



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

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New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Kamboj (India)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
Kenya	Mr. Olanda
Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Shaheen
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Jacobs
United States of America	Ms. Saha

Agenda

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2022/896)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 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/2022/896)

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. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa; and His Excellency Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/896, 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. Abarry.

Mr. Abarry (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you warmly, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and wish you every success in your work.

The presentation of the twenty-third report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) (S/2022/896) gives me the pleasant opportunity to address Council members, with emotion, as, from 2020 to 2021, I was the Permanent Representative of the Niger and I worked alongside some current Council members in search of viable solutions to the major challenges threatening peace and security in the world. I stand before members today in a different capacity, that of Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOCA, as a continuation of that commitment.

Exactly one year ago, I presided over the Security Council (see S/PV.8933), and in that meeting my predecessor, Ambassador François Louncény Fall, conducted the same exercise that I am undertaking today. I would like to pay tribute to Ambassador Fall for his excellent work as Head of UNOCA and thank him for his wise counsel, which enabled me to begin my term under good auspices.

Since I took office in Libreville at the beginning of September, I have had the unique opportunity to see what I would call the two faces of Central Africa: a land of great challenges, but also of great opportunities, particularly in terms of economic and social development and the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law.

With regard to democracy and the rule of law, a review of recent electoral processes in Central Africa shows significant progress despite major challenges. The change in Government in Sao Tome and Principe and the results of the elections in Angola, although close, are clear indications that elections are far from being a mere formality in Central Africa. We should also welcome the holding of peaceful elections in the Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea.

A positive trend that I have seen since I took office is the increased participation and representation of women in political institutions and processes, as a result of the elections I mentioned previously, among other things. Therefore, thanks to the incentive measures taken in Angola and Sao Tome and Principe, the elections in those countries have resulted in a greater proportion of women in parliamentary assemblies and in Government. The election of women to head the National Assemblies of those two countries, for the first time in their history, and the election of a woman, Ms. Esperança da Costa, as Vice-President of Angola, are a new source of pride for the subregion, where Rwanda is already a global model and where other countries, notably Gabon, the UNOCA host country, have made significant efforts in recent years to promote the participation and representation of women.

During the period covered by this report, Central Africa's commitment to the environment and the fight against climate change and its effects, including its effects on peace and security, has continued and been strengthened. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and some of its member States were particularly active during the

twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was recently held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, after also hosting preparatory meetings for that important conference.

I would like to stress that this commitment is far from being simple posturing in the subregion.

First of all, Central Africa is home to the Congo basin, one of the two green lungs of our planet. However, despite the goodwill shown by the States concerned, I am afraid that this global ecological heritage can be preserved only if the States of that geographical area cooperate with each other and receive adequate support from their partners.

Secondly, I recall that Central Africa is suffering the full effects of climate change, particularly with the multiplication of extreme climatic events. Moreover, competition for access to natural resources, such as water, land and pastures, continues to be one of the causes of intercommunal violence, which is constantly increasing in number and intensity in some countries in the region and is being used by certain armed groups.

In addition to climate and environmental threats, Central Africa faces other challenges related to governance, human rights and the security situation. I would like to refer to a few of them.

With respect to governance and human rights, it is clear that, despite the organization of regular elections, which we welcome, the credibility of those elections is often questioned by certain actors who, at the same time, challenge the legitimacy of the elected leaders. Most of the time, that challenge is expressed peacefully. In other cases, however, that challenge is expressed through violence, such as the recent events in Chad and Sao Tome and Principe. While condemning all attempts to seize power by force and attacks on public order, we must continue to call on the States of Central Africa to further open up political and civic space to promote a peaceful and orderly expression of opinions and to take measures to strengthen the inclusivity, diversity and credibility of political processes. That is the only way to ensure the legitimacy of the institutions resulting from the elections. We also urge State authorities to ensure full respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and to avoid any disproportionate use of force in maintaining public order.

In terms of security, Central Africa continues to harbour armed groups and terrorist groups, whose harmful actions have dire consequences, mainly for the civilian population, but also for economic resources. Thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes, sometimes even their countries of origin, and are in need of humanitarian assistance.

I would like to mention the situation in the Lake Chad basin, where violent extremist groups continue to have significant capacity to cause harm, despite their weakening. Military pressure must be maintained against these groups in a coordinated manner, within the framework of the joint multinational force. To this end, I welcome Chad's announced strengthening of its military presence in the Lake Chad basin.

I call on partners to provide adequate support for ongoing military efforts, but also for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region, which should address the root causes of this crisis. I would like to commend the good cooperation between UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, as well as the actions of the Peacebuilding Commission in favour of a sustainable return to peace in this area.

The situation in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon continues to threaten the stability of this country, which is a pillar of economic integration in Central Africa. Attacks on civilian targets, including schools, and the spread of violence to other parts of Cameroon are unacceptable and must stop immediately. I commend the Cameroonian authorities for their commitment to resolving this crisis peacefully through discussions with the armed groups and the diaspora.

During the reporting period, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea continued to show significant progress. We need to maintain this momentum by building national capacity and strengthening regional coordination, including within the framework of the Yaoundé Architecture. I welcome the efforts of ECCAS to adopt regional strategies on maritime governance, maritime security and the blue economy, which will culminate in the first maritime summit of the subregion to be held in January 2023 in Kinshasa.

Central Africa is clearly facing many challenges, but this subregion also has, as I said at the beginning of my briefing, many assets that, if properly exploited, could enable it to meet these challenges successfully.

These assets are first and foremost Central Africa's abundant resources, including its human resources and specifically its dynamic youth, whose average age is just over 17. Well-trained, supported, motivated and adequately involved in the management of public affairs, these young people are precious human capital that could enable us to rapidly achieve the objectives of sustainable development. However, we must also remain aware that, if these young people are poorly trained or victimized by socioeconomic exclusion, they could be attracted to terrorist and criminal groups, thus becoming a factor of instability.

Central Africa's strengths also lie in the role and capacity of subregional organizations to promote a common vision on key issues, without which no progress is possible. I have therefore observed since I took office that ECCAS is showing a clear desire to play its full role as the Central African pillar of the African Peace and Security Architecture. Its will to do so has taken the form of rapid actions to support the political transition in Chad and preserve stability and democratic gains in Sao Tome and Principe. In both cases, ECCAS has expressed its willingness to work closely with the United Nations, as evidenced by the joint visit I made with the President of the ECCAS Commission, Ambassador Gilberto da Piedade Verissimo, to Sao Tome following the serious events that occurred in that country. I take this opportunity to welcome the participation of Ambassador Da Piedade Verissimo in today's meeting.

For greater efficiency, the United Nations entities in Central Africa have initiated a tradition of regular consultations. In this context, I am pleased to report that my colleagues from the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and I have just held a coordination meeting from 29 November to 1 December in Luanda, Angola, during which we identified ways and means of "delivering as one" on meeting the challenges of peace, security and governance facing the region. I am also pleased with the good collaboration we are seeing with other United Nations presences in the region, including the resident coordinators and the country teams, which are important partners in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the year 2023 will be marked by important political processes in some Central African countries. Bearing in mind

that the last elections in these countries were marked by violence, international support for national and regional efforts may be needed to ensure peaceful electoral processes. I would like to reiterate UNOCA's commitment, within the framework of its mandate, to playing a full role in this regard, working in coordination with other relevant United Nations entities and in support of States and such regional organizations as ECCAS. To this end, increased support from the Security Council at the political level will be essential.

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

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

Mr. Da Piedade Verissimo (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), on whose behalf I am addressing the Security Council and the entire diplomatic community in New York at today's open debate, to be invited to give an overview of the political and security situation in the Central African region, following my colleague and brother, Ambassador Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). Although he has already largely presented the contours and challenges of the current situation in the region, I would like to focus my briefing on the cases of the Republic of Chad and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and on the collaboration between our regional organization, ECCAS, and UNOCA, in the area of promoting peace and security in Central Africa.

Before going any further, allow me to take this opportunity to express my warm congratulations to the President of the Security Council for her country's presidency of the Council in the month of December 2022, and for the way in which she is conducting the Council's work, which, I cannot help but say here, is commensurate with the role that India plays on the international scene.

With regard to the political situation in the region, it is worth recalling the recent holding of elections at several levels in the Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Angola, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. The Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States deployed international electoral observation missions in each of these countries to monitor their electoral processes and ensure that

they complied with international, continental and subregional electoral standards.

In the Republic of Chad, ECCAS closely followed the proceedings of the Sovereign Inclusive National Dialogue held in N'Djamena between August and October. It took note of the extension of the transition period, as decided by the participants in the dialogue. ECCAS therefore maintained its commitment to supporting the ongoing transition process as the only way to prevent the risk of instability in the country, which would have the immediate effect of destabilizing the Sahel and Central African regions.

However, ECCAS is continuing consultations with the Chadian authorities and all the sociopolitical actors in the country, particularly those who did not take part in the dialogue, with a view to achieving greater inclusion of all the stakeholders in the transition process. In that context, the extraordinary meeting of the ECCAS Conference of Heads of State and Government, held in Kinshasa on 25 October, appointed His Excellency Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, as facilitator for reconciliation among the stakeholders in the Chadian process.

With regard to the unfortunate events of 20 October, which resulted in serious violence, with the death of men in four towns in the country, including the capital, N'Djamena, the same meeting of 25 October condemned in the strongest terms any recourse to violence for political ends. ECCAS is currently working on setting up an international fact-finding mission, to which it has invited the United Nations, the African Union, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. The mission has received the positive approval of the Chadian authorities and will shortly visit the four towns in the country where the violence took place in order to establish the facts, determine responsibilities and propose ways and means of ensuring justice for the victims.

After the deterioration of the security situation in Chad, particularly in terms of human security following the events of 20 October, the Central African region was once again caught by surprise with the emergence of a political and security crisis in Sao Tome and Principe, a member State of our Community, where it was far from expected, since the transfer of power regularly took place after elections, whose results were ultimately accepted by all the political actors.

It will be recalled that, after the presidential and legislative elections of 2021 and 2022, all of which were monitored by ECCAS, political tensions arose, but they were rapidly overcome. There had been an easing of tensions and a calming of the political situation in Sao Tome and Principe to the extent that no one could have imagined any violent action less than a month after the inauguration of the new Government. However, that is what happened in the early hours of 25 November with the attack on a military barracks for purposes that have not yet been clearly established. In addition to the military response, which quickly brought the situation under control, it is worth noting that a number of civilians were arrested, including the former Speaker of Parliament, a Central Bank official and a former soldier from the ex-*Buffalo Battalion* of the former South African Defence Forces, who were identified as the masterminds of the attack, and an investigation by the judiciary was launched.

However, it should be pointed out that, after initially announcing the arrest and detention of the assailants and their accomplices, the Sao Tome and Principe national and international communities were surprised and deeply shocked by the broadcasting of video images and photographs showing acts of torture and unacceptable cruelty towards the unarmed detainees, whose hands were tied from behind and bloodied, resulting in the death of men in the military barracks. We now know that the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Sao Tome and Principe has since resigned from his position after apologizing to the people of Sao Tome and Principe.

The day after 25 November, that is, from 26 to 27 November, I went with my colleague Ambassador Abdou A Barry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNOCA, to Sao Tome and Principe. We met with the highest authorities, in particular the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Interior, who asked us to send a mission to shed light on the two events, namely, the attack on the military camp and the human rights violations. We also met with the Chief of the General Staff, accompanied by his deputy and the Inspector General of the Armed Forces, as well as with the BASTA political party of former Speaker of Parliament Delfim Neves. A joint communiqué on the visit was issued on 27 November, and on 29 November, an international fact-finding mission from ECCAS, comprising five

members and led by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, with the support of the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Sao Tome and Principe, began its work.

The mission has so far enjoyed the cooperation of the civilian and military authorities of Sao Tome and Principe and the significant support of the United Nations. It has already met with a number of actors and will deliver its report at the end of its mission before the end of this month. The report of the fact-finding mission will be submitted, on the one hand, to the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister of Sao Tome and Principe and, on the other hand, to the Chair of the ECCAS Conference of Heads of State and Government. It is expected to include recommendations that ECCAS will ultimately help Sao Tome and Principe to implement with the support of the United Nations and other actors of the international community.

Still on the security front, the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo remains worrisome. The activity of terrorist movements and armed groups in South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri continues to undermine the initiatives undertaken by the Congolese authorities, including the declaration of a state of siege in the latter two provinces more than a year ago. The persistent activity of armed groups and terrorist movements, particularly the *Mouvement du 23 mars*, is at the heart of the diplomatic tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, with each country accusing the other of supporting the groups and movements. In its application of the principle of complementarity, ECCAS fully supports the Luanda and Nairobi processes set up by the African Union and the East African Community with a view to resolving the regional and national dimensions of the security crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. To that end, ECCAS is on the one hand exploring ways to support the regional force currently deployed in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and on the other serving as an observer and a focal point for the two processes, which are currently running in parallel.

The issue of insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be adequately analysed without discussing the role of the United Nations force that has been deployed there for two decades and is commonly referred to by its acronym, MONUSCO—the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is no

doubt that the United Nations peacekeeping efforts over the past 22 years have greatly contributed to restoring peace and stability in several parts of the country. However, it is also true that the persistence and even the exacerbation of insecurity in certain areas of North Kivu and Ituri provinces in recent years have contributed to the deterioration of relations between the Mission, on the one hand, and the Congolese authorities and people on the other.

As subregional organizations are now working on deploying a regional force in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is perhaps time that the United Nations gave careful thought to the effectiveness of its peacekeeping missions in present-day hotspots like those in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. That also applies to the situation in the neighbouring country of the Central African Republic, where the forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) are facing similar challenges. ECCAS, like other African subregional organizations, I hope, is ready to contribute to those thoughts. But as we wait for them to produce results, it is vital for MONUSCO work quickly on the modalities of its coordination with the regional forces of the East African Community to ensure that their combined efforts lead to a restoration of lasting peace in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the quality of our cooperation with UNOCA, which has continued to improve since its establishment in 2011. Prior to the establishment of the ECCAS Commission, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC) was one of the main frameworks for that cooperation, and it will remain so. But it can also be said that beyond UNSAC, such cooperation has mainly taken the form of joint actions in conflict prevention through good offices, awareness-raising, training to combat hate speech, capacity-building for the benefit of women and young people, based on resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015), civil society and support for the implementation of reform. Those actions have led, for example, to the establishment of the Network of Women Mediators of Central Africa and the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Peace, Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Central Africa, and will lead to support for developing legal instruments to establish new community institutions.

Regular consultations on subjects of common interest between the leaders of both organizations will continue to be an important part of the cooperation between ECCAS and UNOCA. The recent experience in Sao Tome and Principe, which undoubtedly helped save lives, demonstrates their effectiveness and relevance. It should also be noted that besides its collaboration with UNOCA — but always with its support — ECCAS works with other United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in various areas related to human security that if neglected could lead to or exacerbate conflicts.

The challenges created by the situations in the Central African Republic, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and Sao Tome and Principe — and not forgetting Cameroon — provide us with an opportunity to rethink, reimagine, and continually reinvent our cooperative relationships in the work of promoting sustainable peace and security in Central Africa. I hope that 2023 will give us an opportunity to commit to that path and to advance the peace and security agenda in those countries and situations. I would be remiss if I concluded without reiterating the gratitude of the ECCAS to the Security Council for its continued efforts to promote peace on the African continent in general and in Central Africa in particular.

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

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

Ms. Jacobs (United Kingdom): I thank the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for their briefings. We look forward to working with Mr. Abarry in his new role and commend the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to support and promote peace, stability and security in Central Africa. I would like to make four points today.

First, as we consider opportunities, elections in the subregion are intrinsic to building and sustaining peace, as we have seen in Sao Tome and Principe and

Angola. It is critical to ensure that political processes remain inclusive, peaceful and credible. UNOCA and its partners have an important role to play in supporting those processes, but it is up to Member States to draw on that support and deliver democratic elections and inclusive transitional processes.

Secondly, the United Kingdom reiterates its support for Chad's transition to civilian and constitutional rule. However, we remain concerned about the fact that the transition, as currently envisaged, contravenes the conditions set out in the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué of 14 May 2021 that President Déby Itno agreed to uphold. We were saddened to see the eruption of violence in October and welcome the launch of an inquiry, as well as the engagement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with heads of missions in N'Djamena on that important issue. We urge UNOCA, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Chadian Government to ensure that the investigation is credible, transparent and independent. We also call on the Government to ensure due legal process for the remaining individuals currently detained, including minors.

Thirdly, the ongoing crises in Cameroon and the dire humanitarian situation, which require urgent attention, are a continuing challenge for the subregion. The United Kingdom calls on all the parties to engage in inclusive dialogue and enable safe access to schools and humanitarian assistance.

Finally, I want to reiterate our concern about the ongoing violence in the Central African Republic and the distressing toll it is taking on the population. It is compounding an already acute humanitarian situation and risks undermining progress on reconciliation. The targeting of civilians by national forces and the Russian Wagner Group mercenaries, as well as by armed groups, continues to play a destabilizing role in the country. We call on the Government of the Central African Republic to conduct full and timely investigations into allegations of human rights violations and abuses to ensure that all the perpetrators are held to account.

Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Permanent Representatives of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (A3).

We warmly congratulate Ambassador Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-

General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). It is a real pleasure to see that he remains committed to the service of international peace and security. We wish him every success in his new position and assure him of our full support in the implementation of his mandate, which we feel sure will contribute to peace and security in the Central African subregion. We also thank the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, for his insightful briefing. Our statement today will focus on three key issues.

First, on the political front, the A3 welcomed the peaceful conduct of the various elections held recently, in a demonstration of the willingness of the States of the region to strengthen and preserve their democratic gains. We encourage them to continue their efforts in that direction. We welcome the active participation of women and youth in political processes, in particular in Angola, which elected its first female President of the National Assembly. We also note the signing of the Doha Peace Agreement and the holding of an inclusive and sovereign national dialogue launched in N'Djamena, which are significant developments in the work of ensuring a return to constitutional order.

The A3 deplors the incidents that occurred in Chad on 20 October following demonstrations and that resulted in the death of several civilians, and we urge the Chadian authorities to expedite investigations into those events. We condemn the attempted coup d'état on the night of 25 November in Sao Tome and Principe, which we believe is likely to weaken the democratic gains in that country. The international community should support Sao Tome and Principe in its quest for economic development through democracy and good governance and the establishment of strong institutions. Elsewhere, we were pleased to note the positive actions taken in Cameroon, notably the organization of an inclusive dialogue aimed at resolving the security crisis in the north-west and south-west of the country.

On the security front, several countries in the region remain plagued by crises and tensions that are complex and multidimensional. They include terrorism and violent extremism, cross-border crime, the persistence of armed groups, maritime insecurity, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and intercommunal clashes exacerbated by the increasing effects of climate change. We are deeply concerned about the continuing terrorist attacks by Boko Haram

and splinter groups in the Lake Chad basin, which are causing widespread casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure in Cameroon and Chad. Armed groups have also intensified their attacks in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in similar human suffering. The A3 firmly condemns such destructive activities and reiterates its call to the States of the region and the international community to make concerted, sustained efforts to address the root causes of terrorism in the region.

The persistence of such armed groups is an ongoing threat to peace and security in Central Africa. For decades, negative forces have carried out massacres and abuses of civilians, along with the destruction and looting of property, with total impunity. They often self-finance through their illicit exploitation of natural resources, and their actions are having a direct impact on the future of millions, especially young people and women. The A3 firmly condemns them and demands that they immediately and unconditionally join disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and ongoing political consultations. The A3 welcomes the commitment of the regional economic communities that are working to put an end to the rampant insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Those initiatives must be supported by the United Nations.

We welcome the ongoing deployment of the East African Community regional force and hope it will help to resolve the deadly crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is crucial that the international community provide effective support to those subregional efforts. The A3 also underscores the importance of boosting cooperation, first among Central African States through ECCAS and its counterpart, the Economic Community of West African States, and secondly between the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and UNOCA. Such synergy is key to improving the coordination of economic, security and political actions in order to meet the real needs of populations and bring about lasting peace in those subregions.

On the humanitarian front, the number of refugees and displaced persons in the region continues to grow to record levels. In the Lake Chad basin, 9.7 million people will require humanitarian assistance. The deteriorating humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change in Central Africa,

is extremely worrying. Those who voice scepticism about the obvious and direct linkage between climate change and conflicts in Central Africa demonstrate only that they are ignoring the realities of what is going on in the region, in particular around Lake Chad and the Great Lakes. Recurring episodes of flooding and drought are forcing populations to migrate and leading to intercommunal clashes. Today many countries and communities in Central Africa are facing a problem with two sides — climate change and violent conflicts — with a real risk that the impact of the climatic changes will exacerbate the likelihood of violence. There is therefore an urgent need to implement prevention, mitigation and management mechanisms focused on the security risks caused by the effects of climate change by strengthening the adaptive capacities of fragile States and those emerging from conflict. Without that, communities will be even poorer and less resilient.

While emphasizing that the future of the planet depends heavily on the Congo Basin rainforest, we would like to remind the Council that Africa is the least-polluting continent in the world and the most vulnerable to natural disasters. We want to take this opportunity to remind the international community that it should keep its promises to finance adaptation and mitigation policies.

The A3 welcomes the continued efforts of humanitarian actors to provide assistance to the most vulnerable, at times putting their own lives at risk. We call for safe and unhindered humanitarian access in countries in conflict and echo the Secretary-General's call for international donors and partners to fund humanitarian response plans in the region. We support the efforts of UNOCA to systematically integrate the dimensions of climate change and natural resource management into conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and development processes.

In conclusion, the A3 reaffirms respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the countries of Central Africa. We also reiterate our full support for Mr. Abdou Abarry and his team in their tireless efforts on the ground. The A3 hopes that the Council will continue to support UNOCA's work by adopting the presidential statement that has been under consideration by Council members for several months now.

Ms. Shaheen (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abdou Abarry, for his first

briefing of the Council since his assumption of his new post. I also thank the Chairperson of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, for his valuable briefing.

Central Africa continues to grapple with many challenges that require greater efforts to address them and their root causes, foremost among them the insecurity created by transnational organized crime and the spread of extremism and terrorism, in addition to the deteriorating humanitarian situation exacerbated by climate change and its repercussions. We need to devise a comprehensive approach to respond to that complex situation, aimed at enhancing cooperation and coordination at all levels, especially between neighbouring countries and between them and regional and subregional bodies. Those stakeholders play an important role in finding practical and effective solutions because they have the right expertise and tools.

Joint action is needed to address the complex security challenges in the region. While multilateral efforts have helped recently to reduce incidents of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, many other outstanding issues still require serious attention, including the continued threats posed by terrorist and armed groups to regional security and stability, as we have witnessed in the terrorist group Boko Haram's attacks in the Lake Chad basin and other regions. We believe that joint meetings of the two Special Envoys and the stakeholders concerned in the region, such as the one held in Nairobi in October to discuss the threats of terrorism and extremism in the Great Lakes region, are important examples of ways to promote cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations with the aim of supporting local efforts and building the capacities of States in the region. We look forward to the summit on maritime security to be held early next year, as the Special Representative mentioned.

In view of the political developments in the countries of the region, whether related to elections or political processes, we should not fail to emphasize the importance of enhancing the participation and empowerment of women and young people, given the vital role they play in building stable and prosperous societies. We underscore that achieving lasting stability in Central Africa requires a constant focus on preventive diplomacy and inclusive political dialogue in order to address conflicts peacefully and prevent their outbreak

in the first place, as well as to promote social cohesion in the region.

The humanitarian situation in the region requires just as much attention as other problems. We note that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is addressing a situation in which nearly 13 million people are in need of assistance, including more than 7.5 million who are internally displaced and need urgent humanitarian relief. More than half of them are in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo alone. Additionally, we note the ongoing humanitarian challenges in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. In that regard, we stress the need to provide humanitarian assistance and allow that assistance unhindered access to those in need, as well as to provide protection for the humanitarian workers.

We must also pay attention to the effects of climate change on the security and humanitarian situations in the region. Heavy rains, floods and desertification are affecting the population and damaging property as well as exacerbating tensions and conflicts. It is therefore imperative to foster communities' resilience to climate change, including in the Lake Chad and Congo basins. That requires investing more time and resources in order to develop effective and sustainable solutions to the challenges associated with climate change. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa to support African and other actors who continue to expand their knowledge of the links between climate change, peace and security in the region.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its support to the countries of the region and the international and regional organizations and other stakeholders that are working tirelessly to ensure peace, stability and prosperity for the peoples of Central Africa.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Abarry for his first briefing to the Council in his capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). He can count on Mexico's full support. We are also grateful for the information provided by Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo.

While we recognize that some progress has been made in Central Africa in terms of elections and maritime security, we are concerned about the fact that

a number of challenges related to regional governance, security and peacebuilding persist. Mexico believes that situations as complex as those faced by the Central African Republic and the escalation of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo require greater regional coordination. In that connection, we call for the greater involvement of regional organizations in support of the transition in Chad. The decision by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to appoint President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as transition facilitator is a positive sign. We believe that further delays in the Chadian transition process would set a dangerous political precedent for the entire region. Moreover, the speedy restoration of constitutional order in Chad is a prerequisite for its ability to confront the threat of terrorism and its economic challenges with the necessary legitimacy. We urge the transitional authorities to scrupulously respect their obligations under international human rights law.

With regard to Cameroon, we consider political mobilization in favour of national reconciliation to be critical. It is urgent to break the cycle of violence there, which is fuelled by inequality, poverty and discrimination. New foundations must be built to ensure the peaceful coexistence of the country's various communities. The risk that the violence in north-west and south-west Cameroon may affect its neighbours justifies greater regional involvement in facilitating dialogue between the parties. We also believe that the Cameroonian diaspora can play a key role in restoring peace to the country.

Mexico considers UNOCA's role to be fundamental in strengthening regional coordination in Central Africa and would like to highlight two issues in that regard. First, UNOCA should continue to contribute to the consolidation of the regional institutional architecture. Strengthening ECCAS's institutional reform process is key to that, as it will enable it to play a more active role in the resolution of crises within the region. Better use should be made of the regional legal framework to address transnational problems. The Kinshasa Convention, for example, could be used more effectively in combating the illicit flows of weapons that exacerbate conflicts throughout the region.

Secondly, the support provided by the international community and agencies to UNOCA can yield positive results only if the national political actors act responsibly in taking on their share of the work. We welcome the

international funding provided for projects related to democratic governance and the holding of free, fair and inclusive elections. But for those efforts to make a real difference, the national political actors must commit to respecting the rules of the democratic game and electoral outcomes. Otherwise political crises will continue to recur and their humanitarian and economic effects will prevent Central Africa from reaching its potential. In a context where humanitarian needs and global economic recovery efforts are placing new limits on the resources available for international cooperation, it is vital to do everything possible to maximize the impact of international assistance for the countries of Central Africa.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo for their briefings.

The countries of Central Africa have recently been taking active measures to maintain political stability and restore socioeconomic development, demonstrating enormous resilience and potential. At the same time, owing to the global economic downturn, geopolitical conflicts and food and energy crises, the region's political, economic and security situation has been marked by an increased risk of instability and uncertainty. The stability of the region is vital for the peace and development of the entire continent. The United Nations and the international community as a whole should devote more attention and assistance to the region, engage with countries there to understand their difficulties, challenges and real needs and help them build their capacities in governance, counter-terrorism, poverty reduction and sustainable development, with a view to achieving long-term peace and stability in the region. China would like to underscore three points in that regard.

First, we should respect the efforts of the countries in the region to handle their domestic issues independently. During the reporting period, Chad, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe made positive progress in their respective political processes, including the successful holding of important elections in some of those countries. We hope that all of the national actors in those countries will take the opportunity to further promote dialogue and unity and work together for reconstruction and stability. The international community should show genuine respect

for the sovereignty and ownership of the countries in the region, take full heed of and accommodate their concerns, provide constructive assistance and refrain from imposing solutions from outside.

China has been closely following the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and acknowledges the progress that the Government has made on various fronts, including in the 2023 electoral process and in promoting good governance, local development and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We support Cameroon's efforts to safeguard its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and we are confident that the Government and the people of Cameroon are capable of properly resolving the issues in the south-west and north-west regions of the country.

Secondly, we should support regional and subregional organizations in playing their unique roles. China welcomed the convening of the twenty-first summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), as well as ECCAS's continued efforts to promote regional integration. As is pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/896), the social and intercommunal tensions in some countries in the region are not likely to be resolved any time soon. Boko Haram and other terrorist groups are active in the region, piracy persists in the Gulf of Guinea and the region is also facing various non-traditional security challenges. We support the development of security mechanisms in the Central African region to enhance the subregion's capabilities in maintaining stability and combating terrorism and achieving collective security and common development. United Nations entities with a local presence and the wider international community should provide more support to regional and subregional organizations in training personnel, institution-building, logistical backstopping and resource management.

Thirdly, we should help the countries of the region improve their living standards and achieve socioeconomic development. Some countries in the region have recently seen sharp increases in the numbers of hungry people and refugees, and humanitarian needs are growing. The developed donor countries and international financial institutions should fulfil their aid commitments, provide adequate humanitarian financing and help the countries affected alleviate their financial distress and end humanitarian crises as soon as possible. The keys to helping

countries in the region develop are eradicating poverty, building infrastructure, improving education and health, increasing employment, facilitating trade and enhancing food security. China will continue to actively implement President Xi Jinping's Global Development Initiative and support Central African countries through various means, such as debt suspension and development assistance.

Since taking office, Special Representative Abarry has travelled extensively in the region, actively engaged with various stakeholders and made positive efforts to promote regional cooperation and address common challenges, all of which China appreciates. We hope that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa will continue to work within the scope of its mandate, maintain close communication and cooperation with the countries and entities of the region and play an even greater role in promoting the stability and development of the Central African region.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome Mr. Abdou Abarry to the Security Council in his new capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa. We thank both him and Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, for their detailed briefings.

Russia has consistently supported the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa as an important instrument of preventive diplomacy. We can see that the good offices of the Special Representative are sorely needed in the subregion. It is important to note that mediation efforts are being accompanied by direct engagement between the parties in problematic hotspots and coordination with the relevant regional mechanisms, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States. The Central African region is a crucial location in terms of countering the spread of terrorism throughout the continent. We attach particular importance to the regional efforts aimed at developing concerted approaches for countering that threat, and the work of the Multinational Joint Task Force is a good example of that. According to various reports, the terrorist activity of Boko Haram has somewhat diminished recently, but we still consider that group one of the main threats to peace and security in Central Africa. The region's porous borders enable fighters to move from one country to another, although that

depends on the overall situation and the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism measures taken by the authorities to combat them.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is another factor in the region's instability. We are seeing some positive momentum in that regard and hope that with the support of the global community, efforts across the region will provide a lasting solution to the problem of armed robbery at sea, in an area that is so economically so important to the region.

We have also noted the fact that a number of States in the subregion have held elections for officials at various levels in recent months. We are monitoring the developments in Cameroon. The problem of the Anglophone provinces dates back to the colonial period, and those long-standing disputes can only be settled through negotiations. All of the parties in Cameroon should show restraint and reject all forms of violence. We are also monitoring the situation in Chad, where the process of transitional State-building and the implementation of the recommendations of the inter-Chadian national dialogue are under way. We followed the reports of the clashes in October with concern.

We are also paying close attention to developments in the Central African Republic. Thanks to the support of their partners, including Russia, the Central African authorities managed to get through the most difficult phase in countering those who tried to launch an anti-constitutional military coup. In recent months, however, there have been recurring spikes of illegal armed-group activities in the north-western and north-eastern parts of the country, particularly on its borders with the Sudan and Chad. We will continue to assist Bangui in combating armed groups and in expanding the presence of the State throughout the country with a view to achieving a final settlement.

We are concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the subregion, where experts have recorded a large number of refugees, internally displaced persons and people in need of humanitarian assistance of one kind or another. It is clear that the Central African countries are facing complex challenges. However, we believe that it is the States of the region themselves that must play a key role in crisis prevention and conflict resolution, with the international community providing the necessary support.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his highly informative briefing. I congratulate Ambassador Abarry on his new functions and extend to him the full support of the Brazilian delegation. I also thank Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo for his comprehensive and detailed briefing.

I would like to highlight the successful completion of electoral processes in several countries in the region. In particular, I want to mention the elections held in the Republic of the Congo on 21 July, in Angola on 24 August, in Sao Tome and Principe on 24 September and in Equatorial Guinea on 20 November. Brazil is aware that opposition parties in some of those countries have raised concerns about voting procedures, including electoral calendars and voting lists. We call on the relevant national judicial authorities and political forces to address those questions in accordance with their constitutional and electoral rules. We remain encouraged by the fact that most of the elections were peaceful and orderly.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is another area where we can underscore positive results. It is above all an achievement of the States of the Gulf of Guinea, particularly as a result of their ongoing efforts in the context of the Yaoundé Architecture, which is just one example of a successful cooperation initiative that brings together regional and international organizations. In the context, I commend the continued cooperation of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa with the Economic Community of Central African States. Brazil is a member of the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, and we stand ready to continue supporting the countries of the region through cooperation and joint naval operations such as Operation Guinex, Obangame Express and Grand African NEMO.

While there are positive developments, many challenges remain for Central Africa. Long-running conflicts have been exacerbated by the hardships caused by such issues as the coronavirus disease pandemic, terrorism, humanitarian needs, food insecurity and a lack of financial support. The crisis in Cameroon, though it seldom makes international headlines, is particularly troubling. Brazil condemns in the strongest terms any attacks on schools or acts of violence against teachers and students. In Chad, while there has been some progress in the political transition, the violence reported on 20 October is very worrying. Partners

in the region and the international community must remain vigilant in order to prevent further instability. We extend our full support to the Economic Community of Central African States and its leader, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo, as a facilitator. In Sao Tome and Principe, the peaceful transfer of power in October 2021 and the orderly legislative and local elections in September were very positive steps, widely praised by international observers. In that overall positive context, the recent attack on the headquarters of the armed forces is a worrisome development. Brazil is attentively following the situation in that sister nation, with which we have close linguistic and historical ties.

There are important examples of the resilience of democratic institutions in Central Africa that demonstrate what can be achieved with the commitment of States and regional organizations. The Council must continue to support those efforts and remain actively engaged with the evolving scenarios in the region.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and thank him for his briefing. We congratulate him on taking up that important task. We also thank Mr. Veríssimo for his briefing. I will focus on four points.

First, the general trend in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon remains deeply concerning. Justice must be done to all the parties involved in attacks on civilians, school infrastructure and children. Furthermore, Boko Haram remains a persistent threat to civilians, who continue to be targeted by bloody attacks. To end its reign of terror, States of the region must intensify their cooperation for a strong and unified response. Operation Lake Sanity against Boko Haram represents an example of enhanced cooperation involving four States, which we encourage others to follow. In that vein, the spread of hate speech throughout the region is undermining regional stability. Albania welcomes the adoption in Kinshasa of a draft regional strategy and action plan for the prevention and fight against hate speech in Central Africa. We trust that the document will be swiftly signed by Heads of States and Governments in the region.

Secondly, reports of violations by security and defence forces and armed groups, including the Wagner Group, are worrying. Albania also takes note of the recommendations for institutional reforms and accountability mechanisms aimed at protecting victims and witnesses of human rights violations in Burundi,

as well as the launch of a mapping of human rights violations and the verification of illegal detentions in Chad.

Thirdly, with regard to the humanitarian situation, Albania is extremely concerned about the aggravation of human suffering as a direct consequence of the activities of armed groups, the effects of climate change and the increase in prices of food and fuel imports. Albania encourages all international partners to increase their support for the States affected.

Fourthly, with regard to electoral processes and governance challenges, while we welcome the successful completion of the elections in Angola, the Republic of the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe, we have taken note of the challenges in other countries that may further aggravate the political situation. The political transition in Chad is at a critical juncture. The signing of the Doha Peace Agreement and the inclusive Sovereign National Dialogue paved the way for the establishment of a Government of national unity. However, the tragic loss of so many lives during the protest makes it even clearer that what is needed is a restoration of constitutional order and the people's return to the ballot boxes. The establishment of democratically elected and inclusive Governments throughout the region, and increased institutional capacities, are vital preconditions for bringing peace to the region and tackling its imminent challenges.

Lastly, I would like to thank the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa for its support to the countries of the region and for promoting greater coordination with regional organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States, with the clear purpose of establishing lasting peace and security in the Central African region.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank the briefers for their insights. It is a pleasure to see Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry back in the Chamber in his new and important role.

Last week our Deputy Foreign Minister shared his deep concern about the worsening humanitarian and security situation in the east during his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The human rights situation in the provinces affected by conflict is also alarming. We are appalled by the killing of civilians, including children, in the massacre in Kishishe village last week. The violence

must end. Norway calls on all armed groups to lay down their weapons.

We are also worried by the situation in Cameroon, including the activities of Boko Haram. Of particular concern is the targeting of hospitals, health clinics, schools, teachers and pupils. We remind everyone that targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure is prohibited under international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes.

In Chad, we are carefully watching the treatment of protesters in the context of the national dialogue. To ensure an effective transition, male and female stakeholders must be included in relevant processes. We strongly commend efforts by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the African Union in supporting dialogues in member countries.

UNOCA also has a role to play in more cross-cutting thematic areas across the region. First, on climate and security, we commend UNOCA for charting the way. The report entitled "Sustaining peace in Central Africa through addressing the adverse impact of climate change on peace and security" succinctly presents the challenges the region is facing. In addition, the report's recommendations show some of the opportunities that could be seized if the climate challenge is addressed.

Secondly, on food security, which is another area that needs our attention, the recent joint update by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme clearly shows that, this year, acute food insecurity has become an increasingly important challenge in Central Africa. While we must wait for the global drivers of this situation to improve, the impacts of the worsening food crisis must be addressed now, which is why Norway has taken an active role in co-hosting a third Lake Chad conference in January. The conference will seek both to address the urgent humanitarian needs and to look at advancing our joint stabilization and development efforts. In addition, food security and humanitarian access must be central topics in dialogues with armed groups and other actors. Preventing people from gaining access to food can under no circumstances be allowed as a weapon of conflict.

Lastly, on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, where momentum is continuing to build, last week we saw and applauded the first ECCAS conference on this

topic, in Kinshasa, as well as the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea meeting in Abidjan. Our hope is that this momentum will continue to grow.

By preventing fires from breaking out in the first place, the roles UNOCA and other regional actors are playing are often undervalued. Too often these entities carry out important preventive work with only limited resources. We therefore call on all colleagues to continue their support for UNOCA. Norway will remain a reliable partner of UNOCA and special political missions in support of preventive diplomacy, including after our current term on the Security Council has concluded.

Mr. Gallagher (Ireland): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his briefing and join others in welcoming him back to the Security Council. It is a pleasure to see him in the Chamber today. I would also like to thank Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo for his briefing.

Ireland commends the extensive efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) aimed at improving regional cooperation, including with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and other regional organizations. Enhanced cooperation is essential to addressing the region's multidimensional challenges, including armed-group activities in the Lake Chad basin and cross-border threats to peace and security. Maritime insecurity, farmer-herder conflicts and the adverse impacts of climate change also affect security across the region.

One year ago, on behalf of a group of like-minded Council members, Ireland and the Niger introduced a draft thematic resolution on climate and security (S/2021/990). We regret that despite the overwhelming support of the Council and the broader United Nations membership, the text was not adopted (see S/PV.8926). Ireland continues to call on the Security Council to investigate and address the impacts of climate change on peace and security. We cannot continue to stand by while displacement and tensions increase, lives and livelihoods are lost and the opportunity to build sustained and sustainable peace is missed. In addition, international efforts are needed to encourage the sustainable utilization of natural resources. The preservation of the Congo basin and the promoting of traditional knowledge and local peace infrastructures

can help prevent and peacefully resolve conflicts and enhance local and regional peace consolidation.

We commend the work of UNOCA, ECCAS, the Climate Security Mechanism and other entities. Their efforts and the continued commitments of the countries of Central Africa can play a leading role in illustrating the value of climate action for peacebuilding. We know that Special Representative Abarry's personal understanding of and commitment to climate and security will see the issue of climate-related security risks continue being meaningfully integrated into the work of UNOCA.

Ongoing instability is creating a dire humanitarian situation in several Central African countries, with particular impacts on women and girls, who are facing higher rates of sexual and gender-based violence. Ireland condemns such acts. We urge all parties to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We call for perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights to be held accountable.

We welcome the ongoing efforts of UNOCA, ECCAS and Governments of the region to advance the youth, peace and security and the women, peace and security agendas. Promoting women and youth involvement in electoral, mediation and peacebuilding processes, as well as engaging with women-led and youth-led civil society, is vital for peace and security in Central Africa, as it is everywhere.

The socioeconomic situation is also disturbing, exacerbated as it is by Russia's war in Ukraine and the consequent global rise in food prices. The prevalence of food insecurity is cause for concern. We reiterate the need for cooperation and action to address this issue.

Ireland is pleased to note the improved maritime-security situation in the Gulf of Guinea and UNOCA's cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in this regard.

While we welcome the peaceful holding of elections in countries throughout the region, we are concerned by the challenges with respect to electoral governance. We reiterate the need for inclusive and transparent processes.

The situation in Chad is unsettling. We are dismayed by the recent violence in N'Djamena and call on the transition Government and the President of ECCAS to quickly resolve the tensions, peacefully revive the

political transition and ensure the holding of free and fair elections and the return of constitutional order.

Finally, UNOCA's efforts to address hate speech are vital. The adoption of a draft regional strategy and action plan for the prevention of and fight against hate speech in Central Africa earlier this year could make a significant contribution to conflict prevention efforts and regional stability.

Ms. Saha (United States of America): I thank both our briefers for their insightful comments. The United States welcomes Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry in his new role. His portfolio is vast and could not be more important.

Central Africa faces numerous challenges. In Chad, we are concerned about the results of the national dialogue, which disregarded the directives of the African Union Peace and Security Council, thereby undermining confidence in the country's transition. We continue to urge Chad to ensure the meaningful participation of the political opposition in drafting a new constitution and developing independent mechanisms to organize elections. We encourage the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to play a leadership role in supporting this process. We also strongly condemn the violence between Chadian security forces and demonstrators, as well as the crackdown on opposition and civil society groups. We support efforts to conduct a United Nations-led international inquiry into these events.

In Cameroon, the United States remains concerned by continued violence and attacks against civilians. We support UNOCA's role in promoting inclusive political dialogue, which includes the resolution of the crises in the North-West and South-West regions.

With regard to the Central African Republic, we commend the Government's leadership, especially President Touadera and Prime Minister Dondra, in the peace process and urge authorities to redouble their efforts to bring about peace. Progress on the road map of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the revitalization of the 2019 peace agreement is urgently needed to bring stability to the Central African Republic. We continue to encourage the Central African Republic to strengthen its ties with the United Nations peacekeeping mission and other responsible partners as an alternative to the predatory Wagner Group. The Central African Republic has other partners that wish to assist the country's development. Unfortunately, the

Government's partnership with Wagner Group entities creates barriers to that engagement.

While Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita will brief the Council tomorrow, I would be remiss not to mention the devastating humanitarian and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge parties to implement the commitments outlined in the 23 November communiqué, including a cessation of hostilities by the Mouvement du 23 mars.

Turning to Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) in West Africa, we condemn their attacks against civilians. The United States supports regional coordination by neighbours and the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat terrorist groups and implement holistic strategies that address the underlying drivers of terrorism. Furthermore, the United States urges all States Members of the United Nations to counter Al-Qaida and ISIS more proactively, including in Africa, by designating their members and affiliates with assets freezes, travel bans and arms embargoes.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his efforts to bring much-needed peace and prosperity to the Central African region. The United States supports him and his team in those efforts.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abdou Abarry, for his briefing. France congratulates him on his appointment. We welcome it, and we wish him every success in his work as Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). I would also like to welcome the presence of the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) at today's meeting. I would like to emphasize two points.

First, we must of course continue to support the political processes in the region. In Chad, the holding

of the national dialogue, the signing of the Doha peace agreement and the appointment of an inclusive Government, with the participation of representatives of the opposition, were positive steps. But the violence of 20 October reminded us of the fragility of the transition under way. The fight against impunity is essential to promoting national reconciliation and allowing the transition to continue. That is why an international, impartial and independent investigation must be carried out as soon as possible. In that regard, we are pleased that Chad has accepted the principle, and we hope that the United Nations can fully play its role. The perpetrators of those unacceptable acts must be condemned.

In Cameroon, France remains concerned about the situation in the North-West and South-West regions. During his visit to Cameroon last July, the President of the Republic reaffirmed France's commitment to finding a political solution in support of the decentralization process. He encouraged the Cameroonian authorities to continue the dialogue.

In the Central African Republic, a greater commitment from the countries of the region, under the leadership of the African Union and ECCAS, is necessary for the political process to make significant progress. We encourage UNOCA to continue to mobilize the States and organizations of the region to that end.

Following the events of the past few days, France also reaffirms its commitment to the stability of Sao Tome and Principe, which today is an example of democracy in the region.

Finally, the priority for Central Africa must also be respect for human rights and inclusive governance through electoral processes that allow for the free and equal participation of all actors, particularly women and young people.

The second priority that I would like to highlight today is the protection of the population. France welcomes the improved coordination between the region's security and defence forces within the Multinational Joint Task Force, which makes it possible to combat the terrorist threat of Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa. We remain very concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation. The response to all humanitarian needs must be expedited. The region is bearing the full brunt of the tragic consequences of the war in Ukraine, particularly in terms of food

security, and the adverse effects of climate change, as the Special Representative mentioned.

Given the challenges facing Central Africa, UNOCA's support is essential. France welcomes its work and the strengthening of ties with regional organizations. We reiterate our full support for the work of the Special Representative.

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

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abdou Abarry, and the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Mr. Gilberto Da Piedade Veríssimo, for briefing us today. I will focus my remarks on three aspects of recent developments in the region: political, security and humanitarian.

The political developments in the countries of the Central African region have been positive, marked by electoral processes, regular exchanges and collaboration among countries. The successful holding of elections in Angola, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe is yet another positive indication of democracy taking strong and firm roots in Central Africa. It is heartening to see the consolidation of democracy in the region, even though there may be some pitfalls in the processes. We also note the increased participation of women in the electoral process and in the legislatures, particularly in the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe.

We are closely following the developments in Chad. The Doha agreement and the national dialogue brought about agreement on the transition road map. However, challenges remain, particularly in the context of discordant notes by segments of the opposition. It is important that all stakeholders engage in dialogue to resolve all outstanding issues and recommit to the transition process.

We unequivocally condemn the terrorism being perpetrated by Boko Haram in Cameroon and the Lake Chad basin. We commend the role played by the Multinational Joint Task Force in countering Boko Haram and affiliated terror groups. That exemplifies a point that we often make about the need for well-coordinated and well-equipped regional strategies to deal with terrorism in Africa. Downplaying the impact of terrorism on the security of the region and overplaying other factors impinging on regional peace

will serve only to distort our understanding of the problem and, in turn, our responses.

We take note of the improved maritime security situation in the Gulf of Guinea, as countries strengthen regional and international cooperation. We must continue to remain vigilant and follow through by bolstering maritime security capabilities in the region, coupled with providing adequate support to national strategies to deal with acts of piracy.

The socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Central African region portrays multidimensional challenges, underpinned by historical injustices and exacerbated by development challenges. The impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic, and now the protracted Ukraine conflict, is reversing the hard-won development gains to date. With the rise in prices of essential commodities and shortages of food, fuel and fertilizers, basic needs have come under duress. The sustained attention and support of the international community will be needed to help those countries to build back better.

In his report, the Secretary-General points out that “the most enduring solution to the drivers of conflict in the region lies in inclusive sustainable development, within the framework of the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063.” (S/2022/896, para. 77)

An environment with strong democratic institutions, the rule of law and the administration of justice will be necessary to achieve those goals. A focus on the fundamentals is therefore key.

India has cordial and friendly bilateral relations with all countries in Central Africa. We have enhanced our diplomatic presence in the region. Our development assistance and coordination have been steadfast. We extended soft loans worth \$2 billion for projects in agriculture, transport, power and water supply to countries in the region. India’s Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme for Least Developed Countries is also applicable to several Central African countries. We will continue to engage proactively with countries in Central Africa to further peace, security and development for its people.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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 4.40 p.m.