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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request contained in the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 10 December 2014 ([S/PRST/2014/25](#)), in which the Council requested me to keep it informed about the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). It provides an assessment of the major political and security trends in the Central Africa subregion since my last report, dated 13 November 2014 ([S/2014/812](#)), offers an update on progress in the implementation of the UNOCA mandate, and reports on efforts to implement the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (see [S/2012/481](#)).

II. Major developments in the Central Africa subregion

A. Political, peace and security developments and trends

Political developments and trends

2. Since my last report, the political environment has been marked by preparations for upcoming elections, to be held in 2015 and 2016, amid rising tensions.

3. In Burundi, preparations for the parliamentary and presidential elections, to be held respectively in May and June 2015, continued in an increasingly tense political environment. On 25 April, the ruling party, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy, nominated President Pierre Nkurunziza as its candidate for the upcoming presidential elections. The announcement sparked a series of protests in Bujumbura which led to violent confrontations between demonstrators and the police, resulting in the loss of lives, injuries and damage to property. As at 4 May, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 25,000 Burundians had sought refuge in Rwanda, 5,000 more had arrived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 2,100 in the United Republic of Tanzania.



4. Chad continued its preparations for legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 2015 and 2016, respectively. The National Independent Electoral Commission started establishing its local branches and appointed local representatives of the Commission amid criticism from some opposition members concerning the transparency of the selection process. Concerns were also raised on the choice of a technical expert for the biometric voter registration process. Regular consultations among key stakeholders (the Commission, political parties, the opposition and civil society) have been taking place in N'Djamena in order to address outstanding issues.

5. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, contentious electoral issues centred mainly on the electoral calendar and proposed amendments to the electoral law. From 19 to 23 January, protests broke out in Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu and elsewhere in the country, over a new electoral law linking the organization of the 2016 presidential and legislative elections to a population census. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) documented the killing of at least 20 civilians and the injury of 64 others by the police and the Republican Guard from 19 to 23 January in Kinshasa and Goma. The opposition claimed that the objective of this move by the Government was to delay the holding of the presidential elections. A revised version of the bill excluding the linkage between the census and upcoming elections was adopted and promulgated on 12 February. On the same day, the National Independent Electoral Commission released an electoral calendar foreseeing the holding of combined presidential and legislative elections on 27 November 2016, preceded by elections at the provincial and local levels in October 2015 and January/March 2016, respectively. The calendar was met with strong criticism from the opposition, which put forward a counterproposal.

6. In the Republic of the Congo, the ruling party, the Parti congolais du travail (PCT), began holding internal consultations on a revised constitution that would enable the President to run for a third consecutive term. On 24 February, more than 60 political parties, including some members of the ruling PCT and civil society representatives, signed a manifesto (*Manifeste de la dynamique*), expressing their concerns regarding the transfer of political power and electoral governance. The signatories called on the President to convene an inclusive political dialogue. The opposition reiterated those concerns in a memorandum on 20 March.

7. In Gabon, senatorial elections were held peacefully on 13 December 2014. The ruling Parti démocratique gabonais won 84 of the 102 senate seats; two seats have yet to be filled because of irregularities. Meanwhile, the Front uni de l'opposition pour l'alternance continued to call for the resignation of the President, before the upcoming presidential election in 2016. Tensions culminated on 20 December 2014 during an unauthorized march organized by the opposition, which resulted in one official death following clashes between protesters and security forces. In his annual address to the nation on 31 December 2014, the President, Ali Bongo Ondimba, announced his readiness to engage in dialogue with the opposition as long as it agreed to respect State institutions and the law. On 4 February, the Government announced the reinstatement of the Union nationale party, which was banned in 2011, and the reactivation of the Conseil national de la démocratie, an advisory body charged with providing an institutional space for political dialogue. On 12 April, André Mba Obame, the co-founder and Executive Secretary of the Union nationale, died.

8. In Equatorial Guinea, in the aftermath of the National Political Dialogue, which ended on 11 November 2014, expectations for an opening of political space and the legalization of all political parties were tempered by a spate of detentions of opposition leaders. In January 2015, prior to the beginning of the Africa Cup of Nations football tournament, opposition leader Celestino Okenve and three other activists, who protested against the country's hosting of the tournament, were arrested and released a few days later. On 17 March, Guillermo Nguema Ela, leader of the unauthorized Fuerza democrática republicana (FDR) party was arrested in Malabo prior to a ceremony aimed at creating a coalition between FDR and two other opposition groups, the Union Popular and the Convergencia para la Democracia Social.

Central African Republic

9. During the reporting period, Central African States and subregional organizations continued to support the political transition in the Central African Republic. They focused on the preparations for the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation, considered a key milestone for the transition.

10. On 31 January 2015, the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Itno, chaired a meeting of Heads of State of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The meeting addressed challenges in the implementation of the Brazzaville Agreement, including the emergence of a parallel mediation process in Nairobi, and reviewed progress on the preparations for the Bangui Forum. On 16 March 2015, the seventh meeting of the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic, held in Brazzaville, took stock of the progress made in the political process and in the implementation of the Brazzaville Agreement. Participants also discussed the issue of funding for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and for the elections, to be held by August 2015.

11. A parallel process of negotiations was initiated in January in Nairobi, at the request of the ECCAS-appointed mediator, the President of the Republic of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso. On 27 January, the former President of the Central African Republic, François Bozizé, and the former Head of State of the Transition, Michel Djotodia, together with leaders of several ex-Séléka and anti-balaka factions, signed an agreement calling for blanket amnesty and the creation of a third transition. A revised version was initialled on 21 February, in which the earlier demands were abandoned and the Brazzaville Agreement endorsed. On 8 April, a new ceasefire agreement was signed by Joachim Kokate, an anti-balaka representative, and Michel Djotodia, under the auspices of the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta.

12. From 4 to 11 May, the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation was held under the presidency of my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA. The opening session was attended by the President of the Congo and the Prime Minister of Chad, Kalzeube Payimi Deubet.

Boko Haram

13. During the reporting period, Boko Haram perpetrated frequent attacks along the Nigeria-Cameroon border and in the northern provinces of Cameroon. Following authorization by the Chadian parliament and an agreement between the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Itno, and the President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, about 2,500 troops

from Chad arrived in Cameroon on 17 January. Chadian troops subsequently engaged Boko Haram directly along the Cameroon-Nigeria border as well as in northern Nigeria. On 12 February, Boko Haram perpetrated its first attack on Chadian soil.

14. In response to the rising threat posed by Boko Haram, the African Union Peace and Security Council authorized, on 29 January, the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force for an initial period of 12 months, with a mandated strength of up to 7,500 military personnel. The troop ceiling was subsequently increased to 10,000 military personnel on 3 March. From 5 to 7 February a meeting of experts was held in Yaoundé to advance the operationalization of the Task Force; a strategic concept of operations was agreed upon and subsequently transmitted to the Security Council.

15. At the extraordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, held on 16 February in Yaoundé, Central African leaders decided to establish an emergency fund of CFAF 50 billion to support the military efforts of Cameroon and Chad against Boko Haram. They also agreed to approach the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to organize a joint ECCAS-ECOWAS meeting of Heads of State to enhance coordination in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region. The summit meeting, originally scheduled for 8 April in Malabo, has been postponed.

Lord's Resistance Army

16. The Lord's Resistance Army continued to pose a regional security threat, particularly in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The group is estimated at between 150 and 200, mostly Ugandan, fighters. During the reporting period, it continued to demonstrate resilience by exploiting the lack of State authority and security gaps in remote parts of Central Africa; pursuing opportunistic alliances with other armed groups; and engaging in illicit trade. The LRA presence in the Central African Republic ensured links with other LRA elements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and facilitated trafficking of ivory, gold and diamonds, including via the Kafia Kingi enclave at the border between southern Darfur in the Sudan and western Bahr-al-Ghazal in South Sudan, where the presence of senior LRA leaders continued to be reported.

17. The surrender of a former senior LRA commander, Dominic Ongwen, on 6 January, and his transfer to the International Criminal Court at The Hague on 20 January, marked an important milestone, allowing for the first international hearing of an LRA commander. His surrender and subsequent transfer highlighted the successful cooperation among a number of different stakeholders involved in the fight against LRA.

18. In 2014 LRA was responsible for fewer than 20 civilian deaths in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, compared to 76 civilian deaths in 2013. However, abductions of civilians, mostly adults used as temporary porters, increased to several hundreds. Most LRA attacks occurred in the Haut-Uélé district of Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, west of Garamba National Park, and in the Ango territory in Bas-Uélé district. In the Central African Republic, LRA presence was noted in the Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou préfectures bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Haute-Kotto préfecture, particularly in the diamond mining area of Yalinga, as well as in the vicinity of Sam Ouandja, close to the Sudanese border.

19. The African Union Regional Task Force, established to combat LRA, continued to make steady progress towards neutralizing the group through the conduct of military operations. In the Central African Republic, the Task Force contributed to the stabilization of the south-east of the country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the districts of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé of Orientale Province, the Task Force stepped up its efforts to track LRA and to respond to threats against civilians, working closely with the Garamba National Park rangers. During the biannual meeting of LRA focal points, held in March 2015 at Entebbe, Uganda, the Ugandan military representative noted the country's intention to remain engaged within the Task Force, putting to rest rumours of the departure of the Ugandan contingent. The representative, however, continued to express the need for increased support for Ugandan troops in the Task Force.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

20. Piracy, armed robbery at sea, organized crime and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the Gulf of Guinea still constituted a threat to the peace, security and socioeconomic development of both coastal and landlocked States in the Central and West Africa subregions. Since my last report, 16 incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea were reported by the Global Integrated Shipping Information System of the International Maritime Organization. Little progress was achieved in the implementation of the decisions adopted by the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission at Yaoundé in June 2013, owing to the region's primary focus on addressing the Boko Haram threat and the lack of logistical and financial resources to implement the agreed road map.

Poaching and the illicit wildlife trade

21. LRA and other armed elements continued to be involved in poaching in the Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where, during the second half of 2014, park rangers reportedly found the carcasses of 131 elephants.

22. In the framework of the Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and ECCAS signed a memorandum of understanding on 16 January 2015, establishing a political framework to tackle the growing problem of poaching and the trade in illicit wildlife in Central Africa. A joint mission of the Office and ECCAS to Gabon, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was conducted in February 2015 to advance national strategies to address wildlife trafficking and poaching.

23. On 30 April, a number of Central African Heads of State participated in an international conference on the exploitation of and trade in illicit wildlife in Brazzaville. The event, which was preceded by meetings of ministers and experts, was co-organized by the Congo and the African Union Commission, with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, ECCAS, the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and other international bodies.

B. Humanitarian developments

24. During the period under review, the humanitarian situation in the subregion remained of concern, owing in large part to the protracted crisis in the Central African Republic and the regional impact of the escalating violence in north-eastern Nigeria on the Lake Chad Basin region.

25. The situation in the Central African Republic continued to have dramatic humanitarian consequences. Persisting insecurity and violent attacks by anti-balaka and ex-Séléka elements prompted new waves of displacement and forced the suspension of basic services in some areas. More than 2.7 million people in the country, representing almost two thirds of the population, need humanitarian assistance. As at 7 April, 436,000 people remain internally displaced, 225,000 of them in host families, 172,000 in sites and 39,000 people remain in the bush. As at 27 April, 457,480 Central Africans were refugees in neighbouring countries. Cameroon is hosting 244,457 refugees, while Chad is hosting 94,024 refugees. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congo are sheltering 94,133 and 24,866 refugees respectively.

26. Meanwhile, the activities of Boko Haram had a direct humanitarian impact on the States of the Lake Chad Basin region, including Cameroon and Chad, which were already affected by the crisis in the Central African Republic. An estimated 74,000 Nigerians sought refuge in Cameroon, and 96,000 Cameroonians were internally displaced owing to cross-border attacks. Host populations in the most affected regions of northern and eastern Cameroon were particularly vulnerable, and the arrival of refugees from both Nigeria and the Central African Republic exacerbated the chronic food and nutrition crisis. In Chad, almost 20,000 Nigerian refugees, 8,500 returnees and 14,500 internally displaced persons fled Boko Haram attacks in the Lake Chad region. Many remained with host communities on small islands in the lake that are difficult to reach with humanitarian aid.

27. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that, by the end of December 2014, the total number of internally displaced persons due to LRA attacks in the affected areas was approximately 180,000, including 162,000 persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 18,000 persons in the Central African Republic. In the Central African Republic, there was a significant increase in the number of abductions and attacks in 2014 (12 deaths and 269 abductions were reported, an increase of 157 and 65 per cent in LRA attacks and abductions, respectively, compared to 2013). In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted 19,300 refugees from the Central African Republic who fled the recent upsurge in fighting at the beginning of 2015, arriving in Bosobolo in Equateur Province, while South Sudan hosted 17,000 refugees from the Congo and the Central African Republic. This is a significant reduction from the overall figure of 326,000 displaced persons in the affected areas reported in December 2013. In LRA-affected areas of the Central African Republic, humanitarian organizations continued to provide assistance, although activities of non-governmental organizations decreased as donor attention was focused on other parts of the country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, humanitarian assistance in LRA-affected areas visibly decreased as several non-governmental organizations have withdrawn, given the reduction in needs compared to previous years and ongoing crises elsewhere in the country. The underlying risks and vulnerabilities to communities remained unaddressed; the need for early recovery and long-term development activities remained.

C. Human rights trends

28. As a result of the activities of armed groups, including the anti-balaka and ex-Séléka in the Central African Republic and Boko Haram in Cameroon and Chad, the human rights situation in the region has greatly deteriorated.

29. In the Central African Republic, the human rights situation remained grave, with numerous reports of violations and abuses, including killings, looting and destruction of property, violations of physical integrity, and restrictions on freedom of movement. On 15 January, the Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic, established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2127 (2013), issued its final report. The Commission concluded that the main parties to the conflict — the Central African armed forces, ex-Séléka and anti-balaka — perpetrated systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law since 1 January 2013, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including, in the case of the anti-balaka, ethnic cleansing.

30. Boko Haram launched several attacks, killing civilians, looting, and burning down villages on the shores of Lake Chad hosting thousands of Nigerian refugees. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, Boko Haram abducted children and killed civilians, especially those who refused to join their fighters. Frequent incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against women were reported and women were systematically taken into captivity for forced marriages.

31. At least 120 schools were abandoned or destroyed in the affected localities and more than 4,500 young children and 1,000 older students are reportedly not attending school or higher education, respectively. Access to health services has also been affected: there are reports of health centres completely destroyed or closed down in border localities between Cameroon and Nigeria.

32. Concerns were raised over alleged human rights violations during counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) implemented awareness-raising and capacity-building activities on international human rights and humanitarian law standards and norms applicable in the counter-terrorism context for security and defence forces. States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin further prioritized the integration of those standards and norms, within the framework of the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

33. Meanwhile, States of the subregion continued their cooperation with the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. On 17 February 2015, Gabon was reviewed during the sixtieth session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In March 2015, capacity-building initiatives targeting national authorities and civil society leaders were carried out in the Congo and Equatorial Guinea to strengthen the capacity of the two countries to prepare and submit reports to treaty bodies and to implement their concluding observations and recommendations.

D. Socioeconomic trends

34. The Central Africa subregion was increasingly affected by the recent sharp fall in oil prices. As a result of the sudden decline in income from oil production, a

number of countries in the subregion were obliged to revise their national budgets. It is estimated that economic growth in the countries of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) will slow as a result of the fall in oil revenues. Combined with a 3.3 per cent increase in the consumer price index at the end of 2014, a reduction in foreign investment, lower fiscal expenditure on social services, and increases in taxation and unemployment, these elements could exacerbate political and social tensions in a number of countries that are preparing for elections.

35. Increased social tensions were observed in a number of Central African States. In some cases, demonstrations turned violent. In Chad, in mid-November, there were violent demonstrations in N'Djamena, Moundou and Sarh, triggered by recurring fuel shortages and the demands of teachers and students. In Gabon, on 18 December, protesting students clashed with security forces, while early in February a coalition of unions that includes civil servants and teachers, the *Dynamique unitaire*, went on strike to demand wage increases.

36. The increasing activities of armed groups, notably Boko Haram, had an adverse impact on the socioeconomic situation of the affected countries. Insecurity caused by Boko Haram attacks and resulting border closures negatively affected economic activities and trade in northern Cameroon and in the Lake Chad region.

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

37. On 8 December 2014, the Gabonese authorities informed my Special Representative that they had allocated new premises to the Office in a prime location in Libreville. UNOCA is currently finalizing all the necessary legal and administrative arrangements related to the move.

A. Good offices, preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding

38. During the reporting period, UNOCA remained engaged with key stakeholders in order to help prevent conflict and promote regional peace and security. On 13 November, my Special Representative briefed members of the diplomatic corps in Libreville on the peace and security situation in the subregion and on the activities of UNOCA.

39. My Special Representative attended the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on 30 and 31 January and took part in high-level meetings relevant to the UNOCA mandate. He also undertook a number of country-specific activities.

Burundi

40. On the sidelines of the thirty-ninth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, my Special Representative held, on 5 December in Bujumbura, an introductory meeting with the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza. The audience took place just prior to the end of the mandate of the United Nations Office in Burundi on 31 December 2014 and its replacement by the United Nations Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi (MENUB) on 1 January 2015. My Special Representative discussed with the Head of State the current political situation in the country. Subsequently, on the sidelines

of the twenty-fourth African Union summit, my Special Representative held bilateral consultations with the Foreign Minister of Burundi regarding growing political tensions in that country.

41. Meanwhile, on 25 April, I dispatched my Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, to Burundi for consultations with President Nkurunziza and other Government authorities, political party leaders and members of the diplomatic community. My Special Envoy has been leading diplomatic efforts to foster conditions for the resumption of the political dialogue that MENUB had initiated. In that regard, the Ministry of the Interior of Burundi convened a political dialogue on 5 and 6 May, with the support of MENUB, to seek common ground for creating conditions for the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in Burundi.

Central African Republic

42. My Special Representative continued his role as the United Nations representative in the international mediation on the crisis in the Central African Republic, in close collaboration with my Special Representative for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in that country (MINUSCA). He continued to facilitate coordination, kept the parties engaged and provided guidance to advance the mediation process.

43. My Special Representative travelled to Brazzaville four times and had regular exchanges with the ECCAS-appointed mediator, the President of the Congo. Their discussions focused on challenges regarding the implementation of the Brazzaville Agreement and preparations for the Bangui Forum.

44. On 31 January, my Special Representative participated in the meeting of ECCAS Heads of State chaired by the President of Chad. He urged Central African States to focus on the timely conclusion of the transition in the Central African Republic. He also held bilateral consultations with the Presidents of the Congo and Gabon and the President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, and in-depth discussions with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Chad and the Congo regarding the situation in the Central African Republic. In addition, he held consultations with the Foreign Minister of Benin, regarding the role of the former Head of State of the Transition, Michel Djotodia.

45. My Special Representative undertook two missions to the Central African Republic. From 24 to 28 February, he met with the transitional authorities and with leaders of the ex-Séléka and anti-balaka in Bangui, prior to his participation in the seventh meeting of the International Contact Group, held in Brazzaville on 16 March. From 10 to 12 March, he briefed the Security Council on his visit to Bangui and the main challenges of the transition and consulted further with the transitional authorities and international partners.

46. My Special Representative also provided valuable guidance on the issue of the controversial initiative taken in Nairobi, which resulted in the signing of an accord in January by the two previous leaders of the country. He conducted a diplomatic campaign engaging leaders of the region to make clear to all parties that the parallel initiative was entirely outside the Brazzaville process, and he recommitted the country's stakeholders to engaging within the existing framework for the transition.

47. My Special Representative presided over the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation. Before the meeting, he held extensive consultations with representatives of all the stakeholders to be represented in the Forum.

Gabon

48. During the reporting period, my Special Representative continued his efforts to defuse election-related tensions by encouraging Gabonese political actors to engage in constructive dialogue, particularly following the demonstrations held in Libreville on 20 December 2014.

49. In that regard, he met regularly with key leaders of the opposition, including an influential member of the Front uni de l'opposition pour l'alternance, Jean Ping, and the leader of the Union nationale, Zacharie Myboto. He also met with the Secretary-General of the ruling Parti démocratique gabonais, Faustin Boukoubi, to seek the majority's views on the political situation. He further exchanged views with key government officials, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Human Rights, the President of the Constitutional Court and the Speaker of Parliament, and with representatives of Gabonese civil society and members of the diplomatic community.

50. In his meetings with national stakeholders, my Special Representative reiterated to Gabonese actors my calls to refrain from violence and engage in an inclusive and constructive political dialogue. He urged Gabonese stakeholders to take the necessary measures to preserve peace and stability in Gabon. He further stressed the importance of elevating the level of political debate by focusing on key issues for the country. My Special Representative's efforts contributed to the reinstatement of the formerly banned opposition political party, the Union nationale, as well as to the reactivation of the Conseil national de la démocratie by the Government.

51. On 3 March, my Special Representative was received by the President of Gabon, who thanked the United Nations for its efforts to defuse the political tensions in his country and reaffirmed his commitment to open dialogue on concrete issues of political significance.

Republic of the Congo

52. In January, my Special Representative met with different political stakeholders in Brazzaville, including members of the ruling Parti congolais du travail, in order to assess the political landscape in response to the growing internal debate regarding a constitutional change that would allow President Sassou Nguesso to stand in the 2016 presidential elections.

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

53. In its capacity as secretariat, UNOCA organized, from 1 to 5 December in Bujumbura, the thirty-ninth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. States members of the Committee adopted the Declaration of Bujumbura, in which they firmly condemned Boko Haram attacks in northern Cameroon; noted the serious impact of the group's activities in Cameroon and Chad; proposed that the Boko Haram issue be included in the agenda of the next ECCAS meeting of Heads of State; and requested my

Special Representative to highlight this issue to the Security Council. The Committee welcomed the proposal of Angola to host the fortieth meeting of the Committee, scheduled for 1 to 5 June.

54. From 24 to 26 February 2015, UNOCA, in partnership with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Government of Angola, organized a workshop on human rights and the prevention of violent extremism in Luanda. The meeting represented the third in a series of workshops, which emerged from the initiative of States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to advance the development of an integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

Elections

55. UNOCA and the OHCHR Regional Office co-organized, from 6 to 8 May in Douala, Cameroon, a seminar dedicated to the role of the media in the organization and promotion of peaceful electoral processes in Central Africa, with a focus on journalistic ethics and responsibility.

56. UNOCA planned its third meeting of United Nations presences in Central Africa, which includes dedicated discussions on elections in Central Africa. The meeting is to be held on 17 and 18 May.

B. Support to subregional initiatives

Mediation

57. UNOCA continued to provide support to the subregion in the area of mediation. With operational mediation expertise provided by the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, UNOCA participated in a workshop, organized by ECCAS in N'Djamena from 24 to 27 February, to review the institution's mediation architecture. Participants adopted several recommendations for enhancing the mediation capacity of ECCAS. UNOCA played a key role in facilitating cooperation between ECCAS and the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association in Central Africa.

58. On 30 and 31 March, in N'Djamena, UNOCA participated in a meeting of the Central Africa group of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association, which included the participation of the mediator of Chad and the vice-mediator of Gabon. Participants discussed ways to enhance the role and impact of national mediators during political crises and to support the establishment of those institutions in Central African States where they do not exist.

Regional integration

59. On 23 January, my Special Representative met with the President of the Commission of CEMAC to discuss the overall situation in the subregion and the organization of a joint activity to promote greater regional integration. This was followed by working-level consultations in February to advance the development of a UNOCA-CEMAC framework of cooperation and a plan for joint activities.

60. From 3 to 6 February, in Yaoundé, UNOCA participated in a technical meeting, co-organized by ECCAS and the World Health Organization (WHO), aimed at developing a regional integrated strategic framework in response to a potential outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in Central Africa. The meeting brought together, inter alia, participants from the Ministries of Health, Defence, the Interior, Economic Affairs and Justice of ECCAS member States.

C. Boko Haram

61. On 28 November in Yaoundé, my Special Representative met with the Minister Delegate at the Cameroonian Presidency in charge of national defence to discuss the impact of Boko Haram on Cameroon and the measures taken by the country to address the threat.

62. During the twenty-fourth African Union summit, my Special Representative participated in the 484th meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, convened on 29 January, during which Heads of State exchanged views on cooperative security measures to address the Boko Haram threat. At the ECCAS meeting of Heads of State held on the sidelines of the summit, on 31 January, my Special Representative highlighted the growing impact of Boko Haram on Central Africa and the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach.

63. UNOCA participated in a number of technical meetings to advance the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force to provide advice and assistance. These included the fourth meeting of Ministers of Defence, Chiefs of Defence Staff, Heads of Intelligence and Security of the States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin, held in Abuja from 24 to 26 November 2014, and a meeting of experts, held in Yaoundé from 5 to 7 February, to finalize the strategic concept of operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force and related technical documents.

64. On 16 February in Yaoundé, my Special Representative attended the extraordinary summit meeting of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) devoted to combating Boko Haram, during which he delivered an address on my behalf. The meeting was preceded by a meeting of the COPAX Council of Ministers and the Commission for Defence and Security, in which my Special Representative and the UNOCA Military Adviser also participated. My Special Representative consulted extensively with numerous stakeholders on the sidelines of the event. The meeting resulted in the adoption of the Yaoundé Declaration, in which countries commit themselves to providing funding to support the region's military efforts and humanitarian response, and call for the organization of a joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit.

65. UNOCA also supported ECCAS and the Ministry of Health of Gabon in hosting a meeting, on 12 March in Libreville, to develop a humanitarian response action plan for Boko Haram-affected populations. Participants, including representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, agreed to improve information-sharing between ECCAS and United Nations entities while engaging with national and regional humanitarian coordination structures and ECOWAS.

66. From 13 to 16 April, my Special Representatives for Central and West Africa undertook a joint diplomatic tour of Boko Haram-affected countries in the Lake Chad Basin region and Benin. They met with the Presidents of Benin, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, the Prime Minister of Cameroon, and the President-elect of Nigeria.

D. Coordination of the implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the Lord's Resistance Army

67. From 25 November to 1 December 2014, UNOCA participated in a joint mission led by the African Union Special Envoy for the Lord's Resistance Army Issue, General Jackson Tuwei, to Bangui, Kinshasa and Kampala to sustain the commitment of Governments of LRA-affected countries and key partners in the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of LRA and the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army.

68. My Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy participated in the meeting of the International Working Group on LRA, held in New York on 11 December 2014. During the meeting, my Special Representative underlined the Group's role in mobilizing donors and called for renewed commitment to and financing for the operations of the African Union Regional Task Force, reintegration programming, and development and rehabilitation efforts in LRA-affected zones.

69. On 2 and 3 March 2015, UNOCA convened the biannual meeting of LRA focal points at Entebbe, Uganda, which was held at the expert level. Participants included LRA focal points from United Nations entities, bilateral government partners, non-governmental organizations, representatives of civil society from LRA-affected areas and, for the first time, ECCAS. They took stock of efforts undertaken in the context of the United Nations and African Union regional strategies and reviewed recommended actions for the way forward.

70. From 20 to 24 April, my Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy travelled to Kampala. The mission met with national authorities and other key stakeholders to discuss the ongoing counter-LRA efforts. They highlighted the need to increase support to the Regional Task Force; coordination among the United Nations missions, the African Union, and other actors; and development and reintegration interventions in LRA-affected areas.

Operationalization of the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army

71. UNOCA continued to advocate for increased support to the Regional Task Force with African Union officials as well as with partners involved on the LRA issue. It also continued to politically engage troop-contributing countries to sustain their commitment to the Task Force. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) continued to be involved in providing logistical support, mainly in the form of access to United Nations flights, to staff of the Regional Task Force headquarters in Yambio, South Sudan. Meanwhile MONUSCO continued to extend operational coordination and logistical support to the Congolese contingent of the Task Force.

Protection of civilians and child protection

72. MONUSCO maintained and reinforced existing protection mechanisms in LRA-affected areas. This included joint patrols and military operations that involved MONUSCO forces, the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Garamba National Park rangers and United States military forces. MONUSCO also set up new community protection plans and extended the community alert network, while community liaison assistants facilitated coordination between military forces and local stakeholders. Meanwhile, UNMISS continued to provide technical and logistical support for repatriation and family reunification for LRA escapees, including in the context of technical support provided to the Child Transit Centre run by the Government of South Sudan.

Activities relating to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

73. United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, government partners and civil society continued to engage in efforts to encourage LRA defections and to strengthen community protection capacity in the face of the LRA threat. Those efforts included the broadcasting of aerial “come home” messages and the distribution of flyers as well as the establishment of early warning systems. Partners were also engaged in efforts to ensure that communities welcome and reintegrate LRA escapees, while offering vocational training and psychosocial support. MONUSCO processed 25 LRA escapees.

Long-term development and peacebuilding support

74. MONUSCO continued conducting and supporting activities to facilitate the establishment of State authority in LRA-affected areas. These included financial and logistical support to strengthen the justice sector; State and civil society capacity-building; advocacy for the protection of civilians; and key road rehabilitation infrastructure projects. Nevertheless, the lack of funding for protection, reintegration and development programmes in LRA-affected areas, including for LRA child returnees, remains a serious challenge. As a result, several projects have recently closed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

E. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

75. On 3 December 2014, in Accra, UNOCA took part in the meeting of the Group of 7 Friends of the Gulf of Guinea Group, with the participation of ECCAS, ECOWAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA). Regional stakeholders and external partners discussed ways to increase coordination, including with United Nations regional offices, while representatives of the private sector committed themselves to supporting the Yaoundé process. In line with Security Council resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012), UNOCA and UNOWA provided support to ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in the implementation of the decisions of the Yaoundé summit of June 2013.

F. United Nations cooperation

76. At the invitation of my Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, UNOCA participated in a brainstorming session of Special Envoys and partners from the Great Lakes region, held in Nairobi on 17 and 18 November 2014, to examine the current situation in the region and take stock of the implementation of national and regional commitments related to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Discussions focused on defining common approaches to the different crises in the region and priority actions to address political, electoral, security, economic and humanitarian challenges.

77. On 20 February, my Special Representative met with the Regional Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Libreville to discuss strengthened cooperation and joint support to ECCAS for the development of a regional strategy on poaching.

78. On 10 April, my Special Representative participated in a retreat with UNOWA and the Office of the Special Envoy to the Sahel to discuss synergies among the three Offices and identify areas to strengthen cooperation.

79. My Special Representatives for Central Africa and West Africa participated, on 19 April in Yaoundé, in a meeting of resident coordinators from Boko Haram-affected countries in order to increase political and operational coordination among relevant United Nations entities.

IV. Strategic review of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

80. In advance of the renewal of the UNOCA mandate in August, the Department of Political Affairs led an inter-agency strategic review mission to Libreville from 26 to 28 March 2015. The purpose of the mission was to review the scope of the Office's mandate and activities in the light of the current regional political and economic environment, the available financial and human resources, and the mission's structure, as well as cooperation with other United Nations, regional and subregional actors. On the basis of its consultations with various stakeholders, the outcome of the discussions with UNOCA staff members and informed by its own observations and risk assessment, the review team adopted a series of recommendations.

81. The strategic review team recommended that UNOCA should focus on the strategic areas of work that are clearly recognized as strengths of the Office by its stakeholders and for which UNOCA has a comparative advantage.

82. In that regard, the review team recommended that UNOCA should focus on the following four strategic priorities and related tasks:

(a) **Strengthening good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation.** This includes the international mediation on the crisis in the Central African Republic, as well as support to countries approaching elections or facing institutional crisis; and strengthening the capacity for conflict prevention, mediation and peace consolidation of subregional actors;

(b) **Supporting United Nations, regional and subregional initiatives on peace and security.** This includes promoting and supporting regional and

subregional efforts to address the impact of emerging security threats; coordinating the implementation of the LRA strategy; cooperating with subregional organizations, including CEMAC, ECCAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other partners and assisting them, as appropriate, in the promotion of peace and stability and in the strengthening of their capacities;

(c) **Enhancing coherence and coordination in the work of the United Nations in the subregion on peace and security.** This includes increasing internal United Nations exchanges, collaborations, and joint initiatives within the subregion;

(d) **Strengthening the capacity to advise the Secretary-General and United Nations entities in the region on significant peace and security developments in Central Africa.** This includes the establishment of a dedicated analytical unit integrated to provide analysis and reports on the situation in the countries of the region and regional trends.

83. As the region of Central Africa is entering an electoral cycle that will end in 2018, with growing security concerns, it is recommended that the periodicity of renewal of the UNOCA mandate be increased from 18 months to 36 months. Such an approach would align the periodicity of the UNOCA mandate to that of other regional offices.

84. In order to undertake the aforementioned priorities, a strengthening of UNOCA capacities is critical. Therefore, the review team recommended that the Political Affairs Section be significantly strengthened and its profile elevated to better advise the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and represent him at high-level meetings. The review team also recommended the establishment of a dedicated political reporting and analysis unit, as well as mediation capacity within the Political Affairs Section, and dedicated capacity on LRA; security trends; early warning on risks in relation to electoral processes and assessment of electoral developments, and promoting the inclusion of human rights and greater involvement of women in the regional peace and security agenda. The review team noted that UNOCA would greatly benefit from the recruitment of seconded military and police advisers. Finally, UNOCA should explore creative ways of mobilizing financial and human resources to support core capacities or to obtain specific short-term expertise.

85. The review team also agreed on a set of principles to rightsize the mission support component to ensure economies of scale, improve service delivery and balance the current ratio of support to substantive staff. With regard to the mission's mobility challenges, the review team recognized the need to improve the Office's access to air assets. The review team recommended that UNOCA be used as a pilot case for the new charter arrangements as soon as possible so that the effectiveness can be judged prior to the budget submission.

V. Observations and recommendations

86. I am deeply concerned about the ongoing activities of Boko Haram and their destabilizing humanitarian, human rights and security impact on the Central Africa region, particularly northern Cameroon. I welcome the continued efforts by regional and subregional actors and partners to address this growing challenge. I encourage ECCAS and ECOWAS to hold the planned meeting of Heads of State to address the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in a holistic and integrated manner. I also

welcome the commitment of Central African States to advance the road map for the development of the integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and small arms and light weapons for Central Africa. UNOCA will continue to support these efforts in collaboration with the relevant United Nations entities involved.

87. I remain gravely concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic and its impact on the people of the country, as well as its implications across the region. Central African States and institutions have played an essential role in addressing the crisis, in collaboration with the United Nations and the African Union. ECCAS has shown commitment to finding a solution to the crisis in the interest of fostering peace and greater stability in the subregion. The Bangui Forum is a clear demonstration of national unity and ownership of the country's reconciliation process. The momentum generated by the Bangui Forum, within the current framework for the peace process, should be used constructively to advance the transition, and actively prepare for the timely holding of elections. In that regard, the continued leadership and support of my Special Representatives, Abdoulaye Bathily and Babacar Gaye, are critical.

88. I commend the efforts of the Governments of the subregion, United Nations entities, national and international non-governmental organizations and other partners in addressing the effects of the crisis in the Central African Republic on neighbouring countries. In that regard, I reiterate my call to the international community to urgently provide the requisite financial support to the underfunded inter-agency Central African Republic Regional Response Plan, which will assist the States concerned in addressing their growing humanitarian needs.

89. Maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea remains an issue of concern. I encourage States and regional and subregional organizations to remain committed to fully implementing the decisions of the Yaoundé summit. I also call on States in the region and partners to provide the necessary resources towards ensuring the adequate functioning of the Interregional Coordination Centre and the operationalization of the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa and the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in West Africa. UNOCA, in collaboration with UNOWA, will continue to assist the region to achieve these objectives.

90. I am concerned by continuing reports of poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking in Central Africa and the links between the illicit wildlife trade and armed groups in the subregion, including LRA. I reiterate my call on Central African Governments and ECCAS to work together on a subregional strategy to address this disturbing phenomenon. UNOCA will continue to support the subregion, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other United Nations partners, to develop a coherent and concerted approach to address this issue.

91. I welcome the continued progress made against the threat posed by LRA and acknowledge the fruitful cooperation between UNOCA and the African Union in this regard. I recognize, in particular, the critical support provided by the United States and the European Union to the collective international effort against LRA. I am also especially grateful for the dedication and commitment of troops of the Regional Task Force and contributing countries. In particular, I welcome Uganda's continuing commitment to the operations of the Regional Task Force in the Central African Republic.

92. I am concerned by the reported movement of the bulk of LRA into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I call upon the affected States to enhance

cooperation to deny the group safe haven in their country. As I mentioned in my previous report, I welcome the invitation extended to the African Union by the Government of the Sudan to verify reports of LRA presence in Kafia Kingi, and I encourage the African Union Commission and the African Union Peace and Security Council to take steps to verify the allegations. I welcome efforts thus far undertaken by the countries participating in the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of LRA, and I call on them to remain politically committed to tackling the LRA issue and to fulfilling their troop pledges to the Regional Task Force. Given the declining presence of humanitarian actors in many LRA-affected areas, I draw particular attention to the need for donors to support early recovery activities in order to restore basic livelihoods and essential services for affected communities in those areas.

93. The surrender of former LRA commander Dominic Ongwen is a significant achievement, signalling that the collective international efforts are bearing fruit. I commend the cooperation among the Governments of the Central African Republic, the Netherlands, Uganda and the United States and the support provided by MINUSCA, the Regional Task Force and the International Criminal Court in facilitating his expeditious transfer to the Court at The Hague. Ongwen's transfer to the Court represents a first step towards accountability for LRA crimes and justice for the thousands of LRA victims.

94. The mandate of UNOCA has expanded over time following decisions of the Security Council and developments in the region. Five years after its establishment, UNOCA has demonstrated its added value for the subregion and for the United Nations work in Central Africa. The strategic review recognized the need to maximize the potential of UNOCA to continue to serve as an important tool in the area of preventive diplomacy in Central Africa. In the light of the growing security concerns in Central Africa, the electoral cycle that will end in 2018, and the need to support regional initiatives, there is a need to adjust the content and duration of the UNOCA mandate, and to provide the Office with adequate capacities. I therefore encourage Member States to support the recommendations of the strategic review.

95. I would like, once again, to express my appreciation to the Governments of Central African countries, ECCAS, CEMAC, the African Union, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other subregional and regional institutions for their continued collaboration with UNOCA. I 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 relevant entities, for their support and cooperation with UNOCA.

96. I would like to reiterate my appreciation to the Government and the people of Gabon for their hospitality and constant assistance to the regional Office. I would also like to thank them for their recent allocation of new premises to the Office, which will contribute significantly to the functioning of UNOCA.

97. Finally, I would like to thank my Special Representative, Abdoulaye Bathily, and the staff of UNOCA for their continuing efforts to advance the cause of peace and security in Central Africa.