



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 me to keep it informed about the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). It provides an assessment of the major political and security developments and trends in Central Africa since my report dated 24 May 2019 ([S/2019/430](#)) and an update on progress in the implementation of the UNOCA mandate with regard to the conclusions of the strategic review of UNOCA, which were welcomed by the Council in the statement of its President dated 12 September 2019 ([S/PRST/2019/10](#)). The report 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. Preparing for upcoming elections and reconciling past electoral challenges remained salient features of the political landscape in Central Africa. As several countries grappled with the challenges of managing peaceful and credible democratic transitions of power, the mostly young population has grown increasingly vocal about the need for reform. While some countries continued to urge greater economic integration, including the free movement of people and goods in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) zone, others were reluctant to lower barriers that they perceived to be necessary for maintaining national security.

3. Central Africa achieved a milestone in adopting a much-anticipated plan for the institutional reform of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). By the end of 2019, ECCAS Heads of State and Government are expected to sign the reform package developed and approved by ministers in June and July, in order to transform the ECCAS secretariat into a commission, as well as to fully integrate the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa into the ECCAS institutional architecture. On 26 July, Gabon announced its donation of a new building in Libreville to serve as the new commission's headquarters.



Political developments and trends

4. In Angola, the administration of the President, João Lourenço, continued to focus on addressing poverty and corruption while tackling increasing public debt. On 15 June, the ruling party, Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, convened its seventh extraordinary congress in Luanda, at which it adopted a strategy for the municipal elections to be held in 2020 and voted to enlarge its central committee to nearly 500 members.

5. In Cameroon, tensions around the contested presidential election held in October 2018 surged when more than 280 members of the Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun, an opposition party, were arrested during demonstrations in Yaoundé, Douala, Nkongsamba, Bafoussam and Bangangté on 1 and 8 June. A key issue was the holding of parliamentary elections, which had been postponed twice since 2018. On 27 June, the Government of Switzerland made public its efforts to facilitate a resolution to the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions through a dialogue process. Meanwhile, on 26 August, in Yaoundé, the Government announced its intention to reopen schools in the North-West and South-West Regions. In reaction, the secessionists imposed a new 16-day lockdown in the two regions, resulting in increased displacement.

6. From 30 September to 4 October in Yaoundé, the Prime Minister, Joseph Dion Ngute, presided over a national dialogue focusing primarily on the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions. The dialogue was attended by participants from various sectors of Cameroonian society. Secessionist leaders and members of the opposition party of the former presidential candidate Maurice Kamto, some of whom were detained at the time, did not participate in the dialogue. Some opposition leaders left the dialogue process and rejected its outcome. Among the conclusions of the national dialogue were the recommendations that a special status be accorded to the North-West and South-West Regions and that regional councils be created. Other outcomes included the authorization of dual citizenship and representation of the diaspora in the National Assembly, the adoption of measures to promote bilingualism and the designation of mediators to engage radicalized members of the diaspora. The Prime Minister vowed to reopen schools and ensure the resumption of socioeconomic activities and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. These recommendations were submitted to the President, Paul Biya, for his consideration. To date, no official decision on the recommendations has been made public.

7. On 3 October, Mr. Biya ended legal proceedings against 333 persons detained in connection with the crisis in the two regions. On 5 October, a military court ordered the release of Mr. Kamto, along with 102 other members of the Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun, at the request of the President. Since then, authorities have prohibited three public meetings of supporters of Mr. Kamto. On 10 November, Mr. Biya signed a decree calling for legislative and municipal elections to be held on 9 February 2020.

8. In Chad, the security situation was of increasing concern. In the face of continued lawlessness in parts of the north and escalating intercommunal violence in the east, the Council of Ministers decreed a state of emergency in the northern province of Tibesti and in the eastern provinces of Ouaddaï and Sila on 19 August. On 21 August, the Government announced the closing of the country's borders with the Central African Republic, Libya and the Sudan, leaving a small number of official crossing points open along each border. On 10 September, the National Assembly extended the state of emergency in the three provinces until January 2020. On 11 November, the government security forces signed an agreement with the Miski self-defence committee in an attempt to end the fighting that had broken out in Tibesti several weeks earlier.

9. Progress continued to be made towards the holding of legislative and local elections in Chad, which had been postponed repeatedly since 2015. On 3 July, the National Assembly passed a new electoral law in line with the statute on gender parity of 2018. On 12 September, the President, Idriss Déby Itno, appointed a new executive bureau for the national political dialogue framework, which started revising the electoral law to shorten the legal deadlines to hold elections before the end of 2019, as requested by the Government. On 3 October, the National Independent Electoral Commission announced that legislative elections would most likely be held in the first quarter of 2020.

10. In the Congo, some progress was achieved towards inclusive political dialogue. Since 9 October, the National Dialogue Council has been consulting with national stakeholders, including political parties, religious groups, civil society and professional organizations, in preparation for a dialogue to be convened in 2020. The implementation of the ceasefire concluded in 2017 between the Government and the Ninja militia, led by Frédéric Bintsamou, also known as Pastor Ntumi, in the Pool Region continued to advance. However, the critical reintegration phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, had not commenced. This was largely because the financial contribution of \$4 million by the Government, which was expected to trigger donor support, was not released.

11. In Gabon, the President, Ali Bongo Ondimba, gradually resumed his duties following his illness in October 2018. On 10 June, he appointed a leaner Government led by a Prime Minister and comprising 28 ministers and deputy ministers. A new ministerial position for the promotion of good governance was established. A reshuffle on 4 October expanded the Cabinet to 31 ministers. On 24 September, the Constitutional Court was sworn in. The terms of the President of the Court and most of its judges were extended to nine years, in line with the provisions of the Constitution of 2018.

12. In Sao Tome and Principe, inter-party and intra-party political tensions increased, with the former ruling party, Acção Democrática Independente, undergoing a split in leadership, and with a marked rise in tensions within the ruling coalition. Continued fuel shortages and power cuts led to an increase in the number of demonstrations, acts of vandalism, violence and public discord. In an effort to demonstrate a commitment to institutional and political stability, the Government convened a high-level meeting on 17 September at which the President, Evaristo do Espírito Santo Carvalho, the Prime Minister, Jorge Lopes Bom Jesus, and the President of the National Assembly, Delfim Santiago das Neves, committed themselves to preserving the country's institutional and political stability and agreed to develop a strategy for modernizing the justice sector.

13. On 16 July, Equatorial Guinea endorsed the abolishment of visa requirements for nationals of CEMAC countries, in accordance with the CEMAC agreement of 2013 on free movement in Central Africa. The Congo and Gabon were the last two countries to ratify the agreement, in October 2017.

14. On 16 August, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea publicly denied rumours that the country was building a wall along its border with Cameroon, prompting the chief of the Cameroonian army to warn against any unlawful intrusions into the country's territory. In July, Gabon ratified a special agreement to adjudicate its border dispute with Equatorial Guinea through the International Court of Justice.

15. On 12 July, Angola convened a quadripartite summit in Luanda with the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. In a joint communiqué, they renewed their commitment to dialogue for economic and political

cooperation and the peaceful resolution of disputes. On 21 August, in Luanda, the Presidents of Rwanda and Uganda signed a memorandum of understanding, facilitated by the Presidents of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the goal of normalizing relations. On 16 September, a ministerial-level commission formed to implement the memorandum of understanding held its first meeting in Kigali, resulting in a joint communiqué in which several measures were outlined to move the process forward.

Security developments and trends

Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin

16. Boko Haram attacks on civilian and military targets continued in the Far North Region of Cameroon and in the Lac Province of Chad. Between 1 June and 30 September, there were 130 reported Boko Haram-related security incidents in Cameroon, with 98 civilian fatalities, and 25 incidents in Chad, with 22 civilian fatalities. The Government of Chad reinstated security measures that included a ban on fishing and the closure of markets in border areas. On 10 June, intense fighting near a military installation in Darak, Cameroon, claimed the lives of more than 15 Cameroonian soldiers. On 21 June, clashes near Ngouboua in the Lac Province of Chad led to the death of 11 Chadian soldiers, including three officers. Authorities confirmed that 26 Boko Haram fighters were also killed. On 13 August, a female suicide bomber killed six people, including one soldier, in the same region. On 13 September, it was reported that Boko Haram had attacked a military post in Soueram, near Fotokol in Cameroon, killing six Cameroonian soldiers and wounding nine others. Increasingly, landmines were used in carrying out attacks. On 17 September, a Chadian soldier was killed when his vehicle drove over a mine in the vicinity of Kaïga Kindjiria in the Lac Province.

Lord's Resistance Army

17. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to commit abuses against civilians and abduct children, who were frequently held longer in captivity than adults were and forced into marriage with combatants. Adults were frequently abducted to carry goods and undertake dangerous and arduous labour before being released or escaping. LRA groups remained highly mobile within the subregion. The non-governmental organization (NGO) Invisible Children reported that, from January to September 2019, LRA abducted 172 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including 29 children, and 37 people in the Central African Republic, including 8 children.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

18. Maritime crime in Central Africa, specifically piracy, continued to be a major obstacle to the security and sustainable development of coastal economies. While the overall number of attacks worldwide decreased slightly during the third quarter of 2019, the International Maritime Bureau reported that abduction and hostage-taking in the Gulf of Guinea now accounted for more than 80 per cent of incidents worldwide. Armed groups at sea demonstrated better capacity to operate far from the coast with greater technical skill. Attacks were often focused on kidnapping for ransom, which indicated increasing association with organized crime. Judicial responses to crimes at sea were rare and inconsistently documented.

Poaching and illicit trafficking in wildlife and natural resources

19. Illicit trafficking in natural resources and other forms of environmental crime continued to have an impact on the security situation in the subregion. While there

was abundant evidence that trafficking in natural resources contributed to the funding of armed groups, the competition to control those resources also exacerbated tensions between rural communities and nomadic pastoralists.

20. On 17 July, the Superior Council of the Judiciary of Gabon adopted new criminal procedure codes that, inter alia, substantially increased penalties for environmental crimes, particularly those related to trafficking in wildlife and in minerals and, to some extent, those related to the forest industry.

Effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters on the stability of Central Africa

21. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its most recent report, anticipated that Central Africa would see a decrease in the length of wet periods and a slight increase in heavy rainfall, which would pose a higher risk of flooding than previously forecast. Simultaneously, the Panel predicted higher drought intensity in the Congo River basin. Shifts in rainfall patterns and the increased incidence of extreme weather events could disrupt farming by damaging crops and reducing food production. This would ultimately have an adverse impact on food security and human health, which could undermine stability and humanitarian efforts in the region.

22. On 7 September, an extraordinary ministerial meeting of ECCAS held in Brazzaville adopted a common subregional position on the contributions of Central African forests to the global fight against climate change. Governments renewed their collective commitment to reducing threats to the world's second largest rainforest while seeking to mobilize greater global support for the subregion. On 23 September, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, presented the common ECCAS position at the Climate Action Summit held in New York. On the margins of the summit, Gabon and Norway signed an agreement by which they committed up to \$150 million over the next 10 years to the Central African Forest Initiative. Under the agreement, Gabon became the first country to receive results-based payments for preventing deforestation and land degradation, which will contribute to the natural absorption of carbon dioxide by forests. Germany and the Republic of Korea also pledged \$33 million and \$2 million, respectively, to the Initiative. On 3 September, in Paris, during a visit by the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, in his capacity as chair of the Executive Board of the Initiative, signed a letter in which he declared that \$65 million would be designated for the preservation of the Congolese rainforest.

B. Humanitarian developments

23. In Cameroon, the escalation of violence and insecurity caused humanitarian needs to reach their highest levels yet. Some 4.3 million people required emergency assistance – a 30 per cent increase compared with 2018. Checkpoints established by both security forces and armed non-State actors made it difficult for humanitarian actors to gain access to the population. Violence and insecurity had dramatic effects on the lives of civilians, in particular women and children. The deteriorating economic and security situation contributed to high rates of sexual abuse and exploitation and other types of gender-based violence. Concerns related to the protection of teenage boys and young men persisted, including with regard to killings, kidnappings, arbitrary detention and forced recruitment. In the North-West and South-West Regions, violence continued to affect 1.3 million people, including over 700,000 people who were uprooted from their homes. Armed fighting and insecurity in the two regions continued to be the principal impediment to the provision of assistance and a barrier for those in need to reach areas where they could receive aid. Attacks on health infrastructure and personnel, schools, teachers, parents and children persisted.

More than 855,000 children – almost 9 out of 10 – have been out of school for three years in the two regions. As of November 2019, 90 per cent of public primary schools and 77 per cent of public secondary schools remained closed or non-operational. In July, 785 cases of gender-based violence, including 74 cases of rape, were reported in the North-West and South-West Regions. Cameroon continued to host some 272,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, the majority of whom lived among the host communities. The appeal for humanitarian aid for Cameroon remained one of the least-funded such appeals in Africa, with just 41 per cent of the \$299 million required to assist 2.3 million people received by November.

24. In Chad, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate owing to multidimensional emergencies in several parts of the country. As a result of displacement, food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as health emergencies, 4.3 million people were in need of assistance and support for their livelihoods. Chad continued to host more than 330,700 refugees from the Sudan and more than 94,100 from the Central African Republic. More than 170,200 Chadians were internally displaced on account of violence by armed groups, an increase from 133,000 in April 2019. In addition to a measles epidemic that had so far affected 24,330 people, with 241 deaths between January and mid-September 2019, a cholera outbreak was declared in August in the south-west of the country. Humanitarian funding remained desperately low, with just over 49 per cent of the \$476.6 million required to assist 2 million people received by November.

25. At the end of September, it was reported that some 14,000 refugees had spontaneously left the Lóvua camp in Angola to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their departure was apparently triggered by the announcement of an improved security situation in the three Kasai provinces. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was engaged in tripartite discussions with the affected countries to establish a mechanism for safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable returns. A tripartite agreement signed by both Governments and UNHCR entered into force on 9 October, paving the way for organized voluntary repatriations.

26. On 10 September, Rwanda concluded a memorandum of understanding with the African Union and UNHCR to temporarily receive African migrants evacuated from Libya, beginning with an agreed initial intake of 500 people. On 26 September and 20 October, two humanitarian flights relocated an initial group of 189 refugees.

Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin

27. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, violence has displaced over 270,850 people since the beginning of the crisis. The region also hosted more than 108,600 Nigerian refugees. Cameroon remained the second most affected country by the crisis in the Lake Chad basin after Nigeria, with 1.9 million people – or one in two people living in the region – in need of humanitarian assistance, representing more than one third of the country's entire humanitarian caseload in 2019. Populations of the Lake Chad basin faced epidemics and outbreaks, including of cholera, measles and poliomyelitis, and the destruction of assets and agricultural incomes owing to exceptional flooding in September and October.

28. In Chad, a resurgence of armed attacks and insecurity in the Lake Chad basin prompted thousands of civilians to flee and seek refuge. Since the beginning of 2019, 47,000 people had reportedly been displaced in the Lac Province. This included refugees arriving from Nigeria, returnees from the Niger and Chadians who had previously been displaced who were seeking security and assistance. Within the context of ongoing military operations and the growing number of reported incidents, the protection of civilians remained a major concern. Children were particularly

affected by recent violence: 49 schools in the Lac Province were temporarily closed in 2019 owing to insecurity, affecting over 12,000 students. Twenty children associated with armed groups were identified and enrolled in a reintegration programme implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund and its partners.

C. Human rights trends

29. In Cameroon, civil society organizations, national and international human rights observers and humanitarian groups continued to denounce violence and abuses stemming from the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions. A technical team of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) visited Cameroon from 5 to 27 September and found that serious human rights violations and abuses, attributed to both government security forces and armed separatists, were occurring across the two regions. OHCHR received allegations of unlawful killing, rape and gang rape, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, abduction for ransom, infringement of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, forced displacement, destruction of property and attacks on schools and medical facilities, as well as arbitrary detention. There was concern regarding impunity.

30. On 24 June, the Ministry of Defence of Cameroon announced that a military court would try seven soldiers for extrajudicial killings in the Far North Region in July 2018. The trial was postponed several times, but commenced on 21 October, when the defendants entered pleas of not guilty before a military tribunal. On 22 and 25 July, respectively, prison riots broke out in Yaoundé and Buea, reportedly involving several hundred people detained in connection with the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions. On 9 September, courts tried and convicted 15 persons for involvement in the riots. On 20 August, military courts sentenced 10 separatist leaders to life in prison and the payment of more than \$400,000 in damages. On 26 August, the leaders appealed the sentences.

31. On 19 July, the Government of Cameroon established the Human Rights Commission, replacing the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms. The mandate of the new Commission includes promoting and protecting human rights and preventing torture. By law, 30 per cent of the commissioners, whose number was reduced from 30 to 15, should be women. The Commission was also designated to function as the national mechanism for the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

32. Killings, abductions and the destruction of property by Boko Haram continued in the Far North Region of Cameroon and the Lac Province of Chad. On 27 August, a special criminal court in Chad handed down prison sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years to 97 individuals charged with terrorism, child recruitment and conspiring with Boko Haram. Ten adults and one minor were acquitted. The trial involved several hundred detainees, including more than 240 members of the Union des forces de la résistance rebel group, and was held at the remote Koro Toro high-security prison.

33. In Chad, the Government confirmed the appointment of 11 members of the new National Human Rights Commission. The United Nations country team in Chad provided support to the Commission.

34. On 2 July, the Government of Equatorial Guinea established a special committee to begin working on legislation that would criminalize public indecency, prostitution and homosexuality. On 5 July, the Ministry of the Interior and Local Corporations disbanded the human rights NGO Centro de Estudios e Iniciativas para el Desarrollo on charges of carrying out political activities. From 27 August to 8 September,

authorities in Bata detained two journalists for broadcasting an interview with a judge who had been suspended by the Supreme Court.

35. During the reporting period, in Gabon, a number of prominent opposition figures were arrested and briefly detained for making public statements calling into question the health of the President. The High Authority for Communication issued several media suspensions for non-compliance with financial and administrative regulations for broadcasters. On 5 July, the National Assembly enacted a new penal code in which same-sex relations were designated a moral crime.

D. Socioeconomic trends

36. According to a study presented by the Economic Commission for Africa in Malabo on 25 September, on the margins of the thirty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Central Africa, the subregion remained highly undiversified and was focused almost entirely on the extractive sector. Despite having a large market in excess of 187 million people and diverse natural resources for mining, agriculture, forestry, tourism and energy, Central Africa continued to face challenges in attracting international investors. This was aggravated by weak regional integration and reliance on the export of raw materials for economic growth, which left the subregion vulnerable to shocks.

37. On 11 July, after two years of talks, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a three-year macroeconomic stabilization package of nearly \$450 million for the Congo. This was expected to trigger up to \$1.3 billion in co-financing by international partners. The country's external and internal debt was estimated at \$9.5 billion. According to IMF, the Congolese economy was showing its first signs of improvement since the onset of the recession three years ago, but IMF recommended, inter alia, greater efforts in the implementation of structural reforms. From 10 to 12 September, the President hosted the fifth Investing in Africa Forum in Brazzaville, aimed at promoting economic cooperation between China and Africa.

38. Gabon continued with a fiscal arrangement under the IMF Extended Fund Facility. According to IMF, the country's economy had largely stabilized, but growth remained sluggish, vulnerabilities persisted and almost one third of the population lived below the poverty line. The main economic challenge remained the resumption of development-oriented growth. On 13 September, the Prime Minister announced new investment in training and professional development to boost the country's agricultural sector.

39. On 13 June, IMF approved an Extended Credit Facility arrangement for Angola, confirming that the Government had demonstrated a strong commitment to fiscal reform despite a weakened and volatile external environment.

40. On 2 October, IMF approved a \$18.2 million Extended Credit Facility arrangement for Sao Tome and Principe. The programme would also enable the World Bank to release its budget support, thereby averting an acute financial crisis caused by low revenues and high levels of debt. The programme came with significant reform measures, including the gradual elimination of fuel subsidies.

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

A. Good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation

Cameroon

41. My Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA continued to advocate broadly both in Cameroon and with regional and international partners for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions through inclusive dialogue. From 3 to 7 September, he met with the Prime Minister and other government officials in Yaoundé, as well as relevant international partners, to discuss the status of dialogue initiatives. He advocated enhanced dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, as well as confidence-building and reconciliation measures. He also assured national partners of United Nations support for dialogue efforts, bilingualism and multiculturalism, decentralization and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, including through the Peacebuilding Fund, following my designation of Cameroon as eligible for financing from the Fund in July. On 4 September, he made a public statement urging all Cameroonians in the North-West and South-West Regions to uphold the fundamental right to education and ensure safe conditions for children to return to school.

Central African Republic

42. UNOCA continued to advocate intensively with the countries of the subregion in support of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. My Special Representative met political leaders in N'Djamena in September and urged the Government of Chad to resume holding meetings of its joint bilateral commission with the Central African Republic to discuss critical issues, notably border management. Sustained advocacy contributed to the resumption of the joint commission between the Central African Republic and the Congo on 6 August. While in N'Djamena, on 12 September, my Special Representative briefed the meeting of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2127 \(2013\)](#) concerning the Central African Republic via video link, providing an update on progress towards arms control and the implementation of sanctions in the subregion.

Chad

43. From 10 to 14 September, my Special Representative met with the President and other senior officials in N'Djamena to advocate the finalization of the ECCAS institutional reform process. He also discussed the country's progress in organizing legislative elections in a challenging security context, as well as the important regional role of Chad in supporting the peace process in the Central African Republic and in the fight against Boko Haram.

Congo

44. From 17 to 23 June, a UNOCA working-level team visited Brazzaville to follow up on the implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 2017 in the Pool Region between the Government and the Ninja militia led by Pastor Ntumi. It also discussed efforts aimed at launching a political dialogue and addressing the human rights situation.

45. On 9 July, in Brazzaville, UNOCA participated in the formal induction of the permanent secretariat of the National Dialogue Council, which was created under the Constitution of 2015 and has an important role in mobilizing support for inclusive

political dialogue. As part of a project financed by the Peacebuilding Fund in support of the stabilization of the Pool Region, UNOCA provided capacity-building support to the Council.

46. From 8 to 13 November, my Special Representative met with national and international stakeholders in Brazzaville, including the Permanent Secretary of the National Dialogue Council, the High Commissioner for the Reintegration of Former Combatants and other political leaders. He welcomed ongoing consultations between the Council and national stakeholders in preparation for dialogue and encouraged political leaders, in particular those of the opposition, to participate in such efforts ahead of the presidential election to be held in 2021. He reiterated his appeal to the Government to disburse its pledged contribution for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

Equatorial Guinea

47. UNOCA sent a working-level mission to Malabo from 23 to 27 September to hold meetings with national authorities and coordinate with the United Nations country team. UNOCA also organized activities jointly with ECCAS and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to assist the Government in accelerating a framework for implementation of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (the Kinshasa Convention), including by hosting a workshop for arms control experts from the subregion in Malabo from 25 to 27 September (see sect. III.B).

Gabon

48. My Special Representative remained in close contact with influential Gabonese persons from across the political spectrum, encouraging them to maintain direction and momentum following the recent period of institutional and political uncertainty. He also urged them to exercise moderation in their discourse and seek recourse through the appropriate national institutions. On 2 September, he met with the Prime Minister and encouraged the resumption of social dialogue. On 17 July and 9 September, UNOCA met with delegations from a prominent national trade union confederation to urge dialogue with the Prime Minister.

49. On 5 November, my Special Representative met with the President, who, in his capacity as Chair of ECCAS, confirmed that the next extraordinary summit of ECCAS Heads of State and Government would be convened in Libreville by the end of 2019 to agree on the ECCAS reform process. My Special Representative reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the implementation of the reforms and the strengthening of ECCAS capacity.

50. UNOCA continued to support ECCAS in providing strategic training for the security sector. From 17 to 21 June, UNOCA and ECCAS jointly organized a workshop for more than 30 officials from the national police force of Gabon on human rights and transnational crime. From 16 to 19 September, UNOCA and ECCAS jointly organized a capacity-building workshop for 34 senior officials from various branches of the national defence and security forces of Gabon on preventing and combating terrorism.

51. In October, UNOCA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior, Public Security, Immigration and Decentralization and the Ministry of Justice of Gabon to implement an 18-month national human rights capacity-building project, with financing from the European Union and the United Nations. The project is designed to provide updated human

rights training to the National Human Rights Commission, line ministries, human rights NGOs and civil society organizations representing women and youth.

Sao Tome and Principe

52. My Special Representative visited Sao Tome from 15 to 19 September to follow up with the authorities on progress towards implementing the recommendations made by the United Nations technical support mission in March. To that end, on 17 September, he participated in the high-level meeting on the justice sector (see para. 12). The meeting was supported by the United Nations country team and had resulted from recommendations of the support mission, fulfilling the request of the Government for United Nations assistance in advancing democratic and judicial reforms.

B. Support for United Nations, regional and subregional initiatives on peace and security

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

53. The Bureau of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa visited N'Djamena and Bol in Chad from 21 to 24 October to assess the situation in the Lake Chad basin, in particular the effects of climate change and the implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region. The forty-ninth meeting of the Committee was held in Luanda from 25 to 29 November.

Collaboration with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations

54. From 25 to 27 June, in Kigali, UNOCA and ECCAS hosted an expert group meeting on women and peace and security at which the ECCAS general policy and regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) were adopted. On 28 June, the ECCAS meeting of ministers responsible for gender and women's affairs endorsed the regional action plan. UNOCA recruited a consultant to support ECCAS in resource mobilization, among other things, in view of a conference on women and peace and security to be held in Malabo in 2020.

55. From 15 to 30 September, the United Nations deployed an expert from the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers at the request of the ECCAS secretariat to support ongoing reform of its mediation and preventive diplomacy service. The expert held consultations with various stakeholders, made substantive comments on the draft protocol on peace and security and provided guidance to ensure overall coherence of the reform process.

56. From 8 to 10 October, in Libreville, UNOCA and ECCAS hosted the inaugural meeting of the new civil society coalition for conflict prevention, peace and security in Central Africa, a regional coordination mechanism aimed at engaging civil society in conflict prevention and early warning activities. During consultations with civil society representatives from the region, held in Douala, Cameroon, in March, it was agreed that ECCAS would lead the creation of a regional civil society coordination mechanism, drawing from the experience of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.

57. On 18 October and 6 November, my Special Representative met with the Secretary-General of ECCAS to discuss progress in its reform process and joint cooperation, including on the implementation of the Lomé Declaration on Peace,

Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism, adopted at the joint summit of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States in 2018.

Boko Haram

58. From 18 to 20 June, in Niamey, UNOCA participated in the regional consultative forum for civil society groups in the Lake Chad basin, convened by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union, with support from UNDP, the Finnish NGO Crisis Management Initiative and the German Agency for International Cooperation. The forum was focused on engaging civil society in the implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region and identifying avenues for collaboration, partnerships and information-sharing through peer-to-peer learning and exchange.

59. From 16 to 18 July, UNOCA participated in the second meeting of the Lake Chad basin governors' forum for regional cooperation on stabilization, peacebuilding and sustainable development. The meeting was convened by the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with support from the African Union, UNDP and the Crisis Management Initiative. At the forum, UNDP launched the Regional Stabilization Facility for Lake Chad as the mechanism for financing regional cooperation on stabilization, recovery and resilience. UNOCA delivered a presentation on supporting subregional mechanisms to enhance coordination around ongoing national, regional and multilateral stabilization efforts.

60. In the context of enhancing United Nations support for Governments and subregional organizations in addressing the impact of Boko Haram, my Special Representative for Central Africa and my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel undertook a joint high-level visit to Nigeria from 20 to 23 November, along with the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, to advocate the regional strategy led jointly by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. Similar visits were made to Chad in March 2019 and to Cameroon and the Niger in April 2019.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

61. From 9 to 12 July, UNOCA conducted a joint technical mission with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, in Yaoundé, to assess the maritime security situation in the Gulf of Guinea. The mission met with Centre officials and external partners from diplomatic missions, who agreed to convene an annual meeting to assess progress in and coordinate support for a four-year work programme focused on maritime governance, judicial enforcement, information-sharing and administration.

62. On 3 October, in Luanda, UNOCA held a working-level meeting with the secretariat of the Gulf of Guinea Commission to discuss the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Regional strategy and plan of action on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa

63. UNOCA, ECCAS and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa continued to implement their joint project in support of the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention. In June, all States members of ECCAS appointed experts to assess national implementation of the Convention. The findings

of the experts were presented in a series of workshops and transformed into an implementation guide. A capacity-building workshop on legal matters was held in Malabo from 25 to 27 September, with arms control experts from subregional organizations, civil society and other external partners. The workshop adopted recommendations to enhance support for the operationalization of national small arms commissions and to further engage civil society in the implementation of the Convention at the national and local levels.

Transhumance and farmer-herder conflicts

64. UNOCA continued to support the efforts of ECCAS towards the adoption of a subregional regulatory framework on pastoralism and transhumance. A consultant hired by UNOCA developed an initial draft regulatory framework, on the basis of the conclusions of ECCAS regional workshops. From 14 to 16 October, in Libreville, UNOCA supported ECCAS in holding an expert-level workshop to review the draft regulatory framework. Throughout his advocacy in the region, my Special Representative urged leaders to fully integrate the phenomenon of transboundary transhumance into their security strategies, including through joint bilateral commissions between countries sharing a common border.

Link between illicit trafficking in wildlife and natural resources and financing of armed groups in the subregion, including the Lord's Resistance Army and Boko Haram

65. On 24 and 25 June, in Libreville, UNOCA participated in a workshop on the implementation in Central Africa of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, organized by the Gabonese parliamentary caucus for conservation in partnership with ECCAS, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the National Agency for National Parks of Gabon. Members of parliament from 6 of the 11 States members of ECCAS also participated. The Convention secretariat presented an overview of the Convention and its implementation in the subregion, and UNODC discussed the impact of illicit trafficking on regional security and the need to further target criminal networks.

C. Enhancing United Nations coherence and coordination in the subregion

66. On 12 and 13 July, in Nairobi, UNOCA participated along with other subregional entities in the development of an action plan for the comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa. The Office shared experiences, good practices and challenges facing a regional office and lessons learned from system-wide integration in Central Africa.

67. From 18 to 22 September, in Luanda, UNOCA participated in the first biennial Pan-African Forum for a Culture of Peace in Africa, hosted by the Government of Angola, the African Union and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Bringing together hundreds of participants from Africa and elsewhere, the Forum was focused on the intersection between partnerships and culture for engaging young people in the prevention of violent conflict. UNOCA sponsored the participation of 10 young people from Central Africa.

68. On 9 October, in Dakar, my Special Representative briefed the United Nations Children's Fund regional management team for West and Central Africa on the political situation in the subregion and ongoing prevention efforts.

69. On the margins of the high-level segment of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, my Special Representative met with the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Nobel peace prize laureate and advocate Leymah Gbowee, to coordinate United Nations support for the African Women Leaders Network. Such support included initiatives taken in coordination with the Government of Cameroon to support the engagement of women in the national dialogue process.

70. On 23 and 24 October, UNOCA participated in the coordination meeting of Great Lakes political units and peace and development advisers organized in Nairobi by the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region.

71. On 4 and 5 November, in Libreville, UNOCA held an annual coordination meeting with United Nations political units and peace and development advisers in Central Africa, aimed at enhancing the coherence of the United Nations system, including through the development of a common analysis of the subregion.

72. UNOCA continued to collaborate with the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa on strengthening national human rights monitoring and oversight mechanisms. On 30 July, in Libreville, it contributed to a workshop with Gabonese officials of the Ministry of Justice, the National Human Rights Commission and the Centre for Elections, as well as members of parliament, on mobilizing civil society to engage with marginalized groups. Further to a request by the Government of Equatorial Guinea, UNOCA and the Subregional Centre undertook a joint mission to Malabo from 18 October to 3 November to support the Government in establishing a national human rights capacity-building programme.

IV. Observations and recommendations

73. I welcome the intention of ECCAS to hold an extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government before the end of 2019 to approve its institutional reform package. The reform process is the result of subregional collaboration, extensive advocacy and the marshalling of political will. I reiterate the continued commitment of the United Nations to supporting ECCAS in the implementation of its reform.

74. The decision by the President of Cameroon to convene a national dialogue in Yaoundé was a significant step towards addressing the various crises facing the country. Dialogue efforts must continue with all relevant stakeholders, including armed groups, local communities, the diaspora and opposition leaders, to tackle the underlying grievances of those who have felt marginalized and to address the aspirations of the population. It is essential to build on the positive momentum created by the national dialogue to ensure inclusiveness in the implementation of related recommendations with the participation of all Cameroonians, including women, young people and those living abroad. It will also be key to ensuring that inclusive and transparent legislative and municipal elections are held in February 2020. I reiterate my encouragement to the Cameroonian authorities to continue to adopt additional confidence-building and reconciliation measures in connection with the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions. I call upon all parties to renounce violence and invest in the political process in order to bring about lasting peace and reconciliation. I urge national authorities to redouble their efforts to fight impunity and call upon all actors to abide by international human rights principles. I encourage the Government of Cameroon to implement the commitments that it has made in the context of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council and to promptly initiate follow-up actions on the recommendations made by the OHCHR technical assessment mission in September, including on alleged human rights violations in the North-West and South-West Regions.

75. I am concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Chad, which is closely interlinked with security challenges in key neighbouring countries and in the region. The spread of violent extremism is best addressed through prevention. I reiterate my call for the international community to provide increased support to the Group of Five for the Sahel. In Chad, it is essential from the perspective of sustaining peace that the Government advances the implementation of its strategic development plan, Vision 2030, and that international partners provide more support in this respect. Meanwhile, I welcome the renewal of the national political dialogue framework, which remains an essential platform for permanent and constructive dialogue between political parties. I welcome the appointment of several women to the framework and the inclusion of gender quotas in the new electoral law. I also welcome the progress towards the holding of the long-postponed legislative elections. I call upon the Government to increase its efforts towards establishing conditions conducive to inclusive and credible legislative elections. The United Nations stands ready to provide further technical support for these elections.

76. The reactivation of the bilateral joint commission between the Central African Republic and the Congo brings new hope to the subregion. I congratulate the authorities of the two countries for demonstrating the necessary trust and collaboration, and I urge them to capitalize on the current momentum to further enhance their bilateral relations in support of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. I call upon all neighbouring countries to follow this example and show regional solidarity with the Central African Republic.

77. I welcome the IMF Extended Credit Facility support programme for the Congo and urge the Government to remain engaged in the economic reform progress in order to consolidate the renewed upward trajectory of the economic situation. I am encouraged by the commitment of the Government to pursue the stabilization of the situation in the Pool Region. In order to sustain progress, I call upon the Government to continue to address the political dimension of the situation in that region. I further urge the Government to disburse its contribution to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, which is supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, to enable the implementation of the essential reintegration phase.

78. I congratulate the Government of Sao Tome and Principe on showing resolve for ensuring political stability by enhancing the rule of law. However, the commitments articulated by the country's leaders on 17 September must be backed by clear steps towards larger reforms, on the basis of genuine and inclusive dialogue, that will contribute to modernizing the justice sector. The United Nations will continue to support the Government in that modernization process and in promoting inclusive dialogue platforms, including through the deployment of relevant expertise.

79. In some parts of the subregion, the non-realization of economic, social and cultural rights continued to generate social tensions and protests against degrading standards of living. The influence of the executive branch over the judiciary and legislative bodies undermines the delivery of justice and the adoption of legislation that is compliant with international human rights norms and standards, thus increasing impunity. I encourage all Governments of the subregion to step up their engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, the universal periodic review and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, to deliver on their human rights obligations.

80. The humanitarian situation in several pockets of Central Africa remains deeply troubling. While needs continue to grow, resources have become increasingly scarce and host communities are stretched to the limits of their capacity to accommodate displaced populations. Genuine partnership is needed between the affected countries

and the donor community to ensure that sustainable strategies are in place to respond to humanitarian needs while also addressing the political, economic and social conditions that aggravate the desperate situation of millions of people. I will continue to fully promote the new way of working between humanitarian and development actors in order to leverage their comparative advantages and achieve collective outcomes that will reduce need, risk and vulnerability over time.

81. I have taken particular note of the statement of the President of the Security Council of 12 September, in which he acknowledged the vital role of partnerships with civil society networks. In that regard, I commend ECCAS on taking the initiative to establish a subregional civil society coalition aimed at engaging civil society in conflict prevention and early warning in Central Africa. I encourage UNOCA and UNOWAS to exchange best practices that will be beneficial to the new civil society coalition and commit the full support of the United Nations to making the coalition operational and effective.

82. I have also noted that the Security Council has encouraged UNOCA to take into consideration the effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters, among other factors, on the stability of Central Africa, including through drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity. I welcome the increased engagement of the subregion in efforts to protect the Central African rainforest. I also welcome the increased support of the international community for the protection of the rainforest in the context of global efforts to address climate change. I encourage a continued strengthening of the related partnerships. The Central African Forest Initiative will bring significant positive benefits to approximately 60 million people living in or around Central African forests and 40 million living in urban centres, who depend on the forest for food and fuel. Since agriculture and hydropower production in large parts of Africa depend on the Central African forests, their preservation is critical for regional livelihoods and security.

83. I remain concerned about the continued threat of Boko Haram to peace, stability and socioeconomic development in Central Africa. The relentless determination of the Governments in the subregion, as well as subregional and regional organizations, to address the impact of Boko Haram and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant will be required to ensure the full implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region, led jointly by the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and the effective engagement of local authorities in the affected countries. UNOCA and UNOWAS, along with the rest of the United Nations system, will pursue coordinated efforts to help to achieve this common objective.

84. 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 would also like to express my appreciation to the Multinational Joint Task Force and troop-contributing countries for their dedication and commitment to the service of peace and stability. I am grateful to the Government and people of Gabon for their generous hospitality and support for UNOCA. I would like to thank the various entities of the United Nations system working in Central Africa, including the heads of United Nations peace operations, regional offices, country teams and other entities, for their support for and cooperation with UNOCA.

85. Finally, I would like to thank my Special Representative, François Louncény Fall, and the staff of UNOCA for their continuing support for regional efforts to advance the cause of peace and security in Central Africa.