



Security Council

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Twenty-seventh progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1962 (2010), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) until 30 June 2011 and requested me to provide a midterm report on the situation on the ground no later than 31 March 2011. The report covers major developments since my report of 23 November 2010 (S/2010/600).

II. Second round of the presidential election

2. In my previous progress report, I noted that the first round of the presidential elections, held on 31 October 2010, had marked a historic day for Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Laurent Gbagbo of the La Majorité Présidentielle (LMP) alliance and Mr. Alassane Ouattara of the Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP) alliance had emerged as the front runners. As neither of them had garnered an absolute majority of votes, a run-off election was to be conducted. On 9 November, then-President Gbagbo had signed a decree setting 28 November as the date for the second round of the presidential elections.

3. The distribution of electoral materials throughout the country and the retrieval of tally sheets in a secure and timely manner from the 81 departmental offices, as well as their delivery to the Independent Electoral Commission headquarters in Abidjan, remained major logistical challenges for the run-off elections. UNOCI initiated two major logistical operations to support the efforts of the Independent Electoral Commission. The first operation consisted of dispatching electoral kits to the various departments in the country; the second was the delivery of sensitive electoral materials, including ballot papers.

4. On 28 November, at the closing of the polls, UNOCI began to transport tally sheets from the regional offices to the headquarters of the Independent Electoral Commission. This was completed on 1 December, with more than 20,000 tally sheets transported by the United Nations. As the tally sheets arrived in Abidjan, my Special Representative received copies, in line with the provisions of article 59 of the electoral law. UNOCI mobilized more than 400 vehicles in order to retrieve tally sheets directly from the polling stations, while the United Nations Development



Programme rented 250 vehicles. The United Nations Office for Project Services also contributed to this logistical effort. Furthermore, my Special Representative obtained additional resources from the European Union, Japan and Switzerland to enable the presidents of the polling stations in the regions to collect the tally sheets. UNOCI also provided security for the transportation of electoral materials before and after the elections.

Security arrangements for the second round of the presidential elections

5. Under the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, the Integrated Command Centre was tasked with providing security during the elections. Given the limited capacity of the Centre, the Government mobilized other national security forces to assist with the provision of security. To that end, on 14 November, then-President Gbagbo signed a decree stipulating that personnel of the Forces de défense et de sécurité (FDS) would be deployed throughout the country, including in the north, during the second round of the elections, under the supervision of the Integrated Command Centre. A total of 1,500 elements of the national army and 500 elements of the Forces nouvelles were deployed in the north, while 500 elements of FDS and 1,500 elements of the Forces nouvelles were deployed in the west. The total number of Ivorian security forces (police and military) assigned to secure the run-off elections was 11,390.

6. The UNOCI military component, together with the French Operation Licorne force and the Integrated Command Centre, jointly formulated a security plan for the elections. In addition, UNOCI military and police personnel were present at the Centre headquarters in Yamoussoukro and at the 10 regional command posts to effectively monitor the security situation and coordinate the response. UNOCI police officers were also present at the Ministry of the Interior operations centre in Abidjan. This coordination arrangement made it possible to transmit promptly to UNOCI all information reported about incidents and situations at polling stations and the response by the national security forces. This enabled the mission to analyse all incidents that occurred on polling day.

Conduct of the second round of the presidential elections

7. More than 300 international observers, including those from the African Union, the Carter Centre, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, were deployed to observe the run-off election.

8. As had been the case with the first round of the elections, the presidential run-off election of 28 November was preceded by a series of meetings between international and national observer missions and my Special Representative. The meetings were aimed at achieving a common understanding of the mutually reinforcing roles of international observation and certification. The observations of the international observers constituted a key element in certifying the outcome of the elections, given their countrywide presence and their long-standing experience in assessing electoral processes.

9. The one-week official campaign for the second round of the presidential elections was conducted from 20 to 26 November in an atmosphere of virulent verbal attacks by both sides. However, a face-to-face debate on 25 November

between the two opponents, Mr. Gbagbo and Mr. Ouattara, was held in a courteous atmosphere. During the debate, the candidates reiterated their commitment not to unilaterally proclaim themselves the winner of the polls and reaffirmed their pledge to accept the results.

10. On 27 November, then-President Gbagbo signed a decree imposing a curfew, ostensibly as a preventive security measure aimed at deterring violence during the elections. On the same day, the Facilitator of the Ivorian peace process, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, visited Côte d'Ivoire to help the main stakeholders, including then-President Gbagbo, Mr. Ouattara and then-Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, to resolve the controversy arising from the imposition of the curfew. An agreement was reached that the curfew, which Mr. Ouattara's supporters saw as a means to scare voters away from going out to vote, would be lifted the next day. However, the agreement was not implemented by then-President Gbagbo. The polling was conducted as scheduled, on 28 November.

11. Three hours after the polls had closed on 28 November, the then-Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Désiré Tagro, appeared on State television, Radiodiffusion-Télévision ivoirienne (RTI), to denounce what he described as violence committed by the Forces nouvelles against supporters of then-President Gbagbo in the centre, northern and western regions of the country. In reaction, the spokesperson for then-Prime Minister Soro condemned Mr. Tagro's statement as "premature, incomplete and dangerously partisan". At a press conference held on 28 November, the spokesperson for LMP, Mr. Pascal Affi N'Guessan, who is also the leader of Mr. Gbagbo's Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) party, alleged that the conduct of the second round of the presidential elections had not been transparent in the north. In a press conference held the same day, RHDP highlighted incidents of alleged irregularities observed in the western part of the country. Meanwhile, the Independent Electoral Commission announced that, for reasons beyond its control, it could not release the partial results of the elections as planned, indicating that they would be announced as from 29 November.

12. In another press conference, held on 29 November, Mr. Affi N'Guessan urged the Independent Electoral Commission to nullify the results received from the regions of Denguélé, Savanes and Worodougou, all located in the north, which had voted predominantly for Mr. Ouattara. He reiterated that in those regions the elections had not been transparent and denounced what he termed "serious violations" of the right to vote carried out by the Forces nouvelles. Meanwhile, national television repeatedly broadcast the 29 November press conference of LMP condemning "acts of violence committed by the Forces nouvelles". During a 30 November press conference, the spokesperson for RHDP, Mr. Albert Toikeusse Mabri, denounced what he called "a series of manipulations" carried out by then-President Gbagbo to confiscate power.

13. On the evening of 30 November, the spokesperson for the Independent Electoral Commission, Mr. Bamba Yacouba, was physically prevented from announcing the partial results of the run-off election by Commissioners representing LMP. The scuffle was witnessed by journalists who had assembled at the headquarters of the Independent Electoral Commission to await the announcement of the partial results. On 1 December, the Independent Electoral Commission submitted the provisional results to the Constitutional Council in accordance with the electoral law.

Proclamation of the results of the second round of the presidential elections by Ivorian national institutions

14. On 2 December, the Chair of the Independent Electoral Commission, Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, announced the provisional results of the second round of the presidential elections from the Golf Hotel, in Abidjan. He announced that candidate Alassane Ouattara had garnered 54.10 per cent of the votes, while candidate Laurent Gbagbo had received 45.90 per cent. The voter turnout had been 81 per cent. Later that day, the President of the Constitutional Council, Mr. Paul Yao N'Dré, declared the announcement by the Independent Electoral Commission to be null and void, on the grounds that the Commission had missed the deadline for announcing the provisional results.

15. On 3 December, the President of the Constitutional Council proclaimed the final results of the presidential elections, with Laurent Gbagbo having received 51.45 per cent of the vote and Alassane Ouattara 48.55 per cent, and with a voter turnout of 71.28 per cent. Invoking alleged irregularities, including the use of violence, which had prevented people from voting, and the absence of the signatures of LMP representatives on the tally sheets, the Constitutional Council cancelled the election results received from seven departments in the north of the country — Bouaké, Dabakala, Katiola, Boundiali, Ferkessédougou, Korhogo and Séguéla — all of which had voted overwhelmingly for Mr. Ouattara.

Certification of the results of the second round of the presidential elections by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General

16. On 3 December, following the proclamation of the election results by the Constitutional Council, my Special Representative held a press conference during which he explicitly certified the outcome of the second round of the elections as announced by the Independent Electoral Commission. The certification was based on the five-criteria framework referred to in paragraph 32 of my sixteenth progress report (S/2008/250). My Special Representative pointed out that the final results announced by the President of the Constitutional Council, which had proclaimed Mr. Gbagbo the winner of the second round, had not been based on facts. He also indicated that, even if the complaints of Mr. Gbagbo had been found valid, candidate Alassane Ouattara would still be the winner of the polls.

17. As he had with respect to the first round of the elections, my Special Representative used three methods to certify the results of the second round. First, he ascertained the voting trends on polling day. Secondly, he collected election results from the 19 regional electoral commissions, where 19 UNOCI personnel were present. Thirdly, a tabulation centre was established at UNOCI headquarters to compile and analyse the data from the copies of the tally sheets that my Special Representative had received in accordance with the electoral law.

18. The three methods outlined above enabled my Special Representative to arrive at his conclusion regarding the outcome of the second round of the presidential elections. That conclusion was based on the detailed analysis of more than 20,000 tally sheets that UNOCI had received from the Ivorian polling authorities. In addition, he examined the signatures on the tally sheets to determine whether fraud or manipulation had occurred. He also took into account the complaints, which then-President Gbagbo had submitted to the Constitutional Council. To this end, he reviewed all the tally sheets from the departments in question, finding that only a

few of them lacked the signatures of then-President Gbagbo's representatives. The reported irregularities would therefore not alter the outcome of the second round of the elections as announced by the Independent Electoral Commission.

19. Reports by the UNOCI police component and personnel deployed at polling stations throughout the country, as well as the statements made by the observer missions, indicated that the second round of the elections had been conducted in a generally free and fair atmosphere, despite a few incidents — some of them violent — in the western and northern parts of the country. Overall, fewer acts of violence were reported in the north than in the west.

20. In a statement issued on 29 November, the ECOWAS observer mission concluded that the polling had been conducted in a generally free and transparent manner, while noting isolated security incidents in the west of the country and calling on the presidential candidates to respect the outcome of the election. The African Union observer mission also issued a statement, on 30 November, describing the conditions in which the polling had taken place as satisfactory, and called for respect for the election results. On 25 January, the European Union electoral observation mission published its final report, which pointed out, *inter alia*, that the irregularities observed during the second round had not affected the results and that the decision of the Constitutional Council to cancel the votes of some departments had been highly questionable. In addition, the report noted that the certification process carried out by my Special Representative, in accordance with his mandate, had corresponded to what the observation mission itself had observed on the ground in Côte d'Ivoire.

21. On 4 December, Mr. Gbagbo took an oath of office before the Constitutional Council in Abidjan. Meanwhile, Mr. Ouattara, in a letter dated 3 December to the Constitutional Council, explained that, owing to the prevailing exceptional circumstances, he was unable to take the oath of office before the Council and therefore was taking his oath in writing. On 4 December, the outgoing Prime Minister, Mr. Soro, submitted his resignation to President Ouattara and was reappointed to the same office by the President. On 5 December, Prime Minister Soro appointed a 13-member Cabinet, including one woman, at the Golf Hotel, the temporary seat of President Ouattara's Government. On 7 December, Mr. Gbagbo also appointed a new "government", headed by Mr. Gilbert Aké N'Gbo, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cocody in Abidjan, and comprising 33 "ministers", including 7 women, 2 "ministers-delegate" and 4 "state secretaries".

International response to the post-electoral crisis

22. On 3 December, I endorsed the certification by my Special Representative in a statement and congratulated Mr. Ouattara on his victory. My declaration was echoed by, *inter alia*, the High Representative of the European Union and the Presidents of France and the United States of America.

23. During an extraordinary session held in Abuja on 7 December, the ECOWAS heads of State endorsed the outcome announced by the Independent Electoral Commission and certified by my Special Representative, and recognized Mr. Ouattara as President-elect. In a communiqué issued the same day, ECOWAS called on Mr. Gbagbo to yield power without delay and suspended Côte d'Ivoire from the Community until the democratically elected President assumed power. On 8 December, the United Nations Security Council welcomed the decisions of

ECOWAS and called on all Ivorian stakeholders to respect the outcome of the election. On 9 December, the African Union Peace and Security Council endorsed the ECOWAS position and issued a communiqué recognizing Mr. Ouattara as President-elect, urging Mr. Gbagbo to facilitate, without delay, the transfer of power to President-elect Ouattara and suspending the participation of Côte d'Ivoire in the African Union.

24. Meanwhile, the European Union announced on 13 December that it intended to adopt targeted restrictive measures against those who were “jeopardizing the proper outcome of the electoral process” in Côte d'Ivoire. The Council of the European Union approved the first in a series of targeted measures on 20 December. On 21 and 22 December, the European Union and the United States imposed visa bans on dozens of individuals, including Mr. Gbagbo and his wife. On 6 January 2011, the United States imposed financial sanctions on Mr. Gbagbo, his spouse and three of his close collaborators. The Council of Ministers of the West African Economic and Monetary Union decided on 23 December that only representatives of President Ouattara would be allowed to gain access to the State accounts of Côte d'Ivoire. On the same day, the World Bank announced the suspension of all its programmes in Côte d'Ivoire and froze aid funds amounting to more than \$800 million and debt relief totalling \$3 billion. On 25 January, the interim Governor of the Banque Centrale des Etats d'Afrique de l'Ouest decided to close all local branches of the Bank in Côte d'Ivoire until further notice. In addition, 13 of the 20 private banks doing business in Côte d'Ivoire suspended their operations in the country for security reasons and as a result of lack of liquidity. On 17 February, Mr. Gbagbo's “government” announced that the Ivorian branches of BNP Paribas and Société Générale had been nationalized and would reopen shortly. On 24 January, President Ouattara announced a ban on the export of cocoa beans, which was subsequently extended until 31 March, while on 7 March Mr. Gbagbo sought to nationalize the cocoa bean and coffee sectors.

III. Diplomatic efforts

25. In an effort to find a peaceful solution to the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS and the African Union held a number of high-level meetings on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and dispatched several senior delegations to Abidjan.

26. On 5 December, former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki undertook a mission to Abidjan on behalf of the African Union, during which he consulted with President Ouattara, Mr. Gbagbo, the President of the Independent Electoral Commission and my Special Representative. Following a briefing given by former President Mbeki on 9 December, the African Union Peace and Security Council welcomed the mission that he had undertaken, strongly urged Mr. Gbagbo to respect the results of the election and reaffirmed its determination to take other measures, if necessary, against those who were undermining the freely expressed will of the Ivorian people.

27. In another attempt to resolve the stalemate, the Chair of the African Union Commission, Mr. Jean Ping, and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, travelled to Abuja on 17 December to consult with the Chair of ECOWAS, President Goodluck Jonathan, from where they proceeded to Abidjan, together with the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Victor

Gbeho. There, they met with President Ouattara and Mr. Gbagbo. On 21 December, Commissioner Lamamra gave a briefing to the African Union Peace and Security Council on the outcome of the visit, following which the Council publicly expressed deep concern at the continuing stalemate and the risk of large-scale violence.

28. On 24 December, the ECOWAS heads of State and Government further reviewed the situation in Côte d'Ivoire during an extraordinary session held in Abuja. In their communiqué, the heads of State reiterated their previous position, in particular with regard to the status of Mr. Ouattara as the legitimate President of Côte d'Ivoire, which they asserted was non-negotiable. They called once again on Mr. Gbagbo for an immediate and peaceful handover of power to President Ouattara. The heads of State also agreed to dispatch a high-level delegation to Côte d'Ivoire to persuade Mr. Gbagbo to step down. In the event that Mr. Gbagbo should fail to heed the demand, ECOWAS would consider other measures, including the use of legitimate force.

29. Further to the ECOWAS decision of 24 December, a high-level delegation comprising the Presidents of Benin, Cape Verde and Sierra Leone visited Abidjan on 28 December and met separately with President Ouattara and Mr. Gbagbo. On 3 January, the three Presidents returned to Abidjan, together with the Prime Minister of Kenya, Mr. Raila Odinga, who had been appointed Special Envoy of the African Union to Côte d'Ivoire by the Chair of the African Union Commission on 27 December. In a communiqué issued on 4 January, the delegation announced that it had met with Mr. Gbagbo, who had agreed to negotiate a peaceful end to the crisis, without preconditions and to immediately lift the blockade on the Golf Hotel. During a meeting with President Ouattara, the latter had indicated his willingness to ensure a dignified exit for Mr. Gbagbo, provided that he accept the outcome of the election as announced by the Independent Electoral Commission. Mr. Gbagbo's "minister for foreign affairs" indicated on 5 January that Mr. Gbagbo had not made such a promise.

30. Further efforts to achieve a peaceful end to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire were undertaken on behalf of ECOWAS by former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, who visited Abidjan on 9 and 10 January and held meetings with President Ouattara, Mr. Gbagbo, my Special Representative and members of the diplomatic community. The Special Envoy of the African Union to Côte d'Ivoire, Prime Minister Odinga, paid a second visit to the country on 17 January to pursue talks with President Ouattara and Mr. Gbagbo. During a press conference in Abidjan, Prime Minister Odinga announced that no breakthrough had been achieved and that Mr. Gbagbo had "broken his promise for the second time in two weeks" to lift the blockade on the Golf Hotel. On 25 January, the outgoing Chair of the African Union, President Bingu Wa Mutharika of Malawi, met with President Ouattara and Mr. Gbagbo in Abidjan. During a press conference prior to his departure, he indicated that, after having listened to the parties, he would share his findings with heads of State during the African Union summit.

31. Throughout this period, I maintained contact with key African leaders to encourage them in their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in a manner that respects the democratically expressed will of the Ivorian people. I also dispatched my Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Said Djinnit, accompanied by my Principal Deputy Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Abou Moussa, to various African capitals to further clarify the role of the

United Nations in the Ivorian elections, including certification. From 18 to 25 January, they visited Angola, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Mali and South Africa.

32. In a meeting held on 28 January in Addis Ababa, prior to the African Union summit, the African Union Peace and Security Council reaffirmed its previous decisions and those of ECOWAS, and decided to establish a High-level Panel on Côte d'Ivoire, supported by a team of experts, to evaluate the overall situation in the country and propose a political solution to the crisis, based on the relevant decisions taken by the African Union and ECOWAS. It was decided that the Panel would report to the Peace and Security Council by the end of February and that the latter's decisions would be binding. I supported the Peace and Security Council's decisions of 28 January during a high-level meeting on Côte d'Ivoire held on 29 January on the margins of the African Union summit, which I co-chaired with the Chairs of ECOWAS and the African Union. As agreed with the African Union, I designated my Special Representative for West Africa to participate in the work of the team of experts supporting the Panel. Shortly thereafter, the composition of the Panel was announced. It comprised the Presidents of Mauritania (Chair), Burkina Faso, Chad, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania. The leader of the Young Patriots, Mr. Charles Blé Goudé, who is also Mr. Gbagbo's "minister of youth and employment", announced during a press conference that President Compaoré of Burkina Faso would not be welcome.

33. The team of experts conducted a four-day fact-finding mission to Côte d'Ivoire from 6 to 10 February. During this visit, they sought the views of President Ouattara and Mr. Gbagbo and also consulted with Ivorian stakeholders, including Prime Minister Soro, representatives of the Independent Electoral Commission, the President of the Constitutional Council and representatives of political parties and civil society, as well as of UNOCI and the diplomatic community. The team of experts presented its report and its recommendations to the Panel in Nouakchott on 20 February.

34. From 21 to 22 February, the Presidents of Mauritania, Chad, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania travelled to Abidjan, together with the Chair of the African Union Commission and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. They met with President Ouattara, Mr. Gbagbo and the President of the Constitutional Council. President Compaoré had cancelled his participation in the Panel's visit owing to security threats by the Young Patriots, a youth group loyal to Mr. Gbagbo. The ECOWAS Commission President joined the Panel in Abidjan on 22 February.

35. On 28 February, the African Union Peace and Security Council extended the mandate of the Panel to enable it to complete its work during the month of March. On 4 March, the Panel held another meeting in Nouakchott, during which it requested the African Union Commission Chair to travel to Abidjan to extend an invitation to President Ouattara, Mr. Gbagbo and the President of the Constitutional Council to meet with the Panel on 9 March in Addis Ababa. While President Ouattara accepted the invitation, Mr. Gbagbo sent representatives, the President of his political party, Mr. N'Guessan, and his "minister for foreign affairs", Mr. Djédjé. The President of the Constitutional Council did not participate either. On 9 March, the Panel held separate meetings with President Ouattara and Mr. Gbagbo's representatives and proposed a solution, which was consistent with the previous

decisions of ECOWAS and the African Union, recognizing Mr. Ouattara as President-elect. However, Mr. Gbagbo's representatives publicly declared that they would never accept a proposal that entailed Mr. Gbagbo's stepping down, insisting that he was the elected leader of Côte d'Ivoire.

36. On 10 March, the African Union Peace and Security Council met at the level of heads of State to receive a briefing from the Panel on its recommendations. In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the Peace and Security Council recognized Mr. Ouattara as President of Côte d'Ivoire, endorsed the Panel's recommendations and requested the Chair of the African Union Commission to appoint a high representative for the implementation of those recommendations. While President Ouattara expressed his satisfaction at the outcome, Mr. Gbagbo's representatives reiterated their rejection of the binding decision. At the request of the African Union Commission Chair, I forwarded to the Security Council the 10 March communiqué and the report of the Panel (S/2011/180).

37. On 15 March, President Ouattara delivered an address to the nation in which he reiterated that he had accepted the recommendations of the Panel regarding the formation of a Government of national unity and the continuation of reforms set out in the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, especially the reunification of the country and the two armies, and the holding of legislative elections. He called upon Mr. Gbagbo, the Constitutional Council and the army to accept the opportunity provided by the African Union to end the crisis.

38. On 24 March, at an ordinary session held in Abuja, the ECOWAS heads of State and Government adopted a resolution strongly condemning the ongoing violence against civilians and deploring the deliberate targeting of ECOWAS citizens and other foreign nationals, as well as the attacks on United Nations personnel. They declared that the deteriorating security situation and the escalating violence were a result of Mr. Gbagbo's refusal to step down. The resolution stated that the time had come to enforce the decisions to ensure the transfer of power to President Ouattara without any further delay and requested the Security Council to authorize the immediate implementation of the previous ECOWAS decisions. The summit also directed the President of the ECOWAS Commission to explore all avenues for providing the Government of President Ouattara with the necessary legal and diplomatic means to exercise its authority. Furthermore, they requested the Security Council to consider the situation in Côte d'Ivoire with a view to strengthening the mandate of UNOCI and to adopt more stringent international sanctions against Mr. Gbagbo and his associates. Finally, they invited the African Union Commission to implement, as a matter of urgency, the 10 March decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council.

V. Impact of the crisis

Security situation

39. Shortly after the announcement on 2 December of the provisional results of the run-off election, the regular security forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo, as well as groups and militias associated with his political party, resorted to violent attacks against communities believed to be strongholds for President Ouattara, especially those in various neighbourhoods of Abidjan. The forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo also began to erect roadblocks and deploy heavy weapons in positions around the Golf Hotel,

where President Ouattara, the President of the Independent Electoral Commission and many leaders of RHPD, including former President Bédié, had taken refuge as the violence began to escalate. On 2 December, elements of the gendarmerie attacked the Abidjan headquarters of President Ouattara's party, the Rassemblement des Républicains, leaving 8 persons dead and more than 20 wounded.

40. Tensions rose in Abidjan following statements by the commanders of the Republican Guard and FDS on 10 and 12 December, respectively, calling on their troops to defend Côte d'Ivoire against "foreigners" who, they said, were to take over. On 13 December, a stand-off took place at one of the checkpoints between elements of FDS loyal to Mr. Gbagbo and the Forces nouvelles. The situation was defused following the intervention of my Special Representative, together with Mr. Gbagbo's "minister for foreign affairs", Mr. Djédjé, who arranged the deployment of UNOCI troops between the main FDS checkpoint and the Golf Hotel. As the security situation around the Golf Hotel became tense, following a threat by the Young Patriots to launch an attack against the hotel, UNOCI progressively reinforced its deployments of troops and formed police units around the hotel and on the hotel premises. On 29 December, the Young Patriots announced their intention to attack the Golf Hotel. While this initiative was called off, restrictions on the movement of civilians and on supplies to the hotel, as well as threats by the Young Patriots to attack the hotel, have continued.

41. Prime Minister Soro called on supporters of President Ouattara to march and take over the premises of RTI in Abidjan on 16 December and the Prime Minister's Office the following day. On 16 December in Abidjan, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo sealed off neighbourhoods considered to be strongholds for President Ouattara, including Abobo, Adjamé, Koumassi and Treichville, and used excessive force to prevent residents from joining the march. At least 50 people were killed and more than 200 wounded during the ensuing incidents. At the Golf Hotel on the same day, heavy fighting erupted between FDS and elements of the Forces nouvelles, who had attempted to leave the hotel to join the march.

42. In other areas, thousands of supporters of President Ouattara travelled from several towns in the northern part of the country towards Abidjan, but were stopped in Tiébissou, where FDS had reinforced its positions by deploying troops with heavy combat equipment, and used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse the marchers. In Yamoussoukro, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo also used excessive force to disperse a peaceful demonstration of some 1,000 supporters of President Ouattara, during which more than 20 people were killed and many wounded. In a statement issued on 17 December, the Security Council condemned the violence in the strongest terms, warning the parties that the perpetrators would be held accountable for attacks against civilians and urging all stakeholders to exercise maximum restraint.

43. The violence continued to escalate throughout the month of January. On 4 January, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo continued to use disproportionate force against supporters of President Ouattara. On the same day, FDS raided the headquarters of the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire which resulted in one death, several injuries and 136 arrests. On 11 January, in the Abobo neighbourhood of Abidjan, FDS conducted raids, killing at least three civilians. Live ammunition was also used by forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo on 18 and 19 January to disperse pro-Ouattara supporters in the Abobo, Adjamé, Koumassi and Attécoubé neighbourhoods of Abidjan, leaving several persons dead, and on 20 January in other parts of the country, including Gagnoa, Divo

and Daoukro. In Daoukro, pro-Ouattara demonstrators burned several residences in reprisal, including the house of the LMP campaign director. Meanwhile, on 19 January, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo appropriated the distribution control centre of the privately owned Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité. On 25 January, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo forcibly entered the Ivorian branches of the Banque Centrale des Etats d'Afrique de l'Ouest, reportedly removing some \$400 million.

44. On 19 February, President Ouattara called for further protests by his supporters to demand that Mr. Gbagbo step down. In response, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo used excessive force, including heavy weapons, to disperse protesters, in particular in the Abobo, Adjamé, Attécoubé, Koumassi and Treichville neighbourhoods of Abidjan, as well as in Yamoussoukro and Daoukro. Significant fatalities among the civilian population and displacements from the affected neighbourhoods in Abidjan were reported. On 28 February, Mr. Gbagbo's "government" resorted to further retaliatory measures against areas believed to be strongholds for President Ouattara, including the disconnection of electricity and water supplies in areas in northern Côte d'Ivoire controlled by the Forces nouvelles. The utilities were turned off for nearly a week. Subsequently, during the months of February and March, the utilities were again disconnected a number of times, including at the Golf Hotel on 12 March.

45. During the latter part of February, President Ouattara's supporters in Abidjan reportedly became more organized and were reinforced by some Forces nouvelles elements and individuals who had defected from FDS. According to the pro-Gbagbo media, an anti-Gbagbo group calling itself "invisible commandos" attacked forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo in Abobo on 22 and 23 February, killing several. In response, FDS further increased the use of force in Abobo, using armoured vehicles and heavy weapons, including mortars. While Mr. Gbagbo's camp claims that the "invisible commandos" are loyal to President Ouattara, both President Ouattara's Government and elements belonging to the group have denied any links between them. Elements of the group have claimed that their leader is Ibrahima Coulibaly, a former army sergeant who was reportedly involved in the 1999 coup and the 2002 coup attempt.

46. Meanwhile, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo were reinforced by foreign mercenaries. By some accounts, the administration loyal to Mr. Gbagbo has hired mercenaries estimated to number 4,500, the majority of whom are deployed in Abidjan, San-Pédro and Yamoussoukro and along the former zone of confidence, including in Danané, Douékoué, Daloa and Tiébissou. They have been armed with weapons from FDS stocks and, in some cases, supplied with uniforms.

47. After Mr. Blé Goudé called on the Young Patriots in February to identify "foreigners" in Abidjan and throughout the country, a number of attacks targeting nationals of West African countries were reported, with some abducted or burned alive, and foreign-owned businesses in Abidjan vandalized and looted. Forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo also vandalized and looted residences of several Ministers of President Ouattara's Government in Abidjan between 3 and 5 March. In retaliation, youth groups loyal to President Ouattara looted two houses, in Bouaké and Abidjan, belonging to senior officials of Mr. Gbagbo's party.

48. The situation escalated further in March when security forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo used heavy weapons to disperse protesters. On 3 March in Abobo, they used heavy machine guns against a group of women demonstrating peacefully in support of President Ouattara, killing seven and seriously wounding many others. On 8 March, at least four persons were killed in Treichville when security forces

loyal to Mr. Gbagbo and armed individuals supporting President Ouattara clashed following a demonstration by women commemorating those who had been killed on 3 March. A number of clashes between the Young Patriots and supporters of President Ouattara were reported in the Yopougon neighbourhood of Abidjan, with the Young Patriots reportedly burning people alive.

49. On 7 March, in Anonkoua-Kouté, located outside Abidjan, the Ebrié ethnic community, thought to support Mr. Gbagbo, was attacked by armed individuals who were allegedly partisans of the “invisible commandos”, resulting in the displacement of most of the approximately 5,000 inhabitants. On 11 March in Abobo, eight civilians, including three children, were reportedly killed when elements of the forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo used heavy weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. On 15 March, unidentified persons threw a grenade into a heavily populated area of the Attécoubé neighbourhood of Abidjan, killing 1 person and injuring at least 18. On 17 March, more than 25 people were killed and more than 40 wounded when security forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo fired several mortar shells in Abobo.

50. Meanwhile, direct armed confrontations between elements of FDS loyal to Mr. Gbagbo and the Forces nouvelles were reported in the western and central regions of Côte d’Ivoire, in violation of the comprehensive ceasefire agreement signed on 3 May 2003. Both sides reportedly used heavy weapons. They also continued to recruit, train and arm their forces. On 24 February, the FDS reportedly attacked the Forces nouvelles positions in Danané. On 25 February, heavy fighting was reported in Zouan-Hounien. On 28 February, UNOCI reported fighting in Bin-Houye, and on 6 March the Forces nouvelles captured Toulepleu, a key town on the border with Liberia, after heavy fighting. From there, they advanced towards Guiglo, and fighting was reported in Daloa and Bonoufla, with the Forces nouvelles taking control of the villages of Doke and Zaibo, as well as Bloléquin, after heavy fighting on 20 March.

51. In a communiqué issued on 9 March, the Forces nouvelles announced that they had changed their name to the Forces républicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI). On 17 March, President Ouattara signed a decree unifying FDS and the armed forces of the Forces nouvelles under FRCI. On 18 March, Mr. Gbagbo’s “government” called on the Forces nouvelles to disarm, urging the Ivorian people to collaborate with the security forces in this regard. On 19 March, the leader of the Young Patriots called on his supporters to report to FDS headquarters on 21 March and to enrol in the army in order to liberate the country. On 23 March, civilians were shelled from Camp Commando in Abobo-Samanké.

52. In response to the deteriorating security situation, UNOCI has adjusted its posture and increased patrols in areas where civilians are under threat. The Operation also devised a mixed-patrol mechanism, which includes troops and formed police unit personnel with crowd control capabilities, to better respond to the emerging security threats. Furthermore, my Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations visited Côte d’Ivoire in December to assess the situation on the ground and review the Operation’s response. The Military Adviser and the Police Adviser of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations also carried out separate visits to UNOCI to support the mission in enhancing its operational response.

Human rights situation

53. The violence resulting from the political crisis has led to a drastic deterioration in the human rights situation in most parts of the country, in particular in Abidjan and in the west, with a high number of human rights violations reported. These have included more than 434 killings since mid-December; at least 520 arbitrary arrests and detentions, some involving torture; and at least 72 cases of disappearance. Cases of extrajudicial and summary execution, rape, torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, attacks against religious buildings, intimidation, harassment and extortion have also been reported. While human rights abuses have been committed by both sides, most of the killings have been carried out by elements of the forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo, supported by mercenaries and youth groups. The reported violations by Forces nouvelles elements have been fewer in number and of less significance.

54. UNOCI received information on 19 December indicating the possible existence of a mass grave in the Anyama neighbourhood of Abidjan, and that dozens of bodies had been transferred from the mass grave to the morgue in police trucks. After three months of repeated obstructions by forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo to prevent UNOCI from gaining access to the site, the Operation visited it on 12 March. Although UNOCI was unable to verify the existence of the mass grave, the team was informed that some 260 bodies had been kept in the Anyama morgue since the outbreak of the crisis. In other testimony, it was alleged that several bodies had been buried in the Forêt de Banco, in the N'Dotr  district of Abidjan. During a visit on 14 March to N'Dotr , UNOCI did not find evidence substantiating these allegations. The Operation also received several reports alleging the existence of mass graves in other parts of the country, notably in Lakota (near Divo), Issia (near Daloa) and Lobodiguia (also near Daloa). However, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo have obstructed UNOCI in its efforts to investigate these and other allegations of serious human rights violations.

55. In response to reports that the homes of political opponents of Mr. Gbagbo in Abidjan had been marked to identify their ethnicity, my Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, Mr. Francis Deng, and my Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Mr. Edward Luck, issued a joint statement on 29 December expressing grave concern about indications that some leaders were inciting violence between various elements of the population to serve their political purposes. In the light of the deteriorating human rights situation in C te d'Ivoire, on 29 December the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights sent letters to Mr. Gbagbo and some of his key security advisers. In the letters, she pointed out their responsibility for the worrisome human rights situation, reminding them of their obligation to protect civilians and of their personal accountability for human rights abuses and infringements of international humanitarian law committed by elements of the security forces under their command and control.

56. The ongoing crisis has also exacerbated intercommunal and inter-ethnic tensions, and has led to killings, displacement and the destruction of property. The most significant incident was reported in Du kou , where an armed clash between members of the Dioula and Gu r  communities, allegedly supported by mercenaries from Liberia, erupted on 3 January and lasted several days. This incident left at least 37 persons dead; 100 wounded and some 17,000 displaced, with 230 houses burned.

57. UNOCI has established an integrated human rights monitoring and investigation task force to document violations and a 24-hour call centre to receive information about alleged violations. Since it was established on 15 December, the call centre has received more than 9,000 calls.

58. To date, UNOCI has documented at least 28 cases of rape linked to the post-electoral unrest, but the actual number is likely to be much higher. For example, in Duékoué on 4 January, 19 women were gang-raped by armed militia. In a statement issued on 28 January, my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström, condemned the use of sexual violence as a means to political ends.

59. On 25 March, the Human Rights Council decided to establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations of serious abuses and violations of human rights committed in Côte d'Ivoire following the 28 November polls in order to identify those responsible for those acts and bring them to justice. The Council called upon all Ivorian parties to fully cooperate with it. The Council invited the commission of inquiry to present its findings to the Council at its seventeenth session and recommended that the General Assembly transmit the outcome of the commission of inquiry to all relevant bodies.

Media

60. The State broadcasting corporation RTI has been used by Mr. Gbagbo's allies to propagate hate messages against particular Ivorian ethnic, religious and political groups, nationals of ECOWAS countries and UNOCI, fuelling tension and exacerbating the security situation. RTI has disseminated false information, accusing UNOCI of violating the sovereignty of Côte d'Ivoire; of providing support to the Forces nouvelles, including by distributing arms; and of killing unarmed civilians. RTI was also used as a platform for Mr. Gbagbo to call on UNOCI to leave the country. Meanwhile, the Operation's radio station, ONUCI FM, continued to broadcast throughout the country, despite attempts by Mr. Gbagbo's allies to jam its frequency. Furthermore, the National Press Council, under new leadership appointed by Mr. Gbagbo in January, imposed a number of restrictions on pro-Ouattara print media, which led to the suspension of the publication of a number of newspapers at various times. As a result, Mr. Gbagbo's allies have achieved a virtual monopoly on the dissemination of information in the southern part of the country.

Humanitarian situation

61. To date, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered more than 90,000 Ivorian refugees in Liberia, while 916 have fled to Guinea, 214 to Ghana, 143 to Mali and 22 to Burkina Faso. Humanitarian organizations estimate that between 300,000 and 700,000 people (half of the population of the suburb of Abobo) have been displaced in Abidjan since the clashes in Abobo, with 45,000 displaced in the west. The crisis has also led to a growing scarcity of basic goods, deteriorating living standards and increasingly difficult access to health care and education. The supply of medical assistance has been disrupted in most parts of the country, and an estimated 800,000 schoolchildren throughout the country are unable to attend classes because most schools have remained closed since late in November.

62. The United Nations country team and humanitarian organizations have stepped up their efforts to respond to the crisis. Food assistance is currently being provided to some 23,700 internally displaced persons in western Côte d'Ivoire, and efforts are under way to assist some 186,000 refugees and their host communities in Liberia. As the numbers of displaced people continue to increase, increased donor support will be critical to ensure the availability of the necessary relief stocks to meet the needs of the vulnerable populations.

Attacks against United Nations personnel and obstruction of UNOCI operations

63. On 17 December, Mr. Gbagbo's "minister for foreign affairs" sent a letter calling for the immediate departure of UNOCI and alleging that the mission was no longer impartial. Since then, Mr. Gbagbo's "government" has taken sustained measures to strangle UNOCI operations, including by denying the Mission access to vital supplies. It has denied customs clearance for supplies at the port, cut off fuel supplies and prevented United Nations personnel from gaining access to the Golf Hotel when they have attempted to deliver supplies for the UNOCI military and police personnel stationed there. UNOCI has had to resort to airlifting supplies. For the most part, contractors transporting supplies such as fuel in the country have withdrawn their services, some as a result of threats by those loyal to Mr. Gbagbo. Similarly, the denial of landing rights to chartered aircraft by Ivorian civil aviation authorities has disrupted rotations of military troops and police units through Abidjan. The Operation's access to the airport in Abidjan, where some of its aircraft are located, has become increasingly restricted. In addition, on 9 March, the "government" of Mr. Gbagbo announced a ban on all flights by UNOCI and Operation Licorne in the country.

64. During the reporting period, the Young Patriots and FDS resorted to harassment, including creating obstructions at roadblocks and blocking access for patrols, especially to areas where clashes were occurring between forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo and supporters of President Ouattara, and locations where serious human rights violations were being reported. The obstructions and the harassment escalated into attacks. On 18 December, uniformed elements fired at a UNOCI patrol entering the Operation's headquarters in Abidjan, as well as at the sentries. In a separate incident occurring the same day in Abidjan, a group of Young Patriots members threw stones at a patrol of UNOCI military observers, injuring two. On 10 January, a UNOCI logistics convoy on its way to the Golf Hotel was surrounded by a crowd and looted at a checkpoint. On 12 January in Abobo, FDS elements also fired at a UNOCI patrol in the area, injuring three peacekeepers. On 13 January, forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo attacked six United Nations vehicles; two non-United Nations personnel were injured, and one UNOCI military vehicle was burned. Some 300 members of the Young Patriots surrounded the UNOCI logistics base in Koumassi, in Abidjan, on 23 and 24 January, cutting off the water supply and attempting to enter the base, including by throwing Molotov cocktails. On 28 February and 1 March, three international civilian contractors were illegally detained by Young Patriots members before they were handed over to regular security forces, who released them the same day. On 12 March, Young Patriots members attacked a UNOCI staff member in the parking lot of a supermarket. He was injured and robbed, while his United Nations vehicle was set on fire. On 15 March, one peacekeeper was reported missing; he had allegedly been taken away by members of the Young Patriots. On 16 March, a UNOCI supply convoy was ambushed by forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo in the vicinity

of Abobo. On 23 March in Guiglo, armed elements forced their way onto UNHCR premises, removing equipment and a number of vehicles. The Secretariat has compiled a list of incidents involving United Nations personnel and has submitted it to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire.

65. Efforts have been made to find practical ways to surmount the logistical challenges arising from efforts to obstruct UNOCI operations. UNOCI, with support from the Secretariat, has successfully put in place alternative contingency arrangements to overcome these restrictions and ensure the delivery of supplies to Mission personnel, as well as to the Golf Hotel, including by undertaking supply runs by air, establishing an alternative logistics base in Bouaké and opening up alternative supply routes by road and air through neighbouring countries.

66. The continued attempts by forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo to obstruct the activities of peacekeepers and to sever the Operation's supply lines have made it challenging for UNOCI to implement all aspects of its mandate. UNOCI has therefore prioritized the following mandated tasks: providing security for key representatives and installations of the legitimate Government, monitoring and investigating human rights violations, supporting humanitarian efforts, and protecting civilians and United Nations personnel and installations. Furthermore, UNOCI is assisting the legitimate Government in developing plans to carry forward the unfinished aspects of the peace process, which are critical to the consolidation of peace and stability in the country.

Safety and security of United Nations personnel

67. During the reporting period, a high number of incidents involving United Nations personnel were reported, including 191 cases of denial of freedom of movement, 31 threats, 13 robberies, 38 attacks, 7 illegal detentions, 30 lootings of staff accommodation, and many cases of verbal assault, car hijacking and intimidation. In the light of the increased risks for United Nations personnel, on 22 December the security level was changed from level 3 to level 4 in the southern part of the country, and UNOCI and the United Nations country team relocated non-essential international United Nations personnel outside the country. While some staff subsequently returned, United Nations personnel were relocated in the country in March. As at 24 March, out of the total of 1,538 non-uniformed personnel in the country, 230 United Nations civilian staff, 210 individual police officers, and 147 military observers and staff officers were stationed in Abidjan.

V. Reinforcement of the Operation's military presence in Côte d'Ivoire

68. The temporary deployment, under Security Council resolution 1942 (2010), of an additional 500 military and police personnel to reinforce UNOCI during the elections was completed on 12 October 2010.

69. On 24 November, the Security Council, by its resolution 1951 (2010), authorized the temporary transfer of three infantry companies and two military utility helicopters from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to reinforce UNOCI under inter-mission cooperation arrangements pursuant to resolutions 1609

(2005) and 1938 (2010), which were extended most recently by resolution 1968 (2011). The deployment of the three companies to Guiglo and Man in the west was completed on 27 November, while the aviation unit arrived on 26 November. As the three companies returned to UNMIL on 22 January, two companies, from Toulepleu and Odienne, were redeployed to Guiglo on 27 February in an effort to fill the critical gap.

70. In order to effectively respond to the evolving security situation, UNOCI also repositioned existing military and formed police units throughout the country, in particular to reinforce its deployment in Abidjan. One battalion from Korhogo and Ferkéssédougou in the north and two companies, from Bouaké and Man, as well as 265 formed police unit personnel, from Bouaké, Yamoussoukro, Daloa and Guiglo, were redeployed to Abidjan. The force reserve, previously stationed in Yamoussoukro, is now employed full-time in protecting the Golf Hotel.

71. The security situation deteriorated further, requiring additional military capabilities. The emerging hostile environment also required a more robust and more deterrent posture, including armed helicopters to provide deterrence, protection and escorts for supply routes. Furthermore, existing formed police units were strengthened by replacing individual police officers with formed police unit personnel. In the light of the above, the Security Council, by its resolution 1967 (2011), authorized the deployment of an additional 2,000 military personnel to UNOCI until 30 June 2011, as well as other additional capacities, and extended up to 30 June 2011 the temporary additional military and police capacities authorized by resolution 1942 (2010). Troop-contributing countries have been requested to provide most of the additional military capabilities, with the exception of the level II hospital. With regard to the temporary redeployment of the three armed helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI, two arrived on 1 March and the third on 21 March.

72. As at 24 March 2011, the military strength of UNOCI stood at 7,753 personnel, including 7,486 troops, 176 military observers and 94 staff officers, against an authorized ceiling of 9,792 in accordance with resolution 1967 (2011). There were 84 women in the military component. The police strength of UNOCI stood at 1,299, including 346 individual police officers and 953 officers in six formed police units. There were 19 women in the police component.

Observations

73. The successful conduct of the first round of the presidential elections and the acceptance of the results by all parties had been seen as positive signs that Côte d'Ivoire was finally on the path towards sustainable peace and stability. While challenges remained, I had hoped that the Ivorians would meet these in the same spirit, unified in their desire for a better future, overcoming years of crisis that have brought misery and insecurity to its people. The conduct of the second round of the presidential elections on 28 November was satisfactory, notwithstanding several incidents of violence. I commend the Ivorian people, who demonstrated their commitment to the democratic process through a high voter turnout and the generally peaceful atmosphere that prevailed on that day.

74. A number of issues were raised regarding the certification role of the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire, which I am obliged to clarify. The legal basis for the United Nations certification mandate is derived from the Pretoria Agreement on the Peace Process in Côte d'Ivoire and the subsequent Declaration on the

Implementation of the Pretoria Agreement. In particular, the Pretoria Agreement (6 April 2005) and the subsequent Declaration on the Implementation of the Pretoria Agreement (29 June 2005), brokered by the African Union mediator Thabo Mbeki, then President of South Africa, requested the participation of the United Nations in the Ivorian elections, and urged me to appoint a high-level representative who would oversee the electoral process. These agreements were endorsed by the relevant organs of ECOWAS and the African Union as well as by the Security Council. In 2007, the post of high representative for the elections was abolished at the request of President Gbagbo who, together with all other Ivorian political leaders, agreed to transfer the high representative's mandate to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. In its resolution 1765 (2007) of 16 July 2007, the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, decided "that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Côte d'Ivoire shall certify that all stages of the electoral process provide all the necessary guarantees for the holding of open, free, fair and transparent presidential and legislative elections in accordance with international standards".

75. The certification mandate of the United Nations was thus put in place voluntarily by the Ivorians themselves, as an additional safeguard to guarantee the credibility of the elections. My Special Representative had certified the results of the first round of the presidential elections and other key stages of the process following the same procedure, which all parties had accepted. In the light of ensuing developments, the certification mandate has proved to be a critical tool in guaranteeing the credibility of the Ivorian presidential elections and protecting the democratically expressed will of the Ivorian people.

76. I commend ECOWAS and the African Union for taking a firm and principled position recognizing Mr. Ouattara as President of Côte d'Ivoire and for suspending the membership of Côte d'Ivoire in their organizations until the legitimate President assumes office. I welcome the Security Council's endorsement of the position of ECOWAS and the African Union.

77. I also thank Member States for their prompt and strong support for the democratic process in Côte d'Ivoire, and for persevering in their principled stance even as the crisis has become more entrenched. In addition, I appreciate the efforts of ECOWAS and the African Union, and their high-level representatives, to bring the crisis to a peaceful end in a manner that respects the democratically expressed will of the Ivorian people. I call on all parties to respect the binding recommendations issued by the African Union Peace and Security Council, to implement them without delay and to fully cooperate with the African Union High Representative to this end. The continued unity of purpose of the international community, in particular ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations, will be critical in pressing the Ivorian parties to respect the will of the people and to resolve the current crisis peacefully.

78. I add my voice to those calling on Mr. Gbagbo to immediately hand over power to President Ouattara, to step down with dignity and to end the siege of the Golf Hotel, where President Ouattara and his Government are based.

79. I am very concerned about the violence against civilians and the escalation in armed clashes between the two sides, which are pushing the country closer to the brink of civil war, with potentially disastrous consequences not just for Côte d'Ivoire, but for the subregion as a whole. I strongly condemn the violence and the

serious human rights violations perpetrated by all sides, and urge armed regular and irregular groups to immediately stop the violence. It is also unacceptable that the State broadcasting service is being used as a weapon, disseminating messages that incite violence against civilians and the United Nations. I remind the perpetrators and instigators of acts of violence and human rights violations that they will be held accountable under international law for their actions.

80. Violations of human rights are being investigated by UNOCI to fight impunity. I am grateful for the international and national human rights organizations that are documenting these violations. I welcome the establishment of the commission of inquiry by the Human Rights Council to investigate the allegations of serious violations, to identify those responsible for such acts and to bring them to justice. I also urge the Security Council and the wider human rights community to take strong measures to address impunity in Côte d'Ivoire.

81. In addition, I am concerned about the dire humanitarian situation and its potential to exacerbate the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the subregion, in particular Liberia. I would emphasize that all sides must allow unhindered access for humanitarian actors to reach those in need, and I call upon donors to contribute to the flash appeal for Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

82. Looking ahead, the most immediate task is to work with the African Union and ECOWAS to find a peaceful solution to the crisis and end the ongoing violence. The implementation of the binding recommendations of the African Union Peace and Security Council is the key to a peaceful solution. I am pleased that President Ouattara has unconditionally accepted these decisions and that, during his address to the nation on 15 March, he expressed his commitment to their implementation. I am, however, concerned about the statements emanating from Mr. Gbagbo and his "government", which do not signal clear acceptance of these binding decisions and which indicate a determination to continue to hang on to power through the use of force.

83. Addressing the unfinished aspects of the peace process, namely, the holding of legislative elections, the promotion of national reconciliation, the reunification of the country, the disarmament of former combatants and dismantling of militias, the reunification of the armed forces and the restoration of State authority throughout the territory of Côte d'Ivoire, will require concerted attention. I am pleased to note that President Ouattara has initiated some planning in this regard and has indicated that he will form a Government of national unity. He and his Government will require the steadfast support of the international community. The United Nations stands firm in its commitment to supporting their efforts to bring the Ivorian crisis to a successful and long-awaited end.

84. UNOCI has encountered many serious challenges throughout the post-electoral crisis, arising from the prevailing political climate and the hostile actions by the forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo. In addition, the mission has had to overcome the challenges posed by the obstruction of its activities by unarmed hostile groups, such as the Young Patriots. I condemn in the strongest possible terms attacks against UNOCI personnel and convoys, and repeat that intentional and direct attacks on United Nations peacekeepers constitute war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Perpetrators are subject to prosecution for such war crimes.

85. Despite all the challenges facing UNOCI, some of which have yet to be fully addressed, I appreciate the significant achievements of the mission, including the critical support it provided for the electoral process, which made it possible for the two rounds of the presidential elections to be held. I also commend UNOCI for the effective action taken to protect the legitimate Government of President Ouattara and its temporary seat at the Golf Hotel. This timely action was essential in ensuring that the democratically expressed will of the people was not thwarted. Furthermore, while the mission continues to face considerable challenges in providing physical protection to civilians under imminent threat, it is preparing a detailed record of all reported violations of human rights, and its presence has often been an effective deterrent against attacks on the civilian population. With the additional resources approved by the Security Council, including force multipliers, the Operation's capacity to overcome obstacles to the implementation of its protection mandate is being enhanced. I am grateful to the Security Council for its timely action to reinforce the mission throughout the crisis. I will continue to review the evolving situation on the ground and the Operation's capacities, and will revert to the Council with recommendations regarding any further adjustments that may become necessary.

86. The role of UNOCI is even more critical for the stability of Côte d'Ivoire and the subregion. In addition to addressing the multiple security challenges arising from the unfolding crisis, the Operation will focus on facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protect civilians. It will work with the African Union and ECOWAS to implement the 10 March decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council and support President Ouattara in planning not only for the unfinished aspects of the peace process, but also for the stabilization and development of Côte d'Ivoire.

87. In conclusion, I should like to thank my Special Representative, Y. J. Choi, the staff of UNOCI and the international and national personnel of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Côte d'Ivoire, who continue to exemplify the highest aspirations of the Organization by working with exceptional dedication and at great personal risk for a more peaceful and stable Côte d'Ivoire. I should also like to express my appreciation to all troop and police-contributing countries for their continued commitment to UNOCI, in particular during a challenging time for uniformed personnel on the ground. Finally, I am grateful to ECOWAS, the African Union, humanitarian organizations and multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions and steadfast commitment to Côte d'Ivoire.

