



Security Council

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The situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 10 August 2018 ([S/PRST/2018/17](#)), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed about the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) every six months. It provides an assessment of the major political and security trends in Central Africa since the report dated 31 May 2023 ([S/2023/389](#)). 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 the coup d'état in Gabon that overthrew the then President, Ali Bongo Ondimba, and the resulting political transition. In Chad, preparations continued for a constitutional referendum, amid the impact of the conflict in the Sudan. Unrelenting activity by non-State armed actors in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Lake Chad basin continued to undermine peace and security in the subregion.

Political developments and trends

3. In Angola, protests erupted in several provinces following the Government's decision on 3 June to partially remove gas subsidies, resulting in five fatalities and numerous arrests. According to the national police, 32 individuals were arrested at demonstrations in Luanda Province and 55 individuals in Benguela Province. On 19 July, the parliamentary bloc of the main opposition party in Angola, União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), announced its intention to pursue the impeachment of the President, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço. During a press conference, UNITA members of parliament accused the President of establishing an authoritarian regime with no space for pluralism. On 12 October, UNITA formally introduced a request in the National Assembly to initiate an impeachment procedure against the President, which was subsequently rejected by an open vote. The opposition criticized the outcome, noting that the voting process should have been through a secret ballot.



4. In Burundi, on 15 September, the Government dismissed rumours of an attempted coup d'état following the deployment of special forces in front of the premises of Burundi National Radio and Television. According to the Government, the deployment was a routine procedure by the National Defence Forces. On 8 October, the Governor of the Central Bank, who was appointed in August 2022 for a five-year term, was dismissed and arrested for, inter alia, passive corruption, money-laundering and misappropriation of public property. Meanwhile, on 3 August, the National Defence Forces clashed with alleged members of the Rwandan rebel group Movement for Democratic Change-National Liberation Front (FLN) in Cibitoke Province, resulting in casualties on both sides. On 9 August, alleged FLN elements targeted and killed a local leader of the youth league of the ruling party in the same province. At the regional level, Burundian troops continued to operate in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo under bilateral and East African Community regional force agreements. Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a defence and security cooperation agreement on 28 August, providing a legal framework for the supply of equipment, the training of troops and the conducting of border patrols.

5. In Cameroon, the reporting period was marked by the death of the opposition leader and Chairman of the Social Democratic Front party, Ni John Fru Ndi, on 12 June. Before his burial, non-State armed actors, who had criticized his participation in national politics and viewed him as opposed to the separatist cause, partially burned his house in Momo, North-West Region, and declared a lockdown to disrupt the funeral.

6. On 11 August, the Prime Minister of Cameroon, Joseph Dion Ngute, chaired a meeting of the Follow-Up Committee to the Major National Dialogue in Buea, South-West Region. The Government highlighted progress in the implementation of the dialogue's recommendations, including the return of more than 60,000 internally displaced persons as a result of improved security conditions. The Government also noted economic improvement and progress in the implementation of the presidential plan for the reconstruction and development of the North-West and South-West Regions. There was a strong call by religious leaders for dialogue between the Government and the armed groups to establish lasting peace. On 3 September, religious leaders launched an inter-faith campaign advocating the reopening of schools in the North-West and South-West Regions, where separatists had only permitted private and faith-based institutions to operate.

7. In Chad, the political transition continued to advance while the country faced a massive influx of Sudanese refugees due to the ongoing conflict in the Sudan. On 27 June, the National Transitional Council adopted a draft revised constitution, and on 24 July the Transition Government launched the revision of the electoral register in preparation for a constitutional referendum in December 2023 and general elections in 2024. The draft constitution adopted by the transition parliament, which proposes some amendments to the current decentralized unitary State, was criticized by some opposition parties and civil society organizations, who were hoping for a referendum on the form of the State as recommended by the national dialogue in 2022 amid calls for the introduction of a federal system. On 16 September, the transitional authorities announced that the revision of the electoral register had been successfully completed. Opposition political parties, citing partiality and a lack of inclusiveness, demanded a cancellation of that revision and the dissolution of the National Committee for the Organization of the Constitutional Referendum.

8. On 30 June, the President of the Transition of Chad, Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, signed a decree establishing the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, in line with the Doha Agreement for Peace and the Participation of the Political-Military Movements in the Inclusive National and

Sovereign Dialogue signed in August 2022. During a visit to N'Djamena from 18 to 19 July, in his capacity as the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS) facilitator for the transition in Chad, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, encouraged the Transition Government to advance the implementation of the Doha Peace Agreement and urged all political stakeholders to engage constructively in the political transition. On 2 October, the politico-military group Union des forces de la résistance denounced the delay in implementing the Doha Peace Agreement and the failure to establish the follow-up mechanisms envisaged in that agreement. The group invited the Transition President to set up a formal framework for inclusive discussions between the politico-military groups and the transitional authorities. On 16 October, the transitional authorities declared that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process had been launched.

9. On 27 October, the leader of the opposition party Les Transformateurs, Succès Masra, who had been in self-imposed exile since the deadly protests of 20 October 2022, met with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi, in Kinshasa. They were joined by representatives of the Chadian transitional authorities on 29 October. On 31 October, this culminated in the signing of an “agreement on reconciliation for the return of those exiled since the events of 20 October 2022”. On 3 November, Mr. Masra returned to N'Djamena and on 8 November, the Public Prosecutor requested the lifting of an international arrest warrant against him.

10. At the regional level, Chad continued to advocate an end to the fighting in the Sudan. On 6 and 7 August, N'Djamena hosted the first meeting of the interministerial committee established by the countries neighbouring the Sudan to develop a plan for an immediate ceasefire.

11. In the Congo, the ruling Parti congolais du travail won the senatorial elections of 20 August, securing 52 out of 72 senatorial seats, an increase of eight seats compared with the previous legislative term. Women's representation increased from 15 to 22 seats, meeting the 30 per cent established quota. Among the opposition parties, Union panafricaine pour la démocratie sociale secured one seat, while Union des démocrates humanistes lost its only seat. The remaining seats were divided among independent candidates and other parties aligned with the ruling party. In a press conference on 16 September, the president of the opposition coalition l'Alliance pour l'alternance démocratique en 2026 stressed that past elections in the Congo had lacked fairness, transparency and freedom and urged the President, Denis Sassou Nguesso, to consider a two-year transition, followed by an election in which the President would not participate.

12. On 7 August, opposition figures and civil society activists of the Equatorial Guinea diaspora in Spain launched a coalition to denounce the sociopolitical situation and human rights violations in their home country. The authorities of Equatorial Guinea initiated a criminal investigation against the leader of the coalition, a former President of the Supreme Court of Equatorial Guinea, on charges of corruption and influence peddling.

13. In Gabon, in the lead-up to the general elections held on 26 August, opposition parties and civil society organizations expressed concerns about several abrupt changes to the electoral law that were seen as reducing the prospects for credible elections. The Constitutional Court rejected an appeal filed by the opposition parties and civil society organizations requesting that it annul the revision of the electoral law. On 26 August, the elections proceeded in relative calm, despite reported delays in the opening of many polling stations. At the end of that day, the Government enforced an Internet shutdown across the country, suspended broadcasting by

international French radio and television stations, shut borders and implemented a nationwide curfew.

14. In the early morning of 30 August, the election results in Gabon were announced on public television, declaring that the incumbent President, Ali Bongo Ondimba, was the winner. Shortly after, a group of Gabonese army officers announced on television that they had taken power. They formed the Comité pour la transition et la restauration des institutions, annulled the elections and dissolved all institutions. The President, Mr. Bongo Ondimba, was placed under house arrest, while some members of his family and close allies were arrested, including in connection with allegations of massive embezzlement. On 4 September, General Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, a relative of the President and hitherto Head of the Republican Guard, was sworn in as Transition President by the temporarily re-established Constitutional Court.

15. On 7 September, the transitional authorities in Gabon appointed Raymond Ndong Sima, a former Prime Minister and member of the “Alternance 2023” opposition coalition, as Prime Minister of the Transition. On 8 September, the Comité pour la transition et la restauration des institutions unveiled a Transitional Charter that introduced five key entities: the National Transitional Council, composed of members of the defence and security forces, as well as the Transition Government, Parliament, Constitutional Court and President. According to the Charter, the Transition President would oversee defence and security and make crucial appointments, including that of the Transition Vice-President, members of the Transition Government and members of both chambers of the Transition Parliament. On 9 September, the Transition President appointed a 27-member Transition Government, comprising civilians and members of the armed forces, including seven women, while retaining several individuals from the former ruling party and three members from the previous government. On 7 October, the Transition President appointed the members of parliament by decree. Segments of the opposition and civil society criticized the strong representation of the former ruling party in the Transition Parliament. On 18 October, the Transition President announced that he would forgo his presidential entitlements and only benefit from his salary as Head of the Presidential Guard. On 13 November, the Comité pour la transition et la restauration des institutions announced a 24-month transition timeline. Key milestones include a national dialogue in April 2024, a constitutional referendum between November and December 2024, and general elections in August 2025. The Comité clarified that this timeline was indicative, and that the final timeline would be determined by the national dialogue.

16. On 19 September, the Transition President of Gabon embarked on his first foreign state visit since the coup d’état, travelling to Equatorial Guinea, where he was received by the President, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. He subsequently visited most countries in the region, including Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe, where he was received by the respective heads of state.

17. The African Union and ECCAS condemned the coup d’état in Gabon, calling for a return to constitutional order, and suspended the country’s membership in both organizations. The Commonwealth also temporarily suspended Gabon’s membership. On 4 September, ECCAS held an extraordinary summit in Djibloho, Equatorial Guinea, and designated the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, as facilitator of the political process in Gabon. The summit also decided to temporarily transfer the ECCAS Headquarters from Libreville to Malabo and appointed the President of Equatorial Guinea, Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, as Chair of ECCAS, a position held by the President of Gabon, Mr. Bongo Ondimba, since January 2023. In his capacity as ECCAS facilitator, Mr. Touadéra visited Libreville twice, on 6 September and 10 October, where he met the Transition

President and relevant stakeholders, including the deposed President. On 23 October, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union welcomed the appointment of an ECCAS facilitator, requesting the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in collaboration with ECCAS, to carry out good offices with stakeholders in Gabon.

18. In Rwanda, the Senate unanimously ratified a constitutional amendment on 2 June, adopting the synchronization of legislative and presidential elections for 2024. The authorities had previously argued that the synchronization would increase efficiency in the organization of the elections. On 19 September, President Paul Kagame announced that he would run for the 2024 presidential election, his fourth term since being elected in 2000. The announcement followed notable changes in the security apparatus by the President, encompassing key appointments such as the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Staff. On 27 September, retired General James Kabarebe was appointed as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of regional cooperation.

19. In Sao Tome and Principe, there were a series of key changes in the judicial sector. On 31 May, the National Assembly, where the ruling coalition enjoys a majority, passed a bill to set the retirement age of magistrates at 62. Following the bill's entry into force on 5 June, four of the five judges of the Constitutional Court were immediately retired. On 10 June, the National Assembly approved the appointment of four new judges proposed by the ruling coalition, who were sworn in on 22 June. On 2 August, the National Assembly passed another bill amending the organic law of the Court of Auditors, which stripped the Court of the independent authority to scrutinize the state budget and public contracts, instead granting a significant role to the National Assembly in appointing the Court's judges. These changes were denounced by the opposition over possible interference by the ruling coalition.

Security developments and trends

20. In the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, non-State armed actors continued to target state officials, civilians, medical personnel and government-paid teachers and education workers, and to impose lockdowns. Government forces continued to target separatist commanders and raid potential hideouts, resulting in civilian casualties. On 8 June, alleged armed separatists killed a gendarmerie commander in Bamenda, North-West Region. On 23 June, they attacked the Cameroon Development Corporation camp in Idenao, South-West Region, abducting medical personnel and patients from the corporation's hospital. On 11 August, alleged armed separatists killed four civilians in Kekukesim, South-West Region, and set villages on fire. On 6 November, alleged separatist fighters attacked Egbekaw village, near Mamfe, South-West Region, setting ablaze 17 houses and firing on civilians. Government reports indicate that 25 people were killed and at least 40 injured. According to local sources, a number of residents were also abducted. The attack triggered population displacement. Mamfe has faced nearly 38 attacks, including against schools and hospitals, since the start of the violence in the region in 2017.

21. Separatist-imposed lockdowns in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon and attacks against schools and medical facilities continued to affect the security and livelihoods of civilians. From 5 to 16 September, armed separatist groups ordered a lockdown to disrupt the resumption of the school year on 5 September. In the same period, a 16-year-old high school student succumbed to injuries sustained during a clash between security forces and a separatist militia in Kumba, South-West Region. In addition, two public school teachers were reportedly killed by separatist militants in Belo, North-West Region, after attending a preparatory meeting for the start of the school year. Another lockdown was ordered from 26 September to

2 October to commemorate what the separatists consider “the Independence Day of ‘Ambazonia’”. No incidents were reported during the lockdown. Government forces reportedly raided Big Babanki, North-West Region, on 17 June and Ekona, South-West Region, on 23 June, which resulted in 17 people killed.

22. During the reporting period, tensions escalated between Chadian authorities and two politico-military groups that had not signed the Doha Peace Agreement, Conseil de commandement militaire pour le salut de la République (CCMSR) and Front pour l’alternance et la concorde au Tchad (FACT), after an attack on the night of 9 to 10 August claimed by CCMSR in Tibesti Province resulted in the death of a number of Chadian soldiers. On 17 August, the authorities indicated that the Transition President had travelled to Bardaï, Tibesti Province, to lead military operations against the two groups. FACT reported an attack on its bases by Chadian armed forces on 18 August, prompting it to end its unilateral ceasefire of 2021. Meanwhile, the Libyan National Army conducted an operation in southern Libya on 25 August, targeting the rear bases of both groups. In the east, there was an uptick of intercommunal tensions throughout the reporting period, including a few incidents inside camps hosting Sudanese refugees. Meanwhile, the authorities of Chad and the Central African Republic continued to cooperate on efforts to strengthen security in their joint border area, while the situation regarding over 30,000 Chadians who fled from intercommunal tensions into the Central African Republic remained a concern.

Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin

23. In Cameroon, between 1 June and 15 November, 203 Boko Haram-related security incidents resulting in 86 civilian fatalities were confirmed and reported by the United Nations, compared with 92 incidents resulting in 64 civilian fatalities for the same period last year. In Chad, also between 1 June and 15 November, 51 Boko Haram-related security incidents resulting in 53 civilian fatalities were confirmed and reported by the United Nations, compared with 40 incidents resulting in 41 civilian fatalities for the same period last year.

24. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, suspected Islamic State West Africa Province militants reportedly kidnapped six women in Bargaram village, Logone-et-Chari Division, on 17 June for failing to pay “taxes” levied by the group. The group also reportedly beheaded eight fishermen on 3 August in Kofia, on Lake Chad, for the same reason. On 2 July, unidentified armed men attacked a hospital in Mada, Logone-et-Chari Division, and burned vehicles, forcing local communities to seek health care in Kousséri or cross the border into Chad, more than 100 kilometres away.

Lord’s Resistance Army

25. During the reporting period, the Achaye faction of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), one of two groups that splintered from the movement’s leader Joseph Kony, participated in a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the Central African Republic. In July and September, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), 127 ex-fighters and their associates were repatriated. In August, a further 16 were repatriated by the authorities of the Central African Republic and Uganda. These operations were conducted following a 15 June quadripartite agreement between the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda, as well as bilateral engagements between the Central African Republic and Uganda. On 26 August, a son of Joseph Kony and his former chief of logistics, reportedly defected from LRA with some family members and returned to Uganda.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

26. During the period under review, a total of four maritime security incidents were reported across the ECCAS zone in the Gulf of Guinea, an increase of one incident compared with the previous reporting period. On the night of 30 June, two China-owned, Cameroon-flagged fishing vessels were attacked by gunmen on a small boat near Douala, Cameroon. The Cameroonian naval officers aboard the vessels exchanged fire with the attackers. Later that same night, gunmen targeted a Panama-flagged cargo ship at the Douala anchorage, abducting five crew members. They were released on 19 August. On 4 September, a Denmark-flagged supply ship was boarded by thieves at the Luanda anchorage. The attackers fled after the crew sounded the alarm.

Effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters on regional stability, including farmer-herder dynamics in Central Africa

27. The subregion continued to grapple with the accelerating effects of climate change, manifested by an increase in extreme weather events such as intense, flood-inducing rainfalls. On 23 August, authorities announced that floods and rising sea levels had damaged several hundred homes, buildings and plantations along Cameroon's coast. Furthermore, on 8 October, a landslide following heavy rains claimed at least 27 lives on the outskirts of Yaoundé. Between 11 and 13 August, around 2,400 individuals fled flooding in Chad after a dam breach between Bongor and Gamsai, seeking refuge in Mourla, Far North Region of Cameroon. Since August, a water shortage in southern Angola has reportedly led to some residents, including children, to travel to areas bordering Namibia in search of water. Local health centres have warned of diseases related to water shortage.

28. In Chad, clashes between farmers and cattle herders continued unabated and were worsened by climate-induced shifts in transhumance patterns. On 20 August, clashes erupted in Abkhura village, in the Mangalmé Department of Guéra Region, resulting in six fatalities and several casualties.

B. Humanitarian developments

29. Armed conflicts, intercommunal violence, food insecurity and forced displacement, as well as natural hazards exacerbated by climate change, continued to drive humanitarian needs in Central Africa.

30. As at 15 November, recent flooding in the subregion had affected some 321,000 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 17,600 in the Central African Republic and 3,750 households in Cameroon. The floods internally displaced 256,000 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Chad National Weather Centre projected that 1.4 million people were at risk of flood impact in the upcoming months and that approximately 800,000 of them may require humanitarian assistance.

31. As at 30 September, Angola hosted almost 53,400 refugees and asylum-seekers, while the Congo hosted some 60,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, and some 169,000 internally displaced persons.

32. As at 30 September, Burundi hosted some 87,675 refugees and asylum-seekers. Meanwhile, almost 229,550 Burundian refugees had been voluntarily repatriated to Burundi between September 2017 and 31 October 2023.

33. As at 30 September, Cameroon continued to host over 1.06 million internally displaced persons and more than 477,000 refugees, with some 353,700 coming from the Central African Republic. The North-West and South-West Regions hosted some 638,420 internally displaced persons and some 442,600 returnees. It is estimated that

4.7 million people in Cameroon needed humanitarian assistance, an increase of 20 per cent compared with 2022. The humanitarian response plan, requiring \$407 million, was only 28 per cent funded as at 15 November.

34. Chad continued to receive refugees fleeing the fighting in the Sudan, with some 450,635 registered Sudanese refugees and some 77,300 Chadian returnees who had crossed into Chad between 15 April and 10 November. The overall number of refugees and asylum-seekers in Chad is about 1.06 million and the number of internally displaced persons around 216,000 as at 31 October. Chadian authorities and humanitarian actors estimate that the number of Sudanese refugees fleeing into Chad since April would swell to at least 600,000 by December. The revised 2023 humanitarian response plan registered an increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance from 6.9 million to 7.6 million, among whom 5.2 million people are targeted for assistance. A total of \$920.6 million is now required, an increase of \$245.7 million. However, as at 15 November, only 30 per cent of the financial requirements had been met. In the first six months of 2023, humanitarian partners were able to assist 1.1 million people out of the 4.4 million targeted. The impact of climate change continued to affect Chad, with 1.9 million people expected to be food-insecure during the 2023 lean season.

Lake Chad basin crisis

35. Persistent violence in the Lake Chad basin continued to exact a heavy toll on communities, where 11.2 million people need humanitarian assistance, with over 5.5 million people facing urgent food insecurity and some 758,000 children experiencing severe malnutrition as at 30 September. In addition, armed violence rendered some 425 schools non-functional as at 16 October, resulting in the denial of education to thousands of children.

36. The Far North Region of Cameroon was hosting some 428,000 internally displaced persons, 115,000 refugees and 203,170 returnees as at 31 October. The Lac Province of Chad was hosting some 216,000 internally displaced persons and some 21,300 refugees, with some 23,000 returnees from Nigeria, as at 31 October.

C. Human rights trends

37. In Burundi, on 22 August, the Gitega High Court ruled in the case of 26 members of two civil society organizations who had been arrested and charged with homosexuality, incitement to debauchery and prostitution. While 19 of the accused were acquitted, seven were sentenced to imprisonment. On 25 August, one of those acquitted, a 33-year-old man, died in prison. The Prosecutor had reportedly delayed his referral for medical care and denied his release. On 22 September, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Burundi engaged in an interactive dialogue with the Human Rights Council, underscoring certain progress in Burundi, such as the country's active participation in the universal periodic review and advancements in the judicial system. He emphasized, however, that the overall improvements with respect to human rights remained limited, highlighting institutional weaknesses. In response, Burundi urged that reports adhere to strict accuracy standards and criticized the reports of the Special Rapporteur for falling short of these criteria.

38. In Cameroon, civil society and opposition parties continued to experience restrictions to civic space. On 17 August, local authorities in the West Region banned a public sport event planned by Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun in Bafoussam. On 12 September, the Governor of the South-West Region suspended a newspaper for an indefinite period over alleged flagrant violations of professional

norms. Human rights violations and abuses by security and defence forces and armed separatist groups continued to be documented in the North-West and South-West Regions, including alleged killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions and reported extortion. On 5 October, armed separatists publicly executed two men accused of spying for the Government in Guzang, North-West Region. During lockdowns imposed by separatist groups, the latter reportedly killed two people and set three persons on fire for failing to respect the lockdown orders. The separatists also burned vehicles.

39. In Chad, on 23 June, the Transition President pardoned the President of the Chadian Organization for Human Rights and several others who had been accused of plotting a coup d'état and convicted and sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment in December 2022. The individuals were subsequently released. On 17 July, the Transition President also pardoned 110 detainees linked to the demonstrations of 20 October 2022, adding to the 326 political prisoners who had previously been granted a presidential pardon in relation to those demonstrations. On 1 August, the Transition President signed three decrees detailing the conditions, responsibilities and sanctions concerning public gatherings and demonstrations. On 25 August, the Haute autorité des médias et de l'audiovisuel suspended the private news website Alwihda Info for eight days for allegedly publishing insulting comments about the Transition President and comments that could undermine cohesion within the army. On 12 July, the authorities prohibited a demonstration by an opposition political party, citing, inter alia, the non-authorization of the party.

40. The President of Equatorial Guinea pardoned 276 detainees on 6 June and ordered their release. On 26 June, a military court convicted and sentenced the leader of the dissolved opposition party Ciudadanos por la Innovación de Guinea Ecuatorial, Gabriel Nsé Obiang Obono, to 29 years in prison. He had been arrested in September 2022 on charges of murder and insulting the armed forces. Arbitrary arrests, constraints with respect to access to justice and consular access for detained foreigners remained a concern, as was a spate of cases of child abductions, which prompted the Government to issue a resolution concerning school safety in Bata on 4 October. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances requested the Government to carry out investigations into pending cases of such disappearances. On 19 August, a prominent writer, journalist and advocate on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer issues was arrested in Malabo and released 24 hours later.

41. In Gabon, there was a rise in hate speech along ethnic lines and xenophobic discourse in social media platforms, particularly following the coup d'état.

42. On 22 July, two high-level military officials in Sao Tome and Principe were appointed to the posts of Inspector General of the Armed Forces and Commander of the Naval Forces. They had been accused by the Attorney General of direct involvement in 14 criminal offences related to extrajudicial killings following the events of 25 November 2022, during which the main military barracks of the country were attacked. On 17 August, the Government implemented a 15-day ban on all forms of demonstrations, coinciding with the fourteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, noting that the ban was necessary to maintain a peaceful and organized environment and as a result of logistical challenges in providing adequate security for both the summit and demonstrations. Opposition parties strongly criticized this decision as unconstitutional.

D. Socioeconomic trends

43. The subregion continued to be impacted by the effects of global inflation, particularly rising oil prices. Fuel subsidies exerted increasing pressure on state budgets. Fluctuations in fuel prices and fuel shortage crises continued to exacerbate an already challenging socioeconomic situation. Burundi experienced a record inflation rate of 32.6 per cent, generated by a 37 per cent increase in the price of petrol and a 25 per cent increase in the price of diesel compared with April 2022. A liquidity shortage led to restrictions on cash withdrawals, while a significant monetary policy measure introduced in May led to a 38 per cent depreciation of the Burundi franc.

44. In Sao Tome and Principe, a three-week fuel shortage severely affected transportation, fishing and trade.

45. In Cameroon, the Government announced that it had secured nearly \$421 million from development partners and raised \$291 million through the issuance of treasury bonds in the subregional money market. The proceeds of this issuance are expected to finance various projects. Meanwhile, on 4 September, public school teachers in Cameroon went on strike over grievances related to their contracts and non-payment of salaries and benefits.

46. In eastern Chad, the massive influx of Sudanese refugees and Chadian returnees significantly compounded the socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges the local populations were already facing. These were exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change. Women and children, who make up 86 per cent of the newly arrived refugees and returnees, remained the most vulnerable.

47. The International Monetary Fund announced that the economic recovery of 2022 in Equatorial Guinea would be short-lived, with the country's gross domestic product projected to contract by 7.8 per cent in 2023.

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

A. Good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation

Central African Republic

48. On 23 October, in Bangui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa participated in the second strategic review meeting on the framework of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Luanda joint road map. Participants highlighted the challenges faced in implementing the Political Agreement and the joint road map and discussed the way forward. They also welcomed gains made in the areas of security sector reform, the justice sector, decentralization and transhumance.

Chad

49. From 17 to 19 July, the Special Representative participated in a high-level United Nations delegation to Chad led by the Deputy Secretary-General. The delegation met with the Transition President, key members of the Transition Government and development partners. The delegation visited eastern Chad to assess the humanitarian and development challenges facing refugee and host communities, as well as Bol in Lac Province. The visit aimed to highlight the critical role played by

Chad in the region and rally support for the country in the context of the political transition, particularly in view of the massive influx of refugees from the Sudan.

50. On 30 August, in Kinshasa, the Special Representative met with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi, in his capacity as ECCAS facilitator, to discuss efforts to promote increased inclusion in the political transition in Chad.

51. On 18 September, the Special Representative participated in a high-level side event on Chad, under the title “The journey towards constitutional order in Chad”, co-hosted by the Transition Government of Chad and the United Nations on the margins of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. Participants underlined the need for more external support to Chad while calling for increased inclusivity, continued outreach to those still outside the transition and respect for human rights.

52. From 13 to 16 November, the Special Representative travelled to Chad, where he met with transitional authorities, political actors and the diplomatic community to discuss the impact of regional crises on Chad and assess progress in the transition. He discussed continued outreach efforts to those remaining outside the political transition, including some politico-military groups, and launched an expanded Group of Friends for Chad.

The Congo

53. From 10 to 13 October, the Special Representative travelled to Brazzaville, where he met with the Prime Minister and other senior government officials, opposition leaders, civil society representatives and members of the diplomatic community. The Special Representative commended the increase in women’s representation following the senatorial elections. He urged the authorities to persist in building robust institutions, reinforcing dialogue, implementing electoral reforms and broadening civic engagement.

Gabon

54. In the lead-up to the general elections, the Special Representative initiated engagements with key civil society actors, members of the opposition and presidential candidates, including the President, Mr. Bongo Ondimba. On 8 August, he met with members of the opposition coalition “Alternance 2023”, who voiced concerns regarding the electoral process. On the same day, he met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and conveyed the opposition’s concerns. During a meeting with the President, Mr. Bongo Ondimba, on 11 August, the Special Representative relayed the opposition’s grievances and advised him to consider necessary measures to ensure peaceful elections.

55. Following the coup d’état of 30 August, the Special Representative met with the Transition President, General Oligui Nguema, on 6 September. On the same day, he met with the deposed President, who expressed his readiness to meet with the Transition President and provide advice in the interest of the country. The following day, the Special Representative met again with the Transition President to whom he conveyed the message from the deposed President, Mr. Bongo Ondimba. Over the same period, the ECCAS facilitator for Gabon and President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Touadéra, also met with the Transition President and the ousted President. On 7 September, the transitional authorities allowed the former President to depart for medical treatment abroad. Over the subsequent weeks, the Special Representative continued to engage with the transitional authorities on the implementation of the political transition.

56. On 4 September, the Special Representative participated in the extraordinary summit of ECCAS on the situation in Gabon held in Djibloho. In his statement, he stressed the urgent need to tackle unconstitutional changes of government in Africa, including by addressing their root causes, notably shortcomings in governance.

Sao Tome and Principe

57. From 9 to 12 November, the Special Representative travelled to Sao Tome and Principe, jointly with the ECCAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, as a follow-up to the United Nations-ECCAS joint strategic assessment mission of the justice and security sectors conducted in April. They met with the Prime Minister and other senior government officials, who conveyed that the Government had validated the recommendations of the report submitted by the joint strategic assessment mission.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation

Collaboration with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations, including support provided to the Economic Community of Central African States

58. On 25 September, ECCAS, UNOCA, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme jointly organized a side event on the margins of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. Participants discussed the implementation of the ECCAS common agenda for the promotion of women's rights and the empowerment of women, as well as women's participation in peace processes in Central Africa.

59. From 5 to 7 July, UNOCA supported the organization of a regional forum on the draft regional strategy and action plan to prevent and combat hate speech in Central Africa. Organized in Yaoundé by the Government of Cameroon in collaboration with ECCAS, the forum adopted a declaration and outlined a road map for future actions, including the organization of a ministerial forum to discuss and validate the draft regional strategy, to be hosted by the Central African Republic on 14 and 15 December 2023.

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

60. From 25 to 29 September, UNOCA supported a field visit of the Bureau of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa to Sao Tome and Principe. Participants explored peace and security implications of climate change and good practices stemming from how the country was addressing climate-related risk factors. The fifty-sixth meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee was held in Kigali from 20 to 24 November. The Committee adopted a declaration calling upon ECCAS to develop a protocol on democracy, governance and human rights in Central Africa and for greater cooperation in support of countries undergoing transitions. The Committee also recommended the organization of a regional conference on unconstitutional changes of government. It further adopted a declaration calling for a regional solidarity fund.

Partnerships with civil society and support to civil society networks

61. From 11 to 13 July, with the support of UNOCA, the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Peace and Conflict Prevention in Central Africa convened its second regular general assembly in Douala, Cameroon. Participants updated the coalition's governance frameworks and extended the terms of its steering committee and country focal points for another two years.

62. From 17 to 30 July, UNOCA supported the Network of Active Women in Central Africa in the organization of the fourteenth edition of the Central African Annual Cross-Border Fair in the border region between Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Participants focused on advancing socioeconomic integration within the African Continental Free Trade Area and bolstering resilience against violence arising from security, health, food and climate challenges.

63. Between 31 July and 19 August, UNOCA supported three training workshops organized by the civil society organizations Réseau Femme Lève-Toi and ONG Malachie in Libreville and Port-Gentil, Gabon. The training sessions brought together female leaders from various political affiliations and civil society, to promote collaboration, enhance women's role in elections and discuss their political involvement in Gabon.

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

Lake Chad basin crisis

64. From 30 May to 24 June, UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) conducted a joint assessment mission in Boko Haram-affected areas of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, in line with Security Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#). Participants concluded that economic hardships continued to drive vulnerable young persons towards illegal activities, including joining extremist groups. They noted that insecurity had disrupted traditional transhumance routes, affecting local economies and exacerbating resource competition, food insecurity and displacement.

65. From 5 to 7 July, UNOCA participated in the fourth Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development in N'Djamena, marking the completion of the first phase of the implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region. Participants urged partners to support socioeconomic development. State authorities recognized the need to enhance community-based reintegration and transitional justice initiatives across the region. They called for continued support to the Multinational Joint Task Force, finding durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons and adhering to human rights standards in security operations.

66. On 27 September, in Abuja, the Special Representatives for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel attended the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee for the Regional Strategy. Participants agreed on a one-year transition period to finalize the review of the Regional Strategy, which was approaching the end of its initial five-year time frame.

Regional integration

67. On the margins of the cross-border fair mentioned in paragraph 62 above, UNOCA met with representatives of the Central African Economic and Monetary

Community (CEMAC) and delegates from the tri-border regions of Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Participants recommended the establishment of a cooperation framework for governors from border areas in the three countries.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

68. On 25 and 26 July, UNOCA provided guidance during a technical meeting organized in Luanda by the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in Luanda. The meeting aimed to make progress on the revision of the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa (Yaoundé Code of Conduct), the assessment of the Yaoundé Architecture and the plans for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé process. It brought together representatives from the Economic Community of West African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, the Regional Centre for Maritime Security in West Africa, and the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa, also representing ECCAS. Central African coastal States and technical and financial partners, including United Nations entities, also attended. Following the technical meeting, UNOCA, UNOWAS and UNODC supported a core group meeting, held in Dakar, from 14 to 16 August, which resulted in the development of action plans for the evaluation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, the assessment of the Yaoundé Architecture and the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé process.

Climate, peace and security

69. On 20 July, in Libreville, UNOCA, in collaboration with Adelphi Research, a German think tank working on climate security, hosted a regional consultation on the climate, peace and security nexus in Central Africa. The meeting was part of the African continental climate security risk assessment, requested by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Participants from UNOCA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNODC, UNICEF and ECCAS noted that the impact of climate change on peace and security was not integrated into conflict resolution and climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation planning in Central Africa. They indicated a need for a climate security risk assessment focused on the Gulf of Guinea.

70. On 5 September, during the Africa Climate Summit held in Nairobi, UNOCA, UNOWAS, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the Norwegian Refugee Council co-hosted a joint side event on climate, peace and security in Central and West Africa. The UNOCA and UNOWAS climate security advisers highlighted the linkages between climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification, transhumance, development and peace and security in the two subregions.

71. From 26 to 28 October, UNOCA participated in the second Summit of the Three Basins of Biodiversity Ecosystems and Tropical Forests, on the protection of the tropical rainforest in the Amazon, the Congo and Borneo-Mekong, held in Brazzaville. The summit concluded with commitments for enhanced cooperation.

72. Through its climate security adviser, UNOCA continued its engagement with the ECCAS Commission on the development of a conflict-sensitive regional strategy on climate change and resilient development, a regional protocol on transhumance and a regional consortium on climate change and biodiversity, peace and security, transhumance, climate finance and sustainable development.

Transhumance and farmer-herder conflicts

73. On 11 and 12 July, UNOCA participated in the second International Conference of Ministers on Transboundary Transhumance Nexus in Yaoundé. Discussions focused on the links between transhumance, protected areas and natural resources, development, peace and security, as well as ways to develop strategies for the control of transboundary transhumance movements.

74. From 27 to 30 September, a UNOCA-led team comprising representatives from Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon and the Central African Republic visited Garoua, North Region of Cameroon, to document effective local approaches for preventing and resolving agropastoral conflicts. The team met the authorities and traditional leaders, as well as representatives of farmers, herders and women and youth groups.

D. Enhancing United Nations coherence and coordination in the subregion

Partnerships with and support for Resident Coordinators and country teams

75. In the lead-up to the general elections in Gabon, UNOCA and the Office of the Resident Coordinator launched a campaign aimed at countering hate speech in the electoral context and supporting the efforts of authorities to curb the dissemination of prejudiced and xenophobic messages.

76. The Office of the Resident Coordinator in Angola, with the support of UNOCA, organized the second national conference on strategies for gender integration in legislative, political and governance processes, as well as trainings in three provinces on women in democratic processes and advocacy for the inclusion of women in the leadership of political parties.

Advocacy for United Nations priorities in the subregion

77. From 6 to 8 September, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Managing Director for Operations of the World Bank visited Chad, to strengthen their joint response to the intensifying humanitarian crisis. Together with the Government, they renewed their commitment to support both refugee and host communities. During the visit, the World Bank announced a new package of grants amounting to \$340 million to help address the multiple shocks faced by Chad.

IV. Observations and recommendations

78. The period under review exposed challenges with regard to good governance and accountability, highlighting the fragility of political systems in the subregion. It underlined the need for transparent and credible electoral processes as well as increased efforts to address long-standing governance challenges and social exclusion in order to maintain long-term stability in the region.

79. While the population in Gabon widely welcomed the military takeover, the country stands at a critical juncture, with the population expecting the transitional authorities to establish genuinely inclusive, representative and accountable governance that meaningfully benefits all Gabonese citizens. The rise in hate speech and xenophobia observed before and since the coup d'état is worrisome. It is crucial for the transitional authorities to ensure a prompt return to constitutional order through inclusive and credible elections, while promoting the unity and cohesion of Gabon. The United Nations system stands ready to collaborate with Gabon, ECCAS, the African Union and other regional and international partners towards a peaceful

transition and a timely return to constitutional order through the holding of inclusive and credible elections.

80. As preparations advance for the constitutional referendum in Chad, I welcome the conciliatory actions of the transitional authorities, including their invitation to opponents outside Chad to return. I urge the transitional authorities to intensify their efforts to ensure the inclusivity of the transition so as to allow for a peaceful return to constitutional order and sustainable peace. I thank the ECCAS facilitator, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi Tshilombo, for his efforts in this regard. I reiterate my call upon the transitional authorities to enhance overall efforts to promote human rights, including by combating impunity.

81. I commend Chad for opening its borders to welcome Sudanese refugees and engaging in diplomatic and regional efforts to facilitate a resolution to the conflict in the Sudan. The country already contends with significant political, security, humanitarian and development challenges, which are compounded by the risk of spillover of the fighting in the Sudan. I also welcome the generosity of the Central African Republic in welcoming Sudanese refugees, despite the multiple challenges facing the country. I urge the international community to increase its support to assist Chad and the Central African Republic in sustaining appropriate humanitarian assistance for those seeking refuge from the ongoing violence in the Sudan, as well as development support for vulnerable host communities.

82. The fighting in the Sudan highlights the critical need to prioritize collective security as a shared interest. Governments in the region and the international community must prevent belligerents in the Sudan and other actors from exploiting cross-border affinities between communities and geopolitical competition and thereby widening the crisis. In this regard, I reiterate my call upon the neighbours of the Sudan to take all possible measures to help de-escalate the situation, contribute to political solutions and prevent the conflict from spreading to the broader region.

83. The crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon has entered its seventh year. I remind all parties of their obligation to protect civilians. I urge the authorities to work with all relevant stakeholders towards a political solution to the crisis. I reiterate the unwavering commitment and readiness of the United Nations in supporting and facilitating such a process.

84. Progress has been observed in the Lake Chad basin, due in large part to the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force. Concerns persist, however, with terrorist groups maintaining control over certain areas and the absence of State authority in affected zones. The Task Force faces numerous challenges, notably inadequate funding. I encourage the States in the region and the international community to extend continuous support to the operations of the Task Force, and to provide predictable and sustainable funding to the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region.

85. The demobilization of LRA factions in the Central African Republic, which represented a reduction of approximately two-thirds of LRA forces in just two months, is a significant development in the efforts to end the group's terror. I commend the efforts of the Governments of the Central African Republic and Uganda and of MINUSCA, and all those who have contributed to this success. I urge them to continue their efforts to ensure that the remaining LRA elements are demobilized or apprehended. I also call upon the remaining LRA fighters to lay down their arms and surrender peacefully. I am confident that the international community will continue to support efforts to ensure that LRA is no longer a threat to the people of the region.

86. 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 gratitude to the Multinational Joint Task Force and its troop-contributing countries for their commitment to the service of peace and stability. I am grateful to Gabon for its generous hospitality and support for UNOCA.

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