



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9058th meeting
 Wednesday, 8 June 2022, 10 a.m.
 New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Dautllari	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mrs. Gasri
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Boateng
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. McSwiney
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Ms. Shaheen
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

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/2022/436)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



The meeting was called to order at 10 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/2022/436)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; His Excellency Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States; and Ms. Jeanne-Danielle Nicole Nlate, Vice-President of the Coalition des organisations de la société civile d'Afrique centrale pour la préservation de la paix, la prévention des conflits, la résolution et la transformation des crises.

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/2022/436, 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 Ms. Pobee.

Ms. Pobee (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council today on the situation in Central Africa and on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa, Mr. François Louncény Fall, whose mandate came to an end last week. Over the past five and a half years of his mandate, Mr. Fall has contributed to broadening UNOCA's activities through his good offices and to strengthening the capacity of the region in conflict prevention and resolution. He has provided support in terms of the coordination and coherence of United Nations actions aimed at restoring peace and

security in Central Africa. I want to thank Mr. Fall for his service and for his personal dedication to peace.

(spoke in English)

Several countries in the subregion are preparing for crucial electoral processes. For the current year, legislative and local elections are expected to be held in the Republic of the Congo in July; general elections in Angola in August; legislative, regional and local elections in Sao Tome and Principe in September; and legislative elections in Equatorial Guinea, with a date to be determined. In 2023, presidential elections are expected to be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Chad is also expected to hold general elections at the end of its transitional process.

The United Nations has been clear in its message that all stakeholders must work to create the conditions conducive to credible, inclusive and peaceful elections in line with democratic principles. UNOCA and other presences in the region will exercise their good offices wherever required to encourage inclusive and meaningful political dialogue in countries preparing for elections. The Office will also encourage Governments to widen the democratic space and further democratic gains, including by expanding the participation of women and young people in elections, both as candidates and voters.

Some countries in the subregion continue to face political and security challenges. In some instances, those challenges, if not addressed, could risk affecting neighbouring countries and the subregion. The challenges that persist in Cameroon include the conflict in its north-west and south-west regions, the crisis generated by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups in the far north and the influx of refugees fleeing conflict in its neighbour to the east, the Central African Republic. During my visit to Cameroon in March with former Special Representative Fall, I engaged in fruitful exchanges with the national authorities and various stakeholders on the country's peace and security challenges. The situation in the north-west and south-west is particularly worrying, as the violence there is continuing. It will be crucial for the international community to step up its support for national efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully, in line with the conclusions of the Major National Dialogue and international standards.

In Chad, despite delays in the timeline, the political transition continues to be on course. However, the most important challenges remain ahead. It is our hope that the Doha pre-dialogue with the armed opposition will lead to an inclusive peace agreement, including a viable process for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of Chadian armed groups present in neighbouring countries, particularly Libya. I want to underline here that a DDR process in line with international standards will facilitate the mobilization of support from the international community. The United Nations stands ready to support a donor conference to help mobilize funding for the implementation of the transition road map, as and when the national dialogue process gains further traction.

Meanwhile, I am concerned about the recent violence among groups of illegal gold miners, some of whom are allegedly from neighbouring countries, in an area of north-western Chad near the border with Libya. Those clashes have resulted in the deaths of at least 100 people, injuries to many persons and a significant number of displaced persons. In coordination with the transitional authorities, we will explore options for humanitarian support, while also remaining cognizant of the need to address the root causes of instability in that area.

UNOCA has continued its support for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in its efforts to implement institutional reform. UNOCA has also been working to strengthen the Coalition des organisations de la société civile d'Afrique centrale pour la préservation de la paix, la prévention des conflits, la résolution et la transformation des crises (COPAC).

We look forward to hearing Ambassador Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the ECCAS Commission, and Ms. Jeanne-Danielle Nicole Nlate, Vice-President of COPAC, at this morning's meeting. I welcomed Ambassador Da Piedade Veríssimo's participation at the meeting of the Heads of United Nations presences in Central Africa earlier this year. UNOCA will continue to mobilize and coordinate United Nations system-wide support for building the capacity of ECCAS.

The central Africa region continues to face persistent security challenges that are best addressed through regional cooperation. Last week, I briefed the Council (see S/PV.9051) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I remain concerned about the activity of all armed groups in the eastern

part of the country, in particular the heinous attacks against civilians carried out by the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coalition des démocrates congolais and attacks by the Mouvement du 23 mars against Congolese security forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those attacks are exacerbating humanitarian crises, harming bilateral relations at different levels and contributing to the spread of hate speech. In that regard, we welcomed the timely mediation role of President João Lourenço of Angola.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call on all armed groups to disarm and join the political process of the Nairobi Conclave. I also encourage all countries of the region to take steps conducive to peace and to maintain dialogue with a view to avoiding any further escalation of tensions.

Central Africa remains one of the regions in the world that is most severely affected by climate change, which continues to compound peace and security challenges in the subregion, as manifested by the intensifying clashes between farmers and herders in Chad and among farming, fishing and herding communities in Cameroon.

UNOCA, in close collaboration with the United Nations Climate Security Mechanism, is preparing a report on the negative impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa, based on several months of research and field visits, as well as consultations with United Nations and non-United Nations partners, in collaboration with ECCAS. It will provide recommendations to regional stakeholders on how to better prevent, mitigate and manage the security risks linked to climate change, under the leadership of ECAAS.

In the Lake Chad basin, Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province, continue to prey on civilian populations. Intensified air and ground operations by Nigerian and regional military forces have reportedly killed hundreds of terrorist fighters.

At the same time, thousands of former associates of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups have been surrendering to authorities in Nigeria and Cameroon, where they are undergoing a screening process. UNOCA continues to work with the Governments of the region, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and other United Nations

entities to support the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region.

UNOCA and UNOWAS also continued their high-level advocacy with Member States of the Lake Chad basin to increase coherence in their responses to violent extremism and provide technical support for DDR. The two Offices jointly advocate for increased synergies between the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin Regional Strategy.

In the Gulf of Guinea, piracy incidents have decreased as a result of the commendable efforts of the authorities in the region. At the same time, maritime security remains a key challenge, and it will be crucial that initiatives to address it be further intensified going forward. I therefore welcome the adoption of resolution 2634 (2022) of 31 May. Pursuant to the resolution, UNOCA and UNOWAS will continue to report on and support States and subregional organizations in their efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea.

Those security challenges were among the challenges discussed at the ministerial level at the fifty-third meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), which was held last week. The Ministers and Heads of delegation exchanged views on the situation in Chad and adopted the Yaoundé declaration, renewing their support for the transition process in that country.

They also discussed the situation in the Central African Republic and adopted a second declaration reaffirming their support for the Government's peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, UNSAC Member States adopted a third declaration marking the thirtieth anniversary of UNSAC and reaffirming the importance of the Committee in promoting peace and security in Central Africa.

I would like to thank the Government of Cameroon for hosting the meeting and commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of that important Committee, which has over the years been a forum for cooperation among Member States in the region.

Within the Committee, the countries of the region have agreed on important mechanisms, such as the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, the Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and

Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, also known as the Kinshasa Convention, and the regional strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons. UNOCA will continue to work with UNSAC Member States to ensure complementarity between the work of the Committee and that of the ECCAS Commission.

The women and peace and security agenda remains a key priority for the subregion and UNOCA, which continues to support the preparation and implementation of national action plans based on resolution 1325 (2000) across the region. In Angola, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe, the United Nations system provides support for capacity-building, consultations and public initiatives by civil society focused on women's participation in mediation, peacebuilding, political dialogue and elections.

In the case of Chad, the United Nations provides support for the transition process. Collaboration between UNOCA and UN-Women has also led to a dialogue with the Peacebuilding Fund on opportunities to fund a multiyear regional programme that would help operationalize and strengthen the implementation of the agenda.

UNOCA has continued to demonstrate the utility of a regional office as a key mechanism for preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. We look forward to the continued support of the Office for the subregion in addressing its peace and security challenges under a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The President: I thank Ms. Pobee for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo.

Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by apologizing for some technical difficulties. Fortunately, thanks to our good cooperation with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), I was able to move to the UNOCA headquarters here in Libreville.

It is an honour and a great responsibility to address the Security Council in order to outline a general view of the current security and political situation in the Central African region from the perspective of our regional organization. I would like first like to thank the Security Council for the invitation to address this meeting and to offer my sincere congratulations to you,

Madam President, on your country's assumption of the rotating presidency of the Council. It brings with it not only prestige but a great deal of responsibility, thanks to the Council's role in maintaining collective peace and security. I wish you every success in the fulfilment of your beautiful and noble mission. I would also like to take this opportunity to greet all the other members of the Security Council, including one State member of our Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), as well as the senior officials of the Secretariat who are doing us the honour of listening today.

As President of the ECCAS Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, the body that emerged from the institutional reform of our regional organization following the entry into force of its revised treaty, I am delighted to see the Security Council taking an interest in our analyses, insights and perspectives on issues of political governance, peace and security and stability, not only within our States members but also in their relations with one other. I would like to take this opportunity to underline the Commission's readiness to cooperate with the Security Council in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. While the political and security situation in our region of Central Africa is generally stable, it is also true that the region continues to face numerous threats to peace, security and stability. The elements in the positive developments we are seeing are essentially the following.

First, there has been an improvement of the security situation on Rwanda's borders with Uganda and Burundi and the diplomatic relations between them and Rwanda.

Secondly, confidence-building measures between Gabon and Cameroon have been strengthened. That progress was reflected in the holding of their first permanent joint commission on cross-border security and the second session of an ad hoc border commission from 24 to 27 May in Yaoundé.

Similarly, the commitment to ensuring security at their shared borders brought together the authorities of Angola and the Republic of the Congo from 11 to 14 May in Pointe-Noire, in Congo, for a fifth technical meeting on the verification of their maritime border.

It should also be noted that no major incidents have occurred on the borders between the majority of ECCAS member States. There is no doubt that such developments demonstrate the will to prevent

conflicts and to responsibly and definitively manage issues that may emerge on shared borders. However, they also reflect the efforts of the people of Central Africa to strengthen the sense of belonging to a single community, in which borders would no longer be viewed as lines of separation but instead as bridges that unite populations, ethnic groups and cultures that were forced apart by colonization.

That statement cannot in any way deny recent events, which represent one of the greatest threats to regional security in Central Africa along national borders. In that regard, the Commission deplors and deeply laments the deterioration of the security situation on the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which followed attacks by the Mouvement du 23 mars — a rebel movement that was defeated in 2013 — on the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the forces of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those attacks have led to new population displacement flows and heightened diplomatic tensions between those two member States of our Community. Both countries accuse each other of having links with and providing support to the rebel groups that pose a threat to their security.

The ECCAS Commission welcomes the fact that the Security Council was seized of the situation on 3 June and that it condemned all the armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and implored them to participate in the dialogue led by His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta in the framework of the Nairobi process. I would like to stress that a number of initiatives are under way in Central Africa aimed at reducing tensions and encouraging both States to engage in talks to find a permanent solution to the scourge of armed groups on their respective shared borders.

I have just returned from Rwanda, where I discussed the situation with His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and current head of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region. That followed the meeting I held in Kinshasa last week with His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In addition to the security threat I just mentioned, one of the many other threats is the ongoing mobilization of other rebel armed groups and negative

forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their actions have led to mass population displacements, damage to infrastructure that was already weak and the development of a war economy, which prevents genuine development from taking place. The destabilizing consequences of the actions of those armed groups have led the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to declare a state of siege in the region and to set up joint actions with Ugandan armed forces in an attempt to suppress the disruptive capacity of those armed groups.

It should be underscored that they remain active in other areas of our region, in particular in one part of the territory of the Central African Republic, where they carry out abuses against civilians despite the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire by His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera on 16 October 2021 and the holding of the Central African dialogue from 21 to 27 March this year. The rebels are also in Cameroon, operating under the cover of secessionist demands in the North-West and South-West regions.

In our region, Central Africa, terrorism is no longer confined to the Sahel-Saharan area. The actions of two rival factions of Boko Haram and the expansion of terrorist groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces and Madina at Tauheed Wau Mujahedein in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, show that our region is seriously affected by terrorism. We must do our utmost to prevent such groups from becoming entrenched in countries of the region.

Concerning respect for human rights, it must be acknowledged that we have strengthened awareness of the need to build the rule of law in the region. The Constitutions of all States of the region have ensured that democratic governance and institutions that promote and protect human rights are now part of the institutional landscape of the countries in the region. However, that development has not put a stop to human rights violations. The most severe human rights violations are those committed by armed groups, which are often guilty of summary violations.

Intercommunal violence has also re-emerged in our region. Humanitarian crises and transhumance for criminal purposes persist, thereby demonstrating the ever-increasing collusion between transhumance communities and criminal networks in at least three

countries of the region — Chad, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Piracy, which was the subject of a Security Council meeting (see S/PV.9050) held on 31 May at the initiative of Ghana and Norway, remains a threat in our region, in particular in the Gulf of Guinea, as no significant decrease in the number of incidents has been recorded. Although piracy may be a cause of insecurity at sea, it must be acknowledged that it is above all a symptom — behind piracy several issues are concealed.

For the Council's information, on the sidelines of the upcoming Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in Kinshasa in July, ECCAS will organize a maritime conference on the theme "Sea, security and development". The issue of combating piracy on the high seas and in other maritime areas of the region, as well as that of the governance of the region's maritime areas and the development of the blue economy, will be addressed at the conference and broadly discussed.

With regard to the issue of human security and its links to peace and the security and stability of States, there have been some encouraging developments. I would like to mention a few salient points in relation to internal political governance.

All the members of our region except one have signed the protocol of the African Peer Review Mechanism. The region is preparing to establish a programme focused on deepening democratic governance through greater commitment from member States. Despite the economic and social constraints and consequences caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the States of the region have respected the election dates set in 2021 and our Community is ready to observe the elections. That is a clear sign of the collective ownership of our shared values and the entrenchment of democracy in the region. That trend continues, and will be strengthened with the electoral processes planned for this year, 2022, and 2023. Elections are scheduled in Angola, Congo and Sao Tome and Principe in 2022, and in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2023. The latter are already preparing. The Commission has started conducting missions to the countries holding elections in 2022 to ensure that the processes are well under way.

In relation to those electoral processes, we should already welcome some initiatives, in particular the updating of the electoral register in Angola ahead of the general elections scheduled for August. A major new

development is the opening up of voting to Angolans living abroad by registering them on the electoral roll. The holding of a political consultation in Owando, Congo, in March, with a view to building consensus on strengthening electoral governance for the July elections, is also encouraging. The publication of the road map for holding elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2023 by its Independent National Electoral Commission is welcome, too.

However, in terms of political governance, it is also worth noting the holding of the national dialogue in the Central African Republic last March and the establishment of a contact and coordination group, comprising senior officials from Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, supported by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the three guarantor institutions, the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union (AU), tasked with drawing up an action plan that includes measures to support the military operations that an operational unit will be responsible for implementing.

In addition to those political events and activities, which may help to ease tensions on the political front, one cannot help but focus on other actions that have the potential to lead to mistrust among political actors, thereby triggering crises and conflicts. In that regard, I would like to mention the postponement of the Chadian inclusive national dialogue to a later date, which will effectively prolong the political transition period. The planned electoral processes, namely, the constitutional referendum and the presidential, legislative and local elections, will most likely also be delayed. Although we should not succumb to the temptation to adopt dates or trivialize their importance, the concern must be to create the conditions for the participation of all political groups in rebuilding the State in the Republic of Chad.

Another concern is the start of discussions in the political class on amending the Constitution, particularly article 35, on the number of presidential terms in the Central African Republic. That move by part of the Central African political class may exacerbate political tensions in the country. The polarization caused by this debate in a country like the Central African Republic, where peace is fragile, should be very closely watched.

This is the message that the ECCAS Commission, through me, felt it had to highlight to the Security

Council concerning the current security and political situation in the Central African region. Those challenges are clearly the primary responsibility of the region and of its own AU Peace and Security Council, but, at the same time, they transcend them. By affecting the Central African States and the region, in one way or another such challenges affect the collective security for which the Security Council is responsible under the Charter of the United Nations, adopted in San Francisco in 1945.

In conclusion, allow me to take this opportunity to express the readiness of the ECCAS Commission to collaborate in good faith, responsibly, productively and effectively with the Security Council, in the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter, to ensure security and peace, which are prerequisites for the protection of human dignity and the development of peoples.

The President: I thank Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nlate.

Ms. Nlate: (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Coalition des organisations de la société civile d'Afrique centrale pour la préservation de la paix, la prévention des conflits, la résolution et la transformation des crises (COPAC), I have the honour to brief the Council on the regional context, the human rights situation and the situation pertaining to the implementation in Central Africa of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

At the outset, and because it is the first time that our organization has had the honour of addressing the members of the Council, I would like to provide a short summary of the work of COPAC. Who are we? Our organization was established on 10 October 2019. It has five principal networks and platforms in Central Africa, which have existed for more than 15 years. Each has at least 500 members and the largest has approximately 1,200. The establishment of COPAC solved the problem of the lack of leadership at the subregional level, which undermined the possibility of relevant interactions between civil society and the decision-making bodies in the region and across the continent.

Turning to the security situation, according to a study conducted by the African Union Peace and Security Council in June 2020, the peace and security landscape in Central Africa is both heterogeneous and complex. It reflects the ever-evolving social, economic and political dynamics of its various communities, as

well as the numerous factors that shape the nature, trajectory, scope, intensity and duration of conflicts across the continent. Those factors include such underlying causes as the triple threat represented by a lack of governance, respect for human rights and democracy that fuels political conflict, through, for example, electoral violence; conflicts between arable and livestock farmers; the illicit or unequal exploitation of resources to which populations lay claim; and conflicts with religious undertones. Their major consequences are the conflicts we see across Central Africa; instability in regional forums, with low levels of regional integration and cooperation; weak State institutions and at times corruption that is deeply entrenched in all customs and practices; the oppression of the poor and disenfranchised; and insecurity and instability, which are also exacerbated by instability within States with adverse effects, especially on women and minorities.

We will also address the plight of young people, who are making demands and organizing protests. If we map recent conflicts or old conflicts that have re-emerged, we can see that they are concentrated in the Great Lakes region and around Lake Chad and the Gulf of Guinea, affecting a number of countries, particularly Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad. In some cases, those conflicts lead to problems with neighbouring countries accused of fuelling the tensions, as is the case with the conflict between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition to conflict situations, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities and fragilities among the peoples of Central Africa, where civil society's low level of engagement and exclusion from health-crisis management programmes did not help to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

Nonetheless, international organizations now acknowledge civil society as an important agent in promoting peace, respect for human rights, an awareness of gender-based violence and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Civil society plays an important role in advocacy, monitoring and evaluation with a view to creating an environment conducive to more effective policymaking and equitable and sustainable inclusive growth.

I will keep our remarks on the human rights situation fairly brief in view of the previous speaker's statement. In the current volatile security and health environment, COPAC is particularly concerned about

the human rights situation in Central Africa. According to a study conducted on 20 September 2021 on gender-related human rights violations and threats to security in Central Africa, commissioned by the West African Network for Peacebuilding together with COPAC, some populations in the subregion are either suffering or in extreme distress, and yet the leaders of their various countries solemnly declare that their primary concern is the happiness of their peoples.

The report evaluates the relationship between the leaders and peoples and draws the following main conclusions. There are serious human rights violations occurring in the countries of the subregion and at their borders, and it is women who are worst affected by them. The study participants said that 56 per cent of the people most affected by human rights violations are women, and I can confirm that. That also confirms information in country reports on the status of their implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), which clearly reflects the reasons for women's insistent calls to be considered as equal partners in the work of decision-making with regard to preventing and responding to human rights violations. The rights most often violated are the right to life, to a fair trial and to freedom of opinion and expression, which shows that the people of the subregion are more concerned about seeing their strategic needs met than their practical needs and demonstrates their aspirations for greater consideration and for respect for their dignity and their desire for justice.

However, we commend and congratulate the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which, during the sixteenth ordinary session of its Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held on 23 November 2014 in N'Djamena, issued a statement that on the one hand committed its member States to considering civil-society organizations as fully fledged stakeholders in the area of peace and security, and on the other instructed the ECCAS General Secretariat to draft a formal cooperation framework with civil-society organizations and increase measures to combat violence against women in armed conflict.

We very much welcomed the efforts and support of ECCAS and its partners, including United Nations entities, in particular the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Development Programme, for the establishment and operationalization of COPAC, as well as its capacity-building.

We also welcome the support from ECCAS and its partners, thanks to which the countries of the region are currently equipping themselves with the second generation of national action plans on women and peace and security. There is visible progress, which is reflected in the changes to national laws that we see in some countries. However, the problems of dissemination and implementation on the ground, which we are capable of overcoming, remain.

We welcome and commend the partnership between UNOCA and ECCAS, in particular the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. François Louncény Fall, which has enabled COPAC to become a representative organization of Central African civil society, with a regional secretariat, equipped since 2020 with substantial material — computer and all other kinds of equipment — sophisticated equipment, I must say — for data collection, as well as to combat COVID-19. That has served us well.

I must outline civil society actions, since we are active on the ground, as I said. Civil society carries out field activities in election observation; capacity-building of the smallest associations; protecting vulnerable people and defending the rights of victims of violence, including armed violence, particularly involving women and young people; awareness-raising to support peace at the borders and in conflict zones; support for refugees and persons internally displaced from conflicts — internal or displaced from neighbouring countries in the ECCAS region; advocating for the free movement of people and goods in Central Africa, which raises a serious issue of violence; combating terrorism, violent extremism and the dissemination of hate messages on social networks through awareness-raising campaigns and training and information workshops; training women and young people in income-generating activities to promote entrepreneurship in order to combat economic violence, because that is widespread; educating young people about citizenship through educational talks; awareness-raising among young people about the harmful effects of drugs, narcotics and all forms of violence in schools; and awareness-raising to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, which we have undertaken with the support of various institutions and international organizations.

We started campaigns on civic space in four countries, namely, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic,

which are known to be very restricted in terms of civic space, where one cannot express oneself freely. However, we started to work with the authorities and to raise awareness among civil society organizations and put them in touch with the authorities. Some are positive about that, and we continue our work.

We are involved in continuous advocacy. Early warning, mediation and negotiation are also among our skills and actions. The list is by no means complete.

We believe that, with frank collaboration with civil society, Governments will find solutions to most of the problems that arise from violence.

Moving on to COPAC's challenges and expectations and the major challenges for civil society organizations in Central Africa, in general, and for COPAC, in particular, despite the progress made, civil society in Central Africa continues to face challenges that prevent it from fully playing its role. Those clearly include a lack of financial resources, leading to a lack of management capacity, communication, visibility and service provision. Today we are therefore grateful to the Security Council for having invited us and for affording us this platform. Other challenges include poor institutional capacities and the lack of professionalism in institutional activities; the unfavourable environment for the functioning and development of civil society organizations due to the closed, restricted or, sometimes, extremely repressed civic space; the mistrust of Governments towards civil society organizations, which are often seen as opposition organizations; and a lack of inclusiveness, as civil society organizations have little, or hardly any, involvement in consultations on, and the monitoring and evaluation of, development policies and projects.

The expectations of COPAC are simple. In order to promote the Security Council resolution on women and peace and security in Central Africa and to contribute to the new dynamic of an ECCAS of the peoples that we want, which leaves no one behind and which collaborates with its partners in order to restore peace to the subregion, COPAC seeks the political, material and financial support of the United Nations and its partners to facilitate its work, in particular with regard to further involving regional civil society, represented by COPAC, in awareness-raising and dissemination regarding the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of good governance and inclusion for greater ownership by populations and decision-makers; supporting mutually supportive gender-sensitive early-

warning work between Governments and civil society in order to take concrete action to consolidate peace, establish security and stabilize the subregion in general and prevent conflicts; strengthening the capacity of COPAC and its member organizations to make them more effective and professional; creating multi-stakeholder platforms, both virtual and physical, for the sharing of best practices to facilitate dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution; and, lastly, supporting COPAC and civil society organizations in Central Africa to better contribute to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, particularly so as to address the challenges of the shrinking regional civic space and all forms of violence against women and vulnerable groups, including armed violence.

The President: I thank Ms. Nlate for her briefing.

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking all our briefers for their valuable contributions this morning. I also welcome the written contribution from the Peacebuilding Commission, which has an important role to play in the region. I would like to express the United Kingdom's appreciation to former Special Representative Fall for his dedicated service over the past five years.

Central Africa today faces significant political, economic, humanitarian and security challenges. I want to make four key points in response to what we have heard so far.

First, the ongoing crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon requires urgent attention. Over the past five years, the United Kingdom has given \$25 million in humanitarian aid to support those profoundly affected by the crisis. The United Kingdom calls on all parties to enable safe access to schools and humanitarian assistance.

Secondly, inclusive, peaceful and credible political processes are critical for building and sustaining peace in the subregion. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and its partners have an important role to play in supporting those processes, but it is up to Member States to draw on that support and deliver democratic elections and inclusive transitional processes.

In that respect, the United Kingdom reiterates its support for Chad as it undergoes its transition to civilian

and constitutional rule. While the pre-dialogue between the transitional authorities and political-military groups is welcome, a date should be set as soon as possible for an inclusive national dialogue to progress Chad's transitional road map.

Thirdly, I want to reiterate our concern over the ongoing violence in the Central African Republic, including the documented human rights abuses committed by Wagner Group mercenaries. That violence continues to compound an already acute humanitarian situation. The activities of all security actors operating in the country should be coordinated by the Government of the Central African Republic and held to international human rights standards. We welcome the republican dialogue between stakeholders in March and encourage further progress in that regard.

Fourthly, the United Kingdom welcomes UNOCA's implementation of climate security projects in Central Africa. Meeting the challenges posed by water shortages, floods and threats to the Congo basin forest requires a joint effort to accelerate progress. It is critical that UNOCA's work on climate security in the region continue and that the Security Council support efforts to mitigate the challenges posed by climate change.

Finally, Russia's illegal and unjustified war in Ukraine is exacerbating economic pressures and food insecurity in Central Africa and beyond. The United Kingdom calls on Russia to end the violence and enable safe exports of Ukrainian wheat to help address food and energy crises across the African continent.

Mr. Biang (Gabon): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Ghana, Kenya and my own country, Gabon (A3).

We pay a warm tribute to Mr. François Louncény Fall, who has reached the end of his mandate as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We commend him for the work he has accomplished over the past five years as the Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). We thank him for his dedication and commitment in working with all the countries of the region, political actors, civil society and other partners to strengthen cooperation among the countries of Central Africa and with the United Nations for a peaceful region.

We thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Ms. Martha Pobee, and

the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, for their briefings. We also welcome the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory on this meeting.

(spoke in French)

Our statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the region.

At the political level, the A3 welcomes the measures taken by several States in the subregion to prepare for the elections to be held in 2022 and 2023. Those elections represent an opportunity for the Central African region to consolidate its democratic gains. We welcome the smooth conduct of those preparations and encourage the authorities to continue taking all necessary measures to organize free, credible, transparent and inclusive elections.

We recognize the active participation of women and young people in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts and call for their greater involvement in the ongoing electoral processes. Similarly, in countries experiencing crises and tensions, the A3 encourages the organization of inclusive national dialogues involving all stakeholders. A successful national dialogue can make a significant contribution to reducing social and political tensions and providing solutions that align with the expectations of the people.

In that regard, we welcome Chad's organization of the pre-dialogue held in Doha and hope that platform for discussion will pave the way for an inclusive peace agreement. The envisaged agreement should include a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for the armed groups present in Chad, as well as for combatants returning from neighbouring countries, in particular from Libya. We call for the full implementation of all recommendations emanating from those forums for dialogue. In that connection, we note with satisfaction the actions of the Government of Cameroon, which have led to the adoption of measures to consolidate the decentralization process and strengthen the capacities of local institutions.

The A3 welcomes the strengthening of relations between the Member States of the region and encourages the positive dynamic represented by continuous dialogue, enhanced cooperation and the peaceful settlement of disputes. In that regard, the diplomatic agreements between Burundi and Rwanda

aimed at improving their bilateral relations and strengthening cooperation are most welcome. The lifting of the financial and budgetary sanctions imposed by the European Union on Burundi also reflects the significant progress made in the country and the region in recent years.

The A3 welcomes the ongoing process in Nairobi to address the insecurity that has been caused by armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo for decades. We reiterate our call to all those groups to unconditionally lay down their arms and participate in the inter-Congolese consultations.

The A3 are concerned about the emergence of tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We reiterate the African Union's call for the resolution of disputes through diplomatic means, with the support of regional and subregional mechanisms. We also welcome Angola's mediation in that regard.

The A3 stresses the importance of strengthening cooperation among the Governments of the region and with regional, subregional and international organizations, which is essential to improve coordination and create synergies with international partners.

In view of the challenges facing Africa, we encourage the joint efforts by UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to improve their coordination in addressing cross-cutting issues, including maritime security and the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

We also welcome the close cooperation between UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In that connection, ECCAS members hope that the Security Council will reach a consensus on the rapid adoption of a presidential statement, which will ensure the Council's effective support for the UNOCA mandate.

With regard to security, the region faces complex and multidimensional challenges that must be addressed, including terrorism and violent extremism; cross-border crime; the persistence of armed groups, such as the Lord's Resistance Army and Boko Haram; maritime insecurity; the illicit exploitation of natural resources; and intercommunal clashes, all exacerbated by the growing effects of climate change.

In view of those challenges, Central African States have proceeded to strengthen the ECCAS peace

and security architecture and measures to promote structural conflict prevention. Those efforts are all the more important as they have lowered the risk of crises flaring up in the subregion.

The A3 welcomes the reduction in acts of maritime piracy, as well as the decision taken at the ECCAS Summit of Heads of State and Government on 19 January to organize the first Central African maritime conference. In that regard, we congratulate the Council on its successful adoption of the resolution on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (resolution 2634 (2022)).

While the African Union Emergency Summit on Combating Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes in Africa just ended, the terrorist threat continues to affect certain countries in the Central African region. Indeed, despite States' consolidated security measures, the tenacity of terrorist groups such as Da'esh, Boko Haram and the Allied Democratic Forces continues to have a negative impact on the lives of populations and to undermine the economic development of the countries in the region. We commend the determination of Cameroon, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat those terrorist groups and congratulate those countries on the voluntary surrender of 6,000 former combatants in recent months, primarily associated with Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin.

The A3 calls for concerted efforts by the international community to address the root causes of that scourge in the countries of the region. It is time to make the fight against terrorism multidimensional. We welcome the decision adopted at the most recent Extraordinary Summit of the African Union to reactivate the Subcommittee on Counter-Terrorism of the Peace and Security Council.

The A3 condemns in the strongest terms the continued attacks against civilian populations, United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers. In particular, we condemn the use of explosive devices and attacks against schools and hospitals by armed groups and terrorist groups in the Lake Chad basin and Congo basin regions. Those groups must immediately cease their attacks.

We commend the ongoing efforts of humanitarian actors to provide assistance to the most vulnerable persons, in security situations that are sometimes precarious. We echo the call by the Secretary-General

on international partners to continue their efforts to fund the humanitarian response plans of the region.

The A3 underscores that climate change is an aggravating factor in the humanitarian crisis faced by the countries of the Central African region and is adding to the erosion of peace and security. We recall that the world critically relies on the Congo basin rainforest as one of the last remaining net sinks of carbon in the world, which is why there is an urgent need to preserve it.

We all know that global warming, drought, desertification and natural disasters resulting from weather events, combined with sea-level rise, flooding and other related phenomena, are pushing millions of people into extreme poverty. Such climate phenomena, which are occurring with increasing frequency in Central Africa, are negatively affecting agricultural production in particular.

It is therefore imperative that the international community honour its commitments to finance adaptation and mitigation policies. We support the efforts of the relevant United Nations bodies, in particular UNOCA, to systematically integrate the dimensions of climate change and natural resource management into conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and development processes.

In conclusion, the A3 reiterates its support for the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa team and looks forward to the timely appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure to see you, Madam President, presiding over our work. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobee, the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, and the representative of civil society in Central Africa for their briefings.

Mexico acknowledges the progress made in regional governance and political dialogue in several Central African countries. At the same time, we note that the outbreaks of violence, the fragile and weak economic recovery and the effects of climate change in the region continue to require the solidarity of the international community. In that regard, my country reiterates its support for the work in preventive diplomacy that is being carried out by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

Concerning situations that warrant particular attention, Mexico calls on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to continue supporting the transition in Chad towards a timely return to constitutional order. The region's support is critical for all Chadian political actors, including those of the opposition, to commit to the successful implementation of the transition road map. The good offices of the Regional Office for Central Africa must also be directed at finding a political solution to the violence prevailing in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

With regard to the Central African Republic, the Regional Office for Central Africa must also continue to support the implementation of the Luanda road map. In that regard, we welcome the results of the republican dialogue in the Central African Republic and call on the international community to support the holding of municipal elections. In addition, Mexico congratulates the authorities of the Central African Republic on the abolition of the death penalty last month, which is a cause that Mexico has supported for many years.

In those and other hotspots of conflict in the region, it is imperative that United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa coordinate its efforts with those of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. In order to move towards stability in Central Africa, Mexico believes that it is necessary to address three major issues.

First, it is important to accord particular attention to combating illicit arms trafficking to and within the region, which is a subject of particular urgency for Mexico that we reiterate in almost every statement we make. We also reiterate that the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention is critical for stopping the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which continues to fuel conflicts in Central Africa.

We therefore welcome the follow-up to the establishment of national commissions for the management of small arms and light weapons. We also believe that, in accordance with resolution 2616 (2021), which was sponsored by Mexico, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa can promote better regional mechanisms for intelligence-sharing and more effective controls in border areas.

Secondly, in order for politics to succeed where violence and armed struggle have failed, the necessary

conditions must be met so that opposition groups can freely express their views and participate in the public space. Therefore, we call for protecting and prioritizing the work of civil society and promoting the inclusion of all voices in the political debate, particularly the voices of women and young people.

Thirdly, the urgent humanitarian situation in Central Africa must be addressed to stave off further tragedy. Access to international assistance is particularly urgent in a context that is marked by rising food prices, an increase in the number of people displaced by violence and the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic. In that regard, Mexico condemns the attacks in the region against civilian infrastructure, especially hospitals and schools. Similarly, my country condemns the attacks against humanitarian personnel reported in Cameroon and the Central African Republic.

Lastly, we believe that, in order for United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to be able to fulfil the tasks with which the Secretary-General has entrusted it, it needs strong leadership. We therefore hope that a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the region will be appointed as soon as possible.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): Let me thank our three briefers this morning for their informative and useful briefings.

Let me begin by highlighting two issues that have been raised by several of my colleagues who spoke before me — two issues that are causing a great deal of harm in the Central African region and exacerbating conflict: the climate crisis and food insecurity.

The United States Government reiterates that the climate crisis is a security crisis and a threat multiplier that contributes to instability in various ways. Within the scope of its mandate, we urge the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to consider ways to effectively assess and take into account the impacts of the climate crisis.

We also remain concerned, as others are, about the impacts of the food security crisis across Central Africa. Approximately 2.2 million people in the Central African Republic are projected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity, classified in crisis or worse, between April and August due to conflict, population displacement and high food prices.

Unfortunately, people throughout Central Africa have suffered from significant food, fertilizer and fuel

shortages, which have exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia's illegal invasion has affected the entire global food supply chain, increasing suffering and hardship for millions of people across the globe, but has caused particular harm in Africa. We call again on Russia to end its war on Ukraine.

I would now like to talk about several countries in Central Africa where people are owed greater progress towards democratic reforms, as we heard from our civil society speaker. The United States reaffirms the importance of a peaceful, timely transition to a democratically elected and civilian-led Government in Chad. We urge the Chadian transitional Government to signal its commitment to the political transition by reaching a thorough and swift resolution to the political military negotiations under way in Doha. To achieve durable stability and prosperity in Chad, an inclusive national dialogue should begin as soon as feasible and pave the way for a constitutional referendum and free and fair elections.

We share the concern of others about the continued violence in Cameroon, including in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions of the country. We continue to urge all participants to end the violence. A broader dialogue without preconditions is needed for a peaceful and durable resolution, and the United States supports UNOCA's role in promoting inclusive political dialogue in Cameroon. We strongly encourage transparency in efforts to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses.

With regard to the Central African Republic, we note the dialogue that was held in March but urge tangible progress towards the implementation of the road map of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the revitalization of the country's 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. We continue to urge the Government of the Central African Republic and all security actors in that country to deconflict their operations with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, in line with existing United Nations resolutions, and to ensure that their activities do not harm civilians.

Turning to Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province, we join others in condemning their attacks against civilians. Those terrorist organizations continue to threaten the region's peace and development. The displacement of millions of civilians,

compounded by the drought, is a terrible situation that requires significant humanitarian assistance. The United States supports the regional coordination and efforts by neighbours and the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat the actions of those terrorist groups and to implement holistic strategies that address the underlying drivers of terrorism.

The United States is also concerned about the destabilizing activities of the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, whose forces are reported to have committed egregious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. Make no mistake: the Wagner Group threatens the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers in the Central African Republic and Mali and prevents United Nations missions there from protecting civilians.

The ongoing reports of human rights violations and abuses by Government security forces in Burundi are also alarming. We call on the Government to hold perpetrators accountable and cooperate with international human rights mechanisms.

Finally, the victims of the Lord's Resistance Army, past and present, still deserve justice. The United States offers a reward of up to \$5 million for information that leads to the arrest, transfer or conviction of Joseph Kony, who is wanted for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. We urge anyone with knowledge of Kony's whereabouts to contact our War Crimes Rewards Programme and help bring him to justice.

Mrs. Gasri (France) (*spoke in French*): I join others in thanking the briefers for their briefings and written statements. I would like to make three points.

The first relates to our support for the political processes in Central Africa. In Chad, France recalls its commitment to the holding of an inclusive dialogue as soon as possible. We hope that the discussions with political and military movements under way in Doha will make it possible to confirm their participation in the dialogue.

In Cameroon, we are continuing our exchanges with the authorities and support mediation and reform initiatives, which should result in a political resolution to crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. France condemns the attacks on civilians, schools, teachers and humanitarian personnel, as well as the increasing use of improvised explosive devices. We welcome the Peacebuilding Fund's investments to

restore trust in those regions and call for further support for such actions.

In Burundi, we welcome the country's strengthening of relations with the international community and the region. Progress has been made in protecting human rights. Such progress must continue over the long term. It has led the European Union to lift its financial restrictions on Burundi. The European Union will continue to support Burundi in the context of its political dialogue with the country.

Secondly, we must redouble efforts to protect civilians and support civil society. In the Lake Chad basin, civilians continue to be victims of attacks by the Islamic State and Boko Haram. In Cameroon, armed groups have targeted United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel. France condemns those attacks, which hamper the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need. Humanitarian access must be restored as soon as possible and guaranteed in the long term.

France commends the vibrancy of civil society in the region, as mentioned by the Vice-President of the Coalition des organisations de la société civile d'Afrique centrale pour la préservation de la paix, la prévention des conflits, la résolution et la transformation des crises. The voice of civil society must be heard, and its rights must be protected. We commend the Network of Women Mediators of Central Africa, which was launched by the Economic Community of Central African States, as well as the project entitled "Les jeunes tisserands de la paix dans les régions transfrontalières du Gabon, Cameroun et Tchad", which will promote the role of young people in the border regions of Gabon, Cameroon and Chad.

That same spirit of inclusivity should guide the preparations for the upcoming elections to be held in Angola, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe. Elections must be held in the right conditions and contribute to building democracy in the region.

Lastly, regional integration must be strengthened so as to encourage sustainable development in Central Africa. The institutional reform of the Economic Community of Central African States demonstrates the deepening of cooperation in the region. We encourage the countries of the region to extend their cooperation efforts to issues such as climate change.

The forests of the Congo basin are increasingly under threat, in particular from the illegal exploitation

of natural resources. That is why France and its partners, including the countries of the Congo basin, created the Tropical Forest Preservation Alliance. The region can count on France's ongoing commitment to protecting biodiversity in protected areas and developing sustainable value chains in forest areas.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the work of Special Representative François Fall, whose mandate has just ended. We call for the swift appointment of his successor, who can count on the France's continued support.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobeé and the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), His Excellency Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, for their respective briefings. I also thank civil society briefer Jeanne-Danielle Nlate for her insights.

The multidimensional challenges that Central Africa has been facing cannot be viewed in isolation. The legacy of colonialism underpins current instabilities, which are further exacerbated by recent global developments. Despite that difficult situation, Member States in the Central Africa region have demonstrated commendable resilience. During the past six months, their economies have shown a recovery, and faith in the democratic process has been sustained across the region. The regional approach adopted by countries, in collaboration with regional organizations, to address common challenges is showing results. We need to recognize those positive trends. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) needs to support those efforts and work closely with the countries in the region and regional organizations, in line with its mandate.

In the coming months, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and the Congo will be holding elections. We hope that those upcoming elections will further deepen democracy in the region, with greater participation by women, enhance resilience and strengthen their resolve to address the socioeconomic challenges. I also take this opportunity to express our condolences on the sad demise of President Evaristo Carvalho, former President of Sao Tome and Principe, whose contribution to strengthening democracy in the Central Africa region will be remembered in the years to come.

The long-overdue national dialogue in the Central Africa Republic took place a few months ago. However, the implementation of the 2019 peace agreement remains the key to securing peace in the country and the region. Progress on the road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the holding of local elections in the coming months will be equally important. In Chad, the ongoing political transition requires further momentum. We hope that the inclusive national dialogue will be held soon. In Burundi, we welcome the efforts to deepen the democratic space and the proactive engagement with neighbours.

Despite those positive trends, there exist complex political and security challenges in the region. The international community must heed the call of the countries of the region and support their aspirations for peace and development. Inclusive political processes and electoral reforms are critical to strengthening political institutions. Similarly, capacities at the local-administration level also require assistance. We encourage UNOCA and ECCAS to continue to assist the State authorities in such efforts. The humanitarian needs of the region also need to be addressed more purposefully by scaling up assistance.

On the security front, terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in West Africa Province, have continued to expand their activities, mainly in the Lake Chad region. Boko Haram and its splinter groups have persisted with terror attacks. The Lord's Resistance Army has remained active along the borders of the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We strongly condemn terror attacks perpetrated by those groups. We commend the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and recognize its contribution to counter-terrorism. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea remains a matter of concern, and cannot be ignored, despite the decrease in incidents in 2022. India has been engaged with the countries of the region on maritime matters, and we would be glad to contribute further to their efforts to strengthen maritime security.

The countries of the region are also affected by the Ukraine conflict due to the shortage of food grains and increasing oil prices. The international community needs to do more to support the people living in vulnerable countries. We also need to explore affordable alternatives to the question of the free movement of goods to the region.

With regard to climate change and its impact on the region, our position remains consistent. We have maintained that issues of climate change should be addressed holistically through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in accordance with its provisions and principles, especially that of climate finance and adaptation, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We reiterate that no artificial link should be drawn between climate change and security-related issues without any firm scientific basis.

In conclusion, India has cordial and friendly bilateral relations with countries in Central Africa. In recent years, India has further expanded its diplomatic footprint in the region by opening resident missions in several countries. India has so far extended development cooperation assistance through lines of credit worth \$2 billion for projects in critical sectors, such as agriculture, transport, power and water supply. We have also provided assistance to fight the coronavirus disease pandemic. In keeping with our high-level political exchanges with the region, the Vice-President of India, His Excellency Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, visited Gabon last week. We will continue to engage closely with Central Africa and be steadfast in our support for its peace and prosperity.

Ms. Shaheen (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Ms. Martha Pobee, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, His Excellency Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, and Ms. Jeanne-Danielle Nlate, Vice-President of the Coalition des organisations de la société civile d'Afrique centrale pour la préservation de la paix, la prévention des conflits, la résolution et la transformation des crises, for their briefings.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. François Fall for his good offices as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa over the past five years and for his service as Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

Addressing the various security, economic and humanitarian challenges in the Central Africa region requires continued cooperation and coordination among UNOCA and regional and subregional actors seeking to support stability in the region, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great

Lakes Region and the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. In that context, we would like to focus on three aspects related to the strengthening of such cooperation.

First, with regard to security challenges, including cross-border and regional threats, such as organized crime, extremism, terrorism and piracy, there is a need to follow a comprehensive approach to tackle those threats, which undermine the stability of the region and affect its development and economic integration. That includes intensifying joint action between the United Nations and regional initiatives.

Addressing such threats also requires the international community to continue to support countries in Central Africa in effectively countering terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram, including those affiliated with Da'esh, Al-Qaida and other groups. Such support is critical, especially in countries that are experiencing an escalation in threats associated with those groups. The continued implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region for the period from 2022 to 2024 is an important approach to supporting region-wide stability.

We also stress the need to address maritime piracy activities in the territorial waters of the Gulf of Guinea, which is a strategic imperative for the economy and security of the region. We believe that the recent Security Council resolution 2634 (2022), on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, is a decisive step and an example of constructive approaches that bring together regional and local contexts to address complex challenges and contribute to long-term stability.

Secondly, it is critical to continue promoting an inclusive political dialogue in non-mission settings and to redouble efforts and coordinate with local actors in consolidating peace, resolving tensions and preventing or mitigating political crises. To that end, the United Arab Emirates appreciates the good offices of UNOCA in supporting mediation and conflict-prevention efforts in Central Africa, including through the Office's recent engagement in dialogue with a number of countries of the region. As part of those efforts, we stress the importance of the effective and comprehensive integration of young people and women in the political processes to ensure their success.

Thirdly, in line with the concrete examples outlined in the Secretary-General's report on the consequences

of climate change in Central Africa (S/2022/436), we underscore the importance of understanding the impacts of, and potential solutions to, such consequences and how to better support regional efforts. In that regard, we believe UNOCA's initiatives to provide a clearer picture of the impact of climate change on the region will contribute to finding effective solutions to respond to the challenges related to food security and water, build community resilience and mitigate risks related to climate change.

Furthermore, there is a need for ongoing international support to all affected countries in Central Africa, particularly given the increasingly dire humanitarian situation and the continued global food insecurity. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, more than 12 million people in the region need humanitarian assistance this year alone, in addition to the increase in the number of internally displaced persons, particularly in Burundi, Chad and Cameroon. For its part, the United Arab Emirates has contributed humanitarian and development aid to support countries in the region and alleviate the suffering of their peoples. Between 2016 and 2022, the United Arab Emirates provided approximately \$55 million.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for UNOCA's efforts and look forward to its continued coordination with the relevant organizations and actors to assist countries of the region in achieving peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobee, Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, and Ms. Jeanne-Danielle Nlate, Vice-President of the Coalition des organisations de la société civile d'Afrique centrale pour la préservation de la paix, la prévention des conflits, la résolution et la transformation des crises, for their informative briefings.

The Secretary-General's report on the situation in Central Africa (S/2022/436) shows a mixed scenario, where political advances in some countries in the region contrast with persistent security challenges and some worrisome trends.

The peaceful transfer of power in Sao Tome and Principe, a nation close to Brazil for linguistic and historical reasons, is a markedly positive step that confirms the democratic stability in that country and may serve as an example for the region. Sao Tome and

Príncipe will hold legislative elections in September, and we expect once again to witness a peaceful and efficient process.

Several other countries in the Central African region, such as the Congo and Equatorial Guinea, will hold regional elections in the coming months. Moreover, Angola, another sister nation to Brazil, will hold general elections in August. That is encouraging, since functional democratic and electoral systems are the most effective way to prevent conflict and instability.

Another positive development are the efforts of the Government of Burundi to normalize relations with its neighbours and with the international community. We thank Special Representative François Louncény Fall for supporting those efforts.

The pre-dialogue between political actors from Chad is in itself a positive development. We expect that that process, hosted by Qatar, may soon yield results that allow for the convening of an inclusive national dialogue.

The national dialogue in the Central African Republic also allowed for necessary discussions among the local stakeholders, even though it did not produce the expected results. As in Chad, there too much remains to be done in terms of political transition.

Even though Nigeria does not fall under the scope of this meeting, Brazil cannot avoid mentioning the horrific attack on a crowded Catholic church that took place in the town of Owo last Sunday. That appalling incident is a reminder of the dangers that terrorism poses to the world and, in that case, to Africa.

As the Secretary-General's report indicates, Central Africa faces multidimensional and cross-border threats to peace and security. Terrorism, including the presence of the so-called Islamic State and Boko Haram, is a grave threat in the Lake Chad basin. We must therefore commend the efforts of the authorities, which made a reduction in the activities of those groups possible in late 2021.

The situation in Cameroon is concerning. That country is not only directly affected by the violence in the Lake Chad basin, but it has also been facing protracted conflicts in its English-speaking regions. The international community must stand ready to provide its support to address those crises.

We believe that socioeconomic development will be key for the evolution of the situation in Central Africa

in the next few months. Just as the region seemed posed to recover from the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, rising food prices may plunge large numbers of people into acute poverty. Popular discontent may have a destabilizing effect on political systems, which, in turn, can become vulnerable to disruption and violence.

Brazil will continue working closely with its African partners in South-South cooperation initiatives to address the challenges that they face.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Martha Pobee and Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, for their briefings. We listened carefully to Ms. Jeanne-Danielle Nlate. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. François Fall, former Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, for his work.

The situation in Central Africa is characterized by a high level of terrorist threat, ongoing conflicts and political and social tensions. The insufficient capacity of the armed forces of States of the region, problems with military coordination and a lack of reliable intelligence do not allow them to effectively resist well-organized militant groups that use the tactic of guerrilla war and often have the support of the locals, who have to live side by side with the militants. The ideology of radical Islam is gaining popularity, especially among young people.

The Islamic State in West Africa Province and Boko Haram pose a major threat in the Lake Chad basin. The militants are enhancing their capabilities and continue to attack military personnel in Nigeria, Chad, the Niger and Cameroon and terrorize the local population.

We support the decision taken by the command of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad basin States to launch, in April this year, Operation Lake Sanity, a large-scale operation to eliminate terrorists from islands within the borders of the three States — Chad, the Niger and Nigeria.

We believe that it is important to strengthen interaction among countries of the region both bilaterally and in various international forums, including the United Nations. We welcome the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in promoting peacekeeping processes and strengthening

security in the region, including through the tools of preventive diplomacy.

We are concerned by the increasing number of attacks on commercial vessels in the Gulf of Guinea. It is crucial to employ the resources of the international community in order to build the capacity of coastal States to combat piracy. There is a need for cooperation on maritime surveillance, establishing systems for identifying and escorting vessels, as well as early warning on potentially hazardous objects on navigation routes.

We welcome the establishment of the Gulf of Guinea Maritime Collaboration Forum in July last year, which provided a new format for cooperation and coordination on joint anti-piracy operations. We take an active part in the work of that mechanism and stand ready to provide assistance to our Western African partners.

In 2021, Russia made an earmarked contribution to the United Nations Global Maritime Crime Programme to provide technical assistance to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. In October 2021, a squadron of ships from Russia's Northern Fleet participated in a tour of duty in the Gulf of Guinea for naval manoeuvres aimed at combating piracy.

To conclude my main statement, I would like to note that we categorically reject the assessments in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/436) of the situation in Ukraine and its influence on global food security, views that we consider highly politicized. In that regard, we also want to comment on the far-fetched accusations we have heard yet again today alleging that Russia has created a global food crisis that is damaging the economies of countries in Africa. I reiterate that we categorically reject the way that the issue has been framed. We have repeatedly clarified in various international forums why the global food security situation began to worsen long before the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. I ask the Council to refrain from trying to blame Russia for socioeconomic problems related to global development issues and challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic. Members would also do well to remember that the current difficulties with food supplies are primarily a result of the introduction of illegal unilateral restrictive measures on our country and Belarus.

The United States recent disturbing fictions claiming that grain that Russia has been shipping to Africa is stolen are deeply hypocritical, and we are

glad to see that the countries of Africa do not believe them. We have been able to discuss the true state of affairs with regard to food supplies and other vital issues with African representatives, including at President Putin's meeting with the Chairperson of the African Union, President Macky Sall of Senegal. In the general historical context, the real question that arises is why countries that are so rich in human and natural resources find themselves in this kind of economic and security situation. The countries of the West have curated them for decades, trying to impose their own ideas of governance, primarily in the sphere of financing and other resources. They have deployed their own military missions to African lands and have allegedly been fighting terrorism there. Yet the situation is only getting worse. A few months ago, however, our Western colleagues found a reason to blame someone else. Apparently, it is Russia's fault.

In reality we are actually helping African countries, including the Central African Republic, to build the combat capacity of their official armed forces. With the permission of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic we have provided it with a number of shipments of military supplies. Russian instructors have also been conducting successful training at the invitation of the official authorities. To say that the campaign to discredit us is bewildering would be an understatement. Russia has strictly complied with all the restrictions that the Council has imposed regarding the Central African Republic. And with regard to the activity there of private military companies, we want to stress that the choice of any partner engaged in that or any other area is the prerogative of the national authorities, including with regard to issues of law enforcement and investigations of violations of international law.

Mr. McSwiney (Ireland): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and President Da Piedade Verissimo for their briefings. I also thank our civil society briefer, Ms. Jeanne-Danielle Nicole Nlate.

Ireland appreciates the extensive activities being carried out by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to support and improve regional cooperation, including with the Economic Community of Central African States and other regional organizations.

Enhanced cooperation is essential, as the region faces multidimensional challenges, including the activities of armed groups, as well as cross-border

threats to peace and security, such as maritime insecurity, farmer-herder conflicts and the adverse impacts of climate change on security across the region.

We welcome the national dialogue in the Central African Republic as an important forum for sociopolitical actors and community representatives to convene, and look forward to further progress on the path to peace. We welcome the work of UNOCA, in conjunction with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, to mobilize support for a return to the 2019 peace agreement and the implementation of the Luanda road map.

In Chad, Ireland views the national dialogue process as key to the political transition. We hope that the pre-dialogue will prepare the ground for an inclusive peace agreement. However, elections and a return to constitutional governance are urgently needed, and the security situation should not be used as an excuse for delay. We are concerned by the lack of meaningful participation by women's groups in the ongoing peace negotiations.

Ireland continues to call for the link between climate change and security to be appropriately recognized in the Council's work. UNOCA's approach to climate and security is an example of how that link can be given prominence.

The Council should take note of the effects of climate change on the stability of Central Africa. The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/436) shows that we are seeing an increase in intracommunal clashes due to water shortages, floods and drought, leading to significant population displacement.

Ireland is pleased to note UNOCA's implementation of its climate and security project, building on the 2021 scoping study. That work can inform efforts at the national, regional and international levels to address climate and security.

We welcome the ongoing work by UNOCA to further the women and peace and security agenda across the region. Promoting the role of women in governance, mediation and peacebuilding processes, as well as engagement with women-led civil society, is vital for peace and security in Central Africa. We urge all Governments in the region to further integrate that approach.

We again heard about the dire humanitarian situation facing countries across Central Africa, with significant increases in vulnerability and the displacement of people. Food insecurity is also increasing, exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine and the consequent global rise in food prices.

The numbers in need of humanitarian assistance are staggering. Within the most affected populations, women and girls are facing higher rates of sexual and gender-based violence.

Ireland was appalled by the recent killing of a Médecins Sans Frontières staff member in the Central African Republic. Attacks on those working to assist the vulnerable, including humanitarian, health and education personnel, must end. Ireland condemns such attacks and calls for perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights to be held accountable. We urge all parties to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance.

Finally, Ireland welcomes the steps that are being taken in many countries in the region to strengthen their national human rights institutions. However, much still needs to be done. Human rights violations and abuses against civilians in Cameroon persist, with inexcusable attacks against schools now having deprived 700,000 students of their right to education. In Chad, too, we are concerned at the violent repression of peaceful protests, the decline of press freedoms and the shrinking civil society space.

In conclusion, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Mr. François Fall. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, he has made a lasting contribution in support of peace and stability in Central Africa. We appreciate all that he has done and wish him all the best for the future.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank the briefers for their important insights.

Last week, the Norwegian Refugee Council published its annual list of the world's most neglected displacement crises. Three out of five of these crises — those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and Chad — are in the region under the purview of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and in addition to those, there is the ongoing crisis in the Central African Republic. This clearly shows both the challenges, and

importance, of UNOCA's work. While we know that preventive diplomacy rarely reaches the headlines, it can certainly avert some of the most negative headlines.

Let me briefly touch upon the three mentioned most-neglected displacement crises, according to the list. For the second year in a row, the Democratic Republic of the Congo tops the list as a protection crisis that we also addressed in our meeting last week (see S/PV.9051). In Chad, we have taken note of the transitional Government's recent declaration of a food emergency, and its call for support. In the light of the situation, Norway has allocated about \$25 million to humanitarian efforts in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions this year. In Cameroon, we remain concerned about the situations in the North-West and South-West regions of the country. We commend the exploration by the United Nations of ways to bridge gaps between the parties on a framework for dialogue. In all situations, humanitarian assistance and basic social services must be ensured without delay.

Last week, the Security Council adopted resolution 2634 (2022), the first resolution in 10 years on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea (see S/PV.9050). Piracy remains a grave risk to sailors and hampers trade, exports and growth in Central and West Africa. It also affects seafarers and shipowners in countries such as Norway and the ability to enhance cooperation with these regions. We see the new resolution as a strong call to action ahead of the 10-year anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2023.

Moving forward, the region should remain in the driver's seat, with already commendable efforts being scaled up. We fully support closer regional maritime coordination between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States. Norway will also continue its support through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, including to strengthen regional efforts aimed at establishing legal systems for the prosecution of pirates.

The security situation around the Lake Chad basin remains alarming due to armed groups, terrorists and violent extremists. We are shocked by the brutal attacks against civilians, including children, and attacks on schools. We are also deeply concerned about attacks on medical personnel and facilities. The use of improvised explosive devices against civilian targets causes further harm for populations and affects humanitarian access. Accountability must be ensured.

Let me also highlight an underlying issue that may not feel like the most urgent matter, but which is silently worsening the situation: the issue of climate and security. As one example, we note in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/436) that humanitarian needs in Burundi are strongly linked to effects of climate change.

As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall is stepping down, we want to thank him — and, through him, his team as well — for all their efforts. Some of their achievements are linked to the crucial phases around elections. Another key contribution includes working with a reformed ECCAS as part of vital regional cooperation. We thank him and look forward to the appointment of his successor.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Pobee and President Da Piedade Veríssimo for their briefings. I also listened attentively to the briefing by Ms. Nlate.

In connection with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/436), I would like to make the following three points. First, in terms of maintaining the general situation of peace and stability, this year the security situation in the Central African Republic has continued to improve, with President Touadera holding the Republican dialogue and reaching a wide range of results. The Government of Cameroon has actively implemented the outcomes of the national dialogue, promoted the decentralization of the south-west and north-west regions, supported development and reconstruction and built a solid foundation for peace and stability. The Chadian authorities promoted a political transition and steadily advanced the preparations for a national dialogue with the main parties. Angola, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe will all hold elections in within this year, and preparations are under way.

Maintaining peace and stability in Central Africa will contribute to the overall security of the African continent. The international community and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) should support countries of the region in solving their own problems, strengthening national governance and capacity-building in accordance with their own actual situations, and pursuing a development path that fits their national conditions. China firmly supports the efforts of countries of the region with regard to safeguarding their sovereignty and territorial integrity. The countries concerned in the region should resolve

their differences through diplomatic and political channels and maintain unity and stability.

Secondly, in terms of leveraging the role of regional organizations, as the rotating Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Republic of the Congo has actively promoted regional integration and established such collective security mechanisms as the ECCAS Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise in order to address non-traditional security challenges and has made significant progress.

Countries of the region have actively carried out counter-terrorism operations. Some fighters from Boko Haram and other groups have laid down their arms. Thanks to the efforts of regional maritime authorities, maritime-security incidents in the Gulf of Guinea are also on the decline.

At the same time, illegal armed groups, terrorism and violent extremism are still very frequent, and intercommunal conflicts and conflicts between farmers and herdsman continue, making the situation in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo worrying. To tackle these problems, countries of the region need to enhance mutual trust and work together. The international community should provide greater financial and technical assistance to countries of the region in their counter-terrorism efforts and support them in formulating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes to curb the spread of terrorism.

Support should be given to countries of the region to enhance capacity-building, help people overcome poverty and underdevelopment, solve the problems of illegal exploitation and trading of natural resources, and eliminate the root causes of conflicts. China attaches importance to the challenges posed by climate change to countries of the region and hopes that the developed countries will honour their climate-related financing commitments and support countries of the region in enhancing their resilience to adapting to climate shocks.

Thirdly, in terms of making joint efforts to address the challenges, countries of the region have actively responded to the complex changes in the international situation, worked to fight the pandemic and recover their economies by showing sufficient resilience, and the international financial institutions have provided important financial support. Thanks to the impact

of geopolitical conflicts among some major Powers, the countries of the region continue to face multiple challenges, such as crises related to food, energy and other resources, and humanitarian needs are growing. The current situation highlights the importance and urgency of development issues more than ever. The countries concerned, along with international financial institutions, should implement their aid commitments, maintain adequate humanitarian funding and ensure that other crises do not distract their attention from the region and the importance of investment in it.

We must continue to support countries in the region in their response to the pandemic, provide universal access to safe and affordable vaccines and create conditions conducive to post-pandemic recovery in the region. We should assist the countries of the region in improving their investment environment based on their national conditions and development needs, fostering industrialization and economic diversification, supporting digital innovation, youth entrepreneurship and the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises and enhancing their capacity for independent development.

Lastly, we would like to pay tribute to Mr. Fall, the outgoing Head of UNOCA. He has played an important role in leading UNOCA's work and promoting greater cooperation between the United Nations and the countries of the region. I hope that UNOCA will continue to provide tailored assistance as mandated by the Security Council, while taking into account the real conditions in the region and the wishes of the countries concerned.

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

I want to begin by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Pobee, Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo and Ms. Nlate for accepting our invitation and briefing the Security Council today. I too would like to express our thanks to François Louncény Fall for his work. While wishing him every success, we urge for the swift appointment of his successor. Albania also commends the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in supporting the countries of the region that are preparing the ground for elections to be held next month and next year. We hope that the electoral processes will be credible and inclusive, with the meaningful and active participation of women. We were pleased to hear from Assistant Secretary-General Pobee that the women and peace and security agenda is a priority

for UNOCA and that the Office is working with UN-Women to strengthen it. We also commend UNOCA's collaboration with other regional actors, especially the Economic Community of Central African States. We expect that collaboration to continue and further intensify, as we witnessed today even in facilitating the briefing. I will now focus on a few issues pertaining to some specific countries and themes.

First, we are pleased that relations between Burundi and its neighbours are improving, and we welcome the progress that has been made domestically in safeguarding civil and political rights. The steps made towards consolidating democracy have encouraged international partners to lift financial and budgetary restrictions. We have nevertheless received worrisome reports of attacks, torture and disappearances of political opponents allegedly attributed to law-enforcement authorities — troubling developments that undermine the results achieved so far.

As for Cameroon, dialogue continues to be hindered by the tensions in the North-West and South-West regions, where political violence persists, and clashes continue to rage between State and non-State armed forces. We firmly condemn the attacks on civilians, including children, as well as the targeting of United Nations and humanitarian staff, which continues to obstruct the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Turning to Chad, Albania welcomes the efforts made to enhance the national dialogue that is essential to rebuilding the constitutional order and sustainable peace. We call on all stakeholders to engage constructively in the pre-dialogue efforts in Doha, which will enable the national dialogue to resume and will pave the way for an inclusive peace agreement that envisages the disarmament, mobilization and reintegration of the Chadian armed groups present in neighbouring countries.

With regard to the Central African Republic, while the republican dialogue has seen some progress, the security situation in the country remains highly volatile. We commend the work of the Special Representative of

the Secretary-General in mobilizing regional support for the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, including through the implementation of the Luanda joint road map. However, we are deeply concerned about the grave violations of human rights and abuses perpetrated against civilians. In particular, the Wagner Group, while hiding behind a pretext of providing security, is using the conflict to pursue its own gains.

I would now like to shift my focus to specific themes. Issues of climate security are having a deep and sizeable impact on the region's stability. We cannot ignore the tensions among communities and the increasing numbers of displaced people and those in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/436) and its recommendations, and we hope to see them implemented.

That leads me to my last point, which is the socioeconomic impact of both the coronavirus disease pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The Secretary-General's reports have highlighted how those problems have been fuelling popular frustration in the region. In conclusion, we strongly echo the Secretary-General's deep concern about the possibility that the socioeconomic impact of the war in Ukraine may challenge the recovery efforts that have been made so far. The war that Russia is waging on Ukraine has indeed had repercussions on the purchasing power of entire communities, owing to the increases in bread prices recorded in the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which formerly imported more than 60 per cent of their wheat from the Russian Federation or Ukraine.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.