



# Security Council

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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 of the President of the Security Council dated 11 June 2015 ([S/PRST/2015/12](#)), 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 developments in the Central African subregion, since my previous report, dated 14 May 2015 ([S/2015/339](#)), offers an update on progress in the implementation of the mandate of UNOCA, 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

2. Since my last report, the political environment in the subregion has continued to be dominated by preparations for elections and national dialogues, the impact of the crisis in the Central African Republic and the threat posed by Boko Haram, as well as cross-cutting and security issues.

3. On 25 May, the sixteenth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) took place in N'Djaména. The Assembly elected President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon as the Community's new chair and successor to President Idriss Déby Itno of Chad. Rwanda was readmitted as a member State of ECCAS.

#### Elections and national dialogues

4. At the third Emergency Summit of Heads of State held in Dar es Salaam on 6 July, the East African Community (EAC) issued a communiqué recommending the designation of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda as facilitator for the inter-Burundian dialogue, the postponement of the presidential election in Burundi,



the formation of a government of national unity and the commitment of all parties to respect the Arusha Agreement and refrain from amending the constitution.

5. The municipal and legislative elections held on 29 June and the presidential election held on 21 July in Burundi took place in a very tense and polarized environment that was not conducive to an inclusive, free and credible electoral process, despite the adequate logistical preparations by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante. The ruling party, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy — Forces for the Defence of Democracy, won 77 out of 100 parliamentary seats. President Nkurunziza was re-elected. On 1 August, opposition parties, with the exception of the Amizero y'Abarundi coalition, led by Agathon Rwasa, met in Addis Ababa and established the Conseil national pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi et de la restauration de l'état de droit. On 24 August, a new Government was formed, which included five members of Amizero y'Abarundi. Mr. Rwasa, who had been opposed to President Nkurunziza's third term, was elected Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

6. A number of political assassinations targeting high-profile members of the ruling party, the opposition, Burundian defence and security forces and civil society took place during the reporting period, which exacerbated political divisions in the country and made the prospect of a dialogue increasingly elusive. The Government of Burundi established a National Commission for Inter-Burundian Dialogue in October; however, the Commission has done little to relieve tensions. On 17 October, the African Union Peace and Security Council expressed its deep concern over the continuing political impasse in Burundi and urged the resumption of President Museveni's facilitation on behalf of EAC. There has been no progress on the holding of a national dialogue, and while a Government was formed, many key opposition politicians remain in exile. In the meantime, the situation remains highly volatile.

7. On 2 October, President Paul Biya of Cameroon reshuffled the Government while retaining Prime Minister Philemon Yang, a move that had been widely anticipated following the local and legislative elections held in 2013 and the deterioration of the economic and security situations. Seventeen new Ministers, including three women, were appointed.

8. In Chad, the Government reshuffled the cabinet on 24 August, and split the Ministry of Interior and Public Service. The Government took a number of initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue with political actors, in particular within the Cadre national de dialogue politique (CNDP). On 12 September, some 30 political parties issued a joint statement to protest against repeated summons of opposition leaders by the police. On 26 October, biometric voter registration started throughout Chad and will cover nearly 6 million voters in 8,092 centres until 9 December.

9. In the Republic of the Congo, President Denis Sassou Nguesso convened a national dialogue, from 13 to 17 July, on the revision of the 2002 constitution. Opposition parties under the umbrella of the Front républicain pour le respect de l'ordre constitutionnel et l'alternance démocratique and the Initiative pour la démocratie congolaise refused to participate. From 26 to 29 July, an alternative dialogue bringing together nearly 600 participants, mainly from opposition parties, opposed any constitutional amendment. On 10 August, a reshuffle of the government resulted in the departure of two ministers opposed to a constitutional amendment. On 22 September, President Sassou Nguesso announced his intention to convene a referendum on a new constitution, which took place on 25 October. On 6 November,

President Sassou Nguesso promulgated the new constitution after the Constitutional Court confirmed that the voter turnout rate was 71.2 per cent, with 94.3 per cent in favour of the new constitution. On 7 November, the opposition coalitions rejected the new constitution and called for civil disobedience. They also called on the international community, including the United Nations, to facilitate dialogue with the Government.

10. On 20 October, the opposition had planned rallies in Brazzaville and Dolisie. Hours before the rallies were due to begin, the President's office issued a broadcast message on radio and television, calling for people to return to work and banning public gatherings. Mobile Internet services, text messages and the Radio France International channel were shut down in Brazzaville until 3 November. The Government confirmed that there were four deaths as a result of clashes between the protestors and security forces, as well as several injuries, some serious. On 21 October, some opposition leaders were briefly detained, then kept under de facto house arrest until 3 November.

11. On 9 November, President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced the holding of a national dialogue by the end of November. Opposition leaders agreed on the principle of a dialogue only if it does not lead to a "glissement" for the November 2016 legislative and presidential elections. Some opposition leaders have also indicated that they would take part in the dialogue only if it was facilitated by an international mediator. President Kabila has indicated that his preferred option would be for Congolese stakeholders to reach consensus among themselves without the involvement of any external actor; he noted, however, that the question of international facilitation remained open for discussion. On 8 September, a ruling from the Constitutional Court urged the Government to take exceptional measures to establish transitional leadership for the newly created provinces and the National Independent Electoral Commission to organize the election of governors before any other voting. On 29 October, President Kabila, acting on the ruling of the Court appointed Special Commissioners to administer 21 of the 26 new provinces, a move that was criticized by the opposition, as the executive branch of the provinces should have emanated from gubernatorial elections, for which no dates have yet been set. A new bureau of the Electoral Commission is being established, following the resignation of the Commission's president and vice-president. The group of seven, a group of seven opposition parties that were members of the presidential majority, was expelled from the majority on 16 September following a letter the group sent to President Kabila calling for the respect of the constitution and the electoral calendar.

12. In Equatorial Guinea, the Government closed the country's land borders from 4 to 6 November in the run-up to the third Extraordinary Congress of the ruling Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE) in Bata from 10 to 12 November. PDGE nominated President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo as its candidate for the 2016 presidential elections.

13. In Gabon, on 27 June, members of the ruling Parti démocratique gabonais (PDG), including 20 members of Parliament and former Ministers, launched a new movement called Héritage et modernité, and called for an extraordinary congress to hold a dialogue within PDG. The main opposition coalition, the Front union de l'opposition pour l'alternance, experienced internal tensions over the nomination of a sole candidate for the 2016 presidential elections. The reactivated Conseil national de la démocratie, an advisory body tasked with providing institutional space for political

dialogue, held its first and second plenary sessions from 29 July to 6 August, and from 29 October to 7 November, respectively. The Front union de l'opposition pour l'alternance coalition boycotted the proceedings of the established dialogue mechanism. Recommendations submitted to the Parliament and the Government included the reinstatement of presidential term limits, two-round presidential and legislative elections and an age limit of 80 years for presidential candidates; the holding of an inclusive national dialogue; and the establishment of the Conseil national de la démocratie as a constitutionally mandated institution.

14. On 8 August, by-elections for legislative and senatorial seats were held in three constituencies in Gabon. PDG won one senatorial seat, while the opposition Union nationale won one senatorial and one legislative seat. On 11 September, President Bongo Ondimba reshuffled the Government, while retaining Prime Minister Daniel Ona Ondo in office. The revision of the electoral roll for the 2016 presidential election commenced on 30 October and will last until 13 December.

15. In Rwanda, the Lower House of Parliament unanimously approved the draft revised constitution, which shortens presidential terms from seven to five years and maintains term limits, but removes existing ones for the serving President. The vote followed a nationwide popular consultation in favour of the reforms. On 5 June, in an attempt to block Parliament's move, the opposition Democratic Green Party filed a lawsuit in the Supreme Court, which was rejected on 8 October. The Senate will review the draft constitution before submission to a referendum.

### **Central African Republic**

16. In the Central African Republic, violence broke out again on 26 September in Bangui, resulting in 77 dead and 414 injured, according to government sources. Attacks also targeted the personnel and premises of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in that country (MINUSCA), as well as humanitarian personnel. Members of the Central African armed forces were allegedly involved in the escape of 689 prisoners from the Ngaragba prison on 28 September. The international community widely condemned this latest attempt to destabilize the country, vowing to provide support to the Transitional Authority and warning that robust action would be taken against potential spoilers and that they would be brought to justice. Despite the resignations of the Vice-President and the President of the National Electoral Authority, preparations for the constitutional referendum and combined presidential and legislative elections progressed under the leadership of a new National Electoral Authority bureau, which was designated on 28 October. By 16 November, when voter registration closed, more than 1,980,000 voters, representing approximately 95 per cent of the estimated electorate, were registered; however, the out-of-country voter registration of Central African refugees and diaspora progressed slowly, with approximately 47,700 refugees, or 24 per cent of the estimated refugee electorate of 198,000 registered, raising concerns about the inclusiveness of the electoral process. On 9 November, the new electoral calendar was released, announcing the holding of the constitutional referendum on 13 December, the first round of Presidential elections on 27 December and the second round on 31 January 2016.

17. The international mediation, composed of the Republic of the Congo, the African Union and the United Nations, has continued to support national authorities in their efforts to restore constitutional order.

18. On 25 November, an Extraordinary Summit of ECCAS Heads of State and Government took place in Libreville. Regional leaders endorsed the revised electoral calendar.

### **Boko Haram**

19. During the reporting period, the Boko Haram terrorist group perpetrated a series of deadly attacks in Cameroon and Chad. On 15 June, two suicide bombers attacked the police headquarters and the police academy in N'Djaména, killing 34 people and wounding over 100 others. On 11 July, a suicide bomber killed 15 people and wounded over 80 others at the central market in N'Djaména. In July, a series of suicide bombings in the towns of Fotokol and Maroua in the Far North Region of Cameroon killed at least 40 people and injured more than 100. In September, the towns of Kerawa, Kolofata and Mora suffered a number of suicide bombings, which killed at least 40 people and injured over 150. On 10 October, five suicide bombers killed at least 36 people and wounded nearly 50 in the town of Baga Sola in the Lake Chad area. Several other attacks occurred in the Far North Region of Cameroon, in particular close to the border with Nigeria, as well as in the Lake Chad area of Chad, particularly on isolated villages.

20. In response, the authorities in both countries took measures to prevent suicide bombings. The Cameroonian and Chadian security forces frequently clashed with Boko Haram elements, resulting in fatalities and casualties on both sides. On 20 May, the Parliament of Chad voted to extend indefinitely the mandate of the Chadian troops conducting counter-Boko Haram operations in Cameroon and Nigeria. On 9 November, the Government of Chad declared a state of emergency in the Lake Chad region, with immediate effect, granting the authorities the ability to search and monitor residents in the region.

21. On 25 May, the Headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force was officially inaugurated in N'Djaména. My Special Representatives for Central and West Africa attended the ceremony.

22. On 4 June, President Muhamad Buhari of Nigeria met with President Déby Itno in Chad. President Buhari also travelled to Cameroon from 29 to 30 July to meet with President Biya. The leaders discussed ways to strengthen cooperation against Boko Haram. On 11 June, President Déby Itno and the Minister of Defence of Cameroon attended a summit of Heads of State of the member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin in Abuja. The summit approved the concept of operations for the Multinational Joint Task Force; authorized the immediate deployment of funds for the Task Force headquarters; approved the deployment of national contingents under the operational command of the Task Force Commander; requested the African Union to provide operational support to the Task Force and mobilize resources; and adopted an emergency development plan for the Lake Chad Basin. In addition, the summit agreed that Nigeria would designate a Commander for the regional force for the entire duration of the mission, while Cameroon would designate a rotating Deputy Force Commander and Chad would designate a rotating Chief of Staff. On 22 August, the Chief of Staff of the armed forces of the member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin finalized in N'Djaména the deployment plan of the Task Force. The joint summit of Heads of State of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), originally

scheduled to have taken place in Malabo on 15 October to discuss Boko Haram, has been postponed sine die.

23. On 12 October, approximately 90 military personnel of the United States of America began deploying to Cameroon with the consent of the Government to conduct airborne intelligence gathering, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in the region. The total number of military personnel of the United States to be deployed to Cameroon is anticipated to be up to approximately 300.

#### **Lord's Resistance Army**

24. LRA continued to pose a regional security threat, in particular in the eastern part of the Central African Republic and the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The group survived by exploiting the absence of State authority, poor infrastructure, porous borders and lack of inter-state coordination, as well as by engaging in opportunistic alliances with other armed groups and illicit trade, including in ivory, diamonds and gold.

25. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the first half of 2015, LRA was responsible for 131 attacks, 19 deaths and 317 abductions. Overall, while the number of attacks and deaths has remained constant since the launch of the United Nations regional strategy in 2012, the number of abductions, usually short-term, continues to increase steadily.

26. In the eastern part of the Central African Republic, LRA reportedly concentrated its operations along the border between the Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures, where attacks have increased at mining sites in the vicinities of Yalinga and Nzako towns. Sporadic attacks continued in the Haut Mbomou prefectures near the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo while LRA activity was also reported around Sam Ouandja, close to the border with the Sudan. In the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, attacks were carried out on the Dangu-Duru, Dangu-Bangadi, Bangadi-Niangara, Bangadi-Doruma, Dangu-Faradje and Ango-Banda axes, as well as in the Azande hunting domain in Garamba National Park in the Haut and Bas-Uélé districts of the Orientale Province.

27. On 18 May, the African Union Peace and Security Council renewed the mandate of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of LRA for another year. Notably, the Peace and Security Council: (a) urged the members of the Initiative to remain committed to it, including by enhancing logistical support to their respective contingents; (b) stressed the need for closer operational coordination between the African Union Regional Task Force and relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations; and (c) urged the Security Council to take the necessary measures, including adjusting the mandates of the relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, to facilitate the provision by these operations, within capabilities, of effective support to the Initiative. The Peace and Security Council also called for regular meetings of the Joint Coordination Mechanism, the oversight body of the Regional Task Force, which has not met since March 2014.

28. On 10 September, Pre-Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court terminated proceedings against former LRA commander Okot Odhiambo, following confirmation of his death. Odhiambo was reportedly killed in the Central African Republic during a battle with the Uganda People's Defence Force. On 20 March, a body was exhumed from a burial site alleged to be that of Odhiambo and

transported to Kampala. In June, following DNA tests, the Office of the Prosecutor conclusively confirmed that the body exhumed was that of Odhiambo. The leader of LRA, Joseph Kony, and his deputy, Vincent Otti, are still at large.

29. From 12 to 15 September, the African Union Special Envoy for LRA Issues, Lt. General (Rtd.) Jackson Tuwei, visited Khartoum pursuant to an invitation by the Government of the Sudan to the African Union Commission and the African Union Peace and Security Council, which was reported to the Security Council on 14 May 2014 (S/2014/345). He held discussions with senior Sudanese officials, including on the reported presence of LRA in Kafia Kingi.

30. On 23 October, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, reauthorized for an additional year Operation Observant Compass, which supports the Regional Task Force.

31. On 28 October, following consultations with the Ugandan authorities, the Presidency of the International Criminal Court decided that the confirmation of charges hearing in the case concerning LRA commander Dominic Ongwen, scheduled for 21 January 2016, would be held at the seat of the Court at The Hague, Netherlands.

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

32. During the reporting period, seven incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea were reported by the International Maritime Organization. Little progress was achieved in the implementation of the decisions of the June 2013 Yaoundé summit, including the operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre. The lack of logistical and financial resources to implement the agreed roadmap remained a challenge.

33. From 7 to 9 October, the International Conference on Maritime and Energy Security in the Gulf of Guinea was held in Luanda, bringing together some 300 public and private representatives from the maritime and energy sectors from over 50 countries. It aimed at sharing international best practices in order to improve regional security coordination, strengthen public-private security partnerships, and protect the marine and maritime economy in the Gulf of Guinea. The conference was co-organized by the Governments of Angola, Italy and the United States.

34. The African Union Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security and Development for Africa, scheduled to be held in Lomé, from 2 to 7 November, was postponed.

#### **Poaching and the illicit trafficking in wildlife and natural resources**

35. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in partnership with the Central African Forest Commission, organized the first Regional Workshop of Central African States on strengthening border controls to address illicit wildlife and forest crime, in Brazzaville, from 31 August to 2 September. The workshop brought together representatives and experts from law enforcement forces and judiciary of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon, as well as ECCAS, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization and non-governmental organizations. The workshop built on the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa,

which was adopted in Brazzaville on 30 April. It was organized in line with General Assembly resolution 69/314 of 30 July 2015 on “Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife”.

## **B. Humanitarian developments**

36. As of November, Boko Haram-related violence in the Lake Chad Basin region had displaced over 2.5 million people, including 1.5 million children. In Chad’s southern Lake region, 60,000 people were internally displaced, while 7,000 Nigerians sought refuge. The humanitarian community expressed concern about the Government’s plan to relocate some of the internally displaced and all of the refugees to an unknown location. The United Nations humanitarian country team advocated for the relocation to be voluntary and close to host communities so that the displaced communities would benefit from protection and access to essential services. Chad also hosted hundreds of thousands of other refugees as well as returnees from neighbouring countries. Cameroon hosted 62,000 Nigerian refugees and some 92,000 people were displaced internally in the Far North Region. Cameroon also hosted another 250,000 refugees, mostly from the Central African Republic. While countries of the region hosted significant populations of refugees and internally displaced persons, concerns were also raised about the treatment of refugees and internally displaced persons, with reported cases of denial of access or deportations by host countries.

37. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, food insecurity has increased sharply in recent months, as of November 2015 affecting 2 million people, up from 900,000 earlier this year. Malnutrition rates crossed the emergency threshold with severe acute malnutrition at 2.2 per cent. A cholera outbreak in the Far North and North Regions in July affected 23 people, with two deaths. The livelihoods of populations in the Lake Chad region were significantly affected by Boko Haram violence over the last six months. Two thirds of the population in the region suffered either displacement, loss of employment, insecurity and violence, border closure, inflation or the unavailability of food in markets. The majority of households had poor or limited food consumption, with many resorting to survival strategies to access food. Cameroon hosted 256,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and 62,000 from Nigeria, but did not commensurate support from the international community with regional refugee plans for the Central African Republic and Nigeria and remaining underfunded at less than 40 per cent.

38. The political crisis in Burundi had significant humanitarian consequences. As of November, 213,429 Burundian refugees had fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. The Inter-Agency Regional Refugee Response Plan for Burundian refugees remained underfunded at 34 per cent. The impact of the crisis is also expected to become more visible inside Burundi, given the deteriorating socioeconomic situation. There are already concerns over protection, food security, health and nutrition in some parts of the country.

39. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, humanitarian needs remained acute. A total of 7 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.7 million internally displaced persons. The country hosted 249,000 refugees from Rwanda, the Central African Republic and Burundi, while there were over 551,000

Congolese refugees living in protracted exile in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Kenya, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

40. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, by the end of October, over 180,000 people remained internally displaced in LRA-affected areas, including 162,000 persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 18,000 in the Central African Republic. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan hosted 9,200 and 10,200 refugees, respectively, from neighbouring countries in LRA-affected areas.

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

41. The human rights situation in the region has greatly deteriorated as a result of the activities of armed groups, including the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka in the Central African Republic, as well as Boko Haram in Cameroon and Chad. The recent elections in Burundi also triggered serious human rights violations.

42. Boko Haram continued to kill and maim civilians, primarily in suicide attacks, to abduct children and women and to loot and burn villages in Cameroon and Chad. On 29 August, 10 Boko Haram fighters were executed by firing squad, one day after being sentenced to death by the Criminal Court of N'Djaména over their role in the twin attacks in the capital in June. The three-day trial, the first concerning Boko Haram in Chad, was expedited and moved to a secret location due to security reasons. Chad reinstated the death penalty for cases related to terrorism on 5 August, six months after it had been abolished.

43. Concerns were also raised over alleged human rights violations committed by security forces from Cameroon and Chad during counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram. Those violations include the arbitrary arrest and detention of Boko Haram suspects, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a report on violations and abuses committed by Boko Haram and the impact on human rights in the affected countries ([A/HRC/30/67](#)) and stressed accountability for all violations by all parties.

44. As of 23 October, OHCHR registered 198 killings, nearly 100 cases of torture, and hundreds of cases of arbitrary arrest and detention in Burundi. In many cases, people were released after a few days; in others they were held in pretrial detention for months, far beyond the maximum duration allowed by national and international law. Several human rights defenders and media professionals suffered threats and intimidation, and many fled the country.

45. The recent upsurge of violence in the Central African Republic led to a rise of acts of intercommunal violence, targeted killings of civilians and the displacement of thousands. Many houses were burned, and at least two churches and one mosque were vandalized and destroyed.

### **D. Socioeconomic trends**

46. On 17 July, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) concluded the annual discussions on Common Policies and Challenges of Member

Countries with the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). In its press release, IMF assessed that annual growth in 2015 was projected to slow down to 2.8 per cent from 4.7 per cent in 2014, mostly because of lower public investment. The regional fiscal deficit was projected to deteriorate to 5.7 per cent in 2015 from 5 per cent in 2014. The current account deficit was expected to widen from 3.8 per cent of gross domestic product to 5.8 per cent in 2015, as oil exports were expected to decline and investment-related imports to remain significant.

47. IMF further noted that CEMAC countries had reacted differently to the new economic context, marked by a sharp fall in oil prices and Boko Haram-related trade and economic disruption and increased spending on security, with most countries scaling back their spending plans by reducing public investment and limiting current expenditure. All countries had also sought advances from the regional central bank. As a result of these and other debt-related developments, regional public debt was rising. Oil production was projected to start falling after 2017, putting the burden of ensuring macroeconomic sustainability on boosting non-oil revenue, prudent public spending and improving the competitiveness of the non-oil economy.

48. For its part, the Executive Board of the Bank of Central African States, which met in Yaoundé on 28 September, revised its growth forecast for the CEMAC area to 2.5 per cent (from 2.8 per cent) owing to decreasing oil prices and increasing security costs. The Board recommended rationalizing budgetary spending, diversifying economic activities and deepening regional integration.

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

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

49. During the reporting period, my Special Representative, Abdoulaye Bathily, remained engaged with key stakeholders in order to help prevent conflict and promote regional peace and security. He also undertook a number of country-specific visits.

##### **Burundi**

50. On 21 June, I dispatched Mr. Bathily to Bujumbura to facilitate dialogue with a view to ensuring that the conditions for the holding of peaceful, inclusive, free and fair elections were met prior to the holding of elections.

51. The Joint International Facilitation Team held meetings from 23 to 26 June with Burundian stakeholders. The Government attended one session of the inter-Burundian dialogue, while the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy and other allied parties did not attend the meetings. On 25 June, the Facilitation Team proposed that the local, legislative and presidential elections should be postponed by a month. While the proposal was approved by the opposition parties, the Government rejected the principle of postponing the elections.

52. On 6 July in Dar es Salaam, my Special Representative participated in the third Emergency Meeting of the Ministers of the EAC on the situation in Burundi. He also held consultations with the EAC Chair, President Jakaya Kikwete of the United Republic of Tanzania, to emphasize the need for dialogue as a precondition for the holding of credible and peaceful elections in Burundi. He travelled to Kigali

from 4 to 7 August and from 4 to 6 September to meet with President Paul Kagamé and senior government officials. He also extended United Nations support to the EAC high-level facilitator on the Burundi crisis, during a meeting with his Minister of Defence in Kampala on 3 September.

### **Central African Republic**

53. 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 MINUSCA.

54. On the margins of the annual meetings of the African Development Bank, held in Abidjan from 27 to 30 May, my Special Representative held bilateral consultations with a number of potential donors. He stressed that funding for the timely conclusion of the transition was urgently needed. On 27 July, he attended the eighth International Contact Group meeting on the Central African Republic, which took place in Addis Ababa, where he highlighted that the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation was a significant milestone in the peace process and called for the implementation of the Forum's recommendations. He underscored the urgent need to mobilize resources for the effective implementation of the outstanding elements in the peace process, namely disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and elections. On 1 October, on the margins of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, I convened a high-level summit on the situation in the Central African Republic to garner financial, technical and political support for the implementation of the most critical priority outcomes of the Bangui Forum.

55. My Special Representative maintained regular contacts with regional leaders in order to keep them engaged in the peace process in the Central African Republic. In particular, he held regular consultations with President Sassou Nguesso, the ECCAS-appointed international mediator on the crisis in the Central African Republic. He also held regular meetings with the former and current Chairpersons of ECCAS.

56. During the reporting period, my Special Representative visited the Central African Republic three times to engage with all relevant stakeholders. My Special Representative has contributed to putting the electoral process on the fast track and to reducing tensions around contentious matters.

### **Chad**

57. From 13 to 15 August in N'Djaména, my Special Representative exchanged views with political stakeholders, including President Déby Itno and opposition leader Saleh Kebzabo to discuss the situation in the country in the context of the upcoming elections and Chad's military engagement against Boko Haram. He reiterated my calls to them to refrain from violence and engage in an inclusive and constructive political dialogue and urged them to take the necessary measures to preserve peace and stability in the country. He also met with CNDP to examine preparations for the elections and the need for dialogue. From 18 October to 1 November, the Department of Political Affairs and UNOCA dispatched a high-level consultant to N'Djaména to identify entry points and recommendations for the facilitation and promotion of a useful and preventative political dialogue process.

**Gabon**

58. My Special Representative continued his efforts to defuse election-related tensions by encouraging Gabonese political actors to engage in constructive dialogue, as I have done, particularly following the political tensions that arose in the aftermath of the death of the opposition leader, André Mba Obame, and social tensions triggered by the fall in oil prices. In that regard, he maintained regular contacts with key government officials as well as members of the ruling party and the opposition. He also maintained contact with civil society and the diplomatic community.

**Republic of the Congo**

59. During the reporting period, my Special Representative travelled to the Republic of the Congo five times — before, during and after the constitutional referendum — to meet with President Sassou Nguesso and other stakeholders, including leaders of the opposition.

60. Following the sudden rise of tensions ahead of the referendum, my Special Representative dispatched his chief political affairs officer to Brazzaville to monitor developments on the ground, establish communication channels with all stakeholders and ensure that Headquarters was constantly updated. My Special Representative himself returned to the country and pursued consultations, advocating in particular for the release of the detained opposition leaders and building consensus around issues of common concern, such as electoral governance and dialogue. This has greatly contributed to defuse tensions and led the parties to show restraint. On 7 November, my Special Representative travelled back to the Republic of the Congo on a follow-up visit, during which he met with President Sassou Nguesso, the opposition parties and civil society organizations to pave the way towards a political dialogue on electoral governance.

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

61. UNOCA, in its capacity as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), organized the fortieth ministerial meeting of the Committee, held in Luanda from 1 to 5 June. The Committee reviewed the overall political and security situation in Central Africa, including the impact of Boko Haram on Cameroon and Chad, the transition in the Central African Republic, the situation in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the activities of armed groups, as well as the humanitarian situation resulting from the above-mentioned crises. The Committee examined ongoing initiatives related to disarmament, poaching and the illicit wildlife trade, the development of the integrated strategy on counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons, efforts to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, and human rights issues.

62. The Committee adopted two declarations, expressing its solidarity regarding the resolution of the crises in Burundi and the Central African Republic. The Committee welcomed the proposal of the Government of Gabon to host the forty-first meeting of the Committee, scheduled to take place in Libreville from 23 to 27 November.

## **Elections**

63. From 7 to 9 September, UNOCA, in collaboration with MINUSCA and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, organized in Bangui a workshop on the role of media in the conduct and promotion of peaceful electoral processes. Central African journalists endorsed the “Code of Conduct for media and journalists during the electoral period in Central Africa”, which had been adopted during a regional workshop held in Douala, Cameroon, from 6 to 8 May. My Special Representative, who chaired the closing ceremony, welcomed this commitment and stressed that civic responsibility was useful in building democracy and peace.

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

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

64. My Special Representative attended the twenty-fifth summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Johannesburg, South Africa, which took place from 13 to 15 June. He participated in high-level meetings in the subregion relevant to the mandate of UNOCA, including the above-mentioned ECCAS Summit of Heads of State and Government and the high-level retreat of Special Envoys and Mediators, which took place in Windhoek on 20 and 21 October. My Special Representative met with the ECCAS Secretary-General regularly to discuss the situation in the region and UNOCA support to ECCAS.

65. On 28 August and 25 September, my Special Representative met with the Secretary-General of the International Organisation La Francophonie (OIF) and briefed her on the mandate of UNOCA and the ongoing challenges in the subregion.

### **Mediation**

66. With operational expertise provided by the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, UNOCA continued its collaboration with ECCAS, which proposed, in a workshop held in Yaoundé from 21 to 23 July, a set of options for the creation of a “Committee of the Wise” on institutional, legal, financial and operational issues.

### **Boko Haram**

67. From 3 to 5 June, UNOCA participated, as an observer, in an extraordinary meeting of the ECCAS Defence and Security Commission in Yaoundé, to streamline support to Chad and Cameroon in their fight against Boko Haram through the development of an action plan pursuant to the Yaoundé Declaration of 16 February 2015 of the Council for Peace and Security of Central Africa.

68. From 11 to 13 August, my Special Representative held meetings in Yaoundé with Cameroonian authorities on Boko Haram. From 13 to 15 August, in N’Djaména, he met with President Déby Itno and the Minister of Defence of Chad. He encouraged a holistic approach to the threat posed by Boko Haram, including by addressing the conditions conducive to its activities and in compliance with international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

**Integrated subregional strategy on counter-terrorism and small arms**

69. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, UNOCA and the Government of Gabon organized two workshops in Libreville: one on the financing of terrorism in Central Africa from 19 to 21 May and another on criminal justice responses to terrorism and on the validation of a draft regional strategy and plan of action on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, from 29 September to 2 October. The latter was the last in a series of workshops that had emerged from the implementation of the road map on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons that was adopted in Bangui at the thirty-third ministerial meeting of UNSAC in December 2011. The workshop concluded with the adoption, at the expert level, of a draft subregional strategy and draft plan of action on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. It is expected that the strategy and plan of action will be endorsed at the ministerial level during the forty-first meeting of UNSAC.

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

70. My Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy for LRA Issues opened the biannual meeting of LRA focal points, held on 8 and 9 September in Entebbe, Uganda. The meeting was attended by focal points from the African Union, ECCAS, United Nations entities, bilateral government partners, non-governmental organizations, and civil society from LRA-affected areas. For the first time, the countries contributing troops to the Regional Task Force participated in the meeting. Discussions centred on a number of key long-standing issues, including the sustainability of the Task Force and United Nations support thereto, and the structural lack of funding for reintegration and early recovery programming in LRA-affected areas. Many participants noted that the strategy could benefit from a review in light of changing circumstances, competing priorities and dwindling resources.

71. From 18 to 19 November, my Special Representative and the African Union Special Envoy on LRA conducted a joint diplomatic mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**(a) Operationalization of the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army**

72. My Special Representative continued to advocate for increased support to the Regional Task Force with African Union officials as well as with relevant partners. He also continued to engage troop-contributing countries to encourage them to remain committed to the Task Force. On 3 September, my Special Representative met in Kampala with the Minister of Defence of Uganda, who pointed out that country's resource constraints and called for increased international support to the Regional Task Force. On 8 September in Entebbe, my Special Representative, the African Union Special Envoy for LRA Issues and my Deputy Special Representative for Operations and Rule of Law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, met with General Bahingwa of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) to discuss the contribution of the FARDC to the Task Force as well as cooperation between the FARDC contingent of the Regional Task Force and MONUSCO in keeping with Security Council resolution 2211 (2015).

73. On 22 May, MONUSCO established the Northern Sector covering Haut and Bas-Uélé districts with the view to improving coordination and cooperation between MONUSCO and the FARDC contingent of the Regional Task Force. The Northern Sector's headquarters is based in Dungu. Two Mobile Operational Bases were established in Nagero, Garamba National Park, from 10 to 25 July and 14 to 17 September.

74. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) continued to provide logistical support, including access to United Nations flights, information technology assistance, vehicle maintenance and medical support, to staff of the headquarters of the Regional Task Force in Yambio. UNMISS also regularly exchanged information with the Task Force. In line with Security Council resolution 2217 (2015), MINUSCA began enhancing its operational coordination with the Regional Task Force, including through the deployment of 30 troops to Obo.

**(b) Protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance**

75. During the reporting period, MINUSCA began to patrol LRA-affected areas, including Obo, Zemio, Rafai, Bangassou and Yalinga. Early warning systems have been playing a critical role in empowering communities to better protect themselves in the absence of adequate State authority in LRA-affected areas in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In those areas, humanitarian assistance continued to decrease as donor attention shifted to other parts of both countries.

**(c) Disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration**

76. The Regional Task Force, supported by the United States Special Forces of Operation Observant Compass, as well as MONUSCO and non-governmental organizations, continued to actively encourage LRA defections. LRA activity in vast, unpopulated and hard-to-access areas had an adverse impact on the effectiveness of defection messaging. According to LRA Crisis Tracker, there have been only 10 long-term (at least six months) returnees during the reporting period. LRA elements face challenges in defecting, including fear of reprisal stemming from Joseph Kony's propaganda and the alleged lack of clarity in Uganda's amnesty laws. During the reporting period, MONUSCO processed 48 LRA returnees, including six fighters.

77. During the last meeting of LRA focal points, participants agreed on the need to update and harmonize the relevant disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration Standard Operating Procedures. Reintegration programming for LRA returnees, including vocational training and psychosocial support, as well as host communities continued to be severely underfunded, owing in part to the low number of LRA returnees.

**(d) Long-term development and peacebuilding support**

78. The stabilization and rehabilitation of LRA-affected areas remains a daunting task. Those areas, in addition to other areas in LRA-affected countries, have historically experienced underdevelopment and conflict. Within existing frameworks and faced with dwindling resources and competing priorities, United Nations entities continued activities to facilitate the establishment of State authority and the rule of

law, the promotion and protection of human rights, the rehabilitation of key infrastructure, in particular roads and bridges and the improvement of livelihoods.

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

79. From 17 to 18 May, UNOCA hosted the third meeting of United Nations presences in Central Africa. My Special Representative for the Central African Republic, the United Nations Resident Coordinators/United Nations Development Programme country directors from six Central African countries, representatives from the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel, the United Nations Office to the African Union, UNODC, the World Health Organization and the Department of Political Affairs undertook a collective analysis and developed a shared understanding of regional peace and security challenges in Central Africa. A one-day special session was devoted to electoral processes and the prevention of election-related violence. Participants adopted a set of recommendations for promoting stability and democracy in Central Africa and increasing coherence and coordination of the United Nations in this regard.

80. On 16 and 17 November, in Durban, South Africa, my Special Representative participated in the meeting organized jointly by the Peacebuilding Support Office and ACCORD on the theme “Enhancing the inclusivity and accountability of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund support”.

## **IV. Observations and recommendations**

81. I remain deeply concerned about the continuing attacks by Boko Haram and their destabilizing impact on the Lake Chad Basin region, including reported violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by the group. Efforts by regional and subregional actors to address this threat should be in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. Following the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force headquarters in N’Djaména, I call on the international community to support its full operationalisation through the mobilization of requisite political, logistical, and financial support and the provision of necessary expertise. I encourage the concerned governments to address the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency in a holistic and integrated manner, including with regard to human rights. In this connection, I encourage ECCAS and ECOWAS to hold the planned Summit of Heads of State without further delay. My Special Representatives to Central and West Africa, as well as the United Nations country teams in the region, stand ready to support those efforts.

82. The continuing political crisis and instances of politically motivated violence in Burundi give rise to serious concern, particularly because of their human rights implications and significant humanitarian consequences. I urge the Government of Burundi to expedite investigations and judicial proceedings against individuals responsible for human rights violations. I also call for the resumption of an inclusive political dialogue without further delay. The United Nations will continue to support the search for a peaceful solution to the challenges facing Burundi.

83. Growing political tensions and violence in a number of countries in Central Africa is a stark reminder that the question of constitutions and elections, notably presidential elections, continues to represent an important challenge to peace and stability in the subregion. My Special Representative will continue to work with all stakeholders to defuse tensions early and prevent the escalation of violence.

84. The situation in the Central African Republic is worrying. The latest cycle of violence, which began on 26 September, has resulted in further hardship for the population and additional delays in the electoral calendar. It is critical that the individuals responsible for the most recent violence, and their sponsors, are brought to justice. I remain concerned about the slow pace of implementation of the recommendations of the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation. It is important that the efforts of the Transitional Authorities are supported by the international community to ensure that critical aspects are implemented expeditiously. I also commend the region for its continued engagement in support of the Transitional Authorities to restore constitutional order and fight impunity in the Central African Republic.

85. I commend the efforts of the Governments in the subregion, United Nations entities, national and international non-governmental organizations and other partners to address the humanitarian impact of the crises in the Central African Republic on neighbouring countries. In that regard, I reiterate my call for the international community to urgently provide the requisite financial support to the inter-agency Central African Republic regional response plan.

86. I remain concerned about maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. I reiterate my call on States in the region and international partners to provide the necessary resources to ensure the adequate functioning of the Interregional Coordination Centre and to operationalize 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 provide assistance in the region and mobilize support in order to achieve these objectives.

87. Considering the growing links between illicit wildlife trade and armed groups in the subregion, including the Lord's Resistance Army, I reiterate my call on Central African Governments and ECCAS to work together on a subregional strategy to address this phenomenon. In collaboration with UNODC, UNOCA will continue to support the subregional efforts to identify collaborative approaches to address this issue.

88. The LRA has been severely weakened, thanks to the collective efforts of LRA-affected countries and partners, including the African Union, the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and other stakeholders. The LRA continues, however, to have a disproportionate impact on the civilian population. It is critical that the troop-contributing countries to the African Union Regional Task Force remain committed and closely cooperate with each other. It is equally critical that international partners sustain their support to the Regional Task Force.

89. Safe havens and illicit trafficking networks are the lifelines of the LRA. I welcome the visit of the African Union Special Envoy for LRA issues to the Sudan. It is my hope that the Government of the Sudan will continue to demonstrate a similar spirit of cooperation to verify allegations of LRA presence in Kafia Kingi. I am mindful that the humanitarian and development challenges facing LRA-affected

areas are formidable. I call on the donor community to stay the course, in particular for the reintegration of LRA returnees and the protection of children.

90. 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 and other regional and subregional institutions for their continued collaboration with UNOCA. I also express my gratitude to the African Union Regional Task Force, the Multinational Joint Task Force and troop-contributing countries for their dedication and commitment to the service of peace. My appreciation also goes to the Government and the people of Gabon for their hospitality and constant assistance to 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.

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

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