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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 1 June 2021 ([S/2021/517](#)). It also provides an update on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region, pursuant to Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#).

II. Major developments in the Central Africa subregion

A. Political, peace and security developments and trends

2. The period under review was marked by efforts to advance the political transition in Chad and an inclusive national dialogue in the Central African Republic, the presidential election in Sao Tome and Principe and persisting violence in Cameroon and the Lake Chad basin. The subregion pursued efforts to address the multifaceted impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including by advancing vaccination campaigns. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) pursued its institutional reform and implementation of its strategic priorities for the period 2021–2025, notably on peace and security.

Political developments and trends

3. Several initiatives were taken to advance regional integration. On 30 July, the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, in his capacity as Chair of ECCAS, chaired the nineteenth Conference of ECCAS Heads of State and Government, which discussed – in a virtual format – political and security issues in the subregion and adopted decisions to advance the regional integration process. On 16 September, the President of Angola, João Lourenço, in his capacity as Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, convened the third mini-summit of the International Conference on the situation in the Central African Republic. Attended by, inter alia, the Heads of State of the Central African Republic, Chad and



the Congo, the summit adopted a joint road map with a view to advancing the peace process in the country in line with the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 2019 and urged the Government to declare a ceasefire. On 15 October, the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin Archange Touadéra, declared an immediate and unilateral ceasefire across the country, in line with the joint road map of the International Conference.

4. In Angola, the constitutional reform legislation was adopted by the National Assembly on 22 June. On 10 September, the President of Angola returned an electoral reform bill to the National Assembly for a second reading, following its adoption by majority vote in parliament, citing the need to provide “healthy competition, fairness and electoral truth”. On 11 September, opposition party União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola organized a large-scale protest, with significant youth presence, to demand “free, fair and transparent elections”. On 17 November, the electoral reform bill was adopted in a second reading by the National Assembly, with the opposition voting against it. The socioeconomic situation in the country prompted strikes in different sectors. Some journalists expressed concern over being targeted for criticizing the authorities, while others received verbal aggression from opposition supporters on the margins of protests. Opposition parties have expressed concern about unequal access to resources and to State media outlets ahead of the general elections scheduled for August 2022. The former President, José Eduardo Dos Santos, returned to Angola on 14 September after two years of absence. On 5 November, Mr. Lourenço filed his candidacy for a second term as President of the ruling party, Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola, which is scheduled to elect a new president at its congress from 9 to 11 December 2021.

5. In Cameroon, notwithstanding efforts by national and international actors, dialogue between the Government and armed groups in the North-West and South-West Regions has yet to gain momentum. In line with the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue of 2019, progress with regard to efforts towards decentralization continued, but appeared to have limited impact on the ground as violence persisted. A national women’s convention for peace, the first of its kind to be held in Cameroon, was convened in Yaoundé from 29 to 31 July. Participants expressed support for peace efforts in the country. From 21 to 24 September and from 5 to 9 October, the Prime Minister, Joseph Dion Ngute, visited the North-West and South-West Regions to assess the implementation of the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue. He noted the need to enhance communication efforts on those recommendations.

6. In Chad, the transitional authorities made progress towards key transition milestones despite the challenging security and economic context. On 29 July, the Transitional Government adopted a road map that, inter alia, envisages an inclusive national dialogue in late 2021 leading to the adoption of a new constitution and, thereafter, the holding of elections in September 2022. On 13 August, the transitional Prime Minister, Albert Pahimi Padacké, appointed the 69 members of the committee in charge of organizing the inclusive dialogue, including 15 women. Preparations for the inclusive national dialogue, including with the participation of armed groups, are under way. In an address to the nation on 10 August, the President of the Transitional Military Council, General Mahamat Idriss Déby, called upon the armed opposition to join the inclusive national dialogue, and on 17 August, appointed former President, Goukouni Weddeye, to chair the special technical committee on their participation. On 24 September, the leader of the Transitional Military Council appointed the 93 members of the National Transitional Council, of whom 30 per cent are women, comprising members of the outgoing legislature, including from the former opposition, and armed groups, as well as representatives of civil society and youth. On 4 October, the organizing committee of the national inclusive dialogue presented

the road map of the dialogue to international partners. Wakit Tama, an influential opposition platform, continued to reject the transition process as non-transparent and non-inclusive, organizing several rallies to demand the revision of the transition charter and a genuinely inclusive dialogue.

7. The transitional authorities took some measures to open political space in the context of the transition. On 13 July, the transitional authorities authorized the first opposition demonstration since the late President, Idriss Déby Itno, came to power in 1990. Between July and October, civil society and opposition groups critical of the transitional authorities organized several peaceful, authorized demonstrations in N'Djamena calling for an inclusive dialogue; however, some unauthorized demonstrations by Wakit Tama continued to be repressed. At the first Chadian women's symposium for security and sustainable peace, held in N'Djamena on 27 June, participants called for increased women's participation in conflict resolution and an inclusive national dialogue.

8. On 28 July, the High Representative of the African Union and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Chad, Basile Ikouébé, officially assumed his duties. On 3 August, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union issued a statement in which it welcomed progress achieved in the transition; commended the Chadian authorities for creating an enabling environment; and encouraged them to expedite the implementation of the remaining transition tasks and recommit to completing the transition within the stipulated 18-month time frame. Key regional and international partners of Chad formed the International Group of Partners for Support to the Transition in Chad, aimed at mobilizing regional and international support for the transition under the leadership of the African Union. Six meetings of the International Group have been held to date.

9. In the Congo, against the backdrop of persisting economic challenges aggravated by COVID-19, authorities reiterated their commitment to sustainable debt management and good governance. On 21 June, the Prime Minister presented the Government's action plan for the period 2021–2026 to the National Assembly. Opposition parties continued to call for an inclusive dialogue to address the country's challenges.

10. In Equatorial Guinea, the situation remained marked by the impact of COVID-19, steps taken by the authorities to foster macroeconomic stability and preparations for elections. On 28 July, the highest court in France, the Cour de cassation, upheld the conviction of the Vice-President, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, for embezzlement and corruption. On 22 July, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland announced sanctions against Mr. Obiang Mangue for misappropriation of State funds. On 3 July, a military tribunal sentenced two members of the armed forces to 30 and 50 years in prison, respectively, for negligence in relation to the series of explosions at the military barracks in Bata on 7 March 2021, which left 107 people dead and 700 injured. Some political campaigns started in preparation for the legislative elections, scheduled to be held in 2022.

11. In Gabon, authorities focused on governance and economic recovery, given the economic and health crises facing the country. On 13 September, the Council of Ministers adopted an ordinance requiring candidates for the presidential election to reside in the country for an uninterrupted period of at least six months each year during the two years preceding the election. The opposition criticized the initiative as purporting to exclude opposition candidates from taking part in the 2023 election. Several opposition leaders and allies of the former presidential candidate, Jean Ping, defected from his movement and returned to the ruling Parti démocratique gabonais.

12. In Sao Tome and Principe, the first round of the presidential election took place on 18 July. It was contested by 19 candidates, including three women. The incumbent

President, Evaristo Carvalho, was not seeking re-election. Carlos Vila Nova, the candidate supported by the outgoing President's party, Acção Democrática Independente, and Guilherme Posser da Costa, backed by the Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe – Partido Social Democrata party that dominates the Government, advanced to the second round. The second round, initially meant to be held on 8 August, took place on 5 September owing to a disagreement within the Constitutional Court on whether to proceed with a recount. Observer missions from the African Union and ECCAS commended the country for a peaceful and transparent election, while calling for the increased participation of women in the electoral process. On 14 September, the Constitutional Court declared Mr. Vila Nova the winner, with 57.6 per cent of the vote. He was sworn into office on 2 October. ECCAS deployed an electoral assistance mission and appointed a special envoy to Sao Tome and Principe in the context of the presidential election.

Security developments and trends

13. The security outlook across the subregion continued to deteriorate and was marked by activities of illegal armed groups, terrorism and violent extremism, particularly in the Lake Chad basin. The expansion of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), building on the defection from the Boko Haram faction previously led by Abubakar Shekau following his death, posed serious threats to the stability of the wider region. On 14 October, the Nigerian armed forces announced the death of the ISWAP leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi.

14. Violence continued unabated in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon. In the latter two regions, fighting between separatist armed groups and government forces, as well as acts of violence by all sides against government officials, traditional leaders, civilians and school personnel, continued. Observers noted the increased use of improvised explosive devices by armed groups.

15. On 18 June, according to regional authorities, unidentified assailants abducted six government officials in Ekondo Titi, South-West Region, for ransom. On 19 June, reports emerged that separatist militants had killed three gendarmes in Ngo-Ketunjia, North-West Region. On 18 July, government armed forces were reported to have killed the separatist leader “General Rambo” in Kumba, South-West Region. On 18 and 19 August, the Cameroonian armed forces reported to have carried out two operations in the North-West and South-West Regions, killing four and five separatists, respectively, and seizing military materiel. On 15 September, in Nake Bokoko, South-West Region, three members of an armed separatist group, including one of its commanders, were allegedly killed by the military. On 16 September, according to the Government, non-State armed groups ambushed a military patrol in Bamessing, North-West Region, with an improvised explosive device and an anti-tank rocket launcher before opening fire on the convoy. On 12 September, another improvised explosive device attack targeted a military convoy in Kumbo, North-West Region. According to the Government, a total of 15 soldiers and several civilians were killed in those attacks.

16. On 26 August in Abuja, in reaction to the announcement by separatists in Cameroon and the “Indigenous People of Biafra” separatist group in Nigeria that they would join forces in their respective fights for independence, Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities announced an agreement to jointly fight armed separatists in both countries.

17. On 12 August, the Governor of the Far North Region of Cameroon announced that clashes between herders and fishers in Logone Birni subdivision, close to the Chadian border, had left 13 people dead and 74 wounded. At least 11,000 people, mainly women and children, fled into Chad while a further 12,469 were displaced

within Cameroon, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

18. In Chad, insecurity at the country's borders continued to pose challenges. In August, Chad undertook to support the reactivation of a quadripartite agreement signed with Libya, the Niger and the Sudan in 2018, which provides for the deployment of joint forces to secure common borders and fight against cross-border crime and illegal immigration. On 14 September, the Libyan National Army led by General Khalifa Haftar carried out an operation against Chadian armed opposition groups. Several armoured vehicles were destroyed. On 8 October, Chad participated in a meeting held in Cairo with the Libyan 5+5 Joint Military Commission, at which the withdrawal of foreign fighters from Libya was discussed. In the east and the south, several clashes between nomadic herders and local agricultural communities continued to cause deaths and injuries.

19. In a joint communiqué issued on 1 June, the Central African Republic and Chad announced their agreement to establish an independent international commission, comprising representatives of the United Nations, the African Union and ECCAS, to clarify a security incident in the border area on 30 May, while also reaffirming their determination to promote bilateral cooperation.

20. Between 18 and 22 September, Burundi witnessed a series of attacks, including at least four in Bujumbura and one in Gitega. On 18 September, a mortar attack was launched on Melchior Ndadaye International Airport in Bujumbura, leaving minor material damage. The Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara) armed group claimed responsibility for that attack. On 19 September, two persons were killed in a grenade attack in Gitega. On 20 September, three simultaneous grenade attacks were recorded in Bujumbura, of which two targeted the main bus station and a third the Jabe market in the Bwiza district, injuring at least 100 persons. No group claimed responsibility for the incidents, which the authorities called terrorist attacks. On 22 September, the Attorney General issued an international arrest warrant against the chair of the Movement for Solidarity and Development opposition party, accusing him of leading a group responsible for attacks since the beginning of 2020 in which dozens had been killed or injured. International arrest warrants were also issued against seven others, including the secretary-general of the same party, which rejected the accusations as baseless.

Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin

21. The reporting period witnessed a decrease in reported Boko Haram-related incidents in Cameroon and Chad compared to the previous period. Between 1 June and 31 October 2021, there were 184 reported Boko Haram-related security incidents in Cameroon, with 74 civilian fatalities, and 25 incidents in Chad, with 44 civilian fatalities. In comparison, there were 423 incidents in Cameroon, with 145 civilian fatalities, and 62 incidents in Chad, with 199 fatalities, between 1 December 2020 and 30 April 2021.

22. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, there was a decrease in attacks against civilians in June and July but an increase in attacks against security forces, mainly in the Logone-et-Chari Department. In July, nine attacks were reported, targeting mainly military and government personnel and installations. During the reporting period, Cameroonian authorities held 1,149 former Boko Haram combatants, including 352 Nigerian nationals, who had surrendered in Mora, Far North Region.

23. On 27 July, five soldiers and one civilian were killed, and 13 soldiers were wounded, in an attack attributed to ISWAP on the Zigué military post. A similar attack in Sagmé, in Fotokol subdivision, on 24 July resulted in 6 fatalities among Cameroonian soldiers and 20 among the militants. On 9 August, a Boko Haram

faction carried out an attack against a military post in Sagmé, killing three soldiers and wounding five, while one Boko Haram fighter was also reportedly killed. On 14 August, suspected ISWAP militants attacked a military post in Afadé, close to the Nigerian border, killing one soldier, injuring several others and seizing ammunition.

24. Attacks by Boko Haram factions also continued in Lac Province in Chad. On 4 August, Boko Haram militants killed at least 26 Chadian soldiers in Tchoukou Telia, an island in Lake Chad, with several incidents of civilian kidnappings also reported. The Chadian army announced that a counter-offensive had been conducted in the region following the attack. On 19 September, militants killed nine people and set fire to Kadjigoroum village. On 21 August, Chad announced that it had withdrawn 600 out of 1,200 troops deployed to the tri-border areas between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger as part of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, citing a strategic redeployment.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

25. The Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea reported a total of eight security incidents at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, including five in the ECCAS maritime space, between July and September, a decrease compared with the nine incidents, including two in the ECCAS maritime space, reported in the first quarter of 2021.

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

26. The subregion continued to suffer the impact of climate change. In Burundi, as of August 2021, there were more than 96,000 internally displaced persons owing to natural disasters. In Cameroon and Chad, intercommunal clashes between herding and farming communities, compounded by climate change, led to deaths and injuries. Angola was experiencing the worst drought in 40 years, the area of which had expanded geographically from three provinces in 2020 to six in 2021. Combined with rising temperatures and a desert locust plague that destroyed crops in major agricultural areas, this has drastically reduced harvests and livelihoods, creating concerning levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. The situation has led to increased cross-border movements into Namibia of people seeking improved livelihood conditions.

B. Humanitarian developments

27. Conflicts, floods and epidemics in various parts of Central Africa, aggravated by COVID-19, continued to have serious consequences for the humanitarian situation in the subregion, with a particular impact on women and marginalized groups.

28. There continues to be a highly complex humanitarian context in Cameroon owing to widespread insecurity, epidemics and floods. In 2021, 4.4 million people have been in need of humanitarian assistance. Only 42 per cent of the \$362 million needed for the humanitarian response plan for 2021 had been funded by mid-November. As at 31 October, Cameroon hosted over 461,600 refugees and asylum seekers, including some 333,400 refugees from the Central African Republic and nearly 119,000 from Nigeria. The crises in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions led to the internal displacement of more than 1 million people.

29. Persisting insecurity in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon resulted in further abuses against civilians by all sides in the conflict, forced displacement and hampered access to humanitarian assistance and basic social services. As at 31 October, more than 69,380 Cameroonians had sought refuge in

Nigeria. More than 711,050 people were displaced within the two regions and faced significant protection risks, including high rates of sexual and gender-based violence. As at 31 October, there were around 342,270 returnees within the two regions. On 11 September, a non-State armed group announced a general lockdown in both regions from 15 September to 2 October. Most schools and community learning spaces were closed. The closure of banks and markets operating at a limited capacity aggravated food insecurity, increased commodity prices and had an adverse impact on socioeconomic activities. More than 40,000 people were denied food assistance owing to insecurity and roadblocks. Reported cases of gender-based violence in the two regions remained high. Partners referred 1,205 cases to service providers specialized in responding to gender-based violence. Ninety per cent of survivors were women and 28 per cent children. Attacks against humanitarian, health and education personnel and facilities continued unabated, in a context of increasing challenges for humanitarian organizations.

30. Attacks on United Nations convoys have been increasing, and humanitarian workers have been threatened, abducted and killed in Cameroon, a situation that affected the humanitarian response, especially in the North-West Region. On 25 June, a non-State armed group briefly abducted aid workers in Guzang, Momo Department, and confiscated food aid. On 3 August, Médecins sans frontières withdrew from the North-West Region after authorities had suspended its operations for eight months. On 24 August, an aid worker with the International Committee of the Red Cross was killed in an attack in Bamenda.

31. In Chad, concurrent security and humanitarian crises continued to affect several areas, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities such as malnutrition, food insecurity and the risk of epidemics. Overall, 5.5 million people – around one third of the population – have needed humanitarian assistance in 2021. The humanitarian response plan for 2021 called for \$617 million, but only 30 per cent was funded as at 18 November. In 2021, Chad saw its highest numbers of refugees and displaced persons in the past five years, with the country hosting more than 524,400 refugees from the Sudan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Cameroon as at 31 October, along with some 406,570 internally displaced persons and almost 106,900 returnees from the Central African Republic and the Lake Chad basin.

32. In the Congo, 6,928 new asylum seekers from the Central African Republic had been biometrically registered as at 30 September. The Congo hosted 367,898 refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and others of concern to UNHCR as at the same date.

Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin

33. The Lake Chad basin crisis has led to the internal displacement of more than 357,630 Cameroonians and some 406,570 Chadians and forced some 133,600 Nigerians to seek refuge in Cameroon and Chad. People in the Lake Chad basin continued to suffer from epidemics, including cholera, measles and polio, as well as destruction owing to heavy flooding, with women first responders and caregivers disproportionately affected.

34. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, the activities of Boko Haram factions, compounded by chronic vulnerability and the growing impact of climate change, continued to cause population displacements. As at 31 October, more than 607,520 persons, including some 114,630 Nigerian refugees, 135,260 returnees and 357,630 internally displaced persons, faced significant protection risks. Heavy rainfall since July 2020 caused widespread flooding, affecting more than 162,000 people. The loss of livelihoods resulting from conflict and floods and the impact of COVID-19 led to increased food insecurity.

35. Almost 19,000 Nigerian refugees and more than 29,260 Chadian returnees from the Niger and Nigeria were recorded in the Chadian provinces affected by Boko Haram factions as at 31 October. In addition, some 406,570 people remained displaced in Lac Province 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 movement restrictions continued to affect access to livelihoods, leading to the increasing food insecurity and vulnerability of the local populations.

C. Human rights trends

36. In Burundi, a human rights defender, Germain Rukuki, was released on 1 July after serving more than four years in prison. Notwithstanding progress made in the opening of democratic space, opposition parties faced some interference in and restrictions on their activities. On 3 July, following the arrest of at least six of its members for their alleged role in the deadly ambush in June in Muramvya Province, the main opposition party, National Congress for Freedom, criticized the authorities for “restrictions of the political space”. On 8 October, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution [48/16](#), in which it appointed a special rapporteur mandated to monitor the situation of human rights in Burundi.

37. In the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, non-State armed groups continued to attack government forces and civilians, perpetrating killings, torture and ill-treatment against civilians, abducting for ransom, enforcing lockdowns, detonating improvised explosive devices and attacking children and schools. On 16 June, non-State armed groups abducted three girls aged between 8 and 14 years from the residence of a school principal in Elak-Oku village, South-West Region. On 20 August, a pupil died in Kumbo, North-West Region, during an armed exchange between State security forces and non-State armed groups in the vicinity of a school.

38. Reports of alleged abuses by government forces against civilians in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon also continued. On 2 August, Human Rights Watch reported allegations of attacks by government forces against civilians and blamed the Cameroonian army for the deaths of two civilians, the rape of a 53-year-old woman and the destruction and looting of at least 33 houses, shops and a traditional chief's palace in the North-West Region on 8 and 9 June. On 14 October, a gendarme shot dead a schoolgirl in Buea, South-West Region, and was later lynched by a mob. The authorities announced the opening of an investigation.

39. In Chad, while some restrictions on democratic space were lifted and some demonstrations authorized, some civil society leaders and organizers of demonstrations were subject to judicial proceedings for non-compliance with authorized march itineraries. During the march of Wakit Tama in N'Djamena on 2 October, security forces cracked down on demonstrators following a change of route. Officially, a dozen wounded were recorded on both sides and around 10 police vehicles were damaged.

40. In the Congo, six human rights activists, charged with undermining the internal security of the State, were released on 13 July. On 11 August, the editor-in-chief of the satirical magazine *Sel-Piment*, who had been sentenced to six months in prison on libel charges involving a key government official, was released from prison after serving his sentence. Opposition figures Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko and André Okombi Salissa remained in detention, notwithstanding calls by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention for their release. On 22 September, Fédération de l'opposition

congolaise and other opposition groups issued a statement in which they protested the intended transfer of Mr. Mokoko from the military hospital to the main prison in Brazzaville as well as the travel ban imposed on opposition figure Paulin Makaya. On 1 October, Mr. Mokoko was returned to prison after more than a year in hospital since his medical evacuation at the end of July 2020.

41. In Gabon, authorities passed amendments to the Penal Code and Civil Code that reinforced women's rights and tightened sanctions against acts of gender-based violence.

42. In Rwanda, on 20 September, the High Court Chamber for International Crimes delivered its verdict concerning 21 defendants on trial for their involvement with the National Liberation Front, the military arm of the Rwanda Movement for Democratic Change coalition, which had been accused of terrorism-related charges. Among them was leader of the coalition, Paul Rusesabagina, who was not present in court during the pronouncement of the sentence and received a 25-year prison term. A former spokesperson of the National Liberation Front, Callixte Nsabimana, was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty.

D. Socioeconomic trends

43. Economies in the subregion showed encouraging, albeit fragile, signs of recovery following the recession in 2020 resulting from the dual economic and health crises. In some countries, efforts to mitigate the consequences of those crises resulted in higher levels of public debt.

44. The regional economy in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) area was projected to rebound moderately to 1.3 per cent of gross domestic product in 2021, before stabilizing to 2.7 per cent in 2022, 2.3 per cent in 2023 and 2.9 per cent in 2024, according to the Bank of Central African States. Those projections reflected the growing momentum around vaccination and the impact of structural economic reforms initiated by countries of the region.

45. On 18 August, the CEMAC Heads of State held a virtual summit, during which they adopted resolutions aimed at economic recovery in response to COVID-19. The Heads of State recommended common measures to increase the vaccination rate, a progressive lifting of exceptional economic support measures, a mobilization of non-oil-related revenues and a more rigorous management of public debt. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank called upon CEMAC countries to undertake key governance reforms.

46. IMF approved several credit facilities and other emergency funding for Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe to assist them in addressing the macroeconomic impact of the health crisis and undertake structural reforms.

47. In a statement issued on 16 June, creditors of Chad from the Group of 20 indicated a willingness to restructure the debt owed to them, provided that other creditors, including private ones, did the same on comparable terms. On 7 September, IMF, which had conditioned a support package on such debt restructuring, warned that the debt of Chad was currently "unsustainable".

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

A. Good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation

Angola

48. From 27 September to 6 October, UNOCA conducted a visit to Angola to support national efforts to sustain a peaceful path towards democratic stability. UNOCA met with the Government, civil society organizations, international financial institutions, journalists' associations, diplomatic missions and the United Nations country team. Discussions focused on the political space, women and peace and security, anti-corruption, climate change and the socioeconomic situation.

Cameroon

49. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa continued to advocate with key actors in Cameroon and abroad on the need for all stakeholders to engage in dialogue for a peaceful and lasting resolution of the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions.

50. In Yaoundé, on the margins of the third meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, on 4 October, the Special Representative met with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon. They discussed the situation in the North-West, South-West and Far North Regions. The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for the support of the United Nations in addressing the crises in the three regions.

Central African Republic

51. Working closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and senior officials in the Secretariat, the Special Representative for Central Africa continued to mobilize regional support for the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.

52. From 5 to 7 October, the two Special Representatives conducted a joint visit to Luanda. They met with the President of Angola and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tête António, rallying regional support for the peace process in the Central African Republic.

53. On 7 and 8 October, the Special Representative for Central Africa travelled to Bangui. He met with the President of the Central African Republic and discussed regional developments, including diplomatic efforts to ease border tensions between Chad and the Central African Republic.

Chad

54. From 11 to 18 June, UNOCA deployed a mission to Chad to assess the political situation and prospects for the participation of civil society, women and youth in the transition and to strengthen partnerships for coordinated United Nations action. UNOCA met with the transitional authorities, women's associations, civil society organizations and the donor community. Interlocutors underscored the need for a peaceful transition and the importance of supporting those efforts.

55. From 21 to 26 June, the Special Representative travelled to Chad to consult with the transitional authorities, political parties and international partners. He called for a peaceful, inclusive, consensual and timely process to return to constitutional order

and civilian rule. He maintained close contact with the African Union and ECCAS to coordinate efforts in support of the political transition.

56. From 14 to 18 September, the Special Representative travelled to Chad to attend the second meeting of the International Group of Partners for Support to the Transition in Chad. He encouraged the Group to provide the necessary technical and financial resources to the transition process. He also consulted with the transitional authorities and the diplomatic community to assess progress on key transition milestones.

57. The Peacebuilding Fund approved a catalytic investment of \$4 million to support the transitional authorities in the organization of an inclusive national dialogue in line with international human rights standards, with support to be provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Congo

58. From 26 to 30 July, UNOCA undertook a mission to Brazzaville to assess the political and socioeconomic climate after the presidential election of March 2021 and ahead of the legislative and local elections in 2022. It met with political parties, the Conseil national du dialogue, the diplomatic community and civil society. Interlocutors expressed a need for inclusive dialogue. The ruling majority expressed openness to continuous dialogue. UNOCA and the Government also discussed climate security.

59. The Government of the Congo, with the support of the United Nations country team, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNOCA, organized a workshop in Brazzaville from 19 to 21 October to accelerate the implementation of the national action plan on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), bringing together the interministerial technical group, women and youth from political parties and civil society organizations.

Equatorial Guinea

60. From 20 to 22 September, the Special Representative travelled to Malabo, where he met with the President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, other senior officials and the diplomatic community. He called for inclusive and peaceful legislative and presidential elections in 2022 and 2023 and insisted on the need to open political space and allow for the greater participation of the opposition. The President highlighted the importance of addressing maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea and his readiness to organize a regional conference on the issue.

Gabon

61. On 12 October, the Special Representative met with the President of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba. Discussions focused on cooperation between Central and West Africa, as well as the situation in the Central African Republic.

Sao Tome and Principe

62. On 2 October, the Special Representative attended the presidential inauguration ceremony in Sao Tome. He also met with national and international actors and advocated for peaceful and inclusive legislative elections, scheduled for 2022, as well as for enhancing women's political participation.

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

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

63. From 10 to 15 October, the Bureau of the Committee conducted a visit to Chad, in preparation for the fifty-second meeting of the Committee, scheduled to be held in Libreville from 22 to 26 November.

Collaboration with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations

64. The Special Representative 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 and for ECCAS to continue to work in synergy with regional and international partners.

65. UNOCA and the ECCAS Commission met on several occasions to advance their strategic partnership in support of efforts by ECCAS to prevent conflicts and sustain peace and to promote women's participation in governance and mediation structures and processes, leading to planning and programming, joint country visits and the establishment of gender-sensitive civil society platforms for early warning and mediation.

66. From 19 to 25 August, UNOCA participated in the twelfth edition of the Central Africa Annual Cross-Border Fair in Kye-Ossi, Cameroon, near the borders with Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. The event was organized under the auspices of women's networks and attended by women and youth delegates from all ECCAS member States and the local authorities of Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Participants discussed common cross-border issues and avenues for joint initiatives to enhance conflict prevention and dialogue.

67. From 16 to 21 July, the Special Representative represented the Secretary-General at the thirteenth Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, held in Luanda on 17 July. On the margins of the summit, he met with the President of Angola, the Vice-President of Brazil, the diplomatic corps in Luanda and the United Nations country team.

68. From 26 to 29 October, UNOCA, in cooperation with ECCAS and several United Nations entities, organized a forum on combating hate speech in Central Africa in Douala, Cameroon. Participants included journalists from ECCAS member States. The forum was aimed at raising awareness and building the capacity of the media on the prevention of conflicts related to hate speech in Central Africa. It also contributed to the development of a regional ECCAS strategy against hate speech in Central Africa.

Climate security

69. In close cooperation with the climate security mechanism, United Nations presences in Central Africa and external partners, UNOCA embarked on the implementation of the second phase of its climate security project, which involves an in-depth analysis of key security risks and threats aggravated by climate and environmental changes in the subregion. In that vein, UNOCA conducted a field visit to Cameroon from 8 to 12 November to meet with national and local authorities, civil society organizations and United Nations entities in order to obtain first-hand information on the climate security situation in the country. The preliminary findings of the analysis, with policy recommendations, will be presented at the fifty-second

meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Boko Haram

70. On 29 June, the Special Representative participated, virtually, in the second meeting of the Steering Committee of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region. During the meeting, representatives of the eight regions in the four Lake Chad basin countries affected by the crisis presented their respective territorial action plans for the implementation of the Regional Strategy. The meeting also endorsed recommendations for priority actions in 2021.

71. On 4 and 5 October, the Special Representative participated in the third meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, attended by the Governors of the eight Boko Haram-affected regions of the Lake Chad basin, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Multinational Joint Task Force, the African Union, the European Union and other national and regional stakeholders, including civil society actors and the United Nations. Authorities highlighted humanitarian, peacebuilding and development challenges. In particular, they stressed the increasing surrenders by ex-Boko Haram fighters and the urgent need to support their rehabilitation and reintegration into civilian life. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#) and current conflict dynamics, authorities reiterated their commitment to the effective operationalization of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram.

72. From 15 October to 2 November, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel undertook a joint visit to Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria to assess the impact of the crisis in the Lake Chad basin. The visit was part of advocacy efforts by the United Nations to support countries and people affected by the violent extremism in the region.

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

73. From 29 June to 1 July, a regional workshop was held in Yaoundé for ECCAS member States, which sought, inter alia, to enhance national capacities to ensure synergies in the implementation of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly and relevant global small arms instruments. The workshop was organized jointly by the Government of Cameroon and a Cameroonian civil society organization, with the financial, substantive and technical support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat and in cooperation with UNOCA and ECCAS. Nine member States were represented at the workshop.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

74. On 30 June, the Special Representative for Central Africa gave a briefing to the Peacebuilding Commission during its session on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, ECCAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea also participated. The meeting took stock of ongoing efforts to strengthen maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and encourage further support from the

international community, including for the implementation of the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa.

Transhumance and farmer-herder dynamics

75. From 23 to 25 June, UNOCA, in collaboration with ECCAS, held a workshop on the prevention and resolution of farmer-herder conflicts in Central Africa, in Kinshasa. The workshop was aimed at sensitizing stakeholders about the need for a regional transhumance protocol in Central Africa, with a focus on transhumance-related challenges in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Participants recommended, inter alia, that the regional protocol be complemented by national regulations as well as local conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms.

76. The Peacebuilding Fund approved a \$3.5 million investment in Chad, to be implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme and UNDP, to structure and strengthen local, customary and/or traditional committees for the prevention and management of farmer-herder conflicts; support the local judicial bodies involved in this process; and establish social contracts and compensation plans for victims of such conflicts.

C. Enhancing United Nations coherence and coordination in the subregion

77. On 3 June, the Special Representative convened a meeting with United Nations resident coordinators and heads of several United Nations regional offices in Central Africa. Participants reviewed the situation in Central Africa, peacebuilding activities and the coordination of the responses to COVID-19 across the subregion. On 10 September, UNOCA organized a virtual meeting with United Nations presences in Central Africa, including offices of resident coordinators, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Participants shared views on the political dynamics and security developments in the subregion and discussed the mandate renewal and activities of UNOCA.

78. A mission from the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations of the Secretariat, which had deployed to Libreville from 31 May to 11 June, identified trends, opportunities and challenges related to the rule of law, security institutions and broader governance issues in the subregion. Recommendations were developed and a process initiated to enhance partnership with and support to UNOCA in this regard.

79. On 29 June, UNOCA and UNOWAS held a virtual meeting to discuss the role of the United Nations in enhancing interregional cooperation between Central and West Africa, including support to ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission on joint efforts to address maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. The two offices developed a plan to address transitional security threats in the Lake Chad basin and the Gulf of Guinea. The meeting was followed, on 21 September, by a meeting between UNOCA, UNOWAS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as part of joint efforts to establish a framework of coordination among relevant United Nations entities working on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

80. On 8 July, the Special Representative participated in the second virtual meeting 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, chaired by the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region. Participants at the meeting reviewed and adopted the action plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

81. On 23 August, UNOCA met with the UN-Women West and Central Africa Regional Office. Highlighting the importance of collaboration with ECCAS to advance the gender equality agenda, the two offices reflected on strategies to enhance the empowerment of women and their political participation, including by engaging female leadership and enhancing United Nations coherence and internal coordination.

82. On 15 September, UNOCA met with the UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa. Discussions centred on the role that UNOCA could play to assist ECCAS in mobilizing regional support around the issue of forced displacement in Central Africa.

83. On 22 September, UNOCA, the United Nations Office to the African Union and UNDP met in Addis Ababa to discuss opportunities for cooperation in institutional development on gender equality, women's participation in governance, and women and peace and security, supporting the Department for the Promotion of Gender, Human and Social Development of the ECCAS Commission in the implementation of the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and the national action plans of ECCAS member States.

IV. Observations and recommendations

84. The Central Africa subregion continues to face significant challenges to regional peace, security and stability. I welcome the commitment of ECCAS and States of the subregion to overcoming these challenges. The furthering of the ECCAS institutional reform process and the continued engagement of ECCAS in Chad and the Central African Republic, as well as its support to the electoral process in Sao Tome and Principe, are critical contributions to its overall efforts towards establishing lasting peace and stability in Central Africa.

85. The COVID-19 pandemic has already had far-reaching consequences for the political and socioeconomic stability of the subregion. The resilience of Member States in the face of this unprecedented crisis and their efforts to mitigate its social, economic and political impact are encouraging. As countries of the subregion roll out their vaccination campaigns, international partners should renew their commitment and solidarity and support those efforts. ECCAS member States are encouraged to scale up their efforts to ensure that vaccines are available to all, especially vulnerable populations. Efforts by ECCAS to advance its COVID-19 regional response strategy for Central Africa are welcomed.

86. The deterioration of the security outlook in the subregion is deeply concerning. The expansion of Islamic State West Africa Province in the Lake Chad basin affects the wider region and is of particular concern. I welcome the holding of the third meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum and reiterate the importance of accelerating the implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region to alleviate the suffering of the affected populations, especially the most vulnerable, including women and youth. The United Nations will continue to provide support for the implementation of the Regional Strategy.

87. The Gulf of Guinea has remained the global epicentre of maritime insecurity, which continues to threaten the stability of the subregion. Member States should

collaborate urgently to address this issue in bilateral and multilateral forums and ensure the effective implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture.

88. In the Central African Republic, regional and international efforts to advance the peace process led to the declaration of the unilateral ceasefire by the President of the country. I welcome this significant development, which is in line with the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic adopted by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. I call upon all other parties to respect the ceasefire and renew efforts to advance the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation of 2019. I also call for a coordinated and coherent regional approach to support its implementation with a view to making tangible progress in the peace and reconciliation process in the country. A genuinely inclusive national dialogue is vital to the revitalization of the Political Agreement. I remain concerned by insecurity in border areas and encourage the Central African Republic and its neighbours to foster cross-border security cooperation in support of the implementation of the Political Agreement, including through the full implementation and/or establishment of bilateral joint commissions. I welcome the commitment of the Central African Republic and Chad to resolve their border tensions peacefully and promote bilateral cooperation. 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 and the region, in complement to the good offices and political support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

89. I condemn the continued violence in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon. Despite my earlier calls for a negotiated and peaceful solution to the crisis, violence has increased, resulting in more devastation and human suffering. All parties must unconditionally renounce violence and use dialogue as the only viable means to end the conflict and bring long overdue peace and stability to the two regions. Alleged collusion between separatist armed groups in Cameroon and armed groups active in some neighbouring countries is of particular concern.

90. I welcome progress towards key transition milestones in Chad despite the immense challenges facing the country. I commend the Chadian transitional authorities for their outreach to the political opposition and politico-military groups, and encourage all stakeholders to participate in the forthcoming inclusive national dialogue. I encourage the transitional authorities to complete the transition within the stipulated 18-month time frame and not partake in the elections concluding the transition. I encourage all international stakeholders to support national and regional efforts aimed at ensuring a peaceful and inclusive transition towards a return to constitutional order, as well as lasting peace in the country and the region. The United Nations will continue to work with the African Union, ECCAS and other partners to assist the transitional authorities and the people of Chad in setting the course for sustainable peace and stability.

91. The successful completion of the presidential election in Sao Tome and Principe is encouraging. It marks an important democratic milestone for the country, which has been a role model for the peaceful transfer of power in Central Africa. The United Nations stands ready to further its collaboration with the President and the Government as the country continues to consolidate its democratic gains and national unity. Authorities are encouraged to accelerate efforts towards enhancing the participation of women in all aspects of the political and public life.

92. Despite being important dividends of peace, elections continue to be a source of tension in Central Africa. As the region enters another electoral cycle, Member States should promote consensual electoral governance and reforms, leading to credible, transparent and inclusive elections. Member States are encouraged to work with

ECCAS and UNOCA towards the adoption of a protocol on electoral governance, in line with the Declaration on democratic and peaceful elections as a means of strengthening stability and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Central Africa. Member States should also empower and fully associate women, youth and civil society organizations in conflict prevention, mediation and dialogue mechanisms and processes.

93. I would like to express my appreciation to the Governments of the subregion, the African Union, ECCAS, CEMAC, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and other regional and subregional institutions for their continued collaboration with UNOCA. I also wish to express my appreciation 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 grateful to the Government and people of Gabon for their generous hospitality and support to 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 to and cooperation with UNOCA.

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