



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

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Provisional

President: Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Boateng
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

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/2023/389)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2023/389)

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; His Excellency Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States; and Ms. Marie Tamoifo, Founder and Regional Coordinator of the Network of Young Leaders for Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems.

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/2023/389, 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*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you warmly, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month of June and wish you every success in your work. I would also like to thank the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, Ambassador Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, and the Regional Coordinator of the Network of Young Leaders for Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems, Ms. Marie Tamoifo, for their participation in today's meeting.

I have the great honour today of presenting to the Council the twenty-fourth report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office

for Central Africa (UNOCA). Since presenting the previous report of the Secretary-General to the Council, in December 2022 (see S/PV.9213), I have had the privilege of visiting the 11 countries that fall within UNOCA's mandate. During my visits, I had the honour of being received by authorities at the level of Head of State in 9 of the 11 countries. I was also welcomed and briefed on the situation by the United Nations resident coordinators and their teams. In my exchanges with various political and civil society players, I was reassured by the fact that Central Africa is richer in opportunities and resources than it is in challenges.

I also noted the preference shown by most States in the subregion for dialogue and consultation as a means of resolving tensions peacefully. I am thinking in particular of the dialogue between the President of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, and the President of the Transition and Head of State of the Republic of Chad, His Excellency General Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, on the revitalization of cooperation between the two countries. In this regard, I salute the eminently positive role played by His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and African Union Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa, in facilitating the normalization process between the two countries, which led notably to the transfer of former President François Bozizé from Chad to Guinea-Bissau. I am also thinking of the mobilization of the States of the region in favour of resolving the serious crisis that is prevailing in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the support of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for the transition in Chad, through the facilitation entrusted to His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I have also noted the active commitment of the States of the subregion to security issues, which led in particular to the holding of the first ECCAS summit on maritime security and the One Forest Summit, in which Heads of State gathered to discuss climate security, focusing on the preservation of the Congo basin. Similarly, the fifty-fifth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC) was held in Sao Tome and Principe from 15 to 19 May, on the theme of "climate security from the perspective of prevention conflicts and the consolidation of peace and stability in Central Africa", thereby confirming the collective

awareness of the region's States of the need and urgency to act. These efforts are all the more justified as the region continues to face the effects of climate change, as recently demonstrated by the terrible floods in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My thoughts go out to the victims of these floods and reiterate UNOCA's commitment to supporting the efforts of the member States of ECCAS in order to help them meet those challenges.

In addition, the region has continued to pay particular attention to the political participation and representation of women in key positions, notably with the appointment of women to the posts of Vice President in Gabon and Angola and Prime Minister in Equatorial Guinea. In Equatorial Guinea, the last stop on my tour of the States under the UNOCA mandate, His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, expressed his commitment to preserving peace and stability in his country and did not fail to request the support of the United Nations in implementing his youth programme.

Since I last addressed the Council, I have noted a growing number of calls for dialogue in the region to address the challenges of governance and human rights. In Chad, the transitional authorities have pursued with determination the implementation of the recommendations of the sovereign and inclusive national dialogue. In particular, a consultation framework for political parties and a national commission to organize the constitutional referendum scheduled for November to adopt a new constitution have been set up.

Although functional, those bodies continue to be criticized for their lack of inclusiveness. As I stressed to the transition authorities during my visit to N'Djamena at the end of April, the inclusion of all political players and respect for freedoms are essential conditions for the sustainability and success of the transition process. In that respect, I welcome the good collaboration that exists between ECCAS and UNOCA to help create a more inclusive space for dialogue among Chadian political players.

I would also encourage the countries of the region that are due to hold elections in the coming months to ensure that such elections are inclusive and peaceful. In Gabon, the UNOCA host country, the Government organized a consultative dialogue prior to the general

elections scheduled for this year, at the request of the opposition.

Although some parties did not take part, the political dialogue held in February resulted in recommendations for electoral reforms that led to a constitutional revision, the adoption of the electoral code and the establishment of the Gabonese elections centre. In the run-up to this important meeting, I will continue my commitment and my good offices with all stakeholders in order to promote inclusive and peaceful elections, as promised by His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon.

In Cameroon, the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions has entered its seventh year, while the country continues to suffer attacks by violent extremist groups in the far North and the flow of Central African refugees into its eastern regions.

During my visit to the country at the end of March, I noted the determination of the national authorities and, in particular, that of His Excellency President Paul Biya to pursue efforts to promote dialogue and rebuild the areas affected by the crisis. In that respect, I call on international partners to take into account the positions expressed by the Cameroonian Government in any initiative aimed at helping to bring about a peaceful end to the crisis and to lend their support to efforts to rehabilitate and rebuild the regions affected by the crisis.

In Sao Tome and Principe, the authorities' determination to reform the justice and security sectors was strengthened following the unfortunate events of November, confirming the country's determination to tackle the structural problems that threaten its peace and stability by reforming the security and justice sectors. In that regard, the United Nations and ECCAS carried out a strategic assessment mission in the country, whose recommendations, once implemented, will help to ensure the country's stability.

On a completely different level, it is regrettable to note the persistence of violations of human rights, in particular freedom of expression, in certain countries of the subregion.

Indeed, as we marked the thirtieth anniversary of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, attacks on the lives and physical integrity of journalists must cease. I wish here to reiterate my commitment, as part of my good offices, to continue to raise awareness among the

States of the subregion about the safety of journalists and access to information.

Recent developments on the border between Chad and the Central African Republic and the impact of the Sudanese crisis on those two countries remind us of the urgent need to adopt a holistic approach to peace and security issues in Central Africa, a region already marked by the presence of a multitude of armed and terrorist groups, with a humanitarian impact, particularly for women and young people. I would like to pay tribute here to the extraordinary solidarity and generosity shown by the two countries, which have already taken in, respectively, 100,000 and 10,000 Sudanese refugees.

The ongoing fighting in the Sudan is having devastating humanitarian consequences for Chad and the Central African Republic. For Chad, \$129.8 million will be needed to care for the 100,000 refugees for six months. Without a rapid and peaceful resolution to the conflict, the effects will be disastrous for the Sudan, but also for all the countries in the Lake Chad basin region. Faced with the continuing crisis in the Sudan, we must face up to the fact that our commitment and our solidarity with Chad are a matter of urgency. We must therefore act quickly to help this country.

The joint military operations recently carried out by Chad and the Central African Republic on their common border reflect their desire to strengthen their bilateral cooperation to meet the common security challenges they face.

In that respect, I encourage both States to make use of all existing bilateral cooperation mechanisms, in particular their joint cooperation commission. However, as the situation in the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel demonstrates, a purely military response will not be sufficient to address the root causes of insecurity. Political and socioeconomic measures are also necessary. Without them, armed groups will continue to exploit intercommunal conflicts, such as those linked to transhumance.

The issue of cross-border management of the activities of armed groups was so aptly discussed at the fifty-fifth meeting of the UNSAC. I would therefore like to reiterate my Office's readiness to mobilize the relevant United Nations agencies to support ongoing or planned regional efforts to address that issue. My Office also continues to work closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) on

that issue, with a UNOCA/UNOWAS technical mission currently deployed in the four countries of the Lake Chad basin in order to assess the impact of violent extremism on the local populations.

The security situation in Central Africa has also been marked by an upsurge in incidents of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, underlining the need to strengthen interregional cooperation, particularly in the run-up to the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to support ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission in their efforts to strengthen coordination on this important issue.

Three years have passed since the implementation of the institutional reform of ECCAS, and I am pleased to note that since my most recent briefing, ECCAS has continued to play a central role on issues of peace and security in the subregion. Its active involvement in the search for solutions in Chad and Sao Tome and Principe are proof, if any were needed, of its renewed dynamism. The subregional organization has also continued to work to strengthen the political participation of women. The meeting of the ministers for women and gender of ECCAS member States, held in Libreville at the end of May, established a road map for the defence of women's rights and their empowerment. However, the ECCAS institutional reform process requires sustainable financial support. That is why I would like to call on the States of the subregion to put in place mechanisms that will help to ensure sustainable and long-term funding of the organization's operations and activities in order to provide it with the resources to fully play its part. In that respect, I welcome the commitment of His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, the architect of that reform, who has made its support one of the priorities of his mandate as current President of ECCAS.

In addition to the challenges I have just mentioned, Central Africa is suffering from the impact of the crisis in Ukraine, which is leading to inflation and rising prices for basic foodstuffs and fuel and sometimes shortages. Although most countries have taken measures to mitigate the impact on consumers, we must be aware that a further deterioration in the socioeconomic situation could lead to an uptick in

social upheaval, which would undermine the stability of the countries concerned.

During the first nine months of my term of office, I have been pleased to note that coordination among United Nations entities in the subregion has been strengthened, with regular exchanges on political, security and socioeconomic issues. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to the positive collaboration between UNOCA and the United Nations offices in the subregion, namely, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the Office of the Special Envoy, as well as resident coordinators and country teams, with whom my office works closely, including in the implementation of my good offices mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that the coming months will be an important turning point for Central Africa, where crucial political and electoral processes must be held between now and the end of the year. With the invaluable support of Council members, we will ensure that violence, fuelled in particular by hate speech, which have marked elections in the past, are avoided at all costs. The peace and stability of the subregion depend on it. I would like to reiterate my firm commitment to supporting the States of the subregion and ECCAS in their efforts to build the prosperous Central Africa that we want and that is possible, given the abundant potential of the countries of that African subregion.

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

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

Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to take the floor at this important meeting devoted to examining the current situation in Central Africa.

Allow me, at the outset, to express my heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, President of the Security Council for the month of June 2023, for having kindly included the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in today's discussions. In the same vein, I would like to congratulate the Security Council on its decision to devote today's meeting to the situation in Central Africa. We at ECCAS believe that this meeting comes at the right time, given

the particularly complex security and political situation prevailing in our subregion.

At the time of this meeting, the security situation in the majority of ECCAS member States is showing signs of hope and therefore encouragement. Those States are not spared from myriad security threats, but they are nevertheless managing to keep them under control and thus prevent them from contributing to the development of hotbeds of insecurity at the national level, which is likely to have a negative impact on the stability of the entire subregion. We believe that such efforts deserve to be supported, especially given the particularly restrictive economic context in which they are being undertaken.

However, despite those rather positive signs, we must recognize that Central Africa is also facing major security challenges, the nature and scale of which vary from country to country. Such challenges include the persistent activity of armed groups, secessionist factions and terrorist movements; the presence of cross-border combatants; the illicit circulation of weapons; crime at sea in all its forms; the illicit exploitation of natural resources; intercommunal conflicts; the humanitarian crises caused by armed conflict and natural disasters; and the political and diplomatic tensions between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda since the re-emergence of the Mouvement du 23 mars group at the end of 2021.

In addition to those internal challenges, the security situation in Central Africa is being adversely affected by the ongoing armed conflict between rival factions of the Sudanese defence and security forces. It also has been negatively affected for more than a decade by the instability in Libya, the expansion of Boko Haram to all the States bordering Lake Chad and the entrenchment of terrorist movements in the Sahelo-Saharan area.

At the political level, the ECCAS member States are continuing, despite various contingencies, their determined march to establish the system of democratic governance. To that end, the year 2022 and the first quarter of this year were marked by the holding of several more or less peaceful elections in a number of countries.

Elections at several levels are expected to be held in 2023 in the Central African Republic, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition to those elections, constitutional referendums are also expected in the Central African Republic and Chad.

The more ECCAS continues to provide support to member States in organizing electoral processes, the more it becomes aware of the challenges they are facing. Those challenges essentially concern disagreements over the composition of the bodies responsible for elections, the drafting of electoral legislation, the credibility of voter rolls, the authenticity of election results and so forth.

Whether the challenges are strictly linked to security challenges or to political governance, ECCAS now has, as part of its revised Treaty in force since 2020, appropriate instruments to facilitate its work in the areas of politics, peace and security. Those instruments were recently activated in Chad and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

With regard to Chad, for example, ECCAS is continuing its support for the transition process under way in that country, including through the opening of a liaison office in N'Djamena headed by a Special Envoy, the deployment of a mission to establish the facts surrounding the events of 20 October 2022 and the establishment of a platform to facilitate exchanges between the transition authorities and the entities currently opposed to the transition process under way. In accordance with the relevant decisions of the Community's highest decision-making bodies, ECCAS will continue to support Chad until the holding of the elections that are scheduled for the end of next year and are intended to end the transition and mark the return to a democratic constitutional order.

While ECCAS remains Central Africa's principal regional economic community, it is also true that many of its member States are also members of other intergovernmental organizations whose areas of activity cover Central Africa. Based on the principle of complementarity, ECCAS supports the efforts to mediate between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda led by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) under the leadership of President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of Angola, within the framework of the Luanda process. We also support the work led by Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, former President of Kenya, in facilitating the dialogue between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and armed groups as part of the Nairobi process. Finally, ECCAS, six of whose member States are also members of the ICGLR, has expressed its willingness to incorporate into its work the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region, also known as the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement.

Looking ahead, we believe that the increasing strength of ECCAS's new governance, peace and security architectures, which have been in place for the past two years, as well as the implementation of new mechanisms such as the recently approved revised protocol on the strategy for securing vital interests at sea and in the continental waters of ECCAS member States, will gradually enable the Community to give effective support to the States of our subregion in their quest for peace, security, stability and democracy.

To achieve that objective, ECCAS will pursue and strengthen its cooperation with the various relevant United Nations mechanisms on issues of democracy, peace and security in Central Africa, including the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. I would add to those four mechanisms the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. We believe that the support provided by all those mechanisms, together with ECCAS, towards the realization of the agenda for democracy, peace and security in Central Africa could be even more effective if their mandates were reviewed with a view to adapting them to the ever-changing subregional context.

On behalf of ECCAS, I want to conclude by once again commending the Security Council for organizing today's important debate. I would also like to reiterate my organization's thanks to you, Madam President, for involving ECCAS in today's discussion.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Tamoifo.

Ms. Tamoifo (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to address the Security Council on the theme of women, youth, climate and peace and security in Central Africa. My name is Marie Tamoifo Nkom, and I am the Founder of the Association Jeunesse Verte du Cameroun, the Regional Coordinator of the Network

of Young Leaders for Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems and Chair of the development committee of the Batcham group in western Cameroon. I am also an entrepreneur and promoter of Greening Media TV, a goodwill ambassador for the promotion of cybersecurity and a member of a number of national, regional and pan-African platforms, including the African Women's Network for Sustainable Development — of course — the Pan-African Biodiversity Alliance, the Reflection Group on Migration in Africa, the follow-up committee for the One Forest Summit youth initiative, reflection networks on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Gic Accent Sur Elle cooperative.

In the 30 years that I have been doing this work, more than a quarter of a century, I witnessed Nelson Mandela become President and eventually depart this world. Wangari Maathai worked for our planet, and she too has left us. They are my role models and embody my values. In my own way, I have been a mini Wangari Maathai, working behind the scenes for our subregion for 30 years. My father's early death forced me to halt my studies and to assume the responsibilities of an orphaned family with few resources, my studies in law and communications, my shattered family life and my dashed hopes of a political career — the highs and the extreme lows.

In the end, my energy, my education and my indestructible values brought me to where I stand here before the Council today. My perseverance and the business of hope have enabled me to create and develop young people's and women's networks and organizations in the 10 countries of Central Africa — currently including Gabon, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Burundi, Rwanda, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe — to date working together with more than 400 member organizations and nearly 10,000 community relays and beneficiaries of our daily awareness-raising messages via our WhatsApp groups and social networks, without any significant external support. In addition to using standard communication networks, the launch of our web TV channel via our company Greening Media TV, which is going on now, will magnify the impact of our awareness, alert and communication campaigns within the context of our programme for training communications managers. We have always believed in the importance of training young people. That is

why we have trained 100 young reporters and climate and biodiversity ambassadors in order to support the visibility of our members' actions in Central Africa and beyond, whenever we can find sustainable financial partners.

Imagine the results and transformations that can be made possible with the ongoing support of long-term partners. That is part of the work I do, and I am also extremely proud of it.

“If politicians do not take care of young people, the winds of change will drive young people to take care of the politicians in order to ensure that their commitments make sense”.

That statement, which I made as spokesperson for African youth and the African diaspora to the Heads of State at the Africa-France Summit in Bamako in 2005, still holds true today. Unfortunately, States, the African Union and the international community have not been able to provide operational support for our actions, despite the many pleas I have made at the international, continental and regional levels.

The historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change of 2015 and the hopes raised by the N'Djamena Declaration of February 2021, as well as resolution 2250 (2015), are facing real difficulties in terms of their implementation. Vulnerable groups continue to be the hardest hit by conflict and climate change, and it must be said that women and young people often find themselves at the heart of those scourges that hamper development.

Our organization, the Association Jeunesse Verte du Cameroun-Network of Young Leaders for Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems, works on sustainable development issues with a particular focus on empowering young people, women, local communities and indigenous peoples. We work to build their resilience and raise awareness of the need to protect forests and their territories. Equally, we work to build their skills and encourage their participation in decision-making processes.

Our Network mainly carries out voluntary activities related to coordination, structuring, networking and support for civil society in areas related to the blue, green and circular economy. With that in mind, and despite the difficult context, we are managing to innovate and carry out commendable actions in the field of biodiversity conservation and the fight against the effects of climate change. That involves a range of

capacity-building activities on emerging issues related to the global conventions on biodiversity, climate and desertification.

Our training workshops and Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change simulations, known as COP Chez Nous, have enabled us to draw up joint position papers and appoint climate and biodiversity ambassadors in rural and urban areas. From COP15, held in Copenhagen in 2009, to the present day, I have conveyed that message from the youth and civil society of the Congo basin and facilitated the participation of members of our Network in ministerial consultations with the support of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.

Climate and biodiversity caravans and campaigns for mobilization, for awareness-raising and for education on environmental issues have been organized at the local, national and subregional levels. Our programme for the organization and development of communities has provided solar electricity to more than 300 households. Forty rural health centres in Cameroon have benefited from the installation of solar refrigerators and photovoltaic kits for storing vaccines. As part of a pilot project, solar-powered sewing machines have been distributed to women and girls working as seamstresses in rural and urban areas. Running community reforestation projects, with national branches in 10 countries, has effectively enabled us to support the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.

We are a generation of non-professional, self-taught organizers, women and young people, whose actions support the development and stability of our countries on a daily basis. Those actions remain unseen and, unfortunately, underfunded, despite the billions of dollars announced with great fanfare by the international community. The members of my Network, the young people and women leaders I mentor and the local and national organizations I lead are non-State actors who are organizers, unemployed, self-taught volunteers who are trying to survive — and sometimes they are resigned and discouraged. Behind the scenes, they work tirelessly every day to maintain stability in our countries. They are environmental diplomacy actors who are invisible from the windows of New York and Paris and ignored in Yaoundé, N'Djamena and Kinshasa.

Through my statements and my commitment, I want to defend our diversity, our history and our

languages with respect and resolve from within a civil society in the Lake Chad basin and the Congo basin that is open to Africa and to the world. Central Africa is rich in resources, in people, in its active and dynamic youth, and it is poised to become the world's leading green lung. It is therefore a major investment and conservation destination. Given its strategic position, it promotes the development of the world's cultural and ecological heritage, in particular the Congo and Lake Chad basins, which are exceptional ecosystems with much to offer humankind.

As the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa so clearly demonstrated in a report published in July 2022, the impacts of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa are self-evident. The increase in human mobility, the rise in intercommunal violence, the increase in organized crime and the activities of non-State armed groups, the added pressure on coastlines, the rise in crime and maritime piracy, human-wildlife conflicts, food insecurity, increased pressure on the land and the growing threat to the tropical forest of the Congo basin are all climate-related security risks in the subregion.

The negative consequences of climate change also have an impact on the availability of resources — a problem that young people will have to face throughout their lives. I wish to emphasize here the issue of the forced displacement of young men and women, who abandon all their possessions, sometimes risking their lives. I would even go so far as to say that the cause-and-effect relationship works both ways: the impact of climate change on security, and the impact of insecurity on climate change. One cannot be addressed independently of the other. Human action is the driving force, and women and young people are the primary victims. All of that is therefore leading women and young people in Central Africa to adapt and to show a great deal of natural resilience, which I consider to be nothing short of heroic in our countries. It is a constant battle between David and Goliath that must be fought with intelligence, negotiation and consensus.

We therefore open our arms to our leaders: let us work together and support the actions of our Governments, development partners and pan-African and United Nations institutions that want to bolster our programmes over the long term and give them institutional status, framed by our Network's strategy document, as well as other structured youth and women's platforms at the local, national, regional

and international levels. Such actions must also be undertaken in synergy with all stakeholders so as to leave no one behind.

Let us implement programmes using bottom-up approaches to complement top-down ones. We need to build on the perspectives that young people and women themselves bring to the table, as well as their innovative contributions to solving the complex problems that the world now faces. Let us support the empowerment of young people and women through nature-based, income-generating projects and encourage all sectors to create green and decent jobs that will help to prevent the radicalization of young people and the exposure of young girls and women to all forms of violence.

Let us aim our financial resources towards players recognized at the national level for their skills. Let us do away with the surplus of international intermediaries and conditionalities. Let us evaluate the effectiveness of projects and put an end to overly complex procedures for accessing funding and technologies to enable us to act.

The relevant actors and networks in organized civil society must be provided with sufficient resources, as is the case for the Lake Chad Basin Commission, through substantial programmes. A regional, autonomous and independent international coordination mechanism that works in conjunction with an intergenerational task force of young people and women, with a permanent technical secretariat and focal points, should be established.

To conclude, I wish to tell our leaders to take a chance on young people and women in civil society, to invest in them and to have faith in them. They should come with us to see the reality on the ground and in the villages — in Elobi, Ntaba or Eligidzoa — areas that are described as being difficult yet that are so human. They must act differently and in new ways to bring about fair and equitable societies.

If we must ask anything of our leaders in these times of climate change and geopolitical uncertainty, it is to aim high. We need a paradigm shift, because today it is clearly no longer enough to act with Governments alone. We need to do more with civil society, with young people, with women, with ordinary citizens, who are more numerous and more active and who are showing an abundance of imagination in the face of the risks in Central Africa.

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

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

Mr. Biang (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 (A3) — Ghana, Mozambique and my own country, Gabon.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/389) and thank Special Representative Abdou Abarry for his comprehensive briefing and relevant information on the situation in Central Africa. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, and thank him for his briefing. We listened closely to Ms. Marie Tamoifo, President and founder of Association Jeunesse Verte du Cameroun.

Our statement will focus mainly on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the region covered by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). On the political front, we welcome the smooth conduct of elections in several countries of the region and believe that future elections will maintain the same dynamic.

At the regional level, the A3 welcomes crisis-exit initiatives such as the Nairobi and Luanda processes, as well as the deployment of the East African Community regional force, whose mandate has just been renewed. They demonstrate the willingness and commitment of African States to restoring peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the commitment of President João Lourenço of Angola and President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi to stabilizing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire region. Such regional involvement is the essence of the principle of African solutions to African problems and reflects the clear interest of the countries in the region in resolving the security crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to the situation in Chad, the A3 notes with satisfaction the measures taken by the transitional authorities to ease political tensions and prepare for the constitutional referendum and the presidential and legislative elections. The release of several hundred fighters from the Front pour l'alternance et la Concorde

au Tchad and the amnesty granted to the demonstrators of 20 October 2022 could help to foster a climate of confidence in the country. It is therefore essential to ensure that all political players, including civil society, continue their dialogue.

We encourage the countries of the region to continue their inclusive approach to the political and peace processes in Central Africa, paying particular attention to young people and women. In that regard, we welcomed the holding in Libreville on 25 May of the first Conference of ECCAS Ministers in charge of Gender and the Advancement of Women, which has enabled a review of the various national institutional mechanisms designed to promote the advancement of women within the region, as well as the holding in Luanda on 25 May of the first International Women's Forum for Peace and Democracy, dedicated to the struggle of women for equality, emancipation and the development of the continent for peace and democracy. It demonstrates the importance of including women and young people in peace processes, an aspect that the United Nations has repeatedly emphasized.

On the security front, the scourges facing several countries in the region include terrorism and violent extremism, cross-border crime, the persistence of armed groups, maritime insecurity, illicit trafficking in natural resources and intercommunal clashes exacerbated by the growing effects of climate change. The A3 condemns terrorist groups' increasing use of explosive devices, attacks and kidnappings, which have kept children out of school and led to mass displacements, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We strongly condemn the persistent terrorist attacks by Boko Haram and dissident groups in Cameroon and Chad. We also condemn the violence committed by armed groups in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ask that they immediately and unconditionally join the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes and the political consultations under way. With regard to DDR, it is important to remember that those programmes, which are at the heart of peacebuilding processes, are very often hampered by a lack of adequate funding, which in many cases encourages a resurgence of crises in post-conflict countries.

Ghana, Mozambique and Gabon once again stress the economic, security and humanitarian impact of the crisis in the Sudan on the Central African region. The Sudan shares borders with the Central African

Republic and Chad. We encourage the strengthening of cross-border cooperation in the subregion and with neighbouring States. Cooperation against cross-border threats should be strengthened at the level of the subregional organizations and United Nations offices concerned. It is also important to continue organizing joint bilateral operations, as Chad and the Central African Republic did on 15 May, in order to ensure a strengthened and coordinated response to the subregion's security challenges.

We note that maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea deserves particular attention in view of the surge in attacks by pirates, particularly off the coast of Gabon. The threat that maritime insecurity poses to international peace and security is well known. In that regard, it is essential to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the regional and economic communities of Central and West Africa and to continue to support capacity-building in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea in order to combat that scourge effectively.

The A3 notes the importance of the synergy between the subregional organizations of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States, together with UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, in providing a sustainable response to the region's security, economic and political challenges. That cross-cutting approach will be essential to lasting peace in both subregions.

On the humanitarian front, the A3 is concerned about the consequences resulting either from human factors such as armed violence or natural ones such as floods and drought. We call for secure and unhindered humanitarian access to countries in conflict and echo the Secretary-General's appeal to international donors and partners to fund humanitarian response plans in the region. We would like to remind the Council that Africa is the continent that pollutes the least and is the most vulnerable to natural disasters. Competition over access to drinking water, natural resources, foodstuffs and fertile land weakens populations' resilience and reinforces intercommunal violence and the recruitment of young people by terrorist networks and armed groups. The effects of climate change are particularly visible in Africa with its recurring cycles of drought and flooding, as shown by the recent floods in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which claimed hundreds of victims. Such natural disasters

also increase the movements of climate refugees in their quest for peace and stability.

We are all aware of the crucial role that the Congo basin rainforest plays in the fight against climate change. The international community must respect its commitments to financing adaptation and mitigation policies, including those made at the One Forest Summit held in Libreville. The A3 urges the members of the Security Council to take regional priorities into account when adopting its presidential statement on UNOCA, the negotiations on which have been stalled for several years owing to a lack of consensus on the links between security and climate.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to respecting the territorial integrity and intangibility of borders, as well as the sovereignty of the countries of Central Africa prey to chronic insecurity. We also reiterate our full support for Special Representative Abdou Abarry and his team for their tireless efforts on the ground and hope that very soon the Council will support him with a presidential statement on UNOCA.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abarry, the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo, and Ms. Tamoifo for their importing briefings.

I will make five points today on the challenges facing Central Africa.

First, as the Secretary-General described in his most recent report (S/2023/389), the subregion is facing important electoral and transitional milestones. Inclusive, peaceful and credible political processes are critical for building and sustaining peace in the subregion. We encourage Member States to facilitate inclusive electoral and transitional processes and to draw on the support of United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

Secondly, the transition in Chad is one such potential milestone, but the Chadian transitional authorities must honour conditions set out in the May 2023 African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué if this milestone is to be achieved. The response to last October's demonstrations was concerning. The United Kingdom encourages the transitional authorities to work with UNOCA and ECCAS to ensure accountability

and the release of protestors detained without due legal process.

We pay tribute to Chad's generosity in helping to host tens of thousands of refugees fleeing the crisis in the Sudan. The United Kingdom is also providing over \$3 million in humanitarian assistance to support vulnerable refugees from the Sudan in Chad. We encourage the Chadian transitional authorities to use their influence with the Sudan's generals to encourage adherence to the ceasefire, the facilitation of humanitarian access and progress towards a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom remains concerned about the situation in Cameroon, especially the humanitarian impact of the conflict in the North-West and South-West regions. We agree with the Secretary-General that inclusive dialogue is critical to resolving the crisis. The United Kingdom continues to call on all parties to engage and to enable safe access to schools and humanitarian assistance.

Fourthly, as highlighted by my colleague the representative of Gabon, climate insecurity is a major threat to this region. The United Kingdom welcomes UNOCA's implementation of climate-security projects in Central Africa. It is essential that UNOCA's work on climate security in the region continues and that the Council supports efforts to mitigate the challenges posed by climate change.

Finally, we cannot ignore the destabilizing role the Wagner Group continues to play in this region. It is a driver of conflict and resource competition motivated by exploitation of natural resources and frequently associated with human rights atrocities. They are a part of the problem, not the solution.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Special Representative Abarry, His Excellency Ambassador Da Piedade Veríssimo and Ms. Tamoifo for their insightful briefings.

Japan commends the essential work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in carrying out its good offices in coordinating cooperation with and between regional organizations, including the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Such enhanced coordination and partnerships are essential for regional peace and security.

Today I will focus on four challenges facing the region. The first challenge is establishing and maintaining good governance and resilient democratic institutions. This requires continuous effort. Civic space, including freedom of expression, must be protected, and political dialogue must be inclusive. The electoral system must also be transparent and credible. In this regard, Japan echoes the recent calls by the African Union Peace and Security Council on Chad. We expect the referendum on the new Constitution to take place as planned on 19 November.

Secondly, persistent insecurity is of great concern. We are seeing an increasing trend in armed conflicts, growing violent extremism and heightened intercommunal tensions. The spread of hate speech and disinformation also has a destabilizing impact. Japan values the regional initiatives and the efforts of States in the region, along with UNOCA, to tackle these challenges. At the same time, we emphasize that such efforts need to respect human rights and include the voices of women and youth.

Thirdly, we are gravely concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the region. The clashes in the Sudan are compounding the already volatile conditions. In this regard, Japan has decided to provide assistance to the Sudan's neighbouring countries to address the needs of refugees and returnees.

Japan also notes the ongoing humanitarian challenges in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon and laments that more than 600,000 people have been internally displaced. Japan expects all stakeholders, including the Government of Cameroon, to make further efforts to resolve the crisis in line with the recommendations that emerged from the 2019 Major National Dialogue. Japan reiterates its commitments to supporting UNOCA's role in promoting inclusive political dialogue.

Finally, the adverse effects of climate change are exacerbating the region's insecurity and humanitarian crises. The increasing scarcity of water and decreasing amount of arable land are fuelling conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Heavy rains, flooding and desertification are leading to loss of life and property as well as displacement. Japan applauds the initiative taken by UNOCA and other stakeholders in promoting coherence between peacebuilding and climate-action policies. For its part, Japan will continue to assist in strengthening the resilience of climate-vulnerable

groups through enhancing climate-change adaptation and climate disaster risk reduction.

Let me conclude my remarks by stressing the importance of ensuring a humanitarian-development-peace-nexus approach in an inclusive manner when tackling the aforementioned challenges. Promoting human security should be at the centre of the effort. Coordination and cooperation are needed from all stakeholders, including international financial institutions and the entire United Nations system, from the Peacebuilding Commission and the Economic and Social Council to the resident coordinators. In this respect, Japan has been providing development assistance with an emphasis on institution-building and human resource development. We remain committed to continuing to play our part in promoting peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative, the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States and Ms. Tamoifo for their briefings.

I would like to emphasize three points. First of all, France welcomes the solidarity shown by the Sudan's neighbours, in particular Chad, in welcoming the refugees. The crisis threatens to destabilize the entire region, as the number of displaced people, refugees and food-insecure people continues to rise. Together with its European partners, France is mobilized to respond to the humanitarian crisis and the needs of the population.

I would now like to return to the dramatic consequences of climate change in Central Africa, particularly for the population. The torrential rains that have affected the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, to which the Special Representative referred, have caused hundreds of victims and remind us of the urgent need to act. In this respect, we welcome the work carried out by UNOCA in the face of the urgency of climate change. Last March, France and Gabon organized the One Forest Summit to seek solutions to protect tropical forests. It is crucial that the Security Council listens to its African members, as well as civil society, which are constantly alerting us to the link between climate and security. France calls on all Member States to take part in the collective effort, in particular by joining the United Nations Climate Security Mechanism.

Finally, efforts to bring democratic transitions to a successful conclusion and to consolidate political

processes in the region must continue. With elections due to take place in several countries in the coming months, it is essential to work to ensure that the processes are inclusive, credible and peaceful and to guarantee the full participation of stakeholders, particularly women and young people.

In Chad, following the events of 20 October, measures have been taken to promote national reconciliation. It is important to further encourage the Chadian authorities to continue their actions to that end. Dialogue must continue in an inclusive spirit, involving all the country's civic and political forces, particularly with a view to the forthcoming elections, in order to enable the transition to continue peacefully.

In Cameroon, France remains concerned about the situation in the North-West and South-West regions. We encourage the Cameroonian authorities to pursue dialogue with a view to finding a political solution to the crisis.

Following the events of November, France reaffirms its commitment to the stability of Sao Tome and Principe. It welcomes the work carried out by UNOCA, in partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States, to support the reform of the country's security and justice sectors.

In conclusion, France welcomes UNOCA's action to consolidate peace in Central Africa. It encourages the Economic Community of Central African States and its member States to pursue their efforts in terms of regional integration. It also calls on the members of the Council to provide Special Representative Abarry all the support he needs to carry out his mandate, in particular through the adoption of a presidential statement.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), for his briefing and his work. I would like to welcome Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and civil society representative Ms. Tamoifo.

The briefings we have just heard illustrate the nature of Central Africa's security challenges, which are multidimensional, cross-border, interconnected and significant. That is why UNOCA's engagement with all

Central African States and its collaboration with other United Nations missions and Offices remains crucial.

I would like to highlight three points.

First, the growing insecurity and deteriorating human rights situation in some countries threatens all of Central Africa. I am referring, first of all, to the cross-border activities of armed groups, which hamper efforts to consolidate peace and undermine the protection of civilians.

Switzerland welcomes the collaboration between the Central African Republic and Cameroon aimed at strengthening the security of civilians in border areas and encourages further enhanced cooperation with other neighbouring countries. The arrival of people fleeing the conflict in the Sudan has a direct impact on the security and humanitarian situation in Central Africa. We welcome the efforts of the countries of the region to receive refugees. We are concerned about the increase in the number of people in need of assistance as a result of protracted humanitarian crises, particularly in Cameroon. We call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law, in particular by allowing and facilitating rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to civilian populations in need.

Secondly, strengthening good governance and promoting inclusive and transparent political dialogue remains essential for the region. Conflicts are often political in nature, and security responses alone cannot offer a lasting solution. The transition process under way in Chad since 2021, for example, presents a unique opportunity to initiate significant change in the country. For that to happen, the full participation of civilian actors, including the opposition, is essential. In that context, we welcome the constructive role played by UNOCA, including with the transitional Government in Chad. Furthermore, several electoral cycles will take place in the region in 2023. Peaceful, transparent and inclusive elections are a powerful catalyst for advancing peace and stability. That is why we are calling for the respect for human rights, in particular by guaranteeing political rights, as well as providing the necessary means for the full and meaningful participation of women.

Thirdly, the impact of climate change on security in Central Africa is visible and must be taken into account. Ms. Aïchatou Mounkaïla, a civil society representative from the Niger, reminded the Council of this last month (see S/PV.9327). In the Lake Chad basin, 5.5 million people have been affected by flooding and 1,000 have

lost their lives. In other places, droughts contribute to the modification of transhumance corridors, to food insecurity and to displacement, thus fuelling conflicts. We congratulate the countries of the region on their critical initiatives to tackle climate change, notably the Central African Forest Initiative. We also welcome the analytical work undertaken by UNOCA and the ECCAS on the impact of climate change on peace and security. We hope that the appointment of a special adviser on climate and security for UNOCA will contribute to addressing this critical issue in the region.

In view of the complex security challenges in Central Africa, Switzerland reiterates its full support for UNOCA. I call on other members to do likewise. In that regard, Switzerland fully subscribes to the efforts made by the Gabon and the United Kingdom to adopt a presidential statement. After three years, it is time for the Council to reiterate its support for the valuable work of the Regional Office in all areas of its mandate.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I begin by thanking Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and Ms. Marie Tamoifo, civil society representative, for their briefings this morning. I also thank the Secretariat for the detailed report (S/2023/389) on the latest developments in the region and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

Ecuador values the important work of UNOCA and its joint work with countries and organizations in the region, in particular with ECCAS, which is key to addressing the root causes of violence and building sustainable peace.

I would like to highlight the following points.

On the political front, we hope that the electoral processes scheduled for this year in the region will be conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner. The participation of citizens, including women and young people, will be important to consolidate democracy and institutionality, which are necessary pillars for achieving stability. We appreciate the efforts being made in the preparation of a constitutional referendum in Chad, as well as the support provided by UNOCA to the transition process, including the visit made in March. We are also following with interest the electoral process in Gabon and wish our colleagues every success.

On security, the continuation of violence by non-State groups operating in the region, particularly in Cameroon and the Lake Chad basin, is of great concern to Ecuador. We condemn the acts of violence that have occurred. We sympathize with the victims and encourage the countries of the area to continue to cooperate in a coordinated fight against terrorism in all its forms, while recalling the obligation to respect, at all times, human rights and international humanitarian law. We also note with concern the effects of the Sudanese conflict on the region and appreciate the welcome given to those fleeing the violence.

With regard to the situation in Cameroon, we call on the parties to continue dialogue with a view to ending the crisis affecting the North-West and South-West regions of the country. Peaceful talks are the way to avoid further casualties and to protect the civilian population.

Regarding the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, we note with concern reports of restrictions and violations. The abduction and killing of journalists is unacceptable and constitutes an alarming attack not only on the victims but also on freedom of expression, a fundamental pillar of democracy. Similarly, the reports of the torture and the killing of detainees are unacceptable. Those responsible for all those acts must be held accountable for their actions.

Women's participation in political processes promotes social cohesion, development and the prevention of violence. We therefore welcome the appointment of the first women to the posts of Vice-President of Gabon and Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea and invite all countries to make greater efforts in that field.

In conclusion, I recall that the Council, on 31 October 2002, noted that despite its enormous potential, which could make it one of the poles of development of the continent, Central Africa had yet to achieve the stability that would enable it to utilize its resources to the maximum benefit of its population in an equitable manner. That task of achieving stability, identified two decades ago, is ongoing and, in that regard, the work of UNOCA is crucial in coordinating efforts and managing the interplay of factors as diverse as terrorism, organized crime, food insecurity and the effects of climatic phenomena affecting the region.

We are convinced that sustainable peace will be achieved only through development and therefore the

generation of opportunities for the population and the improvement of their living conditions are necessary to create and maintain conditions of stability and security.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa Abarry for his presentation and the good offices he has offered since the assumption of his post, and we encourage him to work closely with other United Nations missions in the region. We also thank Ambassador Da Piedade Veríssimo and Ms. Tamoifo for their briefings.

I will now focus on three key issues.

First, with regard to the political developments, while we recognize that some progress has been achieved, several challenges remain. Albania welcomes the measures that the transitional authorities in Chad took to reduce tensions following the deadly protests of 20 October 2022 and calls on them to continue to uphold and protect all human rights. For the constitutional referendum and the eventual return to constitutional order, it is important that all parties pursue constructive dialogue.

Preserving the democratic gains made across the region demands continuous efforts in safeguarding the civic space, human rights and ensuring accountability. In that vein, the political situation in the Central African Republic remains worrisome, with violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed by all parties, including by the Wagner Group. At the same time, obstructions to the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic are unacceptable, and the status of forces agreement must be fully respected.

As far as Sao Tome and Principe is concerned, we welcome the investigations and measures of the authorities following the torture and death of the individuals detained since the 25 November 2022 events.

Secondly, in terms of the security developments, despite national and regional efforts, the activities of armed groups in the region persist. The operations conducted by the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Far North region of Cameroon and the wider Lake Chad basin have brought together Cameroon and its neighbours in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. Although a positive development, the Force cannot end the violent activities of extremist groups in the region if their exploitation of resources,

recruitment or propaganda as an alternative to State weaknesses goes unchecked.

Albania acknowledges Cameroon's encouraging actions in addressing the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. Nonetheless, we remain concerned about the humanitarian impact and human rights violations. It is crucial for humanitarian operations to go unhindered. The resolution of that conflict should be nationally owned and duly supported, as requested by international partners. As such, we encourage the Government to foster a political environment that enables broader political participation.

Thirdly, with regard to the regional developments, Albania shares the concerns that the alarming escalation of violence in the Sudan is a destabilizing factor in an already extremely fragile region. The challenges on the border between the Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic should be addressed with continued dialogue and enhanced regional coordination.

That leads me to the next point: climate change remains the underlying, silent driver of conflict and hardship in the region. The mass flooding, displacement and worsening of intercommunal tensions require collective solutions to develop capacities against climate change.

We strongly commend the continued engagement of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa in underscoring the implication of climate change, as well as its cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States to promote joint efforts for peace and security in Central Africa.

In conclusion, we think the Security Council should be united in its support for the region and the Office and should adopt a presidential statement in that regard.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for the informative briefing. I also wish to thank Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo and Ms. Tamoifo for their briefings.

I would like to begin by expressing the United States' firm commitment to supporting an inclusive and sustainable democratic transition in Chad. While we welcome Chad's decision to end the suspension of opposition groups involved in the 20 October 2022 protests, we encourage further steps to ensure their meaningful participation in drafting Chad's new constitution and electoral law and developing independent institutions to organize elections. We also

continue to call on the Government to hold accountable those responsible for killings and abuses during the 20 October 2022 protests.

An inclusive and credible democratic transition, based on guidelines in the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué of May 2021, offers the best chance for Chad to emerge from decades of conflict and to build a more stable and prosperous democracy for the future. We stand ready to work with other members of the international community to support those priorities, including through a friends group in N'Djamena.

We also remain concerned about the continued violence in Cameroon and condemn all attacks against civilians, including in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions of the country. That violence must stop.

A broader dialogue is needed to give voice to those stakeholders seeking to address root causes and bring the crisis to an end. And we fully support Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry's efforts to promote inclusive political dialogue.

Turning to the Central African Republic, we urge authorities to redouble their efforts to make progress on the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region road map and to revitalize the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Further, we continue to encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to further strengthen its ties with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and others with a genuine commitment to the country's peace and stability. The Central African Republic has many partners who wish to assist in its development. The Wagner Group, however, is not one of them. The Government's relationship with the Wagner Group hinders others from fully engaging with the Government to bring peace and stability to the Central African Republic.

Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province also continue to destabilize the region through attacks on civilians that have displaced thousands. The United States supports the coordination efforts of regional States and the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat those terrorist groups and implement holistic strategies that address the underlying drivers of terrorism.

Finally, we applaud Gabon's leadership in efforts to preserve the world's tropical rainforests by hosting the One Forest Summit in Libreville. We congratulate the Gabonese Government on hosting a successful summit and look forward to continuing to cooperate and engage in the region to combat climate change.

Central Africa is vibrant, dynamic and full of promise. The United States is proud to partner with the region and others to help realize the vast potential of the people who call it home.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I would like to thank Mr. Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and Ms. Tamoifo for their insightful remarks.

At the outset, allow me to express Malta's regret that the adoption of a presidential statement on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) remain pending, notwithstanding the Council's commitment to addressing the multiple challenges that threaten Central Africa. Malta hopes that an agreement on such a statement can be reached in a timely manner.

We commend Special Representative Abarry for ably steering the mandate and work of UNOCA and for strategically addressing the challenges that individual countries and the region face. We welcome the ongoing coordination with 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 Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

As we express concern about the significant developments that took place last November in Sao Tome and Principe, we also welcome the request by President Vila Nova for the support of the United Nations and ECCAS in strengthening the country's security and justice sectors.

We are also concerned about the difficult path towards transition in Chad. The reports of arrests, transfers to a high-security prison, public hearings and convictions following the protests last October are deeply worrisome. Malta acknowledges the findings published by the National Human Rights Commission in that regard.

As Cameroon is experiencing multiple crises, from terrorism to competition for resources and to the refugee crisis, we encourage the continued efforts towards mediation by Special Representative Abarry in support of the Cameroonian authorities.

Malta remains concerned about the shrinking civic space in certain countries and the repeated threats to the safety of journalists, which only fuel further violence and misinformation, increasing the human cost.

As violent extremism continues to pose a threat to entire communities, we condemn the recent killings of protesters and the closure of schools in the Lake Chad basin area. In that connection, Malta emphasizes the importance of education. It is crucial for schools to remain accessible for children and youth, ensuring that their full potential is unlocked.

In welcoming the work of UNOCA in strengthening democracy in the region and in providing good offices and technical support on multiple aspects, we also commend the Office for its role in addressing cross-cutting issues that represent serious threats to the stability and development of Central Africa. Existing humanitarian needs are compounded by a difficult socioeconomic context in the region, with growing flows of displaced persons and refugees into multiple countries, now further worsened by the conflict in the Sudan. We also echo the findings of the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/389) that adverse climate impacts further intensify the root causes of conflict, triggering transhumance and intercommunal clashes, thus jeopardizing peace and security in the region.

The increase in incidents of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea also reminds us of the importance of advancing regional governance, in cooperation with the Yaoundé Architecture, also funded by the European Union.

The full, equal and meaningful participation of women must stay at the forefront of our considerations. On that note, we welcome the latest efforts geared towards women's leadership in political offices, including in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Those efforts, among others, represent positive and sustainable investments for the peace, security and development of Central Africa.

In conclusion, Malta continues to support efforts to spearhead inclusive dialogue between Governments and citizens, partnerships with civil society and

confidence-building measures. We support UNOCA and the countries of the region towards that path.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to start by thanking Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), for their briefings. I also listened carefully to the presentation by Ms. Marie Tamoifo.

China is a good friend and partner of the Central African countries and a staunch supporter of peace and development in the region. Recently, China invited the leaders of Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries of the region to visit China, injecting a strong impetus into the friendship and cooperation between us. China stands ready to join the rest of the international community to increase our input and commitments in the region by rendering more constructive support. In the light of the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/389), allow me to make the following three observations.

First, we need to support countries in the region in their efforts to maintain political stability. Since the end of last year, Equatorial Guinea has held a presidential election and formed a new Government. Cameroon has held elections for positions in its Senate, made progress in decentralization and national reconciliation and implemented economic and social development programmes at the local level. Chad relaunched its national dialogue. Gabon, Rwanda and other countries are actively preparing for their general elections. The ongoing situation across multiple African countries proves that solutions to African issues must be found from within. The vigorous efforts by the Central African countries deserve full recognition. The international community should respect the sovereignty and ownership of the countries concerned and pitch in to help to maintain regional political stability, with positive energy. Meddling from outside or imposing unilateral sanctions at every turn will not lead to a solution but only aggravate tensions.

We hope that the Special Representative will, in strict accordance with the Council's mandate, provide constructive support to the countries concerned in their electoral preparations and dialogue processes. China believes that the international community should arrive at an objective assessment of human rights work based

on the realities of the countries concerned and the needs of their people. Human rights must not be used as an empty slogan, much less as an instrument to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries concerned.

Secondly, we need to support regional organizations in their response to security challenges. At the ECCAS summit held in February this year, important consensus was reached in areas such as how to deepen regional security cooperation and address common challenges. Nevertheless, illegal armed groups, terrorists and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea remain rampant. The spillovers from the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the turmoil in the Sudan are worrisome, as they are exacerbating the humanitarian and refugee crisis in the region. We support ECCAS in upholding common security and enhancing collective security cooperation. The international community should support the capacity-building of regional counter-terrorism forces and increase its contribution to maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. Efforts must also be made to encourage countries in the region to build greater trust and overcome differences among them.

China takes very seriously the challenges posed by climate change to the region. The international community should provide concrete assistance in that regard. The developed countries in particular should honour their commitments as soon as possible, so that countries in the region can access much-needed financial, technological and capacity-building support.

Thirdly, we need to help countries in the region to prevent and defuse conflict-related risks. According to the Secretary-General's report, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Burundi and the Republic of the Congo are facing a wide range of energy, food, humanitarian and fiscal risks, intensifying the stress factors affecting social stability. Recently, a major economy has adopted irresponsible financial and monetary policies, passing on economic and financial risks beyond its borders, while milking developing countries for their wealth in a cyclical manner. As far as African and other developing countries are concerned, that is the biggest external risk factor. Developed countries and international financial institutions must make real efforts to genuinely understand the difficulties faced by countries in the region, deliver on their development assistance commitments and maintain the current level of humanitarian funding to help countries of the region tide over their difficulties.

Countries in the region must also be supported, on the basis of their national realities and development needs, to bolster their capacities in poverty reduction, employment, trade and infrastructure, in order to make their development more resilient.

The Secretary-General's report calls for tackling the root causes of conflict from the perspective of sustainable development in order to find the key to bringing the region out of its security dilemma. That is an area that merits our close attention and further discussions.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abdou Abarry and President Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo for their highly informative briefings. We also listened attentively to the representative of civil society.

Let me start by highlighting the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the entire United Nations Africa team in preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as in coordination with other international and regional organizations present in Central Africa. Those efforts, while still ongoing, have already produced important results, including the continued engagement of UNOCA and ECCAS in support of the political transition in Chad. Brazil welcomes the progress made in the preparations for the constitutional referendum in late November and the reduction in tensions after the protests last October.

Brazil is also closely following the situation in our sister nation of Sao Tome and Principe, which we are particularly close to for linguistic and historical reasons. The peaceful transfer of power in October 2021 and the orderly legislative and local elections held last September were important developments that were widely praised by international observers. In that overall positive context, the attack on the headquarters of the armed forces last November and the death of alleged perpetrators in State custody is a worrisome development. We are encouraged by the efforts of the local authorities aimed at strengthening the reforms of the country's justice and security sector, and we welcome the support provided by ECCAS and UNOCA, as well as other United Nations agencies, in that regard.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea is an area that has seen positive results. That is an achievement by the States of the region first and foremost, particularly through their efforts in the context of the Yaoundé

Architecture. The recent uptick in maritime crime, with instances of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, shows that as we approach the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture, there is no room for complacency, lest hard-won gains be reversed. As a member of the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea and the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, Brazil stands ready to continue supporting the countries of the region through cooperation and naval operations, as we have done in recent maritime operations such as Guinex, Obangame Express and Grand African NEMO. In that regard, Brazil has already started organizing Operation Guinex III, which is due to take place in August and September and is aimed at strengthening the partnership between the Brazilian navy and the navies and coastguards of the countries in the Gulf of Guinea.

Central Africa continues to face numerous challenges. Long-running conflicts have been exacerbated by many hardships, such as the increase in global inflation. Central Africa faces multidimensional and cross-border threats to peace and security. Terrorism, including the presence of the so-called Islamic State and of Boko Haram, is a grave threat in the Lake Chad basin. We should therefore commend the efforts of the authorities that have helped reduce the activities of those groups. We are particularly concerned about the situation in Cameroon, which is affected by violence both in the Lake Chad basin and in its English-speaking regions. Brazil condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack during the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope, which was directly aimed at civilians, including children.

Finally, we believe that socioeconomic developments will be key to the evolution of the situation in Central Africa in future. Brazil has been working closely with its African partners through South-South cooperation initiatives to address challenges in the areas of health and food security, but that has to be a global effort aimed at reducing the economic and social disparities between various regions of the world.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Abdou Abarry, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Da Piedade Veríssimo, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States, and Ms. Marie Tamoifo for their detailed briefings.

Russia has always supported the work of the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in strengthening peace and security in the region, and considers UNOCA a key instrument of international preventive diplomacy. We note that the good offices of the Special Representative are in high demand in the subregion and that mediation efforts are under way in close contact with the parties in problematic areas, as well as in coordination with regional mechanisms and organizations.

The level of terrorist threats in Central Africa is high, as are social and political tensions. The armed forces of the States of the subregion have to contend with illegal armed groups on a daily basis. The situation is exacerbated by highly porous borders and inadequate resources for effective border control, enabling illegal armed groups to conduct cross-border raids. In the Lake Chad basin, Islamic State West Africa Province and Boko Haram are particularly active and have extended their reach into parts of Nigeria, Chad, the Niger and Cameroon. They are terrorizing local populations, forcing them to coexist and sometimes collaborate with them. The ideology of radical Islam is becoming increasingly popular as it is being widely disseminated by terrorists, especially among young people. We note the increased capacity of illegal armed groups to enhance their organizational structure, enabling them to plan and conduct military operations, prepare terrorist attacks, carry out kidnappings, conduct surveillance and information-gathering, select and train recruits and manufacture improvised explosive devices.

Effective counter-terrorism requires systematic and collective efforts. We attached great importance to the large-scale operation conducted last year by the Multinational Joint Task Force of the countries of the Lake Chad basin to eliminate terrorists from islands along the borders of Chad, the Niger and Nigeria. We believe it is vital to further strengthen cooperation among the States of the region both bilaterally and through various international platforms, including the United Nations.

We are concerned about the continuing attacks on commercial vessels in the Gulf of Guinea. It is important to mobilize the international community's resources in order to build the capacity of coastal States to combat piracy, especially in light of their current lack of naval capacity.

We are monitoring developments in Cameroon, where the problems faced by the Anglophone provinces are rooted in the colonial period. It will be crucial to ensure that they refrain from violence and find solutions through negotiations. We are also watching the situation in Chad in relation to its transitional institution-building process and the implementation of the recommendations resulting from its national dialogue.

We are closely following developments in the Central African Republic. With the support of our partners, including the Russian Federation, the Central African authorities have managed to overcome the most difficult phase in the fight against those who sought to achieve an unconstitutional change of Government by armed force. We appreciate the cooperation with the Central African Republic, and we will continue to help Bangui to combat the insurgency and extend the State's presence throughout the country with the aim of reaching a final settlement. We call for the Security Council to take more decisive steps in July aimed at completely lifting the arms embargo on the Central African Republic, which we feel is essential to strengthening the country's defence capabilities. The African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region are unequivocally in favour of lifting the restrictions.

We are concerned about the serious 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 some kind. We are aware of the gravity of the situation in the Sudan and of the conflict-related risks and difficulties for neighbouring States. There is a new flow of refugees. According to the most recent United Nations data, Chad alone has already hosted more than 100,000 people. International support to the States in the subregion must be increased, in line with growing needs.

The challenges faced by the countries of the subregion are complex. However, we are convinced that the key role in crisis prevention and conflict resolution must be played by the States of the region themselves, with the necessary support from the international community, fully respecting their sovereignty, independence and the decisions they take — in deed, not just in word.

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

First of all, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry, Ambassador Da Piedade Veríssimo and Ms. Tamoifo for their insightful briefings today. I also wish to support the remarks made by the representative of Gabon on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique — and build on the views expressed in that statement.

It is clear that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) continues to pave the way for the United Nations and regional partners to better support the countries in the Central Africa region, in particular through preventive diplomacy and mediation — efforts that are essential in fostering peace, security and prosperity. In that respect, I would like to emphasize three points today.

First, UNOCA should continue its support to the ongoing political and peace processes in the Central Africa region. We see the true value of ensuring that those processes are inclusive, allowing for the meaningful participation of women and the engagement of youth. On that point, I join the Secretary-General in welcoming the recent appointment of women to key political positions in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, the adoption of a national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in Chad and other similar efforts in the region. We are also encouraged by efforts to incorporate gender analysis in the reporting of UNOCA's activities.

Secondly, stakeholders at all levels must work together effectively to enhance cooperation and coordination on border management. The region faces challenges that are mostly transnational in nature, and the solutions must also be transnational. Local-level, cross-border forums between Chad and Cameroon, bilateral joint commissions and regional initiatives help stakeholders in the region to better align their priorities when it comes to managing borders. That is greatly needed, in particular to tackle the issue of terrorism and the activities of armed groups.

We know, for example, that adequate border management can curtail the flow of arms and the illicit trade of natural resources. We are therefore also deeply concerned about the resurgence of Boko Haram attacks in the Lake Chad basin. We reiterate the urgency in tackling the immediate threats posed by terrorist groups, while addressing the underlying causes of violence and extremism.

Thirdly, as other colleagues have mentioned, climate change and peace and security in the region must be prioritized. The rainy season has begun in the region and, as every year, we are seeing increasingly erratic rainfall and its consequences. Heavy flooding across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon and Rwanda have caused the loss of hundreds of lives, destroyed thousands of homes, increased the numbers of refugees and displaced people and damaged critical infrastructure and agricultural plantations.

Southern Angola faces the worst drought in 40 years, with 1.58 million people facing acute food insecurity, according to the World Food Programme. It is well-documented now that climate change is exacerbating tensions among communities, especially between herders and farmers across the region, and those issues cannot be ignored. We are encouraged by the efforts undertaken in the region, including through UNOCA's work to both mitigate and adapt to the ramifications of the changing climate. Such initiatives are crucial for protecting both ecosystems and livelihoods, but more needs to be done.

To that end, together with Mozambique and Switzerland, we hosted an informal briefing of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security last Friday to highlight the link between climate and security. And at the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be hosted in Dubai in November, we will have an opportunity to address the links between climate change and peace and security across the globe.

To conclude, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its support for UNOCA's work in favour of the countries of the Central Africa region and their 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 11.55 a.m.