. The United Nations welcomes the efforts of the Government to further the implementation of the outcomes of the major national dialogue.

73. In Chad, key transitional milestones have been reached, including the historic Doha Peace Agreement and the Inclusive, Sovereign National Dialogue. I welcome the establishment of a government of national unity and note the efforts made by the transitional authorities towards increased inclusion and reconciliation. However, I was deeply saddened by the tragic loss of many lives during demonstrations on 20 October. I call for a credible investigation, due process for those detained and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. I am also concerned about reports of intensifying intersocietal tensions. All Chadian stakeholders must remain committed to the spirit of dialogue and continue to work together towards an inclusive, consensual and expeditious return to constitutional order, in accordance with the country's regional and international commitments, including in relation to human rights. The United Nations will continue to support national efforts to that end, working closely with international, regional and subregional partners, in particular the African Union and ECCAS. I encourage international and regional partners to provide adequate support to the transitional authorities, in particular to put in place inclusive and functional institutions to organize credible elections that would return Chad to constitutional order and advance democratization. I further call on the transitional authorities to increase efforts to promote inclusion, respect for human rights, social cohesion and sustainable economic development for the broader population.

74. Governments in the subregion should promote freedom of the press, including through laws that ensure the safety of journalists and actions that contribute towards holding perpetrators of attacks against journalists accountable. The United Nations will continue to provide relevant support, given the pivotal role that media play in the promotion of peace, security and good governance.

75. The subregion continues to face persistent challenges to its stability with new and emerging threats, including the prevalence of hate speech. I welcome the development of a draft regional strategy and action plan to prevent and address this phenomenon in Central Africa and look forward to its adoption by the heads of State and Government in the subregion.

76. I am particularly worried about the adverse effects of climate change on the region. Extreme weather conditions have created a dire humanitarian situation in several countries of Central Africa. Heavy rainfalls have resulted in the destruction of crops and massive flooding in the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Chad, affecting more than 1 million people in Chad, over 258,000 people in Cameroon and 104,000 in the Central African Republic. At the same time, the commitment of the countries of the subregion to address climate change is commendable, including their continued leading role in international forums to promote international action to curb global warming and environmental depletion. International support and compensation are needed to encourage the subregion to promote a sustainable utilization of natural resources and preserve the Congo basin and to leverage this unique asset in the global fight against climate change and for local and regional peace consolidation.

77. Intercommunal conflicts, notably over access to natural resources, remain a source of concern, in particular in Cameroon and Chad, where tensions relating to transhumance have led to violence that has claimed the lives of hundreds and caused the destruction of livestock and crops. More than ever, Governments are urged to take measures, both nationally and regionally, to prevent and peacefully resolve such conflicts, including by adopting or updating regulations governing transhumance, while also promoting traditional knowledge and local peace infrastructures. Ultimately, the most enduring solution to the drivers of conflict lies in inclusive sustainable development, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, as well as the equitable administration of justice.

78. The improved maritime security situation in the Gulf of Guinea is encouraging. As countries continue to strengthen regional and interregional cooperation, including within the framework of the Yaoundé Architecture, Central African coastal States should rapidly operationalize Zone A of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre. They are also encouraged to strengthen their maritime security enforcement capabilities, including through the criminalization of acts of piracy and the establishment of universal jurisdiction. More efforts are needed to enhance their national maritime security strategies, incorporating a preventive approach aimed at strengthening the resilience of local communities, in particular youth, to violence and crime. The United Nations will continue to provide related support, including towards the development of blue economies, and advocate for greater regional cooperation.

79. The improvement of coordination among the security and defence forces within the Multi-National Joint Task Force, as evidenced by the successes of Operation Lake Sanity, is encouraging. However, the Governments concerned should step up their efforts to redeploy State presence and services with the support of humanitarian and developmental actors to immediately stabilize the areas that have been freed from terrorists and ensure that displaced people can return to their areas of origin in dignity, safety and security. The management and reintegration of those who chose to leave the ranks of Boko Haram affiliates and splinter groups should be undertaken in a coherent manner at the regional level. International partners should step up their support to the affected countries, notably by supporting the implementation of the Territorial Action Plans of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region.

80. A shortage in funding is preventing a timely and appropriate response to the dire humanitarian situation in the subregion. International partners should enhance their support to the financing of humanitarian response plans in the subregion.

81. While the countries of the subregion are yet to fully recover from the economic effects of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), they continued to be hit by the impact of the conflict in Ukraine, in particular rising inflation rates and difficulties in the supply of oil, fertilizer and some basic commodities, leading to shortages and high prices. I



encourage Governments in the subregion to prioritize policies that promote inclusive economic development and structural transformation to enhance resilience against shocks and contribute to social cohesion.

82. I would like to express my appreciation to the Governments of the subregion, the African Union, ECCAS, CEMAC, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and other regional and subregional institutions for their continued collaboration with UNOCA. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Multinational Joint Task Force and its troop-contributing countries for their commitment to the service of peace and stability. I am equally grateful to the Government and people of Gabon for their generous hospitality and support for UNOCA.

83. Lastly, I would like to welcome my new Special Representative, Abdou Abarry, who took office as Head of UNOCA a few months ago. I would like to thank him and the staff of UNOCA for their continuing support to regional efforts to advance the cause of peace and security in Central Africa.

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