



Security Council

Seventy-second year

8134th meeting

Wednesday, 13 December 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Kawamura (Japan)

Members:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Italy	Mr. Lambertini
Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
Senegal	Mr. Seck
Sweden	Mr. Skau
Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Ms. Sison
Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez

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/2017/995)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2017/995)

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/995 which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall: It is my honour to present the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/995) on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The report covers the latest peace and security developments in the subregion, as well as the activities of UNOCA that have been undertaken since my last briefing to the Council in June (see S/PV.7967).

I am pleased to report on some positive developments in the subregion, particularly regarding the regional integration and capacity-building of the General Secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). However, the overall situation in Central Africa remains marked by tense sociopolitical situations, economic difficulties, and continued attacks and horrific abuses carried out by armed groups against civilian populations, all of which necessitate concerted national, regional and international action to prevent further degradation. In this context, I have maintained continuous contact with stakeholders and leaders across the subregion to

facilitate the search for a peaceful resolution of the conflicts through inclusive dialogue.

In Chad, the Republic of the Congo and Gabon, continuing, serious economic difficulties, combined with political and social tensions between the respective Governments and opposition movements, remain a cause for concern. In Chad, I have encouraged the Government and opposition leaders to discuss the modalities and time frame for an inclusive dialogue in order to reach consensus on proposed solutions to the governance and economic issues facing the country and agree on meaningful governance reforms that will create an environment conducive to the holding of legislative elections. In the Republic of the Congo, though several political leaders who were arrested following the 2016 presidential election were released on humanitarian grounds to seek medical treatment abroad, prominent opposition figures — such as Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko and André Okombi Salissa — remain detained without trial. The security situation in the Pool region also remains unresolved, although it has relatively improved and internal political consultations have begun regarding the region's stabilization. During my visits to the country, I have stressed the importance of stabilizing the Pool region and operationalizing the platforms for political and social dialogue. I have also highlighted the need for a timely and fair trial for the detained opposition leaders, who deserve humane detention conditions.

Meanwhile, in Cameroon, half of the country's regions are affected by either Boko Haram in the far north; the crisis in the Central African Republic in the eastern part of the country; or the Anglophone separatist movement in the north-western and south-western regions. We must remain alert and redouble our prevention efforts to ensure that prevailing tensions do not deteriorate in the context of the 2018 elections.

The situation connected to the grievances of the population in the English-speaking regions of the country is of particular concern. I have maintained close contact with the Cameroonian authorities and continued to underline the need for genuine and inclusive dialogue. While the Government has taken a number of measures to address those grievances, including reforms in the judicial and education sectors and the release of a number of English-speaking leaders detained in connection with the crisis, there have been calls for a more fundamental dialogue to overcome the marginalization that is felt by much of the population

there. At the same time, clashes have continued between radicals and Government forces, resulting in the deaths of security officers in the north-western and south-western regions that are likely to further inflame tensions.

(spoke in French)

In Gabon, the national context is characterized by the persistence of an economic slowdown, strikes and the debate on a controversial constitutional reform project. The opposition and a part of civil society criticize the method used, which they consider as non-inclusive and illegitimate, and the substance of the constitutional reform, which, according to them, represents a democratic retreat. It is expected that the reform will be passed by Parliament, where the ruling party holds a two-thirds majority. The referendum option, although possible under the Constitution, has seemingly not been envisaged. The unsuccessful candidate in the last presidential election, Mr. Jean Ping, and his allies continue to challenge the re-election in 2016 of President Ali Bongo Ondimba. In particular, Mr. Ping continues to encourage his supporters to hold public demonstrations in favour of his takeover and persists in his refusal to engage in a dialogue with President Bongo Ondimba.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains a source of concern, with ongoing attacks and serious abuses by armed groups, including the killing of peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and aid workers deployed to the country to provide assistance to the civilian population. It is urgent that the peace process progress, within the framework of the African Initiative, with the implementation of the concrete actions defined by the road map adopted at the meeting organized by the African Union (AU) in Libreville on 17 July. That should lead to an immediate cessation of hostilities and the eventual disarmament and demobilization of all armed groups in the country. I welcome the launch of the activities of the African Union panel of facilitators in Central African Republic in late November, followed by its first contacts with the armed groups in December. It is now important not to lose momentum during the crucial period ahead.

The high-level meeting on the Central African Republic, held on the sidelines of this year's General Assembly, and the Secretary-General's visit to the

country in October played a critical role in attracting new attention from the international community on the Central African Republic. In that context, the region's full engagement in the peace process remains vital, not only to provide political support to the African Initiative, but also to provide a collective response to the cross-border dynamics affecting the conflict in the Central African Republic, including transhumance and trafficking. UNOCA, in close cooperation with MINUSCA, will continue to work with ECCAS and the countries of the subregion and play an active role in resolving the crisis in the Central African Republic.

Despite considerable efforts at the national, regional and international levels to combat Boko Haram, the latter remains capable of perpetuating horrific attacks and abuses that exacerbate the humanitarian, economic, social and security situation in the affected areas. It is therefore crucial that all stakeholders and partners redouble their efforts to address the crisis caused by Boko Haram in a comprehensive manner. To that end, the conclusions of the recent regional conference for the stabilization of the Lake Chad basin, organized by the African Union Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, are welcome initiatives that deserve the full support of the international community for their implementation.

(spoke in English)

Concerning the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), in addition to its abuses committed against local populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic and its poaching activities, along with the increased security vacuum following the withdrawal of Ugandan and United States forces from the zone, it is important to recall that the areas in which the LRA operates face a myriad of security challenges, including issues related to transhumance, the lack of State authority and cross-border movements of poachers and a variety of armed groups. Furthermore, it is important for the African Union and countries that contribute troops to the AU Regional Task Force to quickly agree on the reconfiguration of the Task Force and to an increase in support for the training of the Central African Armed Forces. We also encourage the international community to support the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA.

The United Nations welcomes the advances in regional integration, particularly regarding the free

movement of persons throughout the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) zone, which is now a reality. UNOCA has continued to place emphasis on support for the overall process of regional integration, including through advocacy for institutional reform of the ECCAS secretariat and the rationalization of ECCAS and CEMAC. In that connection, UNOCA has organized multiple activities designed to strengthen the capacity of the ECCAS secretariat in mediation, early warning, collaboration with civil society and gender mainstreaming. UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel have strengthened their cooperation in facilitating and enhancing interregional partnership between ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States, which has culminated in plans to sign a memorandum of understanding between the two regional economic communities. Overall, UNOCA and ECCAS continue to enhance their collaboration through the establishment and execution of a joint work plan and the holding of regular meetings at the senior and working levels.

With regard to women and peace and security, on 16 November the Government of Cameroon launched its national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That will contribute to solidifying the regional action plan for resolution 1325 (2000) in Central Africa, which is in the process of being developed, with the support of UNOCA. It will also encourage other countries to follow suit.

UNOCA, in cooperation with UNESCO and ECCAS, presented their joint three-year programme on youth at the Pan-African Youth Forum, held in Libreville on 30 November and 1 December. The Forum aimed at engaging young people in promoting a culture of peace and non-violence and involving them in the prevention of radicalization and the management of conflicts by creating an early warning system.

Before travelling to New York, I participated in the forty-fifth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), held in Kigali from 4 to 8 December. For the first time, UNSAC held a closed-door ministerial session, which focused on the situation in the Central African Republic, including the report from the October visit of the UNSAC Bureau to Bangui, organized by UNOCA, as well as the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa. A side event for youth and civil society was also

organized to ensure greater visibility by leaders of the region on the issues youth face, as well as their interest and capacity for involvement in conflict-prevention and peacebuilding.

UNOCA continues to place emphasis on efforts to enhance the coherence and coordination of overall United Nations activities in the subregion. This includes collaborating with United Nations resident coordinators and country teams to engage national authorities on sensitive political issues as well as on longer-term efforts to formulate national and cross-border peacebuilding plans, with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund.

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

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

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Francois Louncény Fall, for his briefing on the activities of the Office and his assessment of key trends in the areas of the politics and the security of the subregion.

Uruguay recognizes the important work carried out by UNOCA in the area of good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as the support it gives to United Nations initiatives and regional and subregional initiatives related to peace and security. As the report (S/2017/995) mentions, on 28 November, the tensions caused by disputes related to the electoral processes continued to affect the subregion of Central Africa, although they were mitigated in some cases by attempts to promote dialogue between the Governments and the opposition groups. Similarly, the persistence of social and economic difficulties continues to affect negatively the lives of millions of people. In that respect, we celebrate the various efforts carried out by the countries of the subregion to reduce tensions in a peaceful manner, through inclusive and authentic dialogue processes. In addition, we encourage all interested parties to cooperate with one another with transparency and in good faith in order to resolve the various political, social and economic issues.

One area that would allow for greater progress in these processes is the increased participation of women in decision-making, which still is still quite

lacking in the subregion. On that point, although we have borne witness to positive developments in recent months, such as the mobilization and the creation of a regional platform on the issue of women and peace and security, and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the object of which is to ensure the participation of women in decision-making processes, it continues to be an ongoing challenge in Central Africa. Uruguay understands that more effective participation by women in post-conflict transitions is essential to ensure lasting peace.

I would like to focus on two aspects that are of great importance to Uruguay and that reflect clearly the difficult living conditions that affect a large number of civilians in many countries of the subregion: the humanitarian situation and the situation of human rights.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, according to information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, violence and insecurity caused by Boko Haram have devastated families and communities in the Lake Chad basin region, where 2.4 million people are displaced and over 7 million need food assistance. Throughout the region, there are more than 10 million people in need of humanitarian aid, which makes it one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. In that respect, we commend the collective efforts of the international community, and in particular of the countries of the Central African subregion, to tackle the threat of terrorist groups like Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army. Those efforts have made it possible to mitigate, at least in part, the great damage caused to the civilian population.

On the situation of human rights, Uruguay is concerned the reference in the report to ongoing human rights violations in many countries of the subregion, where excessive use of force, detentions and the arbitrary arrests of political opponents, civil society activists and media professionals reflect a trend towards the consistent contraction of the political space. In addition, the climate of impunity that prevails in some countries remains a cause of concern for Uruguay and represents, among other things, a serious impediment to the creation of an enabling environment for the conduct of peaceful electoral processes and an unimpeded transition towards a democratic regime.

In conclusion, I wish to express the support of Uruguay to the Special Representative and to all

UNOCA personnel in their efforts to promote peace and security in Central Africa.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Francois Louncény Fall, for his informative briefing. Bolivia recognizes the work being carried out by the Office in the areas of preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as the support that it provides to regional and subregional organizations. We therefore wish it success in its operations and express our support for the tasks entrusted to it.

To begin, we recognize that the efforts of UNOCA contribute to the reduction of tensions in the region; we therefore commend its work. However, we must also recognize that other challenges persist in the areas of peace and security, humanitarian assistance and economic development, which must be addressed. The progress made to date, with the support of UNOCA, should not be overlooked. On the contrary, further progress should be made, with the help of all regional and subregional organizations, in accordance with the principle of respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of every State in which it carries out its mandate.

We recognize the complexity of such challenges. Therefore, in order to achieve peace, security and development in Central Africa, we believe that a subregional approach should be taken to confront the current and emerging threats with a view to reducing the impact that these may have on the stability of the subregion. In that regard, we welcome the results obtained by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during his visit to Burundi. I wish to highlight in that respect the need for an inclusive dialogue that contributes to stability. We also underline ongoing interaction with subregional leaders in order to address the situation of the Central African Republic in the framework of the African Initiative and the Libreville road map. We also highlight the initiatives carried out in Chad and the collaboration of UNOCA with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States, among others.

We are of the view that, although the realities of each country differ, the conflicts in the region must be resolved through mediation, preventive diplomacy and mainly through constructive and inclusive political dialogue. To that must be added coordinated efforts between neighboring countries, regional organizations and international cooperation. In that regard, we believe that the initiative of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel could be replicated in Central Africa. In that context, we highlight the progress made by multinational joint force and regional and international partners in the fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin.

We believe that, in seeking to address terrorism, both the countries of the region and the international community as a whole should reflect on the root causes underlying its existence, one of which is the lack of control in the exploitation of natural resources, which in turn are used to supply and finance the illicit activities of these groups.

In his report, the Special Representative refers to Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a key source of poaching and gold mining by the Lord's Resistance Army. That systematic sacking of resources is partly due to the recent withdrawal of troops who had been fighting the Lord's Resistance Army. A new strategy must therefore be developed with the African Union and the countries involved in order

to avoid gaps that could later be exploited by members of terrorist groups.

Another aspect that Bolivia believes would accelerate progress in peacebuilding in the region is the greater participation of women in those processes and in decision-making. We commend the initiative of UNOCA, in collaboration with ECCAS, to create a regional network of women's media for peace and security in Central Africa, which seeks to help to mobilize women in the region and promote the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We support the continuation of that work.

Finally, we urge the international community to take into account the factors I have outlined, which we believe could help to resolve the humanitarian situation. In the Lake Chad basin region alone, there are some 10 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and more than 2 million who are internally displaced. We must continue our work and redouble our efforts to achieve peace, stability and development in the Central Africa subregion.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.