



# 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 November 2021 ([S/2021/975](#)). 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. Several countries in the subregion started preparations during the reporting period for upcoming elections in 2022 and 2023. To date, the risk of electoral violence appears limited in most countries. While the peaceful transfer of power in Sao Tome and Principe has demonstrated the potential to consolidate democratic gains in the upcoming electoral cycles, the shrinking of political space and has been observed in other countries. The socioeconomic impact of both the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the war in Ukraine have fuelled popular frustration. As most countries have recently lifted COVID-19-related restrictive measures, they remain vulnerable to a relapse, in particular given the generally low vaccination rates.

3. The reporting period was marked by the ongoing political transition in Chad and advances in political dialogue in the Central African Republic. In Chad, the inclusive national dialogue, a key milestone of the transitional road map, was originally scheduled for 10 May but was postponed to allow for the pre-dialogue between the transitional authorities and politico-military groups, hosted in Doha, to yield results. In the Central African Republic, the republican dialogue was held from 21 to 27 March amid the withdrawal of some opposition members. Nevertheless, the event offered a venue for sociopolitical actors and community representatives in the country to discuss issues related to peace and security, political governance, the rule of law



and democratic and institutional strengthening, and economic and social development, as well as foreign policy and international cooperation.

4. The region continued to face multidimensional and cross-border security threats. There was an increase in intercommunal violence including, notably, farmer-herder and herder-fisher conflicts in the Lake Chad basin. In the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, prospects for dialogue did not materialize and violence persisted.

5. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) continued to pursue its institutional reform and the implementation of its strategic priorities for the period 2021–2025, notably on peace and security. In Brazzaville on 19 January, ECCAS held its twentieth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government, which took important steps to strengthen the ECCAS peace and security architecture, including through the installation of a committee of the wise and the creation of a network of women mediators in Central Africa. ECCAS leaders agreed to strengthen their efforts to address the multidimensional security dynamics in the subregion.

### **Political developments and trends**

6. In Angola, political preparations for the general elections scheduled to be held in August 2022 continued. From 9 to 11 December, the ruling party, Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, held its congress, at which the President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, was re-elected as president of the party. During its primary elections, held from 2 to 4 December, the opposition party, União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola, re-elected Adalberto Costa Júnior as party leader, following a decision by the Constitutional Court to annul the elections held on the margins of the congress in 2019. Electoral preparations including, notably, voter registration, were also undertaken. The opposition continued to express concern about unequal access to State media. The pre-electoral period has been marked by the effects of five consecutive years of economic recession, including rising unemployment and poverty. Throughout the country, protests have been organized sporadically, which have mostly transpired in a peaceful manner.

7. Burundi continued its positive trajectory towards improving its relations with neighbouring countries and the international community. On 10 January, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, received a message from the President of Burundi, Evariste Ndayishimiye, delivered by the Minister of East African Community Affairs, Youth, Sports and Culture of Burundi. This was reciprocated on 15 March, when Mr. Ndayishimiye received a message from his Rwandan counterpart, delivered by the Minister of Defence of Rwanda. During a press conference on 10 May, Mr. Ndayishimiye said that there would be no remaining issues with Rwanda once the alleged perpetrators of the 2015 coup attempt, who remained in Rwanda, were handed over to Burundi. Meanwhile, following several months of political dialogue between Burundi and the European Union, on 8 February 2022, the Council of the European Union decided to end the financial and budgetary restrictions hitherto imposed on the Government of Burundi, in recognition of progress made in the country since May 2020. On 30 March 2022, Burundian authorities lifted the ban on the British Broadcasting Corporation, three years after the withdrawal of its broadcasting licence.

8. In Cameroon, a reduction in political space and a rise in political violence were noted in the North-West and South-West Regions, where several State officials and prominent local politicians were killed in attacks claimed by separatist armed groups, including Timothée Aboloa, Divisional Officer, Ebeku William, local leader of the ruling party, Nanji Kenneth, Mayor of Ekondo Titi, South-West Region, and Theodore

Kiga, Chief Prison Superintendent in the North-West Region. On 1 December 2021, Maurice Kamto, the leader of the opposition party – the Cameroon Renaissance Movement – was held in his hotel room in Douala and subsequently escorted back to Yaoundé. Local media reported that Mr. Kamto had planned to participate in a book-signing ceremony. Similarly, on 16 February, a workshop for political parties, organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, was banned, allegedly because of public order concerns. On 24 February, the Cameroon Renaissance Movement demanded the liberation of 101 activists detained since September 2020 for taking part in banned demonstrations. On 30 April 2022, Senator Regina Mundi from the ruling party, the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement, was abducted by the so-called “Ambazonia defence forces”.

9. In Chad, in late 2021, the committee in charge of the inclusive national dialogue held pre-dialogues with civilian stakeholders in all 23 provinces of the country and 12 consultations abroad, meeting with over 7,000 people to help to shape its content and process. The main concerns raised during these pre-dialogues were related to national and local governance, decentralization, the management of elections, the depoliticization of public administration, the illegal circulation of arms, impunity, limited rule of law and access to justice, national languages, youth employment and training, and the protection and the rights of women and vulnerable groups. On 30 December, the Transitional National Council passed two laws granting amnesty to 44 armed group members convicted for “attacking the integrity of the State” and crimes of opinion, in addition to 257 other individuals convicted for acts of terrorism and recruitment of minors into armed groups. The authorization by the transitional authorities of a mass gathering by the opposition party Les Transformateurs on 8 January indicated some opening of political space, although other demonstrations were banned during the reporting period and some others led to incidents of violence. On 10 January, the organizational committee started consultations with religious leaders, civil society organizations and political parties, briefing them about the outcome of the pre-dialogues. On 20 April, the committee presented the reports of its five subcommittees to the Prime Minister.

10. On 13 March 2022, a pre-dialogue with Chadian politico-military groups started in Doha with the participation of at least 52 such groups. While these negotiations remained protracted, some confidence-building measures were already being implemented. On 2 May, the transitional authorities of Chad announced that, at the request of Qatar, the mediator for the pre-dialogue between the transitional authorities and the armed opposition, the inclusive national dialogue, which was to be launched on 10 May, would be further postponed to allow time for the pre-dialogue in Doha to conclude. Various women’s groups have denounced the absence of women at the negotiating table and called for their inclusion in the discussions with the armed opposition.

11. In the Congo, preparations continued for the legislative and local elections scheduled to be held in July 2022. The Government organized political consultations in Owando, in the Cuvette Region, from 3 to 5 March. Although the leader of the parliamentary opposition participated, three key opposition leaders boycotted the consultations, arguing that recommendations from the previous consultations had not been implemented, and called for a national inclusive dialogue. Recommendations issued in a final communiqué called for, among other things, the revision of the electoral lists ahead of the upcoming elections, the strengthening of the electoral commission and the reduction of fees to register as a candidate.

12. Equatorial Guinea is preparing for municipal and legislative elections that are tentatively scheduled for November 2022. In November 2021, ahead of the ruling party congress, there was a significant crackdown on suspected undocumented migrants, in particular those of African descent. It was reported that many of these

undocumented migrants had been detained for an extensive period in poor conditions, and several others had been deported. The Government provided undocumented migrants and their employers, when applicable, with a three-month grace period to regularize their paperwork. That period ended in March 2022, with many undocumented migrants remaining in a difficult position owing to slow and inefficient administrative processes. The Government continued to seek to regulate small businesses that either were owned by or employed undocumented migrants. On 6 April, the Government issued a presidential decree launching the start of the electoral census, the first step towards the holding of legislative and municipal elections in 2022.

13. In Gabon, between 5 and 9 March, the President, Ali Bongo Ondimba, reshuffled a number of positions and made several appointments to the Cabinet, the ruling Parti démocratique gabonais and the newly established High Commission of the Republic. The 31-member Cabinet includes eight women. Two members of the opposition party, Les Démocrates, were appointed to ministerial positions. Most of the major opposition leaders expressed their intention to run individually in the presidential election and to rally behind the one among them who qualified for the second round. On 13 November 2021, Paulette Missambo won the internal party election of Union nationale, making her the first woman leader of a major political party in Gabon.

14. Sao Tome and Principe is scheduled to hold legislative, local and regional elections on 25 September 2022. The challenges in the preparing for the elections have included their funding and the establishment of an independent electoral commission, as requested by all political parties. The law on political parties required a quota of 30 per cent of elected positions to be filled by women. Meanwhile a parity law, which was under review, proposed a 40 per cent quota for women in elected positions. On 19 March, the Prime Minister, Jorge Bom Jesus, was re-elected as president of the ruling party, Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe.

#### **Security developments and trends**

15. The security situation in the region continued to be marked by multidimensional threats, including the activities of armed groups, terrorism and violent extremism, as well as cross-border threats to peace and security, such as maritime insecurity, farmer-herder conflicts and climate security challenges.

16. In Cameroon, clashes between State forces and non-State armed groups and attacks on civilians, including children, continued unabated in the North-West and South-West Regions. Non-State armed groups also targeted United Nations and humanitarian staff and assets. On 8 January, at a checkpoint near Bamenda, North-West Region, armed groups intercepted a truck contracted by a United Nations agency to deliver humanitarian assistance. The so-called “Ambazonia defence forces” later released a video showing the truck and claimed that they had distributed the food aid to the local population. This marked at least the fifth incident of vehicles carrying aid diverted by non-State armed groups in the two regions since October 2021. On 26 February, a nurse was killed and two medical personnel were injured after their vehicle came under fire at a checkpoint of a non-State armed group in Mezam Division, North-West Region. On 2 March, the so-called “Ambazonia defence forces” carried out an improvised explosive device attack against a convoy escorting the Governor of the South-West Region on a tour in Ekondo Titi, killing seven people.

17. Non-State armed groups in the South-West Region carried out two attacks in an attempt to disrupt the Africa Cup of Nations. On 12 January, they exchanged fire with security forces in Buea. At least two civilians were reportedly killed in the crossfire and up to five others injured. On the same day, an improvised explosive device was detonated at a security checkpoint in Buea, injuring three members of the security

forces. The number of explosions targeting civilians increased in late 2021 before falling again in the first quarter of 2022. At least half of all attacks using explosive devices in the South-West Region since November 2021 targeted civilians.

18. The United Nations received reports of the burning of homes and businesses on 8 December, allegedly by State forces, along the road between Bamenda and Mbengwi, North-West Region, following an improvised explosive device attack carried out against those forces. The Government released a statement denying the allegations.

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

19. The security situation in the Lake Chad basin remained one of concern, with repeated attacks by terrorist groups and with “Islamic State West Africa Province” consolidating its position as the primary security threat in the region. According to security sources, at the end of 2021, the region experienced a lull in the number of attacks owing to internal dissension among Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, the multiplication of measures taken by the authorities to reinforce advanced military positions, and the increase of patrols. Open sources report that over 6,000 ex-associates, most linked to Boko Haram, have presented themselves to State authorities in the Lake Chad basin in recent months.

20. From 1 December 2021 to 15 May 2022, there were 80 Boko Haram-related security incidents confirmed and reported by the United Nations in Cameroon, with 30 civilian fatalities, and 63 incidents confirmed and reported by the United Nations in Chad, with 98 civilian fatalities. Most attacks took place in the Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga Departments of the Far North Region of Cameroon, with attacks peaking in the first quarter of 2022.

#### **Lord’s Resistance Army**

21. According to the NGO Invisible Children, between 1 December and 13 May, five girls and one boy, as well as a woman and her three children, escaped from Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) factions, and executions within LRA factions operating along the border between the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had become increasingly common.

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

22. The International Maritime Bureau of the International Chamber of Commerce reported a total of 10 security incidents at sea in the Gulf of Guinea between January and May, including five in the ECCAS maritime space, representing a decrease from the 16 incidents in the same period in 2021. On 12 April, the Bureau welcomed the fact that there had been no reports of crew kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea in the first quarter of 2022, compared with 40 reports in the same period in 2021, attributing the positive trend to the efforts of maritime authorities in the region.

23. During the ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, leaders agreed to hold a maritime conference in coordination with the Gulf of Guinea Commission and to update the ECCAS strategy on securing the maritime domain.

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

24. Intercommunal clashes spiked during the reporting period. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, at least 44 people were reportedly killed and 110 injured in clashes between fishing and herding communities in Logone Birni municipality on

5 December and in Kousseri on 8 December. The clashes were due to water shortages. Over 100 villages were set ablaze, leading to the displacement of almost 80,000 people, including 43,500 refugees and asylum seekers who had sought refuge in Chad as at 30 April, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as at 6 May, there were 8,370 persons who had been internally displaced in the Far North Region owing to the clashes who had returned home. On 17 December, the Minister of Territorial Administration of Cameroon led a delegation of ministers, military officials and lawmakers to Kousseri and to Chad, where he met his counterpart and thanked Chad for its support for Cameroonian refugees. On 2 February, the Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education of Cameroon and the Minister of Youth, Sports and the Promotion of Entrepreneurship of Chad chaired a forum on peace and social cohesion in Kousseri.

25. On 10 February, a dozen people were killed in intercommunal clashes involving farmers and herders in Sandana, Moyen-Chari Province, Chad. On 12 February, a ministerial delegation conveyed a message of peace to the population of Sandana, who demanded the resignation of local authorities.

26. The heavy reliance of Central African countries on natural resource exploitation and the growing population of the subregion constitute an increasing threat to the rainforest in the Congo basin, an important source of food, shelter and livelihood for some 80 million people. Deforestation, forest degradation, poaching and the trafficking of wildlife continued.

## **B. Humanitarian developments**

27. The humanitarian situation in the subregion was marked by increased vulnerability and displacement of people, as well as attacks and violence against humanitarian and health-care workers, notably in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon and in the Central African Republic, resulting in reduced humanitarian space. Conflicts, floods and epidemics in various parts of Central Africa, aggravated by the pandemic, continued to have serious consequences for the humanitarian situation, with a particular impact on women, children and marginalized groups.

28. In Burundi, 1.8 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2022. Current humanitarian needs were mainly linked to the continued effects of climate change and the return of refugees in a context characterized by a lack of funding. Some 259,430 Burundians were refugees as at 30 April, with most seeking refuge in the United Republic of Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From January to March, 4,970 Burundian refugees returned to their country of origin from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, joining the 140,389 Burundian refugees who had previously returned from just the United Republic of Tanzania.

29. The humanitarian context in Cameroon continued to be dominated by widespread insecurity, epidemics and natural disasters, including floods and droughts. The crises in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions have led to the internal displacement of almost 1 million people. According to UNHCR, as at 30 April, Cameroon hosted 478,066 refugees and 8,386 asylum seekers, including 345,587 refugees from the Central African Republic and 129,266 from Nigeria. In 2022, an estimated 3.9 million people will need humanitarian assistance, with 95 per cent living in rural areas. The 2022 humanitarian response plan for Cameroon included a request for \$376 million to assist 2.6 million people. Resource mobilization remained a key challenge; only 42 per cent of the financial requirements

of the 2021 humanitarian response plan and 5 per cent of the 2021 financial requirements of UNHCR were funded. Despite the challenge, the humanitarian community successfully assisted 1.9 million people in 2021.

30. Persisting insecurity in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon resulted in further abuses against civilians and forced displacement, and hampered access to humanitarian assistance and basic social services. As at 30 April, more than 579,135 people were displaced within the North-West, South-West and Littoral Regions and faced significant protection risks, and 75,085 Cameroonians had sought refuge in Nigeria. As at 31 March, there were approximately 383,596 returnees to the North-West and South-West Regions.

31. Violence and attacks against humanitarian, health-care and education personnel and facilities continued in the North-West and South-West Regions. Aid workers performing their duties were at risk of arrest and detention by State security forces. For example, two personnel of a medical non-governmental organization (NGO) were detained on 27 December under a counter-terrorism law framework, prompting the organization to suspend its operations in the regions on 5 April. They were provisionally released on 19 May.

32. Chad continued to face a deteriorating humanitarian situation, with an influx of refugees and an increase in internally displaced persons and returnees. Instability elsewhere in the region aggravated the country's humanitarian crisis. Chad faced food insecurity and malnutrition, health emergencies and the effects of climate change, including floods. As at 21 April, over 6.1 million people needed assistance, including 2 million who were experiencing severe food insecurity and 1.5 million forcibly displaced persons, including some 574,525 refugees, mostly from the Sudan and the Central African Republic, as well as from Cameroon and Nigeria. According to UNHCR, there were some 381,290 internally displaced persons and some 101,550 returnees as at 30 April. The 2021 humanitarian response plan for Chad, with a need estimated at \$617.5 million, was funded at 35 per cent. The 2022 humanitarian response plan, which targets 3.9 million people and requires \$510.9 million, was 14 per cent funded as at mid-May.

33. The Congo hosted over 54,588 refugees and asylum seekers, while Angola hosted over 56,625 refugees and asylum seekers, as at 30 April.

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

34. The Lake Chad basin crisis has led to the internal displacement of over 357,630 Cameroonians and 406,570 Chadians, cumulatively. It also forced approximately 129,985 Nigerians to seek refuge in Cameroon by the end of April. People continued to suffer from epidemics, including cholera and measles, and destruction due to heavy flooding. Women, as first responders and caregivers, were disproportionately affected by the disasters.

35. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, the activities of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, compounded by chronic vulnerability, intercommunal clashes and the growing impact of climate change, continued to cause population displacements. As at 30 April, some 129,985 Nigerian refugees, 135,260 returnees and 357,630 internally displaced persons faced significant protection risks, which particularly impacted women and girls. The region experienced drought episodes in 2021, severely reducing crop yields and triggering food shortages. It is estimated that over 900,000 people will be food insecure in the lean season, from June to August 2022, compared with 820,000 people for the same period in 2021. Five members of a medical NGO were abducted in Fotokol, Far North Region, on 26 February, and subsequently released on 31 March.

36. An estimated 19,995 Nigerian refugees and 23,900 Chadian returnees from the Niger and Nigeria were recorded in the Chadian provinces affected by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups as at 30 April. In addition, 381,290 people were internally displaced owing to insecurity and flooding – a number that has more than doubled in the past year. Protection concerns persisted, with women and girls facing higher rates of sexual and gender-based violence and limited access to health care. Insecurity, flooding and COVID-19-related restrictions continued to affect access to livelihoods, increasing the food insecurity and vulnerability of the local population.

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

37. In Burundi, a segment of development partners recognized the progress achieved since the 2020 general elections, including advances related to civil and political rights and some widening of the democratic space. However, echoing the concerns expressed by the Human Rights Council through the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, there was continued demand for more sustainable changes. Of particular concern were the cases of enforced disappearances documented by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which requested information on some cases from the Government, without success.

38. In Cameroon, attacks by armed groups and inter-ethnic clashes in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions resulted in serious human rights violations and abuses against civilians, including children; greatly increased poverty and other vulnerabilities; and continued to cause large-scale displacement. In the North-West and South-West Regions, hundreds of thousands of civilians continued to live in constant fear of attacks, counter-insurgency operations or reprisals directed at them by all parties for their perceived support for adversaries. On 8 and 11 February, members of non-State armed separatist groups set fire to two schools in the towns of Buea and Mamfe, South-West Region. The incidents were the latest in a series of attacks on students and school staff and premises, depriving over 700,000 students of education in the two regions. Reported cases of gender-based violence in both regions remained high. Meanwhile, on 27 December, a military tribunal sentenced 50 members of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement opposition party to between one and seven years in prison on counts of “rebellion”.

39. In Abéché, Ouaddaï Province, Chad, on 24 and 25 January, the nomination of a canton chief led to violent demonstrations causing the death of 14 people and injuring 64. Civil society organizations accused security forces of violent repression. Meanwhile, the Convention tchadienne pour la défense des droits de l’Homme expressed concern about the violent police repression of peaceful protests in several neighbourhoods of N’Djamena on 15 February. The protests were staged in memory of the victims of intercommunal violence involving farmers and herders in Sandana, Moyen-Chari Province, on 10 February. In N’Djamena from 27 to 29 April, the transitional authorities, in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the National Human Rights Commission, held a national forum on human rights to take stock of the national human rights situation in the run-up to the inclusive national dialogue. On 14 and 15 May, demonstrations organized by the opposition platform Wakit Tama turned violent. The coordinator of the platform and a few activists were arrested and reportedly transferred to a prison in central Chad.

40. In the Congo, on 21 February, the Congolese Human Rights Monitoring Centre, called for a revision of the penal code to formally prohibit torture and facilitate the prosecution of security forces that engage in such practices. It noted that, during the previous 15 months, it had registered 80 cases of human rights violations and torture perpetrated by security forces. On 28 February, eight international and national

organizations, with the support of the National Human Rights Commission, urged the authorities to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

41. In Equatorial Guinea, the review process of the penal code to ensure compliance with international standards was ongoing. Equatorial Guinea accepted all the recommendations of the universal periodic review in relation to the abolishment of the death penalty, except the recommended constitutional revision to repeal the provision that allowed the death penalty. The Government committed to submitting a voluntary midterm universal periodic review report in 2022. The process of collecting information from various ministries has begun, with the support of OHCHR.

42. In Gabon on 14 April, the Council of Ministers approved a draft law on the reorganization of the National Human Rights Commission. The draft law, which will be considered in Parliament for adoption, is expected to set out minimum standards on the restructuring and functioning of the existing Commission and aimed at ensuring compliance with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles).

43. In Sao Tome and Principe, the Government committed to taking the necessary measures to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles and requested the assistance of OHCHR in that regard.

#### **D. Socioeconomic trends**

44. Economies in the subregion started to recover in 2021 from the recession caused by the COVID-19, pandemic, many with higher debt levels and limited fiscal space. This economic growth was largely instigated by rising commodity exports, especially in oil-exporting countries, and increased access to emergency financing. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) continued to provide support for economic recovery, while also recalling the need to pursue structural economic reforms so as to achieve the diversification of the economies away from a heavy dependence on primary commodities. The war in Ukraine has affected purchasing power, for example in the form of higher bread prices in some countries, in particular the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which import over 60 per cent of their wheat from the Russian Federation or Ukraine. Some countries had already imposed export tariffs or trade restrictions to support domestic food needs.

45. Over the reporting period, IMF concluded a \$456 million loan agreement with the Congo and disbursed \$116 million to Cameroon. It also approved a 36-month arrangement of \$570.75 million to help meet Chad's large balance-of-payments and budgetary needs. The World Bank approved a \$538 million financing package for a regional Cameroon-Chad Transport Corridor project and approved the eligibility of Cameroon and Chad for the Prevention and Resilience Allocation. The World Bank also approved additional funding amounting to \$265 million for Cameroon and \$133 million for Chad to support programmes to prevent the further escalation of conflict and build resilience.

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

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

##### **Angola**

46. On 7 and 8 April, my Special Representative for Central Africa met Angolan authorities in Luanda, including the President. He commended the President for the reforms initiated since his election, while urging him to ensure a peaceful electoral process. He paid tribute to the President for positioning Angola as a key actor in peace and security at the regional level, including through his contribution to the finalization of ECCAS institutional reforms and his role in the peace process in the Central African Republic. From 11 to 14 May, the President of the General Assembly visited Angola, where he met with the President and commended Angola for its commitment to multilateralism and contribution to the work of the United Nations.

##### **Burundi**

47. On 5 and 6 April, my Special Representative visited Bujumbura, where he met the President of Burundi. He encouraged the President to pursue reforms, national reconciliation efforts and the normalization of the country's relations with its neighbours, in particular Rwanda. The President pledged to pursue efforts aimed at reinforcing social cohesion and good governance.

##### **Cameroon**

48. My Special Representative continued to engage with key actors in Cameroon and abroad to advocate the need for all stakeholders to participate in dialogue for a peaceful and lasting resolution of the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions. On 7 January, he used the opportunity presented by the Africa Cup of Nations to remind parties of the need for a ceasefire.

49. From 29 to 31 March, my Special Representative and the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa visited Yaoundé where they met members of political parties, the international community and the Government, to whom they reiterated the United Nations commitment to supporting Cameroon, including in the peaceful resolution of the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions through dialogue.

##### **Central African Republic**

50. Working closely with my Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and senior officials at the Secretariat, my Special Representative for Central Africa continued to mobilize regional support for the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, including through the implementation of the Luanda joint road map adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

##### **Chad**

51. On 13 March, my Special Representative to the African Union and a UNOCA representative attended the opening session of the pre-dialogue between the Government and armed groups, hosted by the Government of Qatar in Doha. The State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, the Prime Minister of Chad, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Minister for Foreign Affairs

of Libya made opening statements in which they highlighted the historical nature of the event and vowed support for a peaceful resolution to the deeply rooted instability in Chad.

52. On 28 and 29 March, my Special Representative for Central Africa and the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa visited N'Djamena, where they met with the transitional authorities, political parties and the international community. They reiterated the United Nations commitment to supporting the transition process in Chad.

53. The United Nations, in conjunction with the African Union, maintained efforts to support Chad to mobilize resources for the financing of the transition road map. The United Nations continued to serve as a member of the International Group of Partners for Support to the Transition in Chad and to act as its secretariat, jointly with the African Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie. The national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was drafted through a series of interministerial workshops between 3 and 10 May. It will provide a framework for advancing the participation of women in peace and security, including in the transition process.

54. On 2 December, the Peacebuilding Commission convened its first meeting on the transition in Chad, with the participation of the Prime Minister. Participants recognized the country's critical regional role, calling for a timely return to constitutional order. They expressed willingness to support the transitional authorities in implementing an inclusive transition process, stressing the role of women. The Commission expressed its commitment to support Chad in its nationally led peacebuilding efforts, including the inclusive national dialogue; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, constitutional review; and the electoral process. It also called upon partners to increase their efforts to assist Chad in that regard.

55. From 10 to 11 May, my Special Representative travelled to N'Djamena, where he held meetings with the President of the Transitional Military Council and the Prime Minister. He commended national authorities on their stewardship of the transition and urged them to spare no efforts to ensure that the pre-dialogue with politico-military actors and the subsequent inclusive national dialogue helped to break the cycle of political violence.

## **Congo**

56. On 3 February, in Brazzaville, on the margins of the annual meeting of the Heads of United Nations presences in Central Africa, my Special Representative met with political parties; State institutions, including the Senate and the Conseil national du dialogue; civil society; and the United Nations country team, ahead of the 2022 legislative and local elections. He called upon the Government to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition and to broaden political space and encouraged the opposition to participate in the elections.

57. From 13 to 15 April, my Special Representative visited Brazzaville again and met with the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso. The Special Representative acknowledged the improvement in the political and security climate in the country, in particular the end of the conflict in the Pool Department. He urged the President to ensure the completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in the department to prevent a relapse. He also welcomed the recent pre-electoral consultations and encouraged the President to further promote inclusive political dialogue, including within the framework of constitutional platforms such as the National Dialogue Council.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo**

58. On 7 and 8 December in Kinshasa, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted a regional conference on women and peace and security and the engagement of women in prevention, mediation and peacebuilding in Central Africa. Organized in collaboration with UNOCA, the United Nations Development Programme, ECCAS and the Government of Canada, the conference formally launched the process for setting up a network of women mediators in Central Africa.

**Equatorial Guinea**

59. From 21 to 24 March, my Special Representative travelled to Malabo for a visit to national authorities. He met with the Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea and discussed the upcoming elections, scheduled to be held in 2022 and 2023, and subregional threats to peace and security, including maritime insecurity.

60. From 7 to 10 March, UNOCA undertook a mission to Equatorial Guinea to assess the political and socioeconomic situation ahead of the upcoming elections. It met with Government officials, political parties and international partners. On 7 March, UNOCA participated in the ceremony to commemorate the Bata explosions.

**Gabon**

61. On 28 February, my Special Representative met with the President of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba, to discuss the sociopolitical situation in the country and its membership in the Security Council for the term 2022–2023. Prior to meeting with the President, my Special Representative met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 14 January, to discuss the country's priorities for its term on the Council and challenges pertaining to regional integration.

62. On 8 February, my Special Representative met with the president of the opposition party, Union nationale. They discussed the 2023 presidential election, including the opposition's concerns regarding the electoral management body and equal access of political parties to public financing and the media.

63. Implementation of a regional cross-border project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund in Gabon, Cameroon and Chad began in Woleu-Ntem Province, Gabon, in March. The project's aim is to create a network of 1,800 young peacebuilders and to train youth to detect early signs of conflict, help to fight organized crime and trafficking and participate in prevention, mediation and resolution mechanisms.

**Sao Tome and Principe**

64. From 4 to 6 March, my Special Representative travelled to Sao Tome and Principe. In his meeting with the President, Carlos Manuel Vila Nova, he congratulated the country for its democratic advances and the peaceful transfer of power. He also met with the Prime Minister, political parties, women's groups and the diplomatic corps to assess preparedness for the upcoming legislative, local and regional elections. He stressed the need for them to be peaceful and inclusive.

65. On 5 May, UNOCA and the Resident Coordinator in Sao Tome and Principe hosted a government round table with the diplomatic corps accredited in Libreville and the ECCAS Commission on the mobilization of funds for the upcoming elections. Partners expressed their support for the electoral process and agreed on the establishment of a basket fund and a joint monitoring and coordination mechanism for the elections.

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

### **Collaboration with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations**

66. My Special Representative participated in the twentieth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS. Throughout the reporting period, he held regular meetings with the President of the ECCAS Commission to discuss key issues related to regional peace and stability and the need to further strengthen the preventive diplomacy capacity of ECCAS, including through specific programmatic support from the United Nations and other partners, as well as the need for the Commission to continue to work in synergy with regional and international partners.

67. On 1 and 2 February, the President of the ECCAS Commission participated in the meeting of the Heads of United Nations presences in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville. He recommended the convening of a meeting of the Commission and United Nations presences every two years to coordinate efforts, share analysis and develop entry points for conflict prevention in Central Africa. Participants agreed with the recommendation.

68. On 15 March, UNOCA met with the ECCAS Commissioner for Political Affairs to review progress made in the implementation of the joint ECCAS-UNOCA workplan adopted in 2021. The meeting was focused on joint efforts to promote the prevention agenda and good governance throughout Central Africa.

69. On 24 March, UNOCA and ECCAS held a technical-level meeting in Brazzaville, during which they analysed regional sociopolitical and security developments and trends observed in Central Africa in early 2022. On the basis of that analysis, the two entities identified situations that would require close monitoring and joint early warning activities.

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

70. From 28 to 31 March, the Bureau of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa conducted a visit to Bujumbura, Burundi. The visit was aimed at gathering information for the establishment and operationalization of national commissions for the management of small arms and light weapons in line with 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).

71. From 28 February to 7 March, UNOCA undertook a preparatory visit to Yaoundé ahead of the fifty-third ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, scheduled to be held in Yaoundé in early June. Cameroon intended to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Committee by organizing activities to raise awareness about its work, assess its impact on the peace and security architecture of the subregion and recommend new areas of focus for the Committee's member States.

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

72. On 3 February, UNOCA and ECCAS met with civil society youth representatives from the subregion, who introduced their plan to establish a Central Africa youth platform for peace and security, comprising various national and subregional youth organizations and networks.

73. UNOCA continued to promote initiatives on the political participation of women in collaboration with United Nations presences in Angola, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe, entering into partnership with women's civil society organizations, parliamentarians and women's political party leagues, with a view to strengthening the awareness of women's role in decision-making, providing training to women candidates and advocating the full application of parity and quota laws in the current electoral cycles in those countries.

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

### **Boko Haram**

74. From 7 to 9 March, UNOCA participated in a workshop held by the Lake Chad Basin Commission in Abuja. It was aimed at preparing a regional action plan for the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin, for the period 2022–2024. The workshop was attended by humanitarian, development and peace actors.

### **Climate security**

75. UNOCA continued to implement its climate security project in Central Africa to deepen analysis of the impact of climate change on peace and security in the subregion, building on the scoping study completed in 2021. Between 29 November and 3 December, a team composed of UNOCA and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs staff members, with the support of the Office of the Resident Coordinator in Chad, conducted a working-level visit to N'Djamena so as to deepen their understanding of the climate security challenges in the country. During the mission, meetings were held with the United Nations country team, national authorities, civil society organizations, subregional organizations, the diplomatic community and international financial institutions, among others. The exchanges revealed the impact of climate change on the socioeconomic situation and on human security and highlighted ongoing efforts to address climate security, as well as gaps in and entry points for related United Nations support.

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

76. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provided support in the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and other maritime crimes, notably by strengthening national capacities and improving judicial cooperation among ECCAS member States. The aim was to allow ECCAS coastal States to prosecute piracy and other maritime crimes in accordance with the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa (the Yaoundé Code of Conduct) and to increase responses to maritime crimes and inter-State cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea.

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

77. UNOCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), initiated a cross-regional project on farmer-herder dynamics in Central and West Africa. The aim of the project is to enhance local governance responses by placing local authorities at the centre of the response, in collaboration with ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States. A good practices workshop for Central and West Africa is being planned for July.

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

78. On 1 and 2 February, in Brazzaville, my Special Representative convened the meeting of the heads of United Nations presences in Central Africa. Participants addressed recent peace and security developments in the subregion, regional challenges related to governance and security, and advances in regional integration. It culminated in the approval of a regional prevention framework that builds on existing frameworks and provides a regional perspective on conflict prevention priorities, as well as a strategic vision for United Nations engagement in Central Africa, in support of ECCAS. It also seeks to enhance coherence between national- and regional-level commitments and maximize the impact of prevention efforts at all levels.

79. The meeting of the heads of United Nations presences was preceded by a meeting of UNOCA with the political affairs components of peacekeeping and special political missions and with peace and development advisers in the offices of resident coordinators, held in Brazzaville on 27 and 28 January. Participants shared analysis on peace and security developments, discussed peacebuilding efforts and developed the above-mentioned regional prevention framework. Participants developed recommendations on ways to improve cooperation, including more systematic joint analysis and information-sharing, strengthened cooperation with ECCAS and the exploration of partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

80. In Dakar on 17 and 18 March, UNOCA and UNOWAS held their annual desk-to-desk meeting. Participants shared good practices, reviewed the political and security situation in the two subregions and identified areas in which joint activities could address common challenges.

81. On 21 February, my Special Representative for Central Africa participated in a meeting convened by my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel and the Development Coordination Office to discuss the evolving political and security situation in West Africa and the Sahel and assess the appropriateness and viability of the United Nations response mechanisms and interventions, as well as to discuss a way forward.

82. In Naivasha, Kenya, on 9 and 10 March, UNOCA participated in a retreat of the Implementation Support Mechanism, the technical arm of the Senior Policy Group for the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, organized by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes. The retreat was held to prepare for an upcoming Senior Policy Group meeting; review the implementation of priority actions in 2021 and update the priority actions for 2022; develop a joint resource mobilization strategy; and discuss a joint communications strategy.

83. On 8 March, my Special Representative for Central Africa met with the Deputy Director of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa of IOM. Discussions centred around the work of IOM in Central Africa and the possibility of strengthened cooperation between IOM and UNOCA.

## **IV. Observations and recommendations**

84. I commend the resilience that Member States in Central Africa have demonstrated in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic recession prompted by the collapse in oil revenues. The economic recovery attained in parts of the subregion, with the support of international financial institutions, is

welcome, and Governments are encouraged to use the crisis as an opportunity to undertake structural reforms to build resilient economies that are diversified away from relying on primary commodities. To support the recovery process, efforts to continue vaccination campaigns should be maintained.

85. I reiterate my deep concern that the socioeconomic impact of the war in Ukraine is challenging the recovery efforts undertaken so far. People across the regions are already feeling the impact of the global rise in food prices, in particular wheat prices. I encourage Governments in the region to address these socioeconomic concerns in an inclusive manner.

86. COVID-19 has underscored the importance of inclusive governance, as restrictive measures and allegations of the misuse of COVID-19-related funds have reinforced the perception of non-inclusive governance and limited democratic space. In this context, I wish to reiterate the importance of respecting people's rights to express their concerns and opinions in a peaceful manner.

87. All stakeholders should ensure inclusive, credible and peaceful elections, in line with democratic principles. Governments should seize the opportunity presented by upcoming elections to widen democratic space and advance democratic gains in the subregion, including with regard to the participation of women.

88. The notable advances in strengthening the ECCAS peace and security architecture are welcome. UNOCA will further leverage the partnership with ECCAS to further promote conflict prevention efforts.

89. Enhanced cooperation is crucial at a time when the region faces multidimensional security challenges, notably in the Lake Chad basin, the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Of particular concern is the failure to protect civilians and increased intercommunal violence, including farmer-herder conflicts. These developments are especially worrisome in view of their impact on social cohesion and the risk that they pose with regard to further escalation and cycles of reprisal, as well as possible recruitment by non-State armed groups. Also of concern is the increase in attacks against humanitarian actors and the use of improvised explosive devices against civilian targets, which cause further harm to populations and have an impact on humanitarian delivery in the affected areas. Member States should use all available means to address these challenges through dialogue and other efforts aimed at enhancing social cohesion. International partners should continue to support the financing of humanitarian response plans in the region.

90. The situation in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon continues to be of particular concern despite the Government's efforts to address it, including through the implementation of recommendations stemming from the Major National Dialogue and the presidential plan for the reconstruction and development of the two regions. The United Nations will continue to advocate a political resolution of the conflict, including by exploring ways to bridge gaps between the parties with regard to a framework for dialogue and scaling up support for local peacemakers, in particular women's groups. Increased attention and coherent action on the part of the international community will be essential for the success of these efforts.

91. The national dialogue process in Chad constitutes a key milestone on the path to a successful conclusion of the political transition and a return to constitutional order. It is also a historic opportunity to address long-standing grievances and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace. The efforts of Qatar in mediating between the transitional authorities and the politico-military groups provide an opportunity to end the cycle of armed conflicts in a sustainable manner. The pre-dialogue in Doha should lead to an inclusive peace agreement, including a viable process for the disarmament,

mobilization and reintegration of Chadian armed groups present in neighbouring counties. A timely conclusion of the Doha talks will enable the start of the delayed inclusive national dialogue. The transitional authorities and all Chadian stakeholders should engage in that dialogue in good faith and remain guided by the national interest. International partners are encouraged to provide further support for the transition, in line with satisfactory progress on transition milestones, and for national efforts to address fragility factors.

92. The subregion's continued support for the peace process in the Central African Republic will be instrumental in bringing stability to the country. UNOCA will continue to engage with all stakeholders, including the African Union, ECCAS and neighbouring countries, to mobilize their unified efforts to promote peace and stability in the Central African Republic, as a complement to the good offices and political support of MINUSCA in the Central African Republic.

93. I would like to express my appreciation to the Governments of the subregion, the African Union, ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, 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 dedication and commitment to the service of peace and stability. I am equally grateful to the Government and people of Gabon for their generous hospitality and their 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.

94. Lastly, I would like to thank my Special Representative, François Louncény Fall, for his efforts with regard to peace and security priorities in Central Africa during his mandate, which has come to an end. In particular, I would like to commend him for the progress accomplished with regard to reinforced cohesion and cooperation among United Nations presences in the region, as well his support for ECCAS at the crucial time of its institutional reform.

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