

The President of the Security Council presents her compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a **letter dated 1 August 2019 from the Secretary-General** addressed to the President of the Security Council.

This letter will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2019/625.

1 August 2019



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1 August 2019

Dear Madam President,

I have the honour to refer to the statement by the President of the Security Council on the Central African region of 10 August 2018 (S/PRST/2018/17), as well as my letter to the President of the Security Council on the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) dated 24 August 2018 (S/2018/789) and her response to that letter dated 28 August 2018 (S/2018/790).

In the aforementioned presidential statement, the Council requested me “to conduct a strategic review regarding the scope of UNOCA’s mandate and activities and present recommendations for areas of improvement, including the coherence of UN activities in countries under UNOCA’s mandate, or new or refocused priorities, to the Security Council by 1 August 2019.” The Council expressed its “intention to consider these recommendations, including any proposed changes to the mandate, by 31 August 2019”.

I appointed Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah (Mauritania), former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Somalia and Burundi, to lead the strategic review team, which included representatives from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO)/Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The strategic review took place in three phases: (1) from 28 May to 4 June 2019, consultations were held in New York with United Nations officials, the UNOCA Integrated Task Force (ITF), United Nations field presences, Security Council members, Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and think tanks; (2) from 5 to 14 June, consultations were held in Libreville, Brazzaville and Yaoundé with UNOCA, Government officials, political parties, regional and sub-regional organizations and mechanisms, including the

Her Excellency
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African Union, the diplomatic community and civil society; and (3) from 17 to 20 June, debriefing meetings were held in New York with United Nations Secretariat officials, UNOCA-ITF, Security Council members, ECCAS member States and member States of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF).

The review team conducted a thorough analysis of the strategic context in the Central Africa sub-region, including the challenges and regional trends in the political, security, humanitarian, human rights and socio-economic fields. The review team submitted its report on 27 June 2019.

Main findings of the UNOCA strategic review

The report of the review team noted that since the last strategic assessment review of UNOCA in March 2015, the Central African sub-region continued to face serious peace and security challenges, which were likely to increase in the coming years with multiple elections and ongoing security, humanitarian, human rights and socio-economic issues.

UNOCA enjoyed strong support and buy-in across the region through its work in conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy, support to regional and sub-regional initiatives, coordination of United Nations presences in Central Africa and reporting and analysis provided to United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations entities. In particular, UNOCA was most appreciated for its good offices and early warning.

UNOCA's partners expressed their wish for more frequent visits by my Special Representative to the countries of the sub-region. In a vast sub-region such as Central Africa, they expressed the need for UNOCA to be more visible. Furthermore, partners called for stronger engagement, particularly in enhancing awareness-raising around electoral processes and human rights issues.

In general, little concern was raised about possible duplication of mandates between UNOCA and other United Nations presences in Central Africa. A strong need was identified for UNOCA to continue rallying the sub-region in support of the peace process in the Central African Republic, in close consultation with MINUSCA. On the other hand, UNOCA's partners saw limited space for UNOCA to engage in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, given the presence of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (OESG-GLR). Partners requested further information-sharing and consultations between UNOCA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, OESG-GLR and the Office of my Special Envoy on Burundi (OESG-Burundi) at both the leadership and working levels.

The review team noted that UNOCA's coordination role was valued, as were my Special Representative's good relations with United Nations Resident Coordinators in the sub-region and his regular contacts with them. UNOCA's ongoing contacts with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) was welcomed and partners requested increasing cooperation on inter-regional issues such as the Lake Chad Basin crisis, transhumance, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and other issues included in the Lomé Declaration, jointly adopted by the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in July 2018.

The relationship with ECCAS was flagged as key to preventive diplomacy, yet capacity remained a limiting issue. This was identified as an area for possible expansion of activity. Partners requested that UNOCA be more involved in the ongoing ECCAS reform process, and for UNOCA's mandate to be aligned with the outcome of that process once concluded. Regional and sub-regional organizations appreciated their working relations with UNOCA and requested more frequent interactions with the Office.

UNOCA's partners called for more support from the Office to regional initiatives and work on cross-border, cross-cutting and thematic issues. This included, among others: maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea; implementation of the Central African 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; transhumance and related illicit trafficking and insecurity; forced displacement including refugees, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; systematic consideration of climate change and socioeconomic concerns in UNOCA interventions; women, peace and security; and youth engagement in conflict prevention. Further engagement with civil society and national human rights institutions was also identified as a need, in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

The limited operational capacities of UNOCA were frequently cited as a limiting factor, particularly in terms of travel and communications.

Observations and recommendations

I welcome the report of the strategic review, which validates the United Nations Secretariat's conviction that the regional offices are a forward platform for conflict prevention.

In the eight years since its inauguration, UNOCA has made noticeable contributions to conflict prevention and management in a complex sub-region, through the good offices of my Special Representative. The Office has been

instrumental in preventing or mitigating election-related crises and promoting inclusive political dialogue and reform processes in Chad, Cameroon, Gabon, the Congo and São Tomé and Príncipe. UNOCA has remained engaged on the crisis in the Central African Republic and promoted bilateral cooperation with the country's neighbours, while encouraging coherence among regional and international actors. UNOCA has bolstered cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations on peace and security, in particular the African Union, ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. UNOCA has also increased its cooperation with UNOWAS on regional and sub-regional initiatives. UNOCA has further ensured coherence and coordination in the activities of United Nations entities in Central Africa on peace and security. The Office has continued to serve as the Secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Having reviewed the report of the UNOCA strategic review, I have the honour to put forward the recommendations below regarding the mandate of UNOCA, for the Security Council's consideration.

(1) The mandate of UNOCA remains valid. In that regard, I wish to refer to the aforementioned exchange of letters I had with the President of the Security Council in August 2018 (please see S/2018/789 and S/2018/790). **UNOCA's work should be enhanced in the areas identified below:**

(a) Early warning and analysis work with a gender perspective. Such work will continue to benefit United Nations Headquarters, Member States and United Nations country teams and presences in Central Africa. UNOCA, in cooperation with regional partners, should focus on conducting regional research and analysis, particularly on trans-national issues that impact the stability of Central Africa.

(b) Good offices in non-mission settings. UNOCA has a particular advantage in working in such settings. My Special Representative has used his good offices role in Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe. UNOCA's good offices will be particularly needed during the upcoming electoral cycle in the sub-region.

(c) Support for and strengthening the capacity of ECCAS. In addressing the regional and sub-regional peace and security issues identified by the review, the role of ECCAS is key. The strengthening of ECCAS must remain one of UNOCA's topmost priorities, including in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation and early warning. The ongoing reform process of ECCAS should culminate in a stronger sub-regional organization. In working closely with ECCAS, UNOCA should enhance its efforts in the area of women, peace and security, including in accompanying ECCAS member States in developing their national action plans for the

implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). UNOCA should also enhance its engagement with youth in conflict prevention and in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015).

(d) Strengthening partnerships with civil society and supporting sub-regional civil society networks. UNOCA is currently working with ECCAS on establishing a sub-regional network of civil society organizations.

(2) Ensure a clear division of labour between UNOCA and other United Nations entities:

(a) UNOCA should continue to help rally regional support for the peace process in the Central African Republic, in close consultation with MINUSCA. This includes UNOCA's facilitation of the revitalization of the joint bilateral commissions between the Central African Republic and its neighbours. **There is little value in UNOCA engaging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Burundi.** UNOCA continues to organize an annual meeting of my Special Representatives and Envoys, Regional Directors of United Nations entities and United Nations Resident Coordinators in Central Africa. My Special Representative for Central Africa also participates in a separate annual meeting with my Special Envoys on the Great Lakes Region and on Burundi. At the same time, there is a need for enhanced cooperation, information exchange and lessons learned between UNOCA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, OSESG-GLR, OSESG-Burundi and other United Nations regional presences, including the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and the OCHA Regional Office for West and Central Africa.

(b) UNOCA should build on its good relations with the United Nations Resident Coordinators and with relevant regional directors of the United Nations Development Coordination Office to further support cross-border initiatives. UNOCA and UNOWAS should enhance their cooperation. This includes on various inter-regional issues such as the Lake Chad Basin crisis, transhumance, forced displacement, and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, among others.

(3) I have instructed DPPA, in coordination with UNOCA and other relevant United Nations entities, to assess the reasonable resource requirements for UNOCA to implement its mandate as presented by the review to ensure an achievable ambition.

I would like to thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah and the team members of the UNOCA strategic review for the important work that they have undertaken and for submitting their findings and recommendations to me. I also take this opportunity to thank UNOCA and all entities of the United Nations system in Central Africa for their continuing efforts to advance the cause of peace and security in the sub-region.

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Madam President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

António Guterres