



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 23 December 2013 ([S/2013/759](#)), the President of the Security Council informed me of the Council's concurrence with my recommendation that the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) be extended until 31 December 2016, and requested that I report to the Council every six months on the implementation of the mandate.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2015. It provides an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in the areas of good offices, the enhancement of subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security, and the promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights and gender mainstreaming. It also outlines the engagement by UNOWA with regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Mano River Union, in order to promote peace and stability in West Africa.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

3. Since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2015/472](#)), there have been a number of key political and security developments in West Africa, particularly in countries in which general elections were held or were scheduled to be held in 2016. In Burkina Faso, the transition process was disrupted on 16 September by a coup d'état led by the elite military Régiment de sécurité présidentielle (RSP). However, following a popular mobilization across the country supported by the regular armed forces, coupled with intense pressure from the international community, the leaders of the coup d'état were compelled to relinquish power. On 23 September, the country's transitional institutions were reinstated, allowing for the resumption of activities aimed at the holding of elections. In Guinea, presidential elections were held on 11 October in a peaceful atmosphere, resulting in the re-election of the incumbent President, Alpha Condé. In Côte d'Ivoire, the presidential elections held on 25 October resulted in the re-election of the incumbent President, Alassane Ouattara. In the Niger, tensions among political actors continued to rise in the lead-up to the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for February 2016. Guinea-Bissau



also experienced political tensions, which threatened to derail the progress made since the country's return to constitutional order in 2014.

4. Several challenges related to drug trafficking and cross-border security threats continued to adversely affect the subregion. Other serious challenges were linked to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin. In that regard, the commencement of joint military operations by the military forces of Cameroon, the Niger and Nigeria under the Multinational Joint Task Force, established to combat Boko Haram, has been a welcome development.

5. Of the three countries most affected by the Ebola outbreak, Sierra Leone was declared free of Ebola transmission on 8 November. However, Guinea recorded a few active cases, while Liberia recorded new cases in November.

A. Political developments

6. In Burkina Faso, peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 29 November, marking the conclusion of the transition period. The elections were monitored by some 16,200 domestic and 876 international observers from the African Union, ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). According to the final results of the presidential elections, announced by the Constitutional Council on 15 December, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré of the Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès (MPP) won, with 53.46 per cent of the vote. He was followed by Zéphirin Diabré of the Union pour le progrès et le changement (UPC), with 29.62 per cent. The preliminary results of the legislative elections, announced by the National Independent Electoral Commission on 2 December, indicated that no party had secured an outright majority in the National Assembly, with MPP obtaining 55 of the 127 seats, followed by UPC, with 33 seats. The final results of the legislative elections have yet to be announced by the Constitutional Council.

7. On 15 September, the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS co-chaired the fourth meeting of the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso, held in Ouagadougou. The meeting was marked by general optimism regarding the completion of the transition process. However, on 16 September members of RSP disrupted a Council of Ministers meeting, detaining Transitional President Michel Kafando, Prime Minister Isaac Zida and several other officials. They dissolved the transitional institutions and established a National Council for Democracy led by General Gilbert Diendéré, a longtime aide to former President Blaise Compaoré. The international community was unanimous in quickly condemning the coup d'état. In response, President Macky Sall of Senegal, in his capacity as Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, and President Boni Yayi of Benin, as the ECOWAS Regional Mediator, launched diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. On 21 September, the armed forces of Burkina Faso intervened, shifting the balance of forces and helping to lay the groundwork for the signing of an accord, which led to the cantonment of RSP and the removal of its heavy weaponry.

8. On 23 September, Transitional President Kafando and the transitional institutions were reinstated. The following day, the authorities announced the disbandment of RSP. On 29 September, the national armed forces launched an assault on the RSP barracks in Ouagadougou, which resulted in the surrender of the

remaining RSP elements, with no casualties. According to the Transitional Government, the coup d'état left 15 dead and 251 wounded. On 5 November, the National Transitional Council approved a constitutional amendment preventing future attempts to revise the presidential term limits.

9. Following the launch of the inter-Guinean dialogue process between the Government and the opposition on 20 August, the parties signed a political accord to revise the voters' register and replace a number of Commissioners on the National Independent Electoral Commission. The accord also contained provisions to replace government appointees with opposition representatives in 128 local councils, in alignment with the results of the 2013 legislative election. It was also agreed that local elections would be held during the first half of 2016. While the agreement was aimed at creating conditions conducive to the organization of the elections, tensions between the Government and the opposition continued. The subsequent electoral campaign period was marred by violent incidents that reportedly left three dead and approximately 100 wounded.

10. The presidential election was held on 11 October. Incumbent President Condé was declared the winner, with 57.8 per cent of the vote, while the main opposition leader, Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG), garnered 31.4 per cent. The election was observed by more than 500 international and 13,000 national observers, including 2,000 women. Observation missions, which included the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and OIF, commended the high turnout and peaceful conduct of the elections, while noting that there were significant logistical and technical challenges. The majority of the presidential candidates competing against President Condé denounced the logistical and operational challenges observed during the polls. On 14 October, Cellou Diallo announced his withdrawal from the presidential race. Moreover, following the announcement by the National Independent Electoral Commission of the provisional electoral results, three opposition candidates filed complaints with the Constitutional Court. Mr. Diallo's UFDG party was not among them. On 31 October, the Constitutional Court rejected all complaints and confirmed the re-election of President Condé.

11. In the Niger, the political scene has been dominated by preparations for presidential and legislative elections, which are scheduled to take place on 21 February 2016. The opposition parties have voiced concerns about the neutrality of the election oversight bodies and called for a revision of the voters' register and the electoral timeline. While the Government has declared its readiness to discuss those issues with the opposition within the framework of the National Council for Political Dialogue, little progress has been made to date. Meanwhile, tensions have increased following the arrest of Hama Amadou, the leader of the opposition Mouvement démocratique nigérien pour une fédération africaine and former Speaker of the National Assembly, following his return to the country on 14 November 2015 from his self-imposed exile in France.

12. In Benin, following the successful legislative and local elections of April and June 2015, the country is now preparing for a presidential election on 28 February 2016. At the request of President Boni Yayi, I dispatched a United Nations electoral needs assessment mission to the country in September to evaluate the country's electoral preparedness. The mission recommended the establishment of frameworks for regular consultations among stakeholders to address outstanding issues, while

taking note of efforts by the national stakeholders to address concerns regarding the quality of voting cards. It also recommended that the United Nations system and other international partners provide political and technical support for the organization of the presidential election in 2016.

13. On 29 October, the Nigerian Senate confirmed the 36 ministerial nominees proposed by President Muhammadu Buhari. They were formally sworn in on 11 November. In accordance with his stated strategy, President Buhari's administration has continued to pursue the criminal investigation and prosecution of former government officials suspected of financial corruption, with some members of the People's Democratic Party, the former governing party, claiming that the actions are politically motivated.

14. In Ghana, the opposition New Patriotic Party submitted a petition to the Electoral Commission calling for a revision of the voters' list, alleging that the register included a significant number of foreign nationals. To address that concern, the Commission held a forum from 29 to 30 October during which political parties and civil society groups presented various position papers on the issue. The forum was moderated by a five-member committee whose recommendations will guide the Commission in its final decision on the register.

15. In Sierra Leone, following the dismissal of former Vice-President Samuel Sam-Sumana by President Ernest Bai Koroma earlier in 2015, the Supreme Court issued a verdict on 9 September confirming the constitutionality of his dismissal. Meanwhile, a proposal by the National Electoral Commission to postpone the local elections planned for 2016, owing to delays in the conduct of a national census, has contributed to speculation as to whether any attempts will be made to postpone the presidential and legislative elections scheduled to be held no later than early 2018. Political parties have also expressed concern about the extension of the Ebola-related state of emergency by Parliament on 27 August, which, they have claimed, may be used as a pretext for postponement of the elections.

16. In the Gambia, the National Assembly adopted an amendment to the electoral bill on 7 July, which substantially increased registration fees for political parties and nomination deposits for contesting candidates. One of the main opposition parties, the United Democratic Party (UDP), described it as a deliberate attempt to thwart the democratic process in the country. Several opposition parties, including UDP, announced their intention to challenge the amended electoral bill.

17. In Mauritania, internal divisions within the ruling political party, the Union for the Republic, led to three cabinet reshuffles in less than a year. Meanwhile, consultations aimed at an inclusive national political dialogue started on 7 September, following the indefinite postponement of the senatorial elections initially scheduled for March. Unlike previous attempts, the current dialogue initiative includes trade unions and representatives of civil society. However, the National Forum for Democracy and Unity, the most prominent coalition of opposition parties, declined to participate amid allegations that the dialogue was intended to pave the way for a constitutional amendment to allow the incumbent President to seek a third term.

18. The prevalence of the Ebola outbreak in the subregion significantly declined during the reporting period. Sierra Leone was declared free of Ebola transmission on 8 November. In Guinea, where transmission was confined to well-defined areas, the last patient was discharged on 16 November, thus starting the countdown towards

declaring the country Ebola-transmission-free. Liberia, after having been declared free of Ebola transmission on 3 September for the second time, witnessed three new cases in November that were quickly contained. The United Nations response in the subregion has been coordinated by the Inter-agency Collaboration on Ebola since the closure of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response on 31 July. Meanwhile, vaccination trials have commenced in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Following the International Ebola Recovery Conference, which I hosted in New York in July, the African Union and the Mano River Union also hosted regional recovery conferences, on 22 July and 12 and 13 August, respectively. In addition, the affected Governments have developed their own national recovery programmes, in addition to the subregional programme proposed by the Mano River Union.

B. Security trends

19. The overall security situation in West Africa remains fragile, characterized mainly by terrorist attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region. Attacks by the Boko Haram terrorist group continued in Nigeria, despite increased military operations. During the reporting period, Boko Haram carried out at least 49 attacks, causing more than 1,200 fatalities. Other notable attacks included multiple bombings in three locations in Abuja on 2 October, which left 18 killed and 41 injured. On 23 October, 45 worshippers were killed as a result of suicide attacks on mosques in Maiduguri, Borno State, and in Yola, Adamawa State. Beyond the north-east, other parts of Nigeria have been affected by intercommunal violence, which has often involved conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.

20. In the Diffa region in the south-eastern part of the Niger, Boko Haram carried out four attacks during the reporting period, killing 36 persons and wounding 20. On 28 October, in response to the attacks, the Government of the Niger extended the state of emergency imposed in Diffa for an additional period of three months. Those security measures have led to restrictions in trade between residents and outside communities and to a rise in food prices. They have also resulted in limited health services, as some civil servants have either abandoned their posts or made requests to transfer to other regions owing to the insecurity.

21. The situation in Diffa has been further compounded by the presence of more than 210,000 internally displaced persons and refugees/returnees from Nigeria, which has stretched basic services. It is estimated that Boko Haram-related violence has led to the displacement of 2.1 million people in northern Nigeria, including 1.2 million children. An additional 265,000 children have also been displaced in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger.

22. To provide impetus to the fight against Boko Haram, President Buhari appointed a new National Security Adviser and Chief of the Armed Forces on 13 July. On 2 September, the Nigerian army secured the border city of Gamboru-Ngala following several days of ground and air operations. Other operations led by the army in September and October resulted in the destruction of several terrorist camps, the capture or surrender of more than 320 militants and the rescue of some 338 people, including at least 138 women and 192 children. Following President Buhari's meeting with President Paul Biya in Cameroon on 29 July, the two leaders agreed to improve security cooperation and intelligence-sharing. Cameroon is also deploying an additional 2,000 troops to its Far North region to fortify security in the area.

23. With regard to the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force, military forces from Cameroon, the Niger and Nigeria commenced joint operations. Benin and Chad are still in the process of deploying their troops. On 14 September, France announced its support for Nigeria within the framework of the Task Force. As part of its pledge to support the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the United States of America has offered two surveillance planes and other military equipment to the Niger and has since begun to train units from the Niger's army. Notably, in October the United States administration announced that it was considering lifting its restrictions on arms sales to Nigeria that had been in effect since 2014.

24. The peace process in Mali continued to be threatened during the reporting period. Despite the peace accord of 20 June between the Government and the coalition of armed movements in northern Mali, there were several violations of the agreement. Moreover, on 20 November the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako was attacked by a group of armed men, which left 20 dead and several injured. The Islamist militant groups Al-Mourabitoun and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for the attack. On 28 November, a deadly attack against a camp of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Kidal claimed the lives of two peacekeepers and one civilian contractor and injured 20 peacekeepers and civilian personnel. The instability in Mali has also had direct repercussions in the subregion. In Burkina Faso, a police post was attacked in Oursi, close to the border between Mali and the Niger, on 23 August. On 9 October, another attack took place against the gendarmerie brigade in Samorogouan, some 30 km from the Malian territory, leaving five people dead and two wounded.

25. The trafficking of drugs and other illicit goods remains a serious concern for the subregion. Between July and October, airport authorities in the region seized more than 100 kg of cocaine, 44 kg of heroin and more than 120 kg of methamphetamine, most of it heading to European and Asian destinations. A courier travelling with 91 kg of methamphetamine was arrested at Lagos airport on 2 October. Two large shipments of khat, previously not traded in the region, were also seized at the Dakar airport in June. In addition, an increase in wildlife trafficking has been noted. Guinea reported the arrest of two traffickers of great apes and other wildlife species in a joint operation conducted by the National Police in cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in August. In a positive development, only two incidences of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea were recorded during the reporting period.

C. Socioeconomic trends

26. In its recent projection, made in October, the International Monetary Fund predicted overall growth in the sub-Saharan region of 3.75 per cent in 2015 and 4.25 per cent in 2016, compared with 5 per cent in 2014. For ECOWAS countries as a whole, the growth rate is estimated at 4 per cent in 2015 and 4.7 per cent in 2016, compared with 6 per cent in 2014. The slowdown is attributed mainly to a decline in commodity prices and a tightening of global financial conditions. Violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and other groups, particularly in the Niger, Nigeria and Mali, has also hindered economic activity, undermining public finance and reducing the possibility of additional revenue from foreign direct investment. Should the violence continue unabated, economic growth will continue to be negatively affected.

27. With the effects of the Ebola outbreak beginning to subside, it is expected that economic growth will pick up over the next few years in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the economy of Sierra Leone is expected to shrink in 2015 by more than 20 per cent owing to the closure of two major iron companies. In Nigeria, the decline in global oil prices and the slowdown of economic activity linked to uncertainties regarding the post-electoral period prompted the Government to take measures to stem the depreciation of the naira. In October, Nigeria announced the suspension of its contributions to ECOWAS until other countries complied with their financial obligations, as part of its ongoing efforts to bolster its national budget. In Côte d'Ivoire, as a result of increased foreign direct investment, the expansion of infrastructure and a resurgence of the agricultural sector, economic growth is forecast at 7 per cent in 2015.

D. Humanitarian trends

28. The humanitarian situation in West Africa continues to be of serious concern. In the Sahel region, more than 20 million people continue to face food insecurity, with 5.8 million children at risk of acute malnutrition. To date, only 40 per cent of the \$1.95 billion humanitarian response plan for the Sahel has been funded, which has resulted in the scaling-down of relief activities. Nonetheless, the ECOWAS Food Crisis Prevention and Management Mechanism announced that projections for agricultural production were encouraging. In north-eastern Nigeria, tens of thousands of households remain at risk of malnutrition owing to Boko Haram-related insecurity that has disrupted farming, fishing, trading and other income-generating activities.

29. The massive population displacement across the Lake Chad Basin countries is placing a further strain on already fragile communities. During the reporting period, the number of internally displaced persons increased to 2.5 million, in addition to some 180,000 refugees in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. Children and women are particularly affected, with an estimated 1.4 million children uprooted from their homes. On 27 October, the Government of Nigeria hosted a two-day conference in Maiduguri, in north-eastern Nigeria, to coordinate humanitarian and rehabilitation efforts in the north-east.

30. The reporting period witnessed a continuing outflow of migrants from West Africa, mainly towards Europe. In that regard, an Extraordinary Summit of ECOWAS held in Dakar on 12 December requested the ECOWAS Commission to contribute to the formulation of a joint African Union position on migration as part of the preparations for the summit on migration convened by the European Union in Valletta on 11 and 12 November. During those preparations, various approaches emerged in relation to the eligibility to benefit from the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa, as well as the establishment of reception centres, among other things.

31. In September, heavy flooding occurred in Burkina Faso, the Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, affecting more than 300,000 people and killing at least 39. In Sierra Leone, thousands of victims remain housed in temporary shelters. Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria have also been affected by an increase in outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza. On 25 September, in a positive development, the World Health Organization announced that polio had been eradicated from Nigeria.

32. In all Ebola-affected countries, schools have fully resumed operation. However, the aftershocks of the outbreak continue to be felt in the education and health sectors. Studies released on Sierra Leone show a significant drop in the number of women with access to maternal health care and a 30 per cent increase in maternal deaths. In response, the United Nations Population Fund conducted a mission to the three affected countries and supported the Mano River Midwifery Response initiative, in addition to promoting youth employment generation. Furthermore, an assessment conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme in late June in the affected countries revealed that food insecurity affected nearly 1.9 million people in Guinea, more than 2.5 million in Sierra Leone and 640,000 in Liberia.

E. Trends on human rights

33. The overall human rights situation in the subregion remains fragile. The reporting period saw the continuation of the indiscriminate killing of civilians by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region and an increase in the number of suicide bombings carried out by women and girls. 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](#)). It is indicated in the report that the group has targeted civilian objects, including schools, mosques, churches, prisons, hospitals and markets, and has contaminated water sources. Moreover, the report raises concerns about human rights violations in the context of national military counter-insurgency operations against Boko Haram, such as the lack of protection of civilians and the killing of civilians during those operations, including the use of civilian vigilantes. Also outlined in the report are violations such as enforced disappearances, arrests, detention and ill-treatment of suspected Boko Haram members by national security forces.

34. Meanwhile, infringements of the rights of freedom of association and expression, especially in the context of electoral processes, also continued in the subregion. In Burkina Faso, in addition to the deaths and injuries reported during the coup d'état of 16 September, many civilians lost their livelihoods owing to the destruction of their property. Moreover, there were several reports of journalists receiving death threats from RSP. A military prosecutor is currently investigating the events related to the coup. Furthermore, the transitional authorities have established two independent commissions to investigate the popular uprising in October 2014 and the coup in September 2015.

35. In Guinea, according to media reports, security forces killed at least three persons and wounded eight during the electoral period. Widespread vandalism and destruction of property were also reported.

36. On 20 October in Sierra Leone, President Koroma launched the Independent Police Complaints Board with a mandate to protect civilians from abusive police practices. In another development, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists protested the closure of media outlets by the Independent Media Commission, describing as illegal the Commission's termination of the popular radio programme *Monologue*. Civil society representatives have also criticized the renewal of the

Ebola-related state of emergency, describing it as a tool for restricting freedom of expression and assembly.

37. In the Gambia, the Director of the independent radio station Teranga FM was charged with seven counts of sedition in August, following two periods of detention by national security agents that exceeded constitutional limits. On a positive note, two individuals who had been on trial since December 2014 for “homosexual acts” were acquitted in July. Also in July, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed the progress made in the country since 2005 in undertaking legislative reforms, including with respect to the Trafficking in Persons Act (2007), the Legal Aid Act (2008), the Women’s Act (2010), the Domestic Violence Act (2013) and the Sexual Offences Act (2013). The Committee also recommended the establishment of an independent national human rights institution. Furthermore, on 24 November, in a presidential decree, President Yahya Jammeh Babil Mansa outlawed female genital mutilation, with immediate effect.

38. In Senegal, the trial of the former President of Chad, Hissène Habré, charged with crimes against humanity, torture and war crimes, commenced on 20 July at the Extraordinary African Chambers. In October, the National Transitional Council of Burkina Faso established the High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity to investigate more than 5,000 unsolved criminal cases dating from 1960 to the present. The first report on the investigation into the death of former President Thomas Sankara was released to the press, resulting in the indictment of nine individuals, including several former members of RSP.

39. On 11 August, the National Assembly of Mauritania adopted a new anti-slavery law, in line with the road map approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2014. On 20 August, an appeals court upheld the two-year prison sentence imposed on the award-winning human rights activist and presidential candidate Biram Ould Abeid and two of his colleagues.

F. Trends on gender issues

40. During the reporting period, progress was made on the inclusion of women in political and electoral processes, with several countries appointing women to cabinet and other senior decision-making positions. In Mali, a law stipulating a 30 per cent quota for women in elected and nominated positions was adopted on 12 November. In Guinea-Bissau, three women were appointed to the key ministries of Defence, Justice and Health. In the Niger, a woman was elected Vice-President of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Women’s civil society groups have also been actively involved in the electoral process in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea, notably through the management of “women’s situation rooms” set up during the elections. Moreover, political parties have nominated women candidates to presidential elections in those three countries.

41. National efforts aimed at gender mainstreaming continued in a number of countries. Côte d’Ivoire and the Niger established national observatories for gender promotion. Meanwhile, the National Transitional Council of Burkina Faso adopted a law on the prevention of violence against women and girls, while the Ministry of Defence of Ghana took steps to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. In Mali, four women were nominated to the

15-member Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, including one to the position of Vice-President.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. Good offices and special assignments by my Special Representative

Burkina Faso

42. On 15 September, my Special Representative for West Africa co-chaired the fourth meeting of the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso, and he was present in Ouagadougou when the coup d'état of 16 September occurred. In close coordination with ECOWAS and the African Union, he convened an urgent meeting with the international community in Ouagadougou to discuss the unfolding developments and agree on a common position. Furthermore, a joint communiqué of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union was issued, strongly condemning the coup and demanding the immediate release of the detained transitional authorities. On 22 September, my Special Representative attended the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS in Abuja, which discussed the situation in Burkina Faso. He also attended the reinstatement ceremony of Transitional President Kafando on 23 September, where he reaffirmed the unwavering support of the United Nations for the transition process.

43. Following the reinstatement of the transitional institutions, my Special Representative returned to Ouagadougou on 25 and 26 October to assess the country's preparedness for the presidential and legislative elections. During his visit, he held consultations with President Kafando, Prime Minister Zida, the President of the National Transitional Council, the President of the National Independent Electoral Commission and other national and international partners. On 27 November, my Special Representative travelled to Burkina Faso in advance of the general elections to extend his good offices to promote conditions conducive to the holding of peaceful elections. He was supported by political and human rights officers temporarily deployed to Burkina Faso to monitor political and human rights developments.

Guinea

44. Since the resumption on 18 June of the political dialogue process chaired by the Minister of Justice, my Special Representative has continued to facilitate consultations between the ruling party and the opposition. On 20 August, an agreement was reached paving the way for the holding of the presidential elections. Amid persistent disagreements over the implementation of the agreement, my Special Representative continued to engage national stakeholders to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections. In the run-up to the election, he conducted several missions to Guinea to defuse tensions and build confidence regarding the electoral process.

45. In addition, my Special Representative maintained an active presence in the country during and after the elections, meeting with the women's situation room, human rights groups and civil society organizations. Prior to the announcement of provisional results, he convened a consultative meeting of international and

diplomatic partners and urged political actors to pursue legal channels to resolve any disputes that might arise. My Special Representative will continue to work with national and international actors to support the implementation of the 20 August agreement, in advance of the local elections scheduled to be held no later than June 2016.

46. In view of the concerns expressed by Mano River Union member countries regarding potential unrest in Guinea, my Special Representative travelled to Monrovia on 17 October to brief President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on challenges surrounding the electoral process and to discuss the way forward. In that connection, it was agreed that the Heads of State of the Mano River Union would undertake a joint official visit to Guinea as soon as possible.

Nigeria

47. From 26 July to 1 August, my Special Representative, accompanied by the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel, travelled to Abuja, where he established contact with the newly appointed chiefs of the security services and discussed challenges pertaining to the Boko Haram-related violence. During the reporting period, he also met with the Director of the Nigeria Foundation for the Support of Victims of Terrorism with a view to enhancing cooperation.

Niger

48. In a climate of mistrust among political stakeholders in the lead-up to the general elections to be held in the Niger in 2016, my Special Representative travelled to the country on 6 September for consultations with national stakeholders. He met with President Mahamadou Issoufou, Prime Minister Brigi Raffini, political parties, the Independent National Electoral Commission, the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties, the National Council for Political Dialogue and civil society organizations. During his visit, he urged all parties to engage in an inclusive dialogue process.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

49. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission continued to make progress towards the complete demarcation of the land boundary. A joint technical team of surveyors, geospatial information officers and engineers from the two parties, Cameroon and Nigeria, along with the United Nations support team, was deployed to north-western Cameroon (the central area of the land border) to supervise the second phase of the construction and emplacement of 231 pillars. In preparation for the pillar emplacement, the United Nations support team coordinated sensitization missions to both countries to ensure that the local communities accepted and complied with the process. The parties also held technical planning meetings in Abuja and Yaoundé in November and December 2015 for the construction of the remaining 1,800 pillars and to resolve other outstanding issues. Meanwhile, preparations for confidence-building initiatives targeting populations affected by the demarcation were ongoing. In response to a request by the Government of Nigeria, the United Nations support team conducted a mission to Abuja to plan the accompanying socioeconomic projects.

50. In his capacity as Chair of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, my Special Representative held individual consultations with the President of Nigeria and the Prime Minister of Cameroon, which led to the issuance of a joint communiqué in

Yaoundé in July 2015 aimed at renewing efforts to complete the demarcation of their common land boundary.

51. Collaboration also continued with the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The United Nations provided technical support to the Commission's secretariat for the design and implementation of socioeconomic projects empowering women and youth. The United Nations also assisted the Commission in preparations for the rehabilitation of the pillars in Lake Chad.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel

52. In close coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, UNOWA continued to support the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. UNOWA supported the panel on governance and security issues at the high-level regional consultation meeting held in Dakar in October. Several Prime Ministers and Ministers of Sahel countries participated in the meeting, which discussed the findings of a preliminary report and endorsed an in-depth study on the Sahel, which is focused on its demography, economy, social structures, governance, security and natural resources as well as climate change.

53. UNOWA, as the convener of the regional working group on security under the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, continued to support the implementation of the Strategy, in consultation with the implementing agencies. Those agencies include the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for capacity-building to combat drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism and corruption; the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, for technical assistance to enhance small arms control, physical security and stockpile management in the Sahel; and the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism, for the establishment of an observatory regarding violent extremism and radicalization in the Sahel.

Strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union

54. Owing to the focus on post-Ebola recovery efforts, little progress was made in implementing the cross-border security strategy of the Mano River Union. Nonetheless, the joint border security and confidence-building units established under the strategy continued to operate, with joint patrols undertaken along the Guinea-Sierra Leone border. With respect to Ebola, the Union held several meetings on the definition of lessons learned and the development of frameworks for cooperation in the area of Ebola recovery.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

55. Progress in the implementation of the decisions adopted in Yaoundé in June 2013 on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea remained slow. On 1 September, my Special Representative, taking stock of the challenges in that regard, chaired a meeting in Nigeria on security in the Gulf of Guinea. At the meeting, stakeholders noted that the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and

Security in the Gulf of Guinea, located in Yaoundé and inaugurated in September 2014, had yet to become fully operational owing to persistent staffing and logistical challenges. Similarly, Zone E of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre, covering Benin, the Niger, Nigeria and Togo and inaugurated in March 2015, had yet to receive staff, funding and equipment. Also noted at the meeting was a lack of cooperation among major stakeholders.

56. On a positive note, the ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff, at its 35th ordinary meeting, held in Dakar in September, decided to include Mauritania in the Gulf of Guinea maritime security structure. The meeting authorized an assessment mission to accelerate the full operationalization of Zone E and also endorsed Cabo Verde as the host of the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre for Zone G. Furthermore, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, at a meeting held from 24 to 26 November, the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea urged partners to intensify their cooperation with the private sector and to enhance their collaboration with international organizations, including UNODC, INTERPOL, UNOWA and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

Security sector reform

57. UNOWA continued to engage with the ECOWAS Commission to accelerate the development and adoption of the ECOWAS security sector reform and governance policy framework. On 22 November, with the support of the United Nations, ECOWAS and the African Union Commission held a joint seminar in Bamako aimed at enhancing institutional coordination on security sector reform support through joint planning and review.

58. In Guinea, my Special Representative introduced the new Senior Security Sector Reform Adviser to President Condé on 10 October. At the President's request, the Technical Follow-Up Commission and all five technical sectoral committees on security sector reform, led by the Senior Security Sector Reform Adviser, have resumed the holding of meetings, the first of which was chaired by President Condé on 8 December.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

59. Implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative gained traction in the second half of 2015. The transnational organized crime units in Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone have increased their operations and conducted joint regional and international investigations. A new intelligence database was installed and the construction of a transnational organized crime unit office launched in Freetown. The European Union-funded ECOWAS/UNODC project for the implementation of the ECOWAS regional action plan on illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa (2008-2015) began in July, marking significant progress after a six-year delay.

60. On 24 November in Bissau, my Special Representative chaired a meeting of the high-level policy committee of the West Africa Coast Initiative aimed at providing strategic coordination and guidance for the ECOWAS regional action plan, as well as new strategic orientation for its extension until 2017. The ECOWAS Commission and member countries of the Initiative, including Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone, reviewed the status of implementation of the action plan, agreed on follow-up actions and endorsed

recommendations submitted by the Initiative's programme advisory committee led by UNODC, which had met the day before, also in Bissau. Both meetings were organized in close cooperation and with the support of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

Counter-terrorism and Boko Haram

61. In response to the continuing threat posed by Boko Haram, UNOWA remained actively engaged with the leadership of the Multinational Joint Task Force. A memorandum of understanding between the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission was signed on 16 October in Addis Ababa as a step towards the full operationalization of the regional force. The memorandum outlines the respective responsibilities of the African Union Commission and the secretariat of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in the implementation of the strategic concept of operations of the Task Force.

62. UNOWA, together with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and other partners, participated in a mission to Nigeria from 13 to 16 October led by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, to review progress made in the implementation of counter-terrorism recommendations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for its part, is working with community radio networks in Mali and the Niger to counter youth radicalization. The Task Force and UNESCO are also undertaking joint activities in Burkina Faso to prevent violent extremism. In the Niger, UNOWA is engaging with the Peacebuilding Fund to develop socioeconomic activities targeting youth to prevent their participation in illicit activities, including those of a terrorist nature.

63. On 4 September, UNOWA, together with MINUSMA and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, participated in the first meeting of Defence Ministers in Bamako, as part of the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region. Participants discussed modalities for the enhancement of operational cooperation among countries, especially through the systematization of joint border patrols and the establishment of mixed units involving military contingents.

C. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

64. As part of efforts to cultivate partnerships with civil society actors on human rights and governance issues, UNOWA supported the non-governmental organization forum held during the fifty-seventh session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in Banjul in early November. My Special Representative participated in the event, during which he emphasized the commitment of the United Nations to human rights as an element essential for peace and security.

65. On 1 September, UNOWA organized a consultative meeting on the role of judicial institutions in the management and resolution of electoral disputes in West Africa. Together with the West Africa Regional Office of OHCHR, it conducted an awareness-raising session on the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative, which places human rights protection at the forefront of United Nations operations. In preparation for the elections in Burkina Faso, UNOWA and OHCHR

conducted a joint mission to assess the political and human rights situation in the country.

66. At a workshop conducted from 4 to 6 August in Abuja, UNOWA shared its experiences with respect to “Strengthening the role of women, young people and community leaders in countering violent extremism in West Africa”. The workshop was aimed at fostering cooperation among community leaders, youth and regional stakeholders. It was intended as the first in a series of future engagements to promote dialogue with affected communities and forge partnerships among UNOWA, ECOWAS and civil society organizations in the fight against terrorism. UNOWA also coordinated missions of subregional women leaders to Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea with a view to the establishment of women’s situation rooms.

67. On 3 November, my Special Representative met with subregional women leaders in Dakar to assess achievements and challenges in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The event, which was organized in cooperation with ECOWAS, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations peacekeeping missions and the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa, recommended the establishment of an ECOWAS high-level women’s contact group.

D. Inter-institutional cooperation

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

68. During the reporting period, my Special Representative chaired two consultative meetings with the regional directors’ team, discussing security and humanitarian issues in the Lake Chad Basin region as well as development issues and the impact of climate change. On 11 December, my Special Representative chaired the 28th high-level meeting of the Heads of West Africa-based United Nations peace missions in Abidjan, which discussed electoral developments, national reconciliation and the threat of violent extremism, as well as areas for cooperation among the entities in question.

Cooperation with regional, subregional and international partners

69. Throughout the reporting period, UNOWA continued its collaboration with ECOWAS and other regional institutions. The co-chairmanship of the International Follow-up and Support Group for the Transition in Burkina Faso by my Special Representative, the African Union and ECOWAS helped to ensure coherence among regional and international stakeholders in supporting the resolution of the crises faced by Burkina Faso during the transition period. In Guinea, my Special Representative worked closely with ECOWAS, OIF and other international partners to defuse tensions and build confidence with respect to the electoral process.

70. In July, UNOWA participated in the General Assembly of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions held in Praia. The meeting, which brought together representatives of West African electoral management bodies, reviewed lessons learned and best practices in relation to electoral dispute resolution and the participation of youth and women. UNOWA also participated in a joint early warning assessment mission to Sierra Leone in October, which resulted in the

recommendation that the good offices of ECOWAS be extended to support the country's peacebuilding process.

71. From 11 to 13 November, UNOWA, supported by the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, organized a mediation workshop with the ECOWAS Political Directorate in Abuja to share experiences regarding mediation processes and review lessons learned from the joint responses by the United Nations and ECOWAS to crises triggered by disputes over electoral and constitutional issues. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission also participated, providing an opportunity for the workshop to address issues related to confidence-building in the context of cross-border challenges. At its conclusion, participants finalized an ECOWAS-United Nations cooperation programme outlining joint activities to be carried out in 2016.

72. UNOWA continued to facilitate the exchange of information with subregional agencies. In that regard, it held a working-level meeting at the secretariat of the Mano River Union to discuss the cooperation framework for the implementation of the Union's cross-border strategy. Moreover, UNOWA remained engaged with the Peacebuilding Commission to draw international attention to the peacebuilding-related implications of the Ebola outbreak.

73. UNOWA continued to support the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa. With the support of UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme, it held three thematic exchanges with women leaders and national representatives of the working groups from each country on the topics "Women's participation in decision-making and governance", "Extremism, sexual violence and displaced persons" and "Assessment of women's situation rooms".

Observations and recommendations

74. The West Africa subregion continued to face a number of serious challenges to peace and security during the reporting period. Of particular concern were the indiscriminate attacks by Boko Haram and its destabilizing humanitarian, human rights and security impacts on the countries of the Lake Chad Basin, the continuing threat to the Malian peace process and the repercussions of the Ebola outbreak. Nonetheless, there were several positive developments, such as the conduct of peaceful and credible presidential, parliamentary and local elections in several countries and the progress made in achieving Ebola-transmission-free status in some countries of the Mano River Union. In that context, the excellent collaboration among the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations through joint good offices/mediation visits and early warning missions was instrumental in facilitating inclusive political dialogue, promoting democratic principles and helping to prevent an escalation of tensions or a relapse into conflict.

75. I commend the maturity displayed by the people of Burkina Faso in the wake of the aborted coup d'état in September. I welcome the successful holding of presidential elections on 29 November, and commend the people of Burkina Faso for their peaceful participation in the electoral process that marked the end of the transition period. I welcome the constructive role played by regional stakeholders leading to a reinstatement of the transitional institutions, which allowed the elections to be held with minimum delay. I now urge the authorities of Burkina Faso to continue the efforts made in reforming the security sector, and to ensure a fair trial for those arrested in relation to the coup d'état.

76. I welcome the peaceful conduct of the presidential election in Guinea on 11 October, which marked an important milestone in the country's democratic consolidation. I call upon Guinean stakeholders to continue the process of political dialogue and to implement the 20 August agreement in order to permit the holding of local elections in a timely manner. I also welcome the establishment of a new Government in Nigeria, and am pleased to note its commitment to fighting corruption, creating an environment conducive to equitable growth and addressing insecurity in the country.

77. I remain deeply concerned about the continuing attacks of Boko Haram, including the increased use of suicide bombers, in the Lake Chad Basin region. While I note the significant advances made by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, including the rescue of a significant number of women and girls from captivity, I remain concerned about the frequency and intensity of the attacks carried out by Boko Haram against civilian populations. I welcome the progress made in the operationalization of the Multinational Joint Task Force, including the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union. It is imperative that Member States lend support to the Task Force to ensure that it becomes fully operational as soon as possible. In the meantime, I continue to stress that the Task Force and national security authorities must act in full compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law when conducting counter-terrorism operations.

78. The United Nations remains committed to working closely with the African Union, ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to strengthen regional cooperation to address cross-border security threats and prevent the spread of violent extremism and terrorism. I urge ECOWAS and the Commission to hold the planned summit of Heads of State to address the root causes of the emergence of Boko Haram, which provide the conditions conducive to its spread. In addition to the military response, it is crucial that the affected countries develop strategies that address the underlying socioeconomic grievances of marginalized communities. The United Nations country teams in the Niger and Nigeria, with the support of my Special Representative, will continue to support national and regional stabilization efforts, as well as support those countries with humanitarian assistance. In that regard, I call upon Member States to contribute generously to United Nations humanitarian assistance programmes in those countries.

79. I note the ongoing consultations in Ghana on contested electoral issues, and encourage political actors to continue pursuing dialogue. With respect to Benin and Niger, I call upon national stakeholders, with the support of international partners, to create conditions conducive to the holding of inclusive, credible and peaceful elections. With regard to Togo, I urge national stakeholders to continue their efforts aimed at the consolidation of democratic institutions and electoral reform. In respect of Guinea-Bissau, I call upon national leaders to work to sustain stability and advance socioeconomic growth in the interest of the nation and its people. I take note of the efforts to eradicate slavery in Mauritania, and urge the Government to fully honour its international obligations in that regard by implementing applicable national regulations and taking additional measures as required.

80. I welcome the progress made by the Extraordinary African Chambers in the trial of former President Hissène Habré of Chad, displaying the region's commitment to

fighting impunity. I appreciate the role of the Government of Senegal in the holding of the trial, and call upon other Governments in the region to ensure access to justice for victims of political violence, including in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

81. I am pleased to note the progress made in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone with respect to Ebola virus disease. I encourage the Governments of the affected countries to draw lessons from the outbreak with a view to addressing underlying structural issues and further strengthening their governance systems. Cognizant of the burden of stigma associated with survivors, I urge those Governments to also address the livelihood needs of vulnerable groups, including women and girls, and to ensure full respect for fundamental human rights and basic freedoms.

82. I welcome the progress made in the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative. I strongly encourage Member States and partners to further support the full operationalization of the transnational crime units and the implementation of the ECOWAS regional action plan on illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa. The emergence of new forms of drugs and trafficking has highlighted the need for effective institutional response mechanisms and an increase in political will to combat this scourge.

83. While we have witnessed a decline in the number of incidents of maritime piracy, Member States should not relent in their efforts to set up and operationalize the maritime safety and security architecture in the Gulf of Guinea, which remains constrained by inadequate logistics and funding. UNOWA, in collaboration with UNOCA, will continue to assist the Central and West African subregions in mobilizing resources to achieve those objectives. I commend the efforts made to strengthen cross-border cooperation initiatives, such as the joint border security and confidence-building units established by the Mano River Union. I call upon the countries of the region to further enhance cross-border security cooperation and implement existing strategies to that end.

84. I commend the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for its continued efforts to implement the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002. I welcome the meeting between the Heads of State of Cameroon and Nigeria held in July and their renewed efforts to complete the demarcation of their common land boundary. I note that the Commission has entered a phase crucial to the completion of its mandate, focusing on providing support in the border demarcation as well as carrying out confidence-building activities. I encourage the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria to continue their collaboration to increase efforts aimed at the swift completion of the border demarcation. My Special Representative will continue to provide his good offices to help resolve outstanding issues and assist the two parties in mobilizing resources.

85. I appreciate the contribution made by women to the consolidation of peace, notably their active involvement in the aforementioned electoral processes, including the establishment of women's situation rooms. I call upon countries in the region and partners to further create an enabling environment for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security.

86. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of West African countries, the ECOWAS Commission, the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Mano River Union for their continued cooperation with the United Nations in efforts to address challenges to peace and security in West

Africa. I also wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, as well as the staff of UNOWA, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and all United Nations entities in West Africa, for their efforts to advance peace and security in the region.
