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New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Norman-Chalet (United States of America)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Ms. Morrison González
Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
France	Mrs. Gueguen
Germany	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
Peru	Mr. Velásquez
Poland	Mr. Lewicki
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
South Africa	Mr. Mabhongo
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen

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/2019/913)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.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/2019/913)

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: Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and Mr. Sasha Lezhnev, Deputy Director of Policy at the Enough Project.

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/2019/913, 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 (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the United States presidency for December. I wish you great success. I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) since the publication of the report (S/2019/913) submitted for the Council's consideration.

Overall, the political and security situation in Central Africa remains worrisome. The subregion continues to face security, humanitarian, socioeconomic and human rights challenges. In addition, the security concerns related to climate change have deepened. However, we welcome the key progress made over the past 11 months on structural reforms, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, including the finalization of all the major reform documents of the Economic Community of Central African States, the adoption of the regional action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on

women and peace and security, and the establishment of a regional civil society network, namely, the Civil Society Coalition for Conflict Prevention, Peace and Security in Central Africa.

Most of the States of the subregion will hold new elections between 2020 and the end of UNOCA's current mandate, in August 2021. In that connection, efforts continue to promote national dialogue and the participation of women and youth in governance and peacebuilding.

Terrorism continues to pose a threat to the stability of the African subregion, in particular in the Lake Chad basin where Boko Haram remains active. My colleague Mohamed Ibn Chambas and I were in Nigeria in November to complete our tour of the four States of the Lake Chad basin, undertaken jointly with Mr. Angel Losada Fernández, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel. Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, joined us in Chad. We came to the conclusion that support for the implementation of the regional strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad basin region should be one of our priorities.

Climate change continues to have an impact on the lives of women and men in Central Africa, often with direct implications for peace and security. On 20 November, the Government of the Republic of the Congo declared a state of natural disaster and humanitarian emergency in three northern departments, due to serious flooding affecting approximately 50,000 people. It should be noted that several other Central African countries are also facing severe natural disasters related to climate change. I call on international partners to provide humanitarian assistance to the Governments concerned.

I went to Luanda from 25 to 29 November to participate in the forty-ninth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Committee discussed the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa and held a debate on climate change and its impact on peace and security. At the end of its ministerial meeting, the Committee adopted the Luanda declaration on the impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa.

The Central African subregion continues to face maritime security challenges, in particular in the Gulf

of Guinea. On 7 November, an attack on an oil tanker was reported north-west of São Tomé. On 20 November, the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, located in Yaoundé, reported another attack near Malabo, which led the Government of Equatorial Guinea to place its security forces on high alert throughout the country. Special Representative Ibn Chambas and I are planning to conduct a joint visit to the Centre in early 2020 to assess the maritime situation in the Gulf of Guinea and to determine the specific areas where the United Nations could lend integrated interregional assistance.

I am encouraged by the efforts made by the countries of Central Africa to build their capacity for subregional cooperation by strengthening ECCAS. That subregional organization is in the process of accelerating its preparations for the holding in Libreville of the ninth extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government on 18 December, which will be devoted to reforming the Community. During the summit, the leaders of Central Africa are slated to approve ECCAS's institutional reform programme, and the conclusions of the summit will constitute an important step in that reform process. Here I would reaffirm the full commitment of the United Nations to work hand in hand with ECCAS and its member States as well as their partners to implement the reform and to contribute to building ECCAS's capacities.

As the Council is aware, the Government of Cameroon held a national dialogue from 30 September to 4 October that produced a series of key recommendations aimed at addressing the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions of the country. However, I remain concerned by the level of violence that continues to threaten the lives of the people of Cameroon, as there are reports of ongoing human rights violations and abuses by all parties.

Humanitarian personnel have also been attacked, which highlights the scale of the insecurity. More than 700,000 people may now be displaced because of the conflict in the two regions. Other reports also indicate that thousands of people have died or been injured. I call on international partners to support the national efforts that are under way to address the humanitarian needs of the population.

Following the national dialogue, a number of measures were taken, including the release of certain prisoners, which is a welcome development. The swift

implementation of the recommendations from the dialogue will be yet another step towards a lasting solution to the crisis. From 19 to 24 November, the Government of Cameroon dispatched delegations to the North-West and South-West Regions to raise awareness on the conclusions of the national dialogue.

The President of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat; the Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Louise Mushikiwabo; and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Janet Scotland, recently paid a visit to Cameroon to meet with national stakeholders, including President Paul Biya, on the situation in the country. In their final joint statement, the three officials encouraged all stakeholders to continue on this path of wisdom and responsibility, especially with respect to the Government's implementation of the conclusions of the national dialogue.

Following the announcement made by President Paul Biya on the holding of the legislative and municipal elections in Cameroon on 9 February 2020, the head of the opposition party, the Mouvement pour la renaissance du Cameroun, Maurice Kamto, reported on 25 November that his party would not be taking part in the elections, stating that the conditions would not be met for the voting to take place in the North-West and South-West Regions. He also called for a review of the electoral code. Other political parties also expressed some reservations as to their participation in the elections.

In response, during a press conference held on 2 December, the Minister of Territorial Administration and the Minister of Communication assured everyone that the conditions were in place for peaceful elections. As the Secretary-General underscored in his report (S/2019/913), it is important to pursue dialogue with all stakeholders so as to quell the underlying tensions among those who feel marginalized. It is vital that we build on the momentum created by the national dialogue by ensuring inclusiveness in the implementation of the recommendations of the dialogue, including on greater decentralization, development assistance and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in 2020 will to a large extent depend on such efforts and will be a crucial test for democracy in the country. It will also make clear the level of determination on the part of national stakeholders to move towards genuine

stability and socioeconomic development and lasting peace for all the people of Cameroon.

The United Nations remains committed to working in close cooperation with the national authorities and other stakeholders and to support local initiatives geared towards promoting the participation of women, young people and other marginalized groups. In parallel, it is crucial that all actors on the ground step up their efforts to protect and promote human rights and fight impunity.

In Chad, the security situation in the three provinces that share a common border with Libya and the Sudan and are in a state of emergency continue to pose a threat to the building of a lasting peace. That will require an ongoing multidimensional commitment, especially at a time when Chad is preparing for the legislative elections, which have long been delayed and which are now slated for the first quarter of 2020, and the holding of presidential elections in 2021.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, efforts must continue in order to create a political environment conducive to the holding of presidential elections in 2021. The Permanent Secretary of the National Dialogue Council is continuing his consultations with a wide range of national stakeholders, including political parties and civil society, with the support of the United Nations through the Peacebuilding Fund, in order to prepare for an inclusive national dialogue for 2020.

I call on the national authorities and all stakeholders to continue to work jointly to contribute to the holding of a genuinely inclusive and constructive dialogue that will create conditions conducive to peacebuilding and to the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible presidential elections. Unwavering international assistance to stabilize the Pool Region is also necessary, as well as financial contributions, which are essential for the Government to effectively implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

(spoke in English)

I would like to reiterate my appreciation to the Security Council for its continued support for UNOCA and myself to facilitate the implementation of our mandate. The Council's support was once again evidenced through its presidential statement of 12 September (S/PRST/2019/10) welcoming the completion of UNOCA's strategic review.

The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UNOCA are working together in cooperation with the relevant United Nations entities to ensure the full implementation of the strategic review recommendations. We will continue to update the Council as appropriate.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Lezhnev.

Mr. Lezhnev: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council today.

I would like to focus my remarks on what the Council and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) can concretely do to help transform and prevent violent conflict in this often-forgotten region.

Above all, I believe that the Council and UNOCA should strategically focus on the financial aspect of crises in the region. I would argue that this would be most effectively done through enhanced engagement with international partners on transparency reforms that can help to prevent conflict, as well as with the private sector and anti-money-laundering bodies, and by refocusing sanctions to target networks of spoilers to peace processes. These steps would help to give the region a much better chance of achieving peace. Within that framework, I would highlight two main challenges and four recommendations.

The first challenge relates to conflict resources and money-laundering. Rebel groups, criminal units within armies and their facilitators generate hundreds of millions of dollars each year from trading in conflict resources such as gold, diamonds, tantalum and other minerals. They are a key driver of conflict, as armed commanders and their backers want to continue making money, thereby breaking peace agreements through the continuation of such interests.

The Council can have an impact on conflict commodities since they are traded regionally and internationally. The Panels of Experts on the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo report extensively on how gold, diamonds and other minerals are critical resources for armed groups and on how they are smuggled across to Cameroon, Uganda, Rwanda and Chad and on to the United Arab Emirates, among other countries.

The key to combating such interests is to follow and target the middle-men, financial facilitators and corrupt officials who enable the trade in those conflict commodities. Such networks are often involved in arms trafficking in exchange for diamonds and gold. For example, my organization reported last year that conflict gold from the Democratic Republic of the Congo might well be reaching Western consumers through an international corporate network coordinated by a Belgian tycoon with refineries in Uganda, Dubai and Belgium.

Together, these rogue actors make up criminal networks, whose presence is growing in Central Africa. Facilitators such as Dan Gertler, Aziz Nassour and others have made hundreds of millions of dollars from corrupt deals and continue to operate in the region, many with impunity. Unless there are consequences against such facilitators, they will continue to fund armed groups and perpetuate instability.

The second challenge that I wanted to highlight is preventing mass violence through transparency reforms. Many presidents in the region have been in power longer than the average age of the population, some for up to 40 years. Meanwhile, the median age is, for example, 18 years in Cameroon and 22 years in Gabon.

Citizens in Central Africa are growing impatient with non-democratic regimes. The youth populations are increasingly vocal about the need for change and reform, as we have seen throughout the region.

That strong dichotomy is creating serious stability risks, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General highlighted. Most countries in the region are at the top of the Fragile States Index, and five countries in the region were highlighted by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum last week to be in the highest risk category for mass killings.

Arguably, the greatest factor in preventing the reform processes is money. Every country in Central Africa ranks in the bottom third of the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, and a majority of countries in the region are in the lowest 20 per cent. Such corruption is starting to be exposed by various regional reports but, in order to protect the illicit interests, regimes often entrench themselves and repress populations.

The best way to prevent these countries from falling into instability is to assist them to reform. The youth and others want to see real reforms. From the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon, young people and civil society are tired of corruption and of seeing their limited natural resources diminished without any benefit to them. They are demanding that the Governments enact transparency and anti-corruption measures, from holding officials who have stolen funds accountable for their actions to requiring State-owned companies to undergo independent audits. The old models of off-budget accounts and secret State-owned companies that dispersed patronage are not appropriate to the youth generation.

I would like to say a few words about solutions, for which I offer four recommendations.

First, I would propose engaging the banking and gold sectors. Contrary to belief, illicit spoilers of peace processes do not mainly hold their money in cash. They have bank accounts and use financial interests in order to pay business partners and spend the money abroad. Banks and other financial institutions therefore play a critical role in enforcing sanctions and enacting anti-money-laundering measures. Multinational correspondent banks are particularly important because they act as clearing agents for wire transfers abroad and can take a range of actions to combat money-laundering and conflict financing.

The Security Council and UNOCA should proactively engage banks and other financial institutions on sanctions implementation and other anti-money-laundering steps. The Wolfsberg Group, an association of 13 global banks that aims to develop frameworks and guidance for the management of financial crime risks, may be a good starting point. The Council could convene a session with the Group on sanctions implementation and anti-money-laundering/combating the financing of terrorism issues and perhaps set up an ongoing working group to follow up on such issues. UNOCA could also meet regularly with banks in the region to follow up on sanctions implementation issues, including those raised by the Panels of Experts.

Similarly, I would argue that the Council should engage the global gold sector on the issue of conflict gold, since it is a major source of financing identified by the various groups of experts. The Council played a constructive role in helping to address the blood diamonds trade, and could do the same with regard to

conflict gold. Specifically, I would advise the Council to work with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and convene key gold traders, refiners and banks to highlight the need for better implementation of the red flags in the 2015 FATF typology report on gold, money-laundering and terrorist financing risks. The FATF made excellent recommendations that have not been properly implemented.

Secondly, I would recommend engaging anti-money-laundering bodies and financial authorities. The FATF and regional FATF bodies can play critical roles in combating conflict finance, and the Council and UNOCA should engage them as part of their conflict-prevention efforts. The regional FATF bodies are potentially very important actors in countering conflict financing and related corruption because they conduct mutual evaluations of countries' anti-money-laundering/countering the financing of terrorism regimes and their implementation. They also work to strengthen the national financial intelligence units (FIUs) on these issues. The Task Force against Money-Laundering in Central Africa (GABAC) is the Central African FATF-style regional body, but it and the FIUs in the region need significant support and engagement to be effective.

The Security Council can play a role here, building on resolution 2462 (2019), adopted in March, which recognizes the essential role of the FATF. The Council should make supporting regional anti-money-laundering efforts part of UNOCA's mandate in order to stem the flows of illicit finance and conflict finance.

Specifically, I would recommend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General coordinate with GABAC and key FIUs in the region and raise related issues in his high-level dialogues with Governments in the region. UNOCA should also work with GABAC, the FATF and the World Bank to ensure that mutual evaluations and risk assessments are conducted in a timely, effective and non-political manner.

Thirdly, I would like to highlight sanctions issues. Targeted sanctions are a very important financial tool for the Council to pressure spoilers to a peace process. However, too often, they are enacted against individuals or those persons who are least affected by sanctions because they do not travel or have bank accounts abroad, such as many rebel leaders.

To be effective, based on our experience and research, sanctions should target the networks that

spoil peace processes. Rebel leaders who break peace accords have companies, as do traffickers, facilitators and family members who collaborate with them, each profiting from the spoils of war. Importantly, those players are much more likely to have bank accounts abroad and conduct business there, and they would therefore be more greatly impacted by sanctions. The Council and others use the network sanctions approach very effectively with regard to North Korea and Iran and should do so similarly in Central Africa.

In that vein, I would recommend that the Council empower the Panels of Experts and other expert groups with the mandate to investigate the networks that facilitate the spoilers and by supporting them with an additional expert on regional facilitators and enhancing their mandates to investigate the networks.

My last recommendation is to work with key partners to help Governments to enact transparency reforms. The United Nations cannot force Governments to root out corruption, nor should it. However, key international partners, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and civil society coalitions, work with Governments on transparency reforms and, in my view, the United Nations should work closely with them. For example, the IMF is urging the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to publish beneficial ownership information of key companies and improve their anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism regimes.

UNOCA can meet regularly with EITI multi-stakeholder groups throughout the region, as well as IMF teams and civil society coalitions, to find out what transparency reforms are their priorities. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, not pushing but just referencing, could then raise those issues when speaking to Heads of State from the region. We believe that can be quite effective. I would argue that the Security Council should include reporting on financial transparency in the mandates of the mission.

Similarly, the Council should engage the Governments of destination countries on conflict resources. For example, the United Arab Emirates, with respect to conflict gold, can do more as it pertains to various reforms related to transparency. Those steps would reinforce the calls for transparency and bring them to the attention of the highest levels of Government. That would be an important conflict-

prevention tool, informing the Heads of State that there are key reasonable steps that they can take and that they can do more to prevent a much wider crisis with disastrous human impacts.

I thank you again, Ambassador Norman-Chalet, for this opportunity to brief the Council.

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

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

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): It is nice to see you presiding over the Council, Madam President.

The United Kingdom welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fall, for his briefing and his work and that of his team. We welcome the efforts of UNOCA in monitoring political peace and security developments and trends in Central Africa this year. We also welcome the good offices deployed, the work on conflict prevention and mediation, support to peace and security initiatives and efforts to enhance coherence and coordination in the subregion. I would like to say how important we also think it is that the Special Representative continue his efforts to support the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and its members in their work to strengthen and reform the organization. UNOCA should look to enhance its work on early warning and analysis, alongside greater coordination with United Nations country teams in the subregion, going forward. With that focus on conflict prevention in mind, let me turn to some specific country areas within UNOCA's mandate.

The United Kingdom continues to share the concerns set out in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/913) about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. We welcome reports and information that humanitarian access in areas of Cameroon controlled by the Government of Cameroon have improved significantly over the past few months. However, all parties need to do more to ensure that humanitarian access is protected. I must particularly condemn attacks on health infrastructure, personnel, schools, teachers, parents and children, as set out in the UNOCA report. Human rights violations and abuses committed by all sides must stop, and all allegations must be investigated.

Let me say how much the United Kingdom welcomes the steps of the Government of Cameroon to convene a national dialogue and, alongside that, secure the release of detainees. The Government of Cameroon now needs to ensure that the key recommendations from the national dialogue are implemented, including strengthening bilingualism in the educational and legal systems, decentralization by granting special status to the North-West and South-West regions and taking steps to engage diaspora groups. I again stress that those are the own intentions and policies of the Government of Cameroon. But we believe that urgent follow-up on those recommendations is vital to maintaining momentum. Put simply, words need to be matched by actions. Failure to do so will only cause the already concerning situation to deteriorate further. The United Kingdom remains willing, as it has been throughout, to continue to support the Government of Cameroon in carrying out those recommendations and urges all United Nations bodies to do likewise.

A united approach on Cameroon is important. The recent Commonwealth-International Organization of La Francophonie-African Union joint visit to Cameroon helped promote the restoration of peace in the North-West and South-West regions. We look forward to hearing about the follow-up recommendations based on that joint visit. It is imperative that the regional and wider international community continue to support credible peacebuilding efforts, including through the mechanism of the Peacebuilding Fund, and urgently respond to the growing humanitarian need. We believe that regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and ECCAS, play an integral role. We hope for further joint visits by the United Nations and the African Union to Cameroon and neighbouring countries.

Let me welcome the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights technical mission to Cameroon, which was conducted at the invitation of its Government, and urge prompt, continued and full cooperation among all sides to ensure the protection of civilians and accountability. It is important that there be follow-up to the visit, including on impunity. Freedom of political expression must be respected at all times, including in the run-up to the forthcoming legislative and municipal elections.

Let me turn briefly to the situation in the Lake Chad basin. Special Representative Fall reminded us, in his briefing and report, of the impact of climate change in

that area. The UNOCA report highlighted deplorable high levels of violence and human displacement, resulting from Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa attacks on civilian and military targets. The United Kingdom recognizes the important role of the countries of the region in supporting stability in the Lake Chad basin, including through the Multinational Joint Task Force, and the hosting of refugees. A number of us were able to hear from the Executive Secretary of the Lake Chad Basin Commission during the Peacebuilding Commission's annual session this week on the progress made with respect to the regional stabilization, recovery and resilience strategy for areas affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin region.

All I would say is that I believe that we need to do more to ensure the full implementation of resolution 2349 (2017) to tackle security, humanitarian and development crises in the region. We fully support the cooperation between UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. We are very pleased to hear about the joint visits between Special Representatives Fall and Chambas. We look forward to an update when reports on those visits are ready, as well as any conclusions that they draw together on the way forward.

The United Kingdom welcomes the progress made to date by President Touadera and the authorities of the Central African Republic since the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in February. We also welcome the reactivation of the Central African Republic-Cameroon and Central African Republic-Democratic Republic of the Congo bilateral commissions and the advocacy role played by UNOCA in helping to bring them about. We remain extremely concerned about the ongoing political challenges and human rights situation in Burundi and its humanitarian consequences. The election scheduled for next year is a critical moment for Burundi. We urge the Government to work with all parties to ensure a fair and peaceful election.

Let me conclude by again noting that the report and the briefing set out a number of areas where the United Nations, in the form of its Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes, and Member States can support countries and the region in the areas of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. We all need to rise to that challenge, and UNOCA is key to doing so.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to deliver this statement on behalf of the African countries members of the Security Council — South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea.

We, too, would like to congratulate Mr. François Louncény Fall and the entire team of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) for his detailed and informative briefing on the situation in Central Africa and the work of the Office. Allow me also to thank Mr. Sasha Lezhnev for the relevant information he just provided. We would again like to thank the Secretary-General for the recommendations provided in his report (S/2019/913), in which he confirms that regional offices are the platform for progress in conflict prevention, in particular UNOCA, whose work has been effective in promoting peace and stability in the Central African subregion.

Against that backdrop, we will continue to support UNOCA in its ongoing work to create synergies for the purposes of promoting bilateral cooperation among neighbouring countries and strengthening cooperation with regional organizations — in particular the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Gulf of Guinea Commission — in the areas of peace, security and conflict prevention. We also strongly believe that UNOCA needs to strengthen its cooperation, mutual coordination of priorities and ensure a clear division of tasks with other United Nations organizations operating in the region and with the United Nations Regional Office for West Africa and the Sahel, as set out in presidential statement S/PRST/2019/10, of 12 September.

We hope that the extension of UNOCA's mandate until 31 August 2021 will enable the Regional Office to closely follow the electoral-cycle process in the subregion, that the elections scheduled therein will be held in a peaceful and tranquil environment and be transparent, peaceful and inclusive, and that they will address the problems of the present reality and the threats facing the subregion, above all those related, inter alia, to mercenary activities, terrorism, piracy and organized crime, as those threats are currently a major cause for concern in the area as a result of the amplification of the uncontrolled circulation of weapons and the conflicts taking place in the area, all of which pose a serious threat to the peace and security of States in the subregion.

At the same time, we must continue to strongly condemn the terror and attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram since 2009, the year in which the Security Council also raised the alarm about the group. Boko Haram's attacks continue to lead to devastating losses of human life and pose a major threat to stability and peace in Central and West Africa. We also recall presidential statement S/PRST/2011/21, of 14 November 2011, which strongly condemned the ongoing attacks carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army in parts of Central Africa, which pose an ongoing threat to regional security.

In response to all those situations, in February, during the first presidency of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2457 (2019) on the initiative to silence the guns. This resolution will undoubtedly contribute to safeguarding peace and security on the African continent, and we hope that it will constitute a turning point for the future of Africa, which recognizes that silencing the guns will contribute greatly to saving future generations from the scourge of war and building an integrated, peaceful, secure and prosperous Africa.

We appreciate the efforts that the Central African States have taken to achieve political, social and economic stability in the subregion, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNOCA (S/2019/913) delivered by his Special Representative. We welcome the national dialogue that recently took place in Cameroon, which we believe is a positive and significant step towards resolving the disputes that have yet to be reconciled. We appreciate the recent tripartite visit of the joint mission to the country by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Ms. Patricia Scotland, which served as an opportunity to exchange views on the implementation of the outcomes of the national dialogue.

In that context, we align ourselves with the declaration of the tripartite visit of the mission and urge the Cameroonian authorities to support and implement the outcomes of the national dialogue. The rapid implementation of the outcomes of the dialogue would not only demonstrate a commitment to the will of the people of Cameroon, but would also serve as confidence-building measures, which we believe would

pave the way for reconciliation, peace, stability and a return to normal life in the affected regions.

We appreciate the continued efforts to bring all parties to the negotiating table. We encourage the relevant parties to the conflict to heed the call to join the negotiations, which are fundamental to resolving differences of opinion. In the same vein, we urge all parties to approach the negotiations in a spirit of compromise and to strive towards achieving lasting peace and stability in Cameroon. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Cameroon for having hosted on 22 November the extraordinary summit of Central African Heads of State on the economic and monetary situation in the CEMAC zone.

We appreciate UNOCA's efforts to continue strongly promoting the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in the countries of the subregion. We also welcome the work of the joint bilateral commissions between the Central African Republic, Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo. At the same time, we encourage the resumption of the work of the joint bilateral commissions between the Central African Republic and all its other neighbours in order to address cross-border issues. We strongly hope that UNOCA, together with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, will support initiatives aimed at enhancing the capacity of the national security forces, in accordance with resolution 2447 (2018). Côte d'Ivoire, with its first-hand experience in dealing with post-conflict situations, contributed to the adoption of this resolution.

We welcome the tripartite agreement signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of Angola and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which paves the way for the establishment of a mechanism for the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of refugees. We also commend the Government of Angola for hosting from 26 to 28 November the 49th meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

While we also appreciate the measures that the Governments of the region have implemented to address the humanitarian situation, we nevertheless remain concerned about the high number of internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers in the

Central African subregion. Displaced persons need to earn sustainable livelihoods and have their rights and dignity respected, yet their circumstances are compounded by the destabilizing activities of armed groups and continued attacks on communities that also remain exposed to the harsh realities of climate change, malnutrition, cholera and Ebola, for which the international community must provide adequate technical, health and financial assistance.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that strengthened cooperation between the Security Council and the African Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union, which also reinforces the Council's subregional initiatives to advance the women and peace and security agenda, as set out in resolution 2493 (2019), adopted on 29 October during South Africa's presidency of the Council, will serve to advance the implementation of that agenda and its priorities by ensuring and promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages of peace processes.

Lastly, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea reaffirm their support for the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whose mission of good offices and preventive diplomacy continues to be relevant in the quest for peace, stability and socioeconomic development in the States of Central Africa.

Ms. Morrison González (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the briefers for the information they have given us today.

We welcome the good offices of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in promoting peaceful solutions in the subregion through dialogue, confidence-building and reconciliation among the parties. We want to highlight its advocacy work with the countries of the subregion on the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, and its contribution to the resumption of the activities of the joint commission of the Central African Republic and the Congo. We also underscore their enormous efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon.

We are sorry to see the deterioration of the security situation in some parts of the region, especially in the Lake Chad area, as a result of Boko Haram's attacks and the worrying situation in Cameroon. We also condemn

the abuses committed against civilians, particularly the abduction of adults and children by the Lord's Resistance Army.

The adverse effects of climate change, such as increasingly frequent and large-scale droughts and floods, are a challenge for Central Africa and continue to be of great concern. The incidence of extreme weather events hurts farming and has a negative impact on people's health and food security. In that regard, we welcomed the extraordinary ministerial meeting in Brazzaville of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and its Governments' adoption of a common subregional position on the contribution of Central African forests to the global fight against climate change and commitment to reducing threats to the world's second-largest rainforest and mobilizing more global support for the subregion. We believe this initiative will make a positive contribution to improving the living conditions of those who live in forests and in urban centres alike.

The humanitarian situation in various parts of Central Africa continues to be of great concern, particularly in Cameroon, where the escalating violence and insecurity have affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians, especially women and children. The security is exacerbating the high rate of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as the incidence of murders, abductions, arbitrary detentions and forced recruitment. We deplore and strongly condemn the killing of a humanitarian actor in north-western Cameroon on 1 December and urge regional organizations to continue to intensify their mediation and dialogue efforts among the parties in order to build the confidence and political will needed to build sustainable peace throughout the country.

In conclusion, we commend the work of Mr. Fall, UNOCA and ECCAS for their efforts to promote a peaceful solution to the crises in the region. We urge all the countries of Central Africa to expand the democratic space and take concrete steps to improve the processes of dialogue with the various political actors and civil society, with a view to addressing the common problems caused by armed groups, illegal activities and transhumance, in order to develop a safe region, respect for human rights and sustainable stability, which would enable its human and social wealth and natural resources to be used more effectively and thereby transform its economy, offering greater

opportunities for socioeconomic development for each individual country and the region at large.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall and Mr. Lezhnev for their briefings. As the Special Representative said, the political, security and humanitarian situation remains very fragile in several States in Central Africa. I would like to take this opportunity to make a few remarks.

First, we remain concerned about the situation in Cameroon. While 9 February 2020, the date scheduled for the next legislative and local elections, is fast approaching, the situation is still complicated. On the one hand, we commend the Cameroonian authorities for holding a national dialogue and for the recommendations that followed it and the release of political prisoners. Those are encouraging signs. We would also like to commend all the parties for their commitment to Switzerland's mediation in order to resolve the crisis in the English-speaking regions. On the other hand, the situation on the ground has not yet changed substantially. The English-speaking regions unfortunately continue to be the scene of hostilities and human rights abuses by all parties, while an entire generation is at risk of being denied access to education. In addition, the recommendations of the national dialogue have been neither endorsed nor implemented.

We therefore call on all the parties to work for concrete results. That applies to both the national dialogue and mediation. Only through dialogue and negotiation can solutions be found. Nor should we forget the other crises in Cameroon, on the humanitarian front and with regard to the problem of Boko Haram's terrorism. The lack of coverage of the humanitarian plan, which has reached only 41 per cent, only increases the country's challenges. We call on all partners to do their best to contribute to that end.

Secondly, we would also like to take this opportunity to revisit the climate and security issue. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/913) notes several positive developments. Among them are Gabon's adoption of new penal and penal procedure codes that substantially increase the penalties for environmental crimes, as well as the adoption by the Economic Community of Central African States of a subregional common position on the contributions of Central African forests to the fight against climate change. We welcome the increased attention to the effects of climate change, ecological

change and natural disasters on the stability of Central Africa and encourage the mission to continue on that path. As the report points out, we must recognize that we can and must do more.

Lastly, the illegal exploitation of natural resources remains a major issue in the region, and we should therefore provide the various missions covering Central Africa with a robust mandate to enable them to tackle it. We should also work closely with regional partners that are already active in that context, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

As for Belgium, we are working closely with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the judicial authorities in Belgium have had no hesitation in starting investigations of individuals suspected of being involved in trafficking.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General François Louncény Fall for his briefing on the situation in the Central African region. We also listened carefully to Mr. Sasha Lezhnev's briefing.

Russia has consistently supported the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa as an important tool for implementing preventive diplomacy. The challenges facing the countries of the subregion are unquestionably complex, and in that regard it is crucial for regional actors to be at the forefront in matters of crisis prevention and conflict resolution. We welcome the focus of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on achieving the institutional reform that it needs to strengthen the capacity of an organization that is so important to the subregion.

Central Africa plays a key role in countering the spread of terrorism on the African continent. The penetration by radical and terrorist elements of the subregion has been accompanied by illegal trafficking in weapons, drugs and mineral and other natural resources. We were troubled by the information that Boko Haram still has military capacities and is capable of conducting major attacks, and that its activity in Chad and Cameroon is not decreasing. Extremists are attacking civilians, United Nations and non-governmental organization personnel, and military checkpoints. The significant influx of foreign terrorists into Boko Haram, including militants from the Islamic

State, is seriously worrying. We believe that regional efforts to develop coordinated approaches to the fight against any manifestations of terrorism are extremely important, and the activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force are a good example of that. It is crucial to ensure its adequate financing. For our part, we are ready to continue working in various formats in the interests of eliminating the terrorist threat on the African continent. We are focusing in particular on identifying sources of financing for local terrorists and their contacts with other international radical groups.

We are closely monitoring the developing situation in the Central African Republic. We support President Touadera's efforts to reform the security sector and enhance the capacity of the armed forces as soon as possible. The Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed on 6 February, is an important foundation for the continuing resolution of the situation in the country. Russia will continue its full support to the national reconciliation process by coordinating efforts with all involved in the quest for ways to normalize the situation.

One of the other factors in the instability in the Central African region is piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Unfortunately, the criminal raids on foreign vessels, including hostage-taking, continue. Russia has had a positive experience of participating in the international efforts to combat piracy in the north-western Indian Ocean in the framework of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. We hope it can be useful for resolving similar issues in the Gulf of Guinea.

We are concerned about the ongoing activities of the Lord's Resistance Army, which is still engaging in illicit looting and robbery in various parts of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, and combating it should remain a priority for the States of the Central African region. We hope that the concept developed under the auspices of the African Union and ECCAS for eliminating this threat will get results.

We are also closely following the development of the situation in Cameroon. The issue of the country's English-speaking provinces has deep historical roots, and the only way to reach a solution to such accumulated problems is at the negotiating table, while respecting human rights and ensuring the rule of law. We urge all the parties in Cameroon to show maximum restraint and refrain from the use of any form of violence. In that

connection, we welcome the national dialogue that took place from 30 September to 4 October and hope that the recommendations based on its outcome will be put into practice as soon as possible.

In conclusion, we would like to remind the Council that the challenges and threats facing Central Africa are inextricably linked to one another and the States of the region themselves are interdependent. The destabilization of the situation in one country can bring down its neighbours' security too, and it is therefore extremely important not to cross the line between prevention and interference in internal affairs.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), for his briefing, and to commend the efforts and activities of UNOCA in Central Africa in its fulfilment of its mandate. I would also like to thank Mr. Sasha Lezhnev for his valuable briefing. Today I will focus on three aspects of the issue.

First, with regard to the security and political situation in Central Africa, the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/913) gives a clear overview of the deteriorating security situation in a number of countries in the region resulting from problems to do with election processes. We have seen political and security tensions increase in Cameroon since the contested presidential elections there in October 2018, and they are likely to continue to worsen, given the stark differences in views in the country's North-West and South-West regions. In Chad, the postponement of legislative and local elections since 2015 has continued to have repercussions affecting the security situation, especially in the north and some parts of eastern Chad. We hope that elections will be held in the first quarter of 2020, in accordance with the announcement by the National Independent Electoral Commission. We also look forward to an inclusive national dialogue that can halt the bloodshed and ensure political and security stability in the countries of the region that are dealing with political divisions and deteriorating security. This is especially important in view of the fact that a number of major events in the region are approaching, including the presidential elections to be held in the Central African Republic and Burundi in 2020, which we hope will include all political parties, ensure the participation of international observers, and will be held in a stable security environment. All of this will

undoubtedly have positive effects for the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole.

We stress the importance of cooperation between the Governments of the region and regional, subregional and international organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other relevant actors. The security situation in the region continues to be a source of concern in the light of the ongoing violence and armed conflicts, which have unfortunately claimed the lives of many innocent civilians. We stress the need for radical solutions to end the conflicts and hold those responsible to account. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the criminal acts and suicide bombings carried out by Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army, which hinder progress on all fronts and constitute a serious and direct threat, as Mr. Fall said. International and regional cooperation is essential if we are to overcome those challenges.

Secondly, we deplore the worsening humanitarian situation in the region in general, given the large numbers of those in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and the growing numbers of refugees and people forced into displacement as a result of violence and outbreaks of cholera, Ebola and other diseases. We share the Secretary-General's concerns about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in a number of countries in the region and urge them to continue cooperating with regional and international organizations. They should work harder to alleviate human suffering and address the various threats facing the region, including the environmental risks posed by climate change and its impact on agriculture, as well as the lack of rainfall and the drying up of various lakes.

The third and final aspect I would like to discuss is cooperation with UNOCA and other organizations. Since this is the Council's last meeting about Central Africa during Kuwait's membership of the Council, I would like to take this opportunity to stress that over the past two years we have seen a number of Central African countries make good progress, which we have commended and looked forward to building on. Other countries, however, still have a long way to go. There are many and diverse challenges that require meaningful cooperation among Governments and regional and international organizations if we are to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the region

to achieve security, stability and a dignified life, especially given the fact that those countries enjoy a wealth of natural resources.

In conclusion, I once again thank Mr. Fall and the UNOCA team for their outstanding efforts.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): Let me too thank Special Representative Fall and Mr. Lezhnev for their very comprehensive and interesting briefings.

As the electoral process remains an important factor for stability in Central Africa, we commend the further positive developments towards the consolidation of democratic governance. Special Representative Fall described some achievements made in the region during the reporting period.

Poland praises the crucial work carried out by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in terms of good offices, mediation and preventive diplomacy. Bearing in mind the upcoming elections in several countries of the region, we expect that the Governments of those States will make every effort to establish the necessary conditions leading to timely, inclusive, credible and peaceful electoral processes and will ensure the meaningful participation of women and young people. We encourage the authorities of the countries of the region to continue building trust among all stakeholders as a precondition for the establishment of a stable and constructive political environment.

Poland the welcomes the recent decision of the Cameroonian authorities to convene a national dialogue as a significant step towards addressing the difficult situation in the country. At the same time, we are deeply worried about the continued reports of serious human rights violations and abuses attributed to all sides of the conflict. Let me stress that all those responsible for these serious violations and abuses of human rights should be investigated and held accountable.

Poland appreciates all the efforts the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cameroon, including its recent technical assessment mission. In the light of reports from that visit, we call on all parties on the ground to immediately stop the violence and work together in good faith, including for a process of open and inclusive dialogue to reduce tensions and devise a long-term political agreement.

The security situation in the region remains fragile. Recent developments in the northern and eastern parts of

Chad are of increasing concern. We are also worried that Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army continue to provoke serious insecurity across significant parts of the region. This shows that multilateral initiatives to combat those organizations require the continued support of the international community.

While appreciating the United Nations and European Union efforts made so far, Poland recognizes the key role of regional partners in bringing about reconciliation and building dialogue in Central Africa. We welcome the recent consensus on the plan for the institutional reform of the Economic Community of Central African States, and we look forward to its swift adoption.

Poland recognizes the leading role of UNOCA in enhancing the coordination and coherence of measures taken, as well as in fostering synergies among all United Nations presences in Central Africa. I would therefore like to express our full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fall, and his entire team.

Mr. Velásquez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and the comprehensive briefings by the briefers joining us today.

Peru recognizes and supports the important work that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) has been doing in Central Africa. We specifically welcome its significant contributions to the resumption of the joint commission between the Central African Republic and the Congo, the implementation of the national dialogue processes by the Governments of Cameroon and the Congo, and the relaunch of the national framework for political dialogue in Chad.

Notwithstanding, we note with concern the persistence of a dynamic of insecurity and instability in the area, including incidents of intercommunal violence, the exacerbation of political tensions and repression, extremism, the activities of armed groups, the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and human rights violations, especially, as was noted earlier, in the north-western part of Cameroon.

We believe that the urgency of attending to those problems requires regional organizations to play a constructive and complementary role. We encourage the timely strengthening of the cooperation that UNOCA enjoys with the United Nations Office for West Africa

and the Sahel, given the positive impact it can have on combating terrorist organizations such as the Boko Haram and armed groups like the Lord's Resistance Army. We also underscore the synergies that UNOCA can develop with the Economic Community of Central African States in such areas as institutional reform and combating the illicit trafficking in natural resources by armed groups.

We are deeply concerned about the continuing violations of human rights committed not only by armed groups, but also by security forces. We therefore call on the Governments of the subregion to devote their efforts and resources to the fight against impunity through meaningful reforms of their justice systems and the establishment of effective accountability mechanisms. To that end, cooperation with organizations specializing in the promotion of and respect for human rights is very welcome.

We also stress the importance of the connections that UNOCA can and must develop with civil society in areas such as gender equity, human rights and the supervision of electoral processes, as well as in encouraging the private sector to contribute to the efforts to build a stable, peaceful and prosperous subregion.

In conclusion, I reaffirm Peru's full support for the work of UNOCA and stress the need for it to be supported by the international community, in particular those countries and regional bodies with special influence on the region.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to thank the briefers, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall and Mr. Lezhnev, for their comprehensive briefings and recommendations.

We have noted from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/913) that the situation in Central Africa remains volatile and highly charged by political and security challenges. Nevertheless, we should not overlook the positive progress that has been made in the region since the beginning of the year, including the peaceful transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Undoubtedly, the region is currently under close observation by the international community. We have heard on so many occasions that multilateral and bilateral efforts to support the region are being prepared and delivered. We need to collectively seize

that momentum in order to assist countries of the region in their efforts to address various challenges to ensure a better future for the region. We also welcome the strategic review of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), which provides a clear picture on how it can effectively support regional efforts in Central Africa.

Allow me to focus my comments on the following points.

First, the root causes of conflict should be comprehensively addressed. We share the view of the Secretary-General that an inclusive, genuine and credible electoral process remains the key factor for the region. The Governments of the region must regain the trust of their peoples, especially after years of conflict and political distrust. They must also earn one another's trust. Good neighbours create good communities. The international community should work together with the Governments concerned to provide capacity in enabling trust. In short, trust is important and partnership is key.

Peace and stability remain fragile. The region is plagued by threats from armed groups, the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources, and communicable diseases. The violence committed by the Lord's Resistance Army and Boko Haram has significantly affected the stability of the region. This must stop.

Secondly, partnership between regional and subregional organizations, in collaboration with the United Nations, is needed. Indonesia adheres to the principle that neighbours know best. As natural first responders, regional and subregional organizations play a very important role in enabling the region to solve this crisis. We recognize the important work done by the African Union and other subregional organizations for the region.

We would also like to underline the importance of a clear division of labour between UNOCA and other United Nations entities. To that end, we encourage stronger UNOCA support for strengthening the capacity of the Economic Community of Central African States. Regional challenges persist. It is our obligation, in accordance with our mandate as the Security Council, to continue providing support to countries of the region.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall and Mr. Lezhnev for their briefings.

While the overall situation in the countries of Central Africa has been stable of late and positive progress has been made, challenges remain. The activities of Boko Haram, the Lord's Resistance Army and other armed groups and terrorist organizations still pose serious threats to the countries of the region, especially the Lake Chad basin. Moreover, the humanitarian situation does not allow for optimism. Underdevelopment, extreme poverty and other deep-seated factors perpetuate a range of serious challenges, including terrorism and intercommunal conflicts.

China commends the collective efforts of the countries of Central Africa to tackle these challenges. We welcome the extraordinary summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), to be held later this year, and support the Summit's planned approval of ECCAS reform measures. China also commends Special Representative Fall and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) for their active work and good offices mediation and conflict prevention in their endeavours to resolve issues in the region.

China wishes to stress the following three points.

First, it is critical to highlight the importance of the development perspective. A deep knowledge of how development impacts peace and stability and relates to specific issues provides the basis for an in-depth analysis of regional issues. Most of the challenges in Central Africa are, in essence, related to insufficient, unbalanced and non-inclusive development. The countries of the region should be more conscious of the centrality of development so as to resolve the root causes of the said issues. The international community should support the countries of the region in their development endeavours and promote cooperation in economic and social sectors. UNOCA should strengthen its development perspective and integrate it into conflict prevention efforts.

Secondly, we need to respect host-country ownership. The mediation and good offices of the international community and the United Nations should be based on the consent of the host countries. The situation in some countries poses no threat to international peace and security, and those countries want no United Nations intervention. The United Nations and the Security Council should fully respect their positions. China supports regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and ECCAS,

in their efforts to solve African issues in the African way, through unity and self-empowerment.

Thirdly, United Nations agencies in the region and subregional organizations should strengthen coordination. The United Nations has an extensive presence in Central Africa, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi. All parties should enhance communication and avoid stepping on each other's toes. China appreciates the efforts of countries of the region to address those challenges. UNOCA can strengthen communication and coordination with ECCAS, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the secretariat of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram in order to facilitate and complement each other's work.

China stands ready to continue to work more closely with countries in Central Africa, continue to support the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNOCA, and play a constructive role in helping those countries maintain security and stability, achieve greater economic development and improve the humanitarian situation.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): At the outset, let me too thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Mr. Lezhnev for their insightful and comprehensive briefings and recommendations.

I would like to start by commending the important work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in the Central African region. UNOCA plays a crucial role in stabilizing the region and is essential to preventing any further escalation. We would also like to expressly welcome the good offices role that the Special Representative can play.

We also would like to express our concern about the precarious situation in the region, which continues to be beset by challenges, such as the effects of climate change on security and stability. I think it is worth noting, in this context, how many times the Special Representative referred to this nexus in his briefing and in how many different circumstances he considered this nexus to be relevant. We agree with his assessment.

Of course, there are also other challenges, such as cross-border terrorism, particularly by the Lord's Resistance Army and Boko Haram, conflicts between farmers and herders, and small arms proliferation. Those threats destabilize the region, exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and undermine chances for political dialogue.

We would like to underline that many of the issues at hand do not stop at national borders and have to be tackled jointly, which is why one of UNOCA's key tasks should be to promote regional integration through organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). We would like to encourage UNOCA's close cooperation and coordination with other actors in the region, including other United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel or country offices, as well as more specialized bodies, including United Nations counter-terrorism bodies, like the Office of Counter-Terrorism or the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

It is also important for UNOCA to work on addressing the effects of climate change in order to ensure stability and security in the region. At the same time, we believe that it should strengthen its focus on the women and peace and security agenda and support more inclusive political processes. The engagement of civil society is also critical. In addition, strategic cooperation with regional groups, especially ECCAS, should be strengthened. Together with UNOCA and the African Union, ECCAS can play an important role in preventive diplomacy.

We would like to express particular concern about the deteriorating situation in Cameroon and its negative impact on the entire Central African region. We very much regret that the situation has not improved following the grand national dialogue and that violence, unfortunately, continues on both sides. We deplore the incident on 1 December of secessionists targeting a passenger aircraft with gunfire, which constitutes unacceptable violence against civilians. We urge the Government of Cameroon to swiftly publish and implement the recommendations of the grand national dialogue. Special status for Anglophone regions, for example, is a promising approach, but needs to be further substantiated.

We also add that we very much appreciate Switzerland's mediation efforts and would also welcome

regional and wider African engagement. Before concluding, I would like to reiterate that we strongly believe that we should keep an eye on the situation in Cameroon and consider further how UNOCA can contribute to resolving the conflict.

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

I would like to join other colleagues in thanking Special Representative Fall for his briefing today. We commend his efforts to bring prosperity and security to Central Africa, and the United States is grateful for his work in Cameroon to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions. I would also like to thank Mr. Lezhnev for his candid assessment and concrete recommendations to address the challenges in the region.

As the Council seeks to highlight the most pressing concerns to international peace and security, we must clearly state that we are increasingly concerned by rapidly worsening humanitarian and human rights situations in Cameroon. Credible reports detail persistent human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary and unlawful detention and torture, all conducted with impunity.

What started as a political and human rights crisis in the region has become a humanitarian situation requiring immediate attention. Parties to the conflict limit humanitarian access, and a worsening security situation has reportedly left as much as 65 per cent of the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon out of bounds to aid workers. Since 2016, when the protests in Cameroon started, nearly 3,000 people have died as a result of the ensuing violence, including 300 defence and security personnel.

The conflict has created more than 500,000 internally displaced persons and nearly 50,000 refugees. On 5 November, UNICEF reported that around 1.9 million people, most of them children, were estimated to need assistance. This is an increase of 80 per cent compared to last year and an almost 15-fold increase since 2017. We call on separatist groups and the Government of Cameroon to ensure humanitarian access to these areas to deliver life-saving assistance to those who now find themselves in need. We express our condolences to the family of a local aid worker, who was kidnapped and executed by unknown armed men on 30 November during the official conduct of his

duties. We also call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, as well as the protections they provide.

The situation in Cameroon warrants immediate action from all parties, including the African Union and regional Heads of State. As this month is about doing and not just talking, I want to briefly list a few helpful steps that could be taken to restore a measure of stability.

We urge the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and our partners to take a more assertive role in resolving Cameroon's conflict and to continue to urge both the Government of Cameroon and separatist groups to enter into open-ended dialogue without preconditions, relinquishing their focus on a military solution. We also fully support the Swiss-led mediation process between the Government of Cameroon and the separatists, and we urge both sides to take concrete actions to move the initiative forward.

The United States also appreciates the work done by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall to build regional support for the full implementation of the 6 February Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The United States supports the agreement and believes it to be the best pathway to lasting peace, security and stability in the Central African Republic. In a spirit of reconciliation, we urge UNOCA to continue working in coordination with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the African Union and neighbouring countries to rally regional political support for the timely and effective implementation of this agreement.

We would like to again thank Special Representative Fall for all the hard work he does in UNOCA. Over the coming year, we look forward to supporting his promotion of peaceful electoral processes, as well as his cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, so as to bring peace and prosperity to Central Africa.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

As there are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers, I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.