



# Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

**8787<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Monday, 7 June 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Auväärt . . . . .	(Estonia)
<i>Members:</i>	China . . . . .	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France . . . . .	Mrs. Gasri
	India . . . . .	Mr. Tirumurti
	Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Gallagher
	Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger . . . . .	Mr. Abarry
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . . .	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia . . . . .	Mr. Cherif
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Roscoe
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Hunter
	Viet Nam . . . . .	Mr. Pham

## Agenda

### Central African region

Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2021/517)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Central African region**

#### **Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2021/517)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/517, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

**Mr. Fall:** It is a pleasure to brief the Security Council today on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). During the reporting period, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continued to impact our activities, although the situation is gradually improving thanks to a combination of immunization and prevention programmes implemented by the Governments in the subregion. To date, Central Africa remains the subregion on the African continent with the lowest number of infections and deaths due to COVID-19. As of 15 May, official data show that 222,882 cases have been reported regionally and 3,635 people have lost their lives since the beginning of the pandemic.

In that context, the Government of Burundi convened the fifty-first meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in person in Bujumbura on 28 May, while fully observing existing prevention measures. The successful organization of the meeting was a testament to the resilience that Central African States have

demonstrated, individually and collectively, in their efforts to promote socioeconomic recovery, maintain political stability and promote regional integration despite the constraints posed by the pandemic.

As countries of Central Africa pursue their efforts to combat COVID-19, it is essential that they further coordinate their national responses and harmonize policies, guided by the regional strategy adopted last year by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States. In Bujumbura, the Committee focused primarily on the situation in Chad and the Central African Republic, while also addressing the issue of electoral processes in Central Africa. The ministerial segment recommended the development of a subregional protocol on electoral governance and democratic elections in Central Africa. UNOCA will actively support the subregion to this end, while emphasizing the importance of strengthening the participation of women and youth in the consolidation of democratic processes in the subregion.

To illustrate the timeline of this UNSAC recommendation on electoral governance, I would like to recall that since my last briefing in December (S/2020/1188, annex I), elections took place in four countries, namely, the Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo. As the subregion prepares for upcoming elections, notably in Sao Tome and Principe on 18 July, I would like to encourage national authorities and all political stakeholders to promote continued dialogue and consensus on the conditions governing the elections. I will pursue good offices on behalf of the Secretary-General, wherever require, to encourage inclusive and meaningful political dialogue in the countries preparing for elections.

Since my last briefing to the Council, the ECCAS Commission has continued to demonstrate its commitment to promoting peace and stability in the subregion. Important regional initiatives to address the situation in the Central African Republic and Chad have been undertaken. The convening of two extraordinary summits of Heads of State and Government, on the situation in the Central African Republic and on Chad, on 26 December 2020 and on 4 June 2020, respectively, is further evidence that regional leaders are very determined to bring a regional response to the challenges and crises facing the subregion.

In that regard, I welcome the statement issued on 1 June by the ECCAS Chair, the President of the

Republic of the Congo, following the armed attack within Chadian territory and near the border with the Central African Republic on 30 May. The ECCAS Chair recalled the principles of non-aggression, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as both countries' mutual obligations on peace and security. I also commend the authorities of the Central African Republic and Chad for their collective diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving their differences through dialogue. We have taken note of their joint communiqué dated 1 June communicating their decision to establish an independent international commission of inquiry, as well as their proposal that the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and ECCAS assist those efforts, to investigate the situation and identify those responsible.

The situation in Chad following the demise of the late President Idriss Deby Itno has underlined the challenges facing the subregion in addressing the consequences of unexpected changes of government. Consistent with the position adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council and the summit of ECCAS Heads of State and Government held last Friday and further to the appointment of Mr. Ibrahima Fall as the AU High Representative for the transition in Chad and Mr. Basile Ikouébé as the AU Special Representative in the country, the United Nations priority will be to support the efforts of the African Union and ECCAS to assist in the transition in Chad. UNOCA will mobilize the United Nations system and work with relevant partners to support inclusive dialogue aimed at ensuring a rapid transition to democratic and constitutional rule in the country. Coherent external support to the transition within the coordination framework being put in place by the AU will be important.

My consultations with national authorities and international partners in Burundi, at the margin of the UNSAC meeting, highlighted the country's efforts to address its fragilities and move forward. Burundi assumed the six-month rotating presidency of UNSAC and is currently sharing the AU Peace and Security Council for the month of June. I believe that the assistance of the international community will be necessary to support national efforts aimed at resuming cooperation with international partners, promoting national reconciliation and unity, addressing COVID-19, achieving the Sustainable Development goals, promoting human rights, tackling the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and addressing climate-security challenges.

The recent developments in Chad have underlined the interlinkages between the security situation in that country and the security situation in the subregion. The security dynamics in countries bordering Chad, including Libya, the Sudan and the Central African Republic, as well as developments related to the activities of terrorist groups in the Lake Chad basin, could negatively affect the internal dynamics in Chad. The United Nations and the international community should continue to engage these neighbouring countries, in close consultation with national authorities and regional institutions.

The increased and compounding threat posed by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin remains a great concern. Moreover, according to reports, Islamic State West Africa Province and Boko Haram combatants have been fighting over control of the region. The recent joint technical mission to the four countries affected by Boko Haram undertaken by UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) found that, as the security situation in the region has been deteriorating, coordination between the four countries needs to be strengthened. In addition, humanitarian needs have increased against declining resources, whereas the already precarious living conditions of vulnerable groups, especially refugees, internally displaced person, women and youth, have been worsening.

In Cameroon, violence in the north-west and south-west regions has not abated. Further escalation of the crisis is leading to more suffering for the civilian population and widespread violations of human rights, compounded by the aggravated impact of COVID-19. I will continue to engage with key actors in Cameroon and within the diaspora on the need to advance further in a meaningful dialogue complementing the major national dialogue recommendations, for a peaceful and lasting resolution of the crisis in the two regions. In the meantime, I call upon all parties to demonstrate their commitment to dialogue through concrete actions on the ground, including the cessation of hostilities.

Non-State armed groups continue to represent a regionwide threat to peace and security, with a horrendous impact on civilian populations. The Lord's Resistance Army remains a threat to the stability of Central African States, in view of its alliances with other armed groups in the subregion and its operations in an area with very little State presence. I will work closely with the AU and ECCAS to further consult

and agree on a common vision to facilitate a smooth transfer of responsibility from the AU Regional Task Force to ECCAS.

*(spoke in French)*

In the Gulf of Guinea, maritime crime remains a serious threat to Central and West African States and remained high on the agenda of the last two meetings of UNSAC. Indeed, in the first quarter of this year, the Central African maritime region recorded more incidents than the West African region, despite the bilateral mechanisms in place to address maritime insecurity. UNOCA and UNOWAS will continue to prioritize maritime security in their joint actions and cooperation.

Central Africa is strongly affected by the negative impact of climate change. This trend is likely to worsen over the next few decades and is expected to result in an increase in natural disasters hampering socioeconomic progress and exacerbating political and security tensions in the subregion. It is expected that severe climatic consequences will put increasing pressure on the capacities of governments and communities to cope with multiple challenges, with potentially significant impacts for peace and security. During my recent visit to Bujumbura, I witnessed first-hand the impact of climate security on human security, as the dramatic rise in water levels in Lake Tanganyika has caused large-scale flooding and the displacement of an estimated 30,000 people since January. Similarly, the ongoing humanitarian crisis due to the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on the outskirts of Goma has displaced an estimated 230,000 people, including in neighbouring Rwanda. UNOCA will continue to pay attention to this important global priority and its links with peace and security, in partnership with the African Union, ECCAS, relevant governments and United Nations entities, as well as with other actors in the subregion.

I would like to conclude by saying that this is my last briefing to the Security Council before the extension of the UNOCA mandate comes to an end. In his report (S/2021/517), the Secretary-General recommends that the mandate be extended for three years, from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2024.

At a time when Central Africa is facing a fragile political and security context, I strongly believe that UNOCA can build on its past achievements and help the subregion to address its multiple challenges. Recent

developments, in particular the transition in Chad, have highlighted several obstacles to peace and security that could have negative consequences for regional peace and stability. The extension of UNOCA's mandate would enable the Office to strengthen its partnership with the reformed ECCAS, with a view to preventing conflicts and preserving peace, strengthening good governance and regional integration, addressing cross-border security challenges, promoting the participation of women, young people and civil society organizations in early-warning mechanisms, peacebuilding and democratic governance processes and overcoming the challenges with regard to climate security.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Roscoe** (United Kingdom): On behalf of the United Kingdom, I want to begin by expressing our thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall for his continuing efforts to support and promote peace, stability and security in Central Africa, particularly amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its impacts.

We welcome the recent progress in the region, particularly the establishment of the new Economic Community of Central African States Commission. But, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall set out, Central Africa continues to face serious political, economic and security challenges, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

We commend the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to coordinate with United Nations country teams across the subregion and to deploy the good offices of the United Nations to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts across Central Africa. I would like to focus on the next steps needed in that respect in three of the country situations about which we heard today.

First, let me turn to Chad. The United Kingdom deplores the violence and repression of protesters in Chad in April. We support the recommendation of the African Union that the Transitional Military Council should respect human rights, provide an inclusive constitutional framework and conduct free and fair elections within 18 months. A stable Chad is pivotal for the Chadian people, as well as the wider Sahel region.

Secondly, turning to the Central African Republic, I understand that we will have an opportunity in closed consultations to discuss the recent very troubling clashes across the border between Chad and the Central African Republic. The last thing that the region needs are increased instability and mistrust between neighbouring countries. All actors should therefore encourage de-escalation of those tensions.

Within the Central African Republic itself, following the recent presidential and parliamentary elections there is an opportunity to build on that democratic trajectory towards peace and reconciliation. We urge all stakeholders to redouble efforts to strengthen political inclusivity, protect and promote human rights and meet the needs of the population, including with respect to basic security and humanitarian needs.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom also remains deeply concerned by the ongoing crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. In March, the United Kingdom Minister for Africa visited Cameroon and met President Biya and Prime Minister Ngute. We encourage them to renew efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

On his visit, our Minister saw first-hand the profound impact of the crisis on civilians in that region. More than 1 million people have been displaced due to the conflict, and more than 2 million are in dire need of humanitarian support. Unimpeded humanitarian access is desperately needed. At the same time, we continue to receive deeply concerning reports of human rights violations and abuses committed by both sides in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. Accountability for perpetrators is essential to bringing about long-term peace. In the short term, armed actors should heed the Secretary-General's call and cease attacks against civilians.

We welcome the steps taken by the Government of Cameroon to grant a special status to the Anglophone regions and to convene the inaugural regional elections in 2020. However, all parties should do more to end the protracted conflict in Cameroon. The United Kingdom stands ready to support parties to engage in good-faith dialogue and peacebuilding efforts. We are supporting efforts to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable civilians through funding, currently totalling \$19 million, for vital assistance, food, sanitation and medical supplies.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the very real threat that Cameroon and its neighbours continue to face in

terms of terrorist attacks on civilians across the Lake Chad basin region. The recent attack in Yagha province in Burkina Faso, where more than 100 civilians were reportedly killed, is a stark reminder of the grave threats facing civilians across the region. We strongly condemn all such attacks, and we continue to support the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force to tackle Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province. We urge the Governments of the Lake Chad basin countries, with the support of international partners, to improve governance, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants and mitigate the impact of climate change on regional security.

If I may, I will end as I began, by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall for his extraordinary efforts across this region. We know that his personal interventions across the region with countries, Governments and Heads of State have a serious and significant impact of the trajectory of the region, and we are very grateful to him.

**Mr. Geng Shuang (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall for his briefing, based on which, together with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/517), I would like to make the following comments.

First, we must support the countries of the region in maintaining peace and stability. In general, Central Africa has maintained peace and stability, and the efforts of countries of the region to fight effectively against the pandemic and to sustain the momentum for development are indeed worthy of acknowledgement. The international community should continue to respect the sovereignty and leadership of the countries of the region, support the people of the region in seeking peace and development and encourage the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and other regional and subregional organizations in playing a greater role.

China commends the Government of Cameroon for finding a solution to the issues in its South-West and North-West regions. We believe that such matters fall within the internal affairs of Cameroon, and we are confident that the country has the ability to address them properly.

China supports the Chadian authorities in their efforts to maintain national stability and promoting the transition process. We encourage the country to

play a greater role with regard to counter-terrorism in the region.

The security situation in the Central African Republic has improved. The parties should continue to implement the peace agreement and maintain long-term peace and stability. In turn, the Security Council should remove without delay its arms embargo on the country.

Secondly, we should support countries of the region in strengthening unity and cooperation. Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army are still active, which poses a grave threat to the political, economic and humanitarian situations of the countries of the region. In addition, Central Africa must also deal with other challenges, including piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, climate change and food security.

China supports the process of regional integration and the Economic Community of Central African States in enhancing its collective security mechanism and encourages regional countries to strengthen good-neighbourly relations, unity and cooperation and to resolve their differences through consultation and dialogue.

Climate change is in essence a matter of development. The international community, especially developed countries, should provide financial and technical support to regional countries to help them enhance their adaptation and mitigation capabilities.

Thirdly, we must support regional countries in speeding up post-pandemic recovery and eliminating the root causes of conflict. At present, the world has entered a new stage where fighting the pandemic and addressing post-pandemic recovery require equal attention.

Regional countries, especially those affected by conflict, are facing greater medium- to long-term impacts from the pandemic and difficulty in gaining access to vaccines, and thus a more daunting post-recovery challenge. The Security Council held a high-level open debate on the theme of addressing the root causes of conflict while promoting post-pandemic recovery (S/2021/490) and adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/10). The international community should, in accordance with the consensus reached at that meeting, step up its support for fighting the pandemic, post-pandemic recovery, trade, investment, food security and poverty reduction, and ensure that resources are channelled to where there is

the most urgent need among the African parties, so as to eliminate the root causes of conflict.

China, together with African countries, launched the Initiative on Partnership for Africa's Development, which has garnered a positive response and support from many African countries, including those of Central Africa. We invite more countries and international organizations to join the initiative so as to forge synergy in support of African development.

China commends the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the good offices and mediation and will continue to support his work. China, in principle, supports the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and will participate constructively in relevant consultations. We hope that UNOCA will continue to support regional countries and regional organizations and work in close consultation with United Nations agencies, so as to play a bigger part in the achievement of regional peace and stability.

**Mr. Tirumurti (India):** Allow me to begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General François Fall for his briefing on the recent developments concerning the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the situation in the Lake Chad basin region. We deeply appreciate his contribution.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/517) and today's briefing have detailed the progress made by countries of the region on the political, security and humanitarian fronts. My remarks today broadly cover these three points.

The holding of elections in the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Gabon and the Republic of Congo reflects the positive trend of democracy taking root in the region. We are cognizant of the complex challenges that the African countries face in holding elections. While there may be reservations in some quarters about the way elections were conducted, we believe that the holding of timely elections is fundamental to democracy. India welcomes these positive developments and congratulates the people and the leadership of these countries on reaffirming their faith in democracy and on their commitment to sustainable peace and development.

At the same time, we recognize that there exist forces inimical to this positive trend and that reconciliation

and national dialogue may be required in some cases. There is a need to ensure greater political legitimacy and inclusivity in governance and decision-making. We remain hopeful that political stakeholders will continue to respect due process and that the decisions of the constitutional bodies and institutions will be honoured.

We take note of the expectations expressed by the African Union Peace and Security Council in its communiqué of 20 May on developments in Chad. We hope that the transition to democratic rule will take place within the 18-month period, and that the transitional military council will adhere to the commitments made. We welcome the efforts of the African Union in supporting the transition process in Chad.

The Council will be deliberating on the situation in the Central African Republic in detail next week. Therefore, I will restrict my comments to underscore the urgent need for concrete action on the part of all stakeholders, including the Government, towards implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The security situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile, as is evident from last week's clashes at a check post near the Chadian border, which resulted in the tragic killings of nine security personnel. We hope that both sides will work towards de-escalation. Recent incidents, including the restriction of movement, search, arrest, attempted assault and the intimidation of personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and United Nations personnel in the Central African Republic are of serious concern. These incidents have put the safety and security of the peacekeepers in jeopardy. It is also important to ensure strict compliance with the status of forces agreement.

The worsening security situation, due to increasing terror activities of Boko Haram in Cameroon and Chad, remains a cause for serious concern. We strongly condemn these attacks and the killing of innocent civilians by Boko Haram. There is an urgent need to ensure an integrated and multi-country approach to addressing the terrorist threat presented by Boko Haram. The countries of the region need to urgently finalize the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region and to start implementing territorial action plans. Needless to add, the countries in the region should continue to keep the pressure on the Lord's Resistance Army.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is a matter of concern. The International Maritime Bureau recorded a rise in piracy and armed robbery in 2020, with approximately 95 per cent of global kidnappings reported from within Gulf of Guinea waters, compared to 90 per cent in the same period in 2019. In recent years, acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea have increased and Indian sailors have been most affected. There is an urgent need to increase surveillance for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, through increased international collaboration.

Several countries of the region are facing a difficult humanitarian situation owing to the ongoing conflicts. The economic impact of the pandemic has also added an additional burden on the economies. We hope the international community will continue to support the efforts of the countries to alleviate the humanitarian situation.

We commend the positive and proactive role played by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in addressing the challenges faced by the region. We also welcome the adoption of the UNOCA-ECCAS joint strategic plan for 2021-2025 and look forward to its implementation.

India has excellent bilateral relations with countries in Central Africa. In recent years, India has opened diplomatic missions in the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Sao Tomé and Príncipe and will very shortly do so in Chad. India has extended development cooperation by way of soft loans of \$2 billion for projects in agriculture, transport, power and water supply. India has also extended relief under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the Group of 20 to Central African countries. We will continue to engage closely with Central Africa and be steadfast in our support for lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

**Mr. Abarry** (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African States members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

We thank Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa, for his comprehensive and very informative briefing. We commend the work done by the Special Representative to promote peace in the region through mediation and preventive diplomacy and to support electoral processes, conflict resolution, post-conflict

reconstruction, peacebuilding and capacity-building in several areas.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our condolences to the people of Chad following the passing of President Idriss Deby Itno, as well as to the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad basin and the families of all the soldiers who have fallen victim to Boko Haram.

Our statement will focus on socioeconomic, political, security and humanitarian developments.

On the socioeconomic front, the region has been severely affected in recent months by the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, as noted by the Special Representative, and the economic hardship it imposes. We commend the efforts of the States of the region, which have committed significant resources to stop the spread of the virus through the launching of vaccination campaigns. We hope that those efforts will quickly pave the way for the revival of socioeconomic activity, on which the fate of the most vulnerable segments of society depend. In that regard, we are encouraged by the International Monetary Fund's forecast for economic growth in the region. It serves as a strong signal of Africa's resilience. With additional support in the context of the Building Back Better initiative, Africa can expect a complete economic recovery. We cannot stress enough the importance of jobs and shared growth for peace.

With regard to the political situation, we welcome the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and confidence-building initiatives so as to overcome regional challenges and national challenges, such as those in Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad.

With respect to Chad and the communiqué adopted on 14 May by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, we encourage transition authorities to do their utmost to promote inclusive dialogue, ensure that the timetable for the transition is respected and guarantee a return to constitutional order by installing a democratic Government based on free, credible and peaceful elections.

Regarding Cameroon, while we welcome the efforts made by the authorities to advance the decentralization process, in line with the recommendations arising from the major national dialogue, we call on the parties to prioritize dialogue as the only way to restore peace in

the North-West and South-West regions of the country. We deplore the incessant violence in north-western and south-western Cameroon, which has led to the displacement of some 4,200 people, as a result of attacks by separatist armed groups, employing improvised explosive devices, and attacks on schools and teachers.

We are concerned about the increase in the number of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin, which led to 145 civilian casualties in Cameroon and 199 in Chad between 1 December 2020 and 30 April this year. We call for resolute action against the group. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation that coordination be strengthened between States and partners of the Lake Chad basin in order to address the threats posed by Boko Haram by focusing on their root causes and impact. We believe that the joint efforts of UNOCA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and United Nations agencies, supported by analysis, advocacy and joint programmes, remain key to curbing the impact of Boko Haram in the region.<sup>[P]</sup><sup>[SEP]</sup> The uptick in activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which continues to perpetrate attacks against civilians, in particular women and children, and engage in clashes with military forces in some countries, is also another major source of concern. We therefore welcome the fact that, on 6 May, the International Criminal Court (ICC) sentenced an LRA commander to 25 years in prison for crimes against humanity and war crimes. The case was brought to trial in 2015. The sentencing by the ICC, which is the first for a member of the group, is a significant step forward in the quest for justice for the victims. It is also a watershed for international justice, as it was the first-ever successful prosecution of forced pregnancy and forced marriage. We therefore support the call for international support against the LRA, in response to the violence in Central Africa and the ongoing atrocities in several countries. We must accelerate the implementation of the UNOCA-Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) joint strategic plan for the period 2021-2025 to bring about peace and stability.

Still on the issue of security, we are also concerned about the increase in the number attacks and threats to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. We welcome the virtual ministerial meeting on 4 May of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa on strengthening mechanisms to combat maritime insecurity.



The A3+1 is also concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region as a result of ongoing conflict, epidemics and natural disasters. According to United Nations statistics, more than 4.4 million people are in need of humanitarian aid in Cameroon. The humanitarian response plan for the current year requires funding of \$362 million, of which, to date, only 18 per cent have been mobilized.

The situation is even less encouraging in Chad, where more than 5.5 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid. In addition, the number of displaced persons continues to increase across Central Africa and the Republic of Congo. Cholera, measles and polio, combined with the effects of climate change, also have a considerable impact on the Lake Chad basin region, where more than 1.2 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The recent eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano in the Democratic Republic of Congo has compounded an already grim situation. We therefore call on the United Nations, the African Union, UNOCA, ECCAS and all international partners to remobilize so as to provide funding for the humanitarian response plan.

We are also deeply concerned about reports of continuing human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual and gender-based violence committed by armed groups and other actors alike.

In spite of the region's challenges, we welcome the development of regional cooperation and the diplomatic efforts of leaders of the region. We are also encouraged by efforts to normalize relations between Gabon and Equatorial Guinea for a peaceful and jurisdictional settlement of their border dispute through the International Court of Justice at The Hague. We also welcome the fact that Burundi has resumed its place in the region and plays a positive role in regional dynamics. We welcome the efforts of the African Union and UNOCA in supporting regional cooperation. We also call for support for the ECCAS Commission in its partnership efforts with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We thank the Peacebuilding Commission for its support for regional efforts towards economic cooperation, development and peacebuilding.

In conclusion, the A3+1 welcomes the continued commitment and tireless efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General as he works

with States and partners in the region. That is why we support the renewal of the UNOCA mandate for three years, starting 1 September, so as to allow it to continue its integration efforts and address continuing fragilities in the region

**Mr. Hunter** (United States of America): I too thank Special Representative Fall for his briefing today and for his tireless efforts across the region during a tumultuous time.

Today I would like to talk about the situations in Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Burundi.

First, the United States would like to express its gratitude to the African Union Peace and Security Council for its work in Chad, as the country finds a way forward following the death of President Deby. We join the African Union and our international partners in calling for a peaceful, timely and civilian-led transition of power to a democratically elected Government before October 2022. The Chadian people deserve an inclusive national dialogue — one where everyone comes together to decide the future of their country. Specifically, that means laying out a concrete plan and a timeline for elections and drafting a new national constitution. It means setting up strong institutions, such as a representative National Assembly, an independent judicial system and a reformed national independent electoral commission. For Chad, democracy is finally within reach. We urge the people of Chad to seize this moment.

Secondly, the United States continues to be concerned about the situation in the anglophone regions of Cameroon. We condemn everyone contributing to the violence, including both security forces and armed separatists. We call on the Government and armed groups to end the violence and participate in dialogue without preconditions.

I again thank Special Representative Fall for continuing to engage with key actors, both in Cameroon and abroad, as he did in March of this year. Everyone has a role to play in supporting dialogue and peace to end the senseless killings and violence. The United States fully supports the role of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in promoting inclusive political dialogue in Cameroon. We also support the Swiss-led and United Nations-supported mediation of the anglophone crisis. However, we are concerned about the viability of the Cameroon

Government's Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development of the North-West and South-West regions, which is supported by the United Nations Development Programme. Unfortunately, the current security environment on the ground is not conducive to implementing that kind of initiative.

Looking outside Cameroon's borders, we believe that the Cameroonian diaspora has a powerful tool at its disposal — the voices of its people. We therefore ask them and everyone with influence in the region to use their voices to promote peace and meaningful change, rather than retaliatory violence, which will only lead to more suffering. It is time to get children back to school safely, it is time to support humanitarian workers and it is time to end the fighting.

We also remain concerned about the ongoing situation in the Central African Republic and welcome the joint communiqué. We encourage the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to use its good offices to support a meaningful dialogue that is fully inclusive and addresses the need to improve governance. UNOCA has an important role to play in encouraging constructive engagement by neighbouring countries to reduce the violence and secure the shared borders.

We are outraged by reports that Russian instructors led military offensives characterized by confrontations with United Nations peacekeepers, threats against United Nations personnel, violations of international humanitarian law, extensive sexual violence and widespread looting, including of humanitarian organizations. Those violations must stop now. We urge all security actors to coordinate their operations with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and ensure that their activities do not harm civilians. In fact, any security actor must provide justification for how their so-called assistance supports security sector reform.

Fourth and finally, the United States welcomes progress in Burundi, as was mentioned earlier. Burundi has improved diplomatic and economic relationships with its neighbours and returned to international forums. We recognize initial improvements in respect for media freedoms and encourage continued progress on human rights, which we believe would result in significant economic and political benefits for the people of Burundi. The United States celebrates the

efforts of the Government of Burundi, the United Nations, the African Union and many regional and international actors in supporting those changes, and we encourage Burundi to keep making progress towards a lasting peace.

**Ms. Heimerback** (Norway): I too thank Mr. Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his commitment and his briefing this morning.

We commend the preventive diplomacy of United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), including around elections. It is key that the Office get sufficient resources to carry out its mandate. The Norwegian Refugee Council's recent list of the most neglected displacement crises in the world was topped by three Central African countries. That illustrates the challenges UNOCA faces.

Let me touch upon three issues that will guide our approach to the upcoming mandate renewal — peace diplomacy, maritime security and climate change and natural resources.

First, on peace diplomacy and peacebuilding, we know that some of the country situations under UNOCA's purview are not formally on the Security Council's agenda. That should not prevent us, however, from having conversations on how conflicts can be prevented, including through cross-border cooperation. Persistent armed violence in the Lake Chad region continues to increase human suffering and humanitarian needs. We need to address the root causes of that violence, including through political dialogue and conversations with the affected communities. The joint efforts of UNOCA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and other United Nations entities in the region are a positive step forward and should be strengthened.

The situation in Cameroon is a cause for concern. We condemn attacks against schools, civilians, the United Nations and humanitarian actors, as well as high rates of sexual and gender-based violence. We urge both the Government and armed groups to respect international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. We call on all actors, including in the diaspora, to participate in constructive dialogue and we support the Swiss-led efforts in that regard. In Chad, we welcome the call of the African Union (AU) for an inclusive transition culminating in the restoration of constitutional order through the holding of elections, in accordance with the AU timelines.

The death of late President Deby also highlights cross-border linkages to Libya.

Last week's clashes of soldiers around the Chad-Central African Republic border is another reason for concern. Recalling the recent Security Council meeting on the Great Lakes region (see S/2021/351) and the Peacebuilding Commission meeting on Burundi, we underline the need for updates on Burundi, including in UNOCA reports.

Secondly, on maritime security, we welcome the increased cooperation of UNOCA and UNOWAS in the Gulf of Guinea, in line with Security Council resolutions. Out of the 135 crew members kidnapped globally last year, 130 were kidnapped in the Gulf of Guinea. This worrying trend has damaging effects on security and development in the region, as well as on international navigation. Building on regional institutions and initiatives, we should also take a fresh look at what the Council can do to support the region.

Finally, on the effects of climate change and natural resources on security, we welcome UNOCA's two-year project to strengthen knowledge on interlinkages between climate change and security in Central Africa. While we are awaiting further findings, the report (S/2021/517) already tells a story of severe droughts and flooding, leading to food insecurity, forced displacement, natural resource scarcity, land conflicts and farmer-herder conflicts —with women and girls often most affected. Add to that conflicts over scarce natural resources, including minerals, and it all points to the need to address climate change and natural resources as a security issue.

In conclusion, amid often complex and interconnected developments in the region, we are encouraged by the increasing engagement of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). We also believe that there is untapped potential for even stronger cooperation between UNOCA and the AU. When actors like ECCAS, UNOCA and the AU work closely together on key issues, we know that progress can happen.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his update on the situation in the Central African subregion.

Russia has always supported the activity of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa as

an important instrument of preventive diplomacy. We believe that the good offices of Special Representative Fall are extremely useful. In that connection, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the mission for three years.

The situation in Central Africa remains very complex and is characterized by an increase in terrorism and political tensions, as well as ongoing conflict. The coronavirus disease continues to be present in the region, which has compounded the already difficult socioeconomic situation for the people living there.

We are particularly concerned about the fragile and unstable security situation in Chad. On 20 April, President Deby was killed there. We believe that this tragic event will have far-reaching consequences for peace and stability in the region and on the continent, as a whole.

That said, I think it is important to remember that it is precisely the Western intervention into neighbouring Libya in 2011 and the bloody conflict that ensued for many years that led to the current tragic situation in the region. Our views on this are confirmed by the outcome of the extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which took place in Abuja on 25 May under the chairmanship of the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari. We support the efforts of the African Union to normalize the situation in Chad, including the recommendation to organize a national dialogue and reconciliation, as well as the timely holding of democratic elections.

One characteristic of the region is its porous borders, through which goods and peaceful civilians, but also insurgents and contraband, move freely. On 30 May, for example, on the border between Chad and the Central African Republic, as a result of provocation by insurgents from the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, which opposes the Government of Bangui. As a result, a clash occurred between the soldiers of the Central African Republic and Chad, which led to loss of life.

In this regard, we call on all sides to demonstrate maximum restraint and peacefully resolve any issues that arise. We note the readiness of the authorities of the Central African Republic to ensure the security of their borders together with N'Djamena. To prevent any kind of misunderstanding in future, Chad and the Central African Republic must create a joint commission and conduct a demarcation of their border. We know that

this kind of initiative has been proposed by Bangui, and we hope that N'Djamena will agree to it.

Unfortunately, we have to note the expansion of the area of activity of terrorist groups in Central Africa. Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province are the main sources of instability in Cameroon, Nigeria, the Niger and Chad. Jihadists are also intent on consolidating their position in the Central African Republic. We believe that uncontrolled jihadist propaganda leads to radicalization of the local populations and weakens the central authorities in the peripheral areas of certain countries. In addition, socioeconomic problems and easy access to firearms make it very realistic to see the establishment of a Caliphate 2.0 in Africa.

Accordingly, we think it is very important to increase countries' efforts to quickly identify and block channels through which terrorists are supplied with ideological material and financial and human resources. Furthermore, we believe that a more active use of the instruments of the subsidiary specialized bodies of the Security Council — first and foremost, the Counter Terrorism Committee and the sanctions committee concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida — will contribute to effective prevention and countering of the terrorist threat on the African continent, including the threat from Boko Haram.

We are extremely concerned about the situation with regard to the security of maritime navigation in the Gulf of Guinea. There are many cases of maritime piracy against commercial vessels, abduction of crew members by pirates and demands for ransom. We note the activity of the Global Maritime Crime Programme that is overseen by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In 2020, the Russian Federation decided to allocate a special contribution to the fund for this programme. These resources are used to provide technical assistance to coast guard services of the coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea. We intend to continue providing financial assistance to regional partners through the United Nations. We also believe that it would be a good idea to involve United Nations mechanisms more actively in order to counter piracy and maritime crime. As we see it, the positive experience of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia could be used to deal with similar problems in the Gulf of Guinea.

Unfortunately, I cannot conclude without reacting to the statement made by my colleague from the United States. There is nothing principally new or unexpected in what we heard in his statement. Instead, the United States delegation continues to make the same unfounded accusations against us. In addition, we refer to the campaign that has been launched in the media. We believe that this is simply a coordinated action to give Russia a bad name and, in particular, to undermine our effective efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation in the Central African Republic, which has indeed been effective, particularly compared to other bilateral assistance efforts.

We believe that the investigation of possible cases of violations of international humanitarian law must be conducted by the relevant authorities of the Central African Republic, once convincing evidence is transmitted to them and once they are apprised of the facts. This is what should be done, rather than launching baseless accusations and biased media investigations.

We also note that we believe that it is unacceptable to blackmail countries that find themselves in very difficult situations, including the Central African Republic, by threatening to cut off bilateral assistance including financial assistance. Blackmailing such countries because of their so-called inappropriate behaviour or owing to the fact that they are cooperating with the wrong partners is wrong. This kind of tactic is widely used by our colleagues, who, in their own worlds, insist they are worried about the well-being of ordinary people.

As for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), we will continue our coordination and cooperation with the Mission, both here in New York and on the ground.

**Mrs. Gasri** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Special Representative François Fall for his always very substantial briefing.

I would like to return to three points. First of all, let me stress the importance of regional cooperation for the stability of Central Africa. We welcome United Nations cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in supporting regional stability, crisis prevention and peacebuilding in the region. As Lord's Resistance Army attacks persist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic, and Boko Haram terrorist actions increase

around the Lake Chad basin, regional coordination is essential to address transnational threats and to protect populations.

Also essential is regional advocacy for the respect of human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law, the promotion of inclusive electoral processes and the protection of fundamental freedoms. In the context of the political transition in Chad, ECCAS has taken the initiative to rapidly deploy an assistance mission in conjunction with the African Union. We welcome this.

The appointment of an inclusive civilian Government is a positive step forward that should lead to a political transition based on dialogue with all political actors and civil society. The objective must be a rapid return to democratically elected institutions.

We welcome the efforts of ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, working in conjunction with the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, in favour of stabilizing the Central African Republic and initiating a truly inclusive political dialogue. We count on the Central African authorities to fulfil their commitments quickly.

Threats and attacks against United Nations personnel as well as violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are unacceptable. The events of 30 May are serious. We will have the opportunity to return to this point during the consultations.

In Cameroon, France is continuing its exchanges with the Cameroonian authorities to support the path of dialogue and find a political solution to the crisis in the north-west and south-west regions of the country. We also welcome Cameroon's contribution to regional stability, which was illustrated by Cameroonian contingents' actions within the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. We also support Cameroon in its fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin.

Secondly, we must focus our attention on the fate of the civilian population. Humanitarian needs have increased, particularly with regard to food insecurity. Instability is exacerbating the situation of displaced people and refugees, especially women. Attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel, as well as teachers and schools, as was the case in Cameroon

recently, are unacceptable. They are crimes that must not go unpunished.

Thirdly, and this is my last point, the support of international partners remains essential to help Central Africa to overcome the health crisis and continue its development. In the context of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator initiative, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, funded to the tune of more than €2.4 billion by the European Union and its member States, has already made it possible to distribute nearly 20 million doses of vaccine to 43 African States, including in Central Africa.

International partners must also remain committed to mitigating the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic in Central Africa. That was the objective of the Summit on Financing African Economies, held in Paris last month. It agreed on concrete measures to break the cycle of excessive debt and to support a sound economic recovery.

We reaffirm the important role of the Peacebuilding Commission and welcome its work in connection with the countries of the region, particularly Burundi.

The role of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) is indispensable in preventing conflicts and building peace. Synergies among the United Nations regional offices and the Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General must be further developed, and we welcome the work of Special Representative Fall in that regard. We support the renewal of the UNOCA mandate for the next three years, like several mentioned earlier.

**Mr. Pham** (Viet Nam): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) François Louncény Fall for his comprehensive briefing.

We share the concerns over the persistent security and socioeconomic challenges that countries and people of the region continue to face in the reporting period, which, sadly, are also aggravated by the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

My delegation is troubled by the continued violence perpetrated by armed groups and terrorists in certain parts of the region, including in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, areas affected by Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance

Army. The maritime security situation in the Gulf of Guinea remains troubling.

We strongly condemn the continued violence against civilians, civilian infrastructure and United Nations and humanitarian personnel in several parts of the region.

The insecurity situation continues to adversely affect stability and development in the region. Violence, epidemics, floods and climate change also pose serious challenges to the humanitarian situation of millions of people, especially women and children.

In addressing those challenges, we would first like to highlight the importance of dealing with the root causes of instability in the region. That should be done in a pragmatic and comprehensive manner by supporting the ongoing diplomatic and political efforts, enhancing reconciliation efforts at the national and regional levels, addressing the threats posed by armed groups and terrorists, strengthening the governance of natural resources and providing equitable development opportunities for countries.

Secondly, regional and subregional cooperation significantly contributes to achieving peace, stability and development. We are genuinely pleased to see the efforts of regional countries in response to the pandemic, as well as the continued commitment among them to addressing peace and security issues. Notably, we commend the initiatives to assist the Central African Republic taken by the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We support the cooperation efforts between the Central African Republic and Chad in settling the recent security incident at the border.

The role of regional and subregional organizations, as well as the United Nations, could be greatly beneficial in supporting efforts towards peace and prosperity in the region. We therefore warmly welcome the joint strategic plan of the Economic Community of Central African States and UNOCA for the period from 2021 to 2025.

Thirdly, the efforts of Central African countries should always be coupled with international support. My delegation calls on international partners and the relevant United Nations entities to provide sustained technical and financial assistance to countries in the region. Given the heavy tolls that the region is paying due to the impact of the pandemic, it is important to

provide resources to address emergency humanitarian needs and to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all people of the region.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our full support for the work of UNOCA, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall and the other United Nations entities in the region, especially during this challenging time. Viet Nam will continue its strong support for peace, stability, prosperity and development for the people of Central Africa.

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the situation in Central Africa.

In a context marked by diverse and complex challenges to peace and security in Central Africa, Mexico believes it a priority that UNOCA should continue to exercise its good offices to contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Preventive diplomacy is particularly needed to address the situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, where the civilian population is the most affected by the violence. As in other parts of the region, particularly Chad and the Central African Republic, an inclusive political dialogue is indispensable in Cameroon to identify and address the legitimate demands of the local population and isolate extremist elements that take advantage of the marginalized conditions in which some communities live in order to further their extremist agenda.

One of the most serious security challenges facing the region is the activities of extremist groups, such as Boko Haram, in the Lake Chad area and Cameroon, as well as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Those organizations remain a challenge to State institutions, an ongoing threat to the civilian population and a source of instability for the region.

My country, Mexico, therefore underlines the importance of implementing the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region by finalizing and implementing the territorial action plans.

Furthermore, we recognize as an important step forward the recent sentence issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Dominic Ongwen for

war crimes and crimes against humanity in order that victims of the LRA can obtain justice. We call on all countries of the region to continue to cooperate with the ICC in cases under its jurisdiction.

In view of the security challenges facing the region, Mexico strongly condemns the attacks noted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/517) against humanitarian personnel and schools. The work of humanitarian teams is essential and requires the full support of the national authorities, especially in view of the increase in cases of forced displacement, the consequences of extreme natural phenomena and the coronavirus disease pandemic. In that regard, we reaffirm the importance of respecting and enforcing the rules of international humanitarian law.

In terms of inter-agency coordination, I would like to acknowledge UNOCA's work with other regional organizations, including the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). I welcome in particular the greater involvement of the latter organization in matters of peace and security, thanks to its institutional reform. The joint work between UNOCA and ECCAS in favour of mediation and preventive diplomacy during the recent elections in countries of the region is an example of the potential for coordination between both organizations.

Furthermore, we know that conflicts in the region are exacerbated by the activities of transnational networks involving illicit trafficking in arms and natural resources, as is evident in the case of the Central African Republic. These activities are a source of financing for armed groups and contribute to perpetuating the cycle of violence. That is why we believe that UNOCA could play a key role, in coordination with ECCAS, to develop regional responses to those challenges.

In conclusion, as co-Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, Mexico welcomes the support that UNOCA provided to Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe in preparing their national plans of action in compliance with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000).

**Mr. Gallagher** (Ireland): I would like to begin, like others, by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall for his briefing and for the relevant and necessary work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in the subregion.

I will focus my comments today on a number of country-specific areas of concern, as well as on a number of thematic considerations raised by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

I want to again express our condolences to the people of Chad on the passing away of the late President Deby. We urge all stakeholders in Chad to work together to ensure a swift, peaceful and inclusive transition that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and a return to constitutional order and civilian rule through free and fair elections within 18 months. We welcome the nomination of Mr. Ibrahima Fall as the African Union High Representative for the transition in Chad.

We are deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in the Central African Republic. The recent joint African Union-European Union-United Nations-the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) working visit to the Central African Republic illustrates the regional and international commitment to supporting the people and the Government. We urge the Central African Republic authorities to engage constructively with regional organizations and neighbouring States, which have a vital role to play. Furthermore, we appeal to the Central African Republic authorities and all parties on the ground to coordinate and engage fully with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and to end impediments to the work of the Mission and to investigate those that have occurred. The safety and security of peacekeepers and United Nations personnel is not optional; it is a necessity.

The continuing and escalating levels of violence in both the Central African Republic and Cameroon are deeply concerning. Attacks and abuses against civilians must end, and those responsible must be held to account. Those allegedly perpetrated by Government forces are particularly disturbing. Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of their citizens. The essential social contract between State and citizen, vital to securing peace, requires trust in the State's institutions and its actions.

The humanitarian situation in Cameroon is dire, as we have heard, exacerbated by attacks against humanitarian facilities. Violence against civilians, schools and humanitarian personnel is unacceptable, and the attack against a United Nations convoy, reported by the Secretary-General, is deeply concerning. We call

on all groups to facilitate humanitarian access and urge all parties to pursue inclusive political dialogue to solve the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. Let me also take this opportunity to acknowledge Cameroon for hosting significant numbers of refugees displaced from within the region.

Parties to conflict must comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The sentencing last month by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of the Lord's Resistance Army commander, Dominic Ongwen, is significant, showing that those who commit crimes against humanity or war crimes will answer for their actions. We welcome the ICC's efforts in holding perpetrators to account, since countering impunity is essential to preventing further violations.

Like the Ambassador of the Niger and our colleagues in the three African States members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we believe that the fact that the Court in its verdict and sentencing addressed the crimes of forced pregnancy and forced marriage for the first time is important. We must demand the prosecution of the crime of conflict-related sexual violence on an equal basis with other war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We welcome the fact that the links between climate change and peace and security have been addressed so directly in the Secretary General's report (S/2021/517). We have seen in the Sahel, particularly in the countries around Lake Chad, how conflict and climate combine to diminish access to natural resources. The multiple and repeated shocks of drought and flooding undermine community resilience and livelihoods, creating drivers which armed groups exploit. Ireland will continue to work across the Security Council to recognize and act on climate-related security risks, which will only become more pressing in the years to come.

The work undertaken by UNOCA in supporting the development and implementation of national action plans on women and peace and security must also be commended. As Ireland noted at last week's Arria Formula meeting on women and peace and security in the Sahel, the women and peace and security agenda beats with an African heart.

Finally, regional coherence and cooperation are key to the region being able to recover strongly

and sustainably from the coronavirus disease, but it is also essential to strengthening national and regional governance systems, protecting human rights and addressing transnational security challenges. Cooperation between UNOCA and ECCAS is critical, and the joint strategic plan for the period 2021 to 2025 can be a significant framework for progress in the coming years.

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Estonia.

I would like to start by thanking Special Representative Fall for today's informative briefing and expressing my appreciation for the work the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) is undertaking across the Central African region.

Countries across Central Africa continue to face serious political, economic and security challenges that continue to be exacerbated by the pandemic. It is regrettable to witness that these challenges have worsened in the past six months. The flare-up of violence in the Central African Republic has been most worrisome. Particularly concerning has been the rise in human rights violations in the conflict, most notably those perpetrated by Government forces and their partners. Estonia strongly condemns threats made against United Nations personnel and any hampering of the delivery of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic or humanitarian access in the country.

In Cameroon, violence and human rights violations and abuses have continued. Particularly tragic have been attacks against schools and schoolchildren and the targeting of humanitarian workers. Estonia condemns such attacks in the strongest terms. There is no excuse for targeting civilians or firing at humanitarian aid providers. Accountability for these violations and abuses must be established in order to fight the establishment of a culture of impunity, which would only breed more violence. We welcome steps made in advancing a political dialogue, which is the only path to finding a peaceful and lasting resolution to the conflict. The role of UNOCA in supporting mediation and political momentum towards reconciliation in Cameroon is most welcome.

It has been encouraging to witness active regional cooperation in meeting these challenges, and we see great value in all regional initiatives that contribute



to silencing guns, promoting civil rights and ensuring constitutional order. On the latter, we continue to monitor closely the return to civilian-led democratic governance in Chad. Neighbourly cooperation is essential for maintaining regional peace and security, ensuring safe and secure borders and mitigating the effects of the pandemic.

I would like to conclude by noting that the complex and fragile situation in Central Africa continues to be adversely impacted by the destructive effects of climate change. There is no denying that climate change is affecting, and will continue to have effects

on, international peace and security, and this threat will continue to grow without focused action to tackle it. We commend UNOCA for addressing this issue in the report (S/2021/517).

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

*The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.*