



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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Friday, 13 December 2024, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Wood. (United States of America)

Members:

Algeria.	Mr. Remaoun
China.	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador.	Mr. Egas Benavides
France.	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Guyana.	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan.	Mr. Mikanagi
Malta.	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique.	Mr. Afonso
Republic of Korea.	Mr. Cho
Russian Federation.	Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone.	Mr. Yajah
Slovenia.	Ms. Jurečko
Switzerland.	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. . .	Mr. Kariuki

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/2024/865)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 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/2024/865)

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 for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and Ms. Daniele Nlate, President of the Central African Women's Active Network and Vice-President of the Central African Civil Society Coalition for Peace and Conflict Prevention.

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/2024/865, 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*): Since I presented the twenty-sixth report of the Secretary-General (S/2024/420) on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), on 10 June 2024 (see S/PV.9648), the Security Council has extended UNOCA's mandate for a period of three years and adopted a presidential statement on Central Africa (S/PRST/2024/7) that provides valuable guidance on the Council's priorities and corresponding expectations in the implementation of those priorities. I would like to thank Council members most sincerely for their renewed confidence in the work of UNOCA and assure them of my and my colleagues' determination to spare no effort in achieving the objectives they have set for us.

The past few months have also been marked by the adoption of the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution A/79/1) as a founding instrument

of strengthened multilateralism. Unfortunately, Central Africa has not been spared the challenges of the current global context. The region has avoided neither security crises, climate emergencies nor geopolitical rivalries. It is with good reason that the States of Central Africa unreservedly supported the renewed commitment to multilateralism embodied in the Pact for the Future and, under the leadership of the Republic of the Congo, played a decisive role in its adoption. UNOCA intends to ensure that the region benefits as much as possible from the momentum generated by the Pact in terms of conflict prevention, sustainable development, reform of the international financial system and of the Security Council, and other matters that are priorities for the subregion. To that end, UNOCA will continue to work with the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

During the period covered by the report (S/2024/865), I undertook visits to Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe.

I would like to welcome civil society representative Daniele Nlate to this meeting.

We noted with great interest the emphasis in the Security Council's presidential statement of 1 November on preventing unconstitutional changes of Government and the risks associated with elections. Members will recall that at the fifty-sixth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), Member States asked UNOCA to organize a conference on the issue of unconstitutional changes of Government in Central Africa. That conference was held on 1 and 2 July in Sao Tome and Principe. The participants made a number of recommendations, including strengthening prevention, developing a regional legal framework, setting up permanent inclusive political forums for dialogue and ensuring the effective participation of women and young people in political processes.

I am pleased to say that those recommendations are in line with the Pact for the Future, in terms of putting in place national structures for conflict prevention, for reaffirming the role of regional organizations and for implementing the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas.

Elections have been or will be held in the subregion. On 15 July, presidential and legislative elections were held in Rwanda. According to the ECCAS observation

mission, those elections took place in a peaceful and calm environment.

UNOCA is closely monitoring the preparations for the many elections scheduled for the region in 2025 and 2026. It should be noted that we have always advocated consensual and inclusive elections, free of any restrictions on freedom of expression and free of any hate speech or calls for violence.

On 29 December, Chad will complete its political transition by holding legislative, provincial and local elections that will finalize the establishment of the institutions provided for in the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, adopted by referendum on 17 December 2023. In addition, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Gabon will hold legislative or presidential elections in 2025, while the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe will work towards holding presidential elections in 2026. With regard to those elections, and as proof of the good working relationship and trust between the countries of the region and the United Nations, Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe have all requested electoral assistance from the United Nations, and most have already received needs assessment missions. We intend to make full use of our mandate to support the countries of the region in those electoral processes, including by ensuring the prevention of electoral violence and hate speech, and by supporting the full participation of women and young people.

Since the beginning of 2024, almost all the countries of Central Africa have been affected by extreme weather events that caused deadly and destructive floods, affecting more than 3.2 million people and exacerbating social and economic tensions in the subregion. We are pleased to note that the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 29) highlighted the key role of the Congo basin forest, the planet's "second green lung", which absorbs between 1 and 1.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, and which plays a strategic role in global climate regulation. However, the climate funding needed to protect that vital ecosystem and strengthen the resilience of populations to the effects of climate change is largely insufficient. Indeed, to date, less than 15 per cent of international pledges to Central Africa have been honoured.

Furthermore, the humanitarian situation is becoming even more complex as a result of the

emergence of the mpox disease, the epicentre of which is in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In view of the worrisome humanitarian situation in the region, ECCAS, in collaboration with UNOCA, is planning a summit of Heads of State and Government on that issue in February 2025.

The transition process in Gabon is continuing according to the timetable set by the authorities. As part of my good offices, I held regular talks with the transitional authorities and the opposition ahead of the constitutional referendum on 16 November. The talks were held in a secure manner and without any restrictions or infringements on freedom of speech or information. Another positive development is that the authorities allowed more than 30 organizations to observe the process, including observers from Gabonese civil society and numerous international partners, such as ECCAS and the African Union. Those experts were unanimous in their praise for the smooth conduct of the elections, while making recommendations to strengthen the electoral process and the legislative framework for future elections. We hope that the Gabonese authorities will implement those essential reforms to strengthen institutions before the holding of presidential and legislative elections, which will bring the transition to an end in 2025.

In Sao Tome and Principe, a model of peaceful political transition in Central Africa, the authorities have stated their intention to revise the 2003 Constitution in order to adapt to the country's social and political realities. In order to advocate the establishment of a framework for dialogue on this issue, I travelled to Sao Tome and Principe at the end of November for talks with the main political actors, who expressed their commitment to a constructive and inclusive dialogue to ensure a consensual and sustainable reform.

In Cameroon, institutions, voters and political actors are already mobilizing for the 2025 presidential election. The annual voter registration exercise is currently being completed. ELECAM, the body in charge of organizing the elections, has agreed to include again 120,000 voters who had previously been removed from the electoral roll, following problems registering their biometric data.

Preparations for those elections are taking place, it should be emphasized, in a context in which separatist groups continue their destabilizing activities in the north-west and south-west of the country. In addition

to all kinds of violence, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the atrocities have resulted in nearly 250,000 children dropping out of school for the 2023-2024 school year, in violation of resolution 2601 (2021).

While the Cameroonian authorities have taken charge of the process of resolving this crisis through several commendable initiatives, the arrest by Norwegian authorities on 25 September of the separatist leader Ayaba Cho Lucas by the Norwegian authorities will have a definite impact on reducing acts of violence against the local population and, we hope, will mark the end of impunity for all those responsible for human rights abuses.

Chad and the other countries of the Lake Chad basin continue to suffer attacks by groups affiliated with Boko Haram or dissident groups, including the particularly deadly attack against the Chadian army on 27 October. In accordance with resolution 2349 (2017) of the Council, I undertook, from 12 to 15 November, a joint mission with my colleague from the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to the affected region. We argued in favour of maintaining and strengthening the Multinational Joint Task Force, considered to be the most effective force of the continental security architecture on the ground. We spoke to people displaced by attacks committed by Boko Haram-affiliated groups or splinter groups and by floods, the majority of whom are women and children.

In that respect, I would like to call for funding for the humanitarian response plan and the Eastern Chad Resilience and Stabilization Project 2025-2027, as well as the revised Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. We must not lose sight of the fact that Chad is home to almost 1,254,000 refugees, as well as being a cornerstone of the regional architecture for security and stability in Central Africa.

The States of Central Africa have demonstrated their political will and ability to overcome their differences peacefully. Accordingly, the Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea have requested arbitration by the International Court of Justice in the delimitation of their land and maritime borders, as well as the determination of the sovereignty over the Mbanié, Cocotier and Conga islands.

Since the issuance of the report under review, high-level contacts have taken place between Chadian and

Central African officials on issues including security on their common border.

I was also encouraged to learn that, on 17 November, His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, received a high-level delegation from the Republic of Nigeria, to discuss the Multinational Joint Task Force. I am confident in the capacity of members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with the support of international partners, to adapt the Force to the new security challenges.

I cannot conclude this briefing without mentioning the enormous hope raised recently by the Luanda process under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola, to end the crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Angolan Foreign Minister reported on this at the fifty-eighth meeting of UNSAC, held in Bangui, Central African Republic, on 29 November. The tripartite summit scheduled to take place in Luanda on 15 December will be another important milestone in the search for a negotiated solution to the serious crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I would like to conclude by expressing my wish, as we enter the year 2025, that our world in general, and Central Africa in particular, will enjoy a year of peace, stability, justice and prosperity, in line with the commitment made by all States to a reinvigorated multilateralism that respects the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations and the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1).

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Nlate.

Ms. Nlate (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council on behalf of civil society in Central Africa. I would also like to thank the members of the Security Council for listening to me, as we do not always have this opportunity. We therefore thank them sincerely.

I am Ms. Daniele Nlate, President of the Central African Women's Active Network and Vice-President of the Central African Civil Society Coalition for Peace and Conflict Prevention. In this capacity, I will not be speaking solely about the cause of women, as there is not much more for Council members to learn. They are well aware that femicide today, in the world and in Central Africa, is legion. Given that the figures have

increased, I am unable to give them to the Council, but we note that not a single day goes by in Central Africa in which we do not see a case of femicide.

After the briefing by Ambassador Abarry, I would like to focus on the social aspect, with all the gender-based violence we have observed. As a member of civil society with a truly independent viewpoint, as a woman on the ground, I can assure Council members of the difficulties encountered by the populations, precarious situations that drive most young people to take drugs and narcotics. Unemployment, underemployment, the high cost of living and rising food prices are just some of the problems. We know that the problems in Ukraine and around the world, all the wars and conflicts, are taking us back 20 years, with a poverty which is having an impact on households and homes, States and even the African continent. Although we observe all these conflicts in other parts of the world too, we are embarrassed, because when we complain and plead for our needs to be taken into account, as that is the objective, we are always told that there is a crisis, it is widespread, it is affecting the world, there is no funding and that everything is destroyed. And yet, the situation of women and girls remains complex, despite the efforts of governments and regional, continental and international institutions, not to mention civil society.

I am here to tell Council members that, after the celebration of the 16 days of action against gender-based violence, we have come to a bitter conclusion: the rate of femicide, rape and violence, including armed violence against girls and women, is truly on the rise.

I would like to give the Council a brief overview of the security challenges that women are facing with regard to violence. I will also include in my briefing civil society in general and gender, which is of interest to those gathered here, because if it were not for our well-being, we would not be invited.

Women are therefore at the greatest risk of being killed by a partner, a family member or another malicious individual, according to a UN-Women study from 2019. We are seeing physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence in the countries of Central Africa, as in other parts of the world. The political agendas of African States are gradually starting to take into account the fight against gender-based violence. However, we are seeing an increase in domestic violence, femicide, murder, rape and the kidnapping of young women and girls. Above all, as we

see it, gender policies have not produced the results that we hoped for or expected. Those policies are often not very effective. We are not saying that nothing can be done, but we note that civil society is often dismissed and discriminated against and accused of provoking conflicts by facilitating access to those who are labelled as the enemies of peace in our various countries.

The context was well described by Mr. Abarry, who told the Security Council about our Central African region, which is very beautiful and very rich but also prone to conflict, with crises throughout the region. Whether members visit Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo or other countries, they will see that there are open or latent conflicts there. However, women and young people are the ones who suffer as a result of those conflicts and pay the highest price for them.

If we look at the statistics — and I will not dwell on them, because I know that members are familiar with them — according to the World Health Organization, 65 per cent of women in Central Africa have experienced violence. Africa recorded 21,700 victims of femicides in 2023 — imagine what could be behind that increase in attacks, assassinations and violence — or approximately half of the femicides committed globally. More specifically, we can say that three of every 10 women in Cameroon will fall victim to violence. In addition, forced and child marriages are commonplace in Central Africa and contribute to women's vulnerability to violence. It is important to note that, as I said, those figures are likely to be higher in reality, because many cases of violence and femicide are not declared or documented. The statistics on violence against women and girls in Central Africa are of particular concern. Again, according to some studies, one of every three women, not only in Cameroon but in the rest of our countries, will fall victim to physical or sexual violence during her lifetime. The reported percentage is particularly high.

We see physical and sexual violence. Women and girls are often victims of physical violence and rape. Domestic violence is also very widespread in Central Africa, with women being kidnapped, raped and abducted. Given everything we know about our borders, the armed groups and Boko Haram, we have deeply concerning cases and civil society is doing its part to try to support those Governments that open their doors to those victims. As I said earlier, genital mutilation of young girls is also a concern in certain regions.

One United Nations report denounced the serious sexual violence committed by armed groups in the Central African Republic, in particular in the town of Bakouma. According to one study, 70 per cent of women traders at the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola have suffered physical or sexual violence. In fact, as we will see today, the problem in Central Africa is free movement and all the known obstacles thereto. Closed borders lead to poverty, because all those living at the borders become prisoners and are unable to trade, exchange or move freely. In Cameroon, another study found that women traders on the border between Cameroon and Nigeria had fallen victim to physical violence. They were seriously assaulted by the armed groups we talked about today — groups born from the conflict that has been establishing itself for the past few years in the north-west and south-west of Cameroon.

I must highlight the role played by civil society, because we are not here only to criticize or say that nothing is being done by States. Indeed, efforts are being made and we will mention here that along with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), our regional networks have been supported substantially, such as through the strengthening of their technical, thematic and even financial capacities during our activities. We would like to emphasize, for example, the organization of cross-border faith, which for us is an advocacy tool. We launched it 15 years ago in cooperation with the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), which has also supported us. However, we find that that support to be insufficient and we hope that the Security Council or the United Nations will look into the practical question of financing our activities, because supporting civil society solely by strengthening thematic and technical capacity is not enough. We must implement everything that we have received in terms of conflict prevention, including early-warning systems in the field. We sometimes do so sporadically or in a way that is not always very professional, because members know that in Central Africa roads are a problem, the borders are closed and there is a lack of electricity and there are inconvenient power cuts for those who have access to electrical power. In addition, our means are modest, even in terms of computer equipment or new information technologies, but we must be able to access those means in order to communicate, sound the alarm and avoid escalation.

There is also the Central Africa Annual Cross-Border Fair, which we have organized in partnership with institutions, including UNOCA. For five years, we have had the support of UNOCA in the area of communication. We hope to have more support with communication, because quite simply that allows us to solve some of the problems at the borders. Such support is already in place for those fairs that we have managed to hold at a border that has achieved relative peace but is slightly more prone to crises, namely, the border between Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, where one may observe violence and violations of the rights of certain citizens. Even there, among brotherly countries, it is difficult for a Cameroonian citizen to cross the other borders without being suspected. All that also comes from the lack of infrastructure at times, with no real infrastructure development at those borders. Or to be more precise, some countries are better developed than others at the border — as in the example of Equatorial Guinea — and in some cases young migrants or in any case those who seek work or visit the families are assaulted and/or taxed by bandits, if we can call them that, and sometimes we have seen the police make mistakes when they come under fire, which poses a problem.

We have been able to bring the institutions with us — UNOCA, as I said, as well as CEMAC and the Governments of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea — to carry out this initiative, the physical platform through which we have together established a gender component, so that women, young people, disabled persons, Indigenous peoples and now businesses and institutions can explain their mission, can inform people where to find them if they need support. It is clear that in our cities and capitals it is difficult to have access to institutions, ministries and so on, so we get together and try to encourage collaboration with those bodies.

We are attempting to bring together the mayors of border towns because as those spearheading transborder cooperation, there must be cooperation among the parties. We talk about conferences on issues of concern primarily to women and young girls and their empowerment. That is because preventing conflict is already a way to empower women and encourage young women and girls to become self-employed. These are often women and girls who have been displaced from difficult areas, such as in the Central African Republic or Chad or from regions in crisis in Cameroon or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By sheer resilience or

out of necessity, they reach the borders of other countries but the doors are closed and poverty sets in. That is in addition to illicit trafficking of all kinds, both national and transnational. Danger gives rise to more danger.

In addition, with regard to those who commit crimes and, at times, it is young people who have lost their way and feel trapped and unsupported. Ultimately, to get by, they end up committing crimes in an attempt to survive. They may end up killing a woman or a girl they recruited into conflict. Speaking of recruitment into conflict, especially in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Cameroon, with Boko Haram, young boys and girls are recruited into conflict because poverty is real.

Conflicts have an impact on farmers seeking a lush environment and a better life. However, many of them find themselves in poverty and in that, a threat. We note with regret that our actions are not always taken into account. Civil society is, at times, viewed as a troublemaker. Instead of being seen as making a good contribution, it is seen as an evil. That is because we are suspected, as I was saying earlier, of supporting those who are known as the enemies of one State or another.

We will continue to approach all institutions, Governments and community leaders to encourage people to trust us. Instead of supporting us, some will duplicate our actions. Members can see that we are somewhat confused and no longer know which way to turn. Should women still have to beg although we are determined to always find a way to cope, raise our children and show them how to do things, be independent and avoid being recruited into unfavourable activities? No, we do not think so.

For 16 years, therefore, we have been carrying out advocacy, organizing physical platforms because we have carried out advocacy via correspondence. Our approaches are clear. We are appealing to the Security Council because cooperation among institutions, Governments, civil society and traditional chiefs could be helpful. Let me borrow the words of Dr. Elono of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), who recently made us smile when he said that after 40 years, we are almost at a standstill because when the regional economic communities abandon or fight us, when the Governments fight us instead of bringing us to them so that we can work together effectively, we remain by and large discouraged or taken in by what they fear.

There are those who will charm and offer one money. Weak-minded people will indeed succumb to the offer. We are saying no. We will not succumb. We will continue our advocacy. We will ask for help to build our capacities, despite the crisis in Ukraine and all of the global issues. Although it will be a bit difficult for the Council, we know — based on our information — that the Council functions as we do. States contribute, but with all of the issues, it will be somewhat difficult. However, the Central African region is the last region on the continent for a visit, with all its natural resources, including mineral and other resources. It is a shame. I do not think anyone is happy seeing people living in poverty.

While supporting the regional economic communities, such as the ECCAS, volunteer institutions and UNOCA, the mandate of which, I would like to recall, has been extended by three years, I implore the Council to build the capacity of our United Nations Office for Central Africa. We commend the Head of UNOCA, who I had the pleasure of meeting when he visited Cameroon and met with civil society. I had the pleasure of hearing him out.

The Central African Civil Society Coalition for Peace and Conflict Prevention has been well equipped for more than 15 years on early-warning issues, negotiation and mediation. We have received training from the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace Disarmament and Development in Africa and on the fight against terrorism. We implement all of it, if only at the borders, and with Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Our representatives in the country are also active.

I ask members to kindly pay more serious attention to our subregion and provide increased resources to our institutions, such as UNOCA and others, through perhaps direct support. The United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations are also there. We have often worked with them. We also work with UNESCO and other organizations so that Central Africa can survive, the conflicts can come to an end and people can be happy.

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

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/865) and his briefing today. I am also grateful to Ms. Nlate for her remarks.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank co-penholder Mozambique and the other members of the Security Council for the successful agreement of an important presidential statement (S/PRST/2024/7) on the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) last month. The statement underscored the Council's support to Special Representative Abarry and the valuable work of his Office in the subregion.

The United Kingdom also welcomes the Special Representative's close coordination of efforts with his counterparts in the region, namely the Special Representatives of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, 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 Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region. Together, they facilitate a coherent approach to common regional challenges.

I will now make three points.

First, The United Kingdom welcomes the continued progress towards Gabon's political transition and the Special Representative's efforts in using UNOCA's good offices to support the recent peaceful referendum. The United Kingdom encourages UNOCA to continue its valuable work as Gabon moves towards presidential elections next year. Peaceful and credible presidential elections in 2025 will be an important way for the Government of Gabon to continue to deliver for the Gabonese people.

Secondly, the United Kingdom welcomes legislative, provincial and local elections in Chad, which will mark the end of the country's political transition. Chad has been impacted by the conflict in the Sudan, severe flooding and terrorism in recent months. But even in this challenging time, we urge the Government to uphold the principles agreed in the inclusive and sovereign national dialogue and to ensure transparent, pluralistic and, above all, peaceful elections. The end of the transition should mark the beginning, not the end, of Chad's journey to democracy. The United Kingdom

will continue to support the Government's resilience and development priorities.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom remains concerned about the violence in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon and its impact on the lives of civilians. UNOCA is well-placed to support a Cameroonian-led dialogue and ultimately a Cameroonian-led resolution to the conflict. We are also concerned about the continued threat posed by Islamist groups in Cameroon's far north region and across the Lake Chad basin. We encourage all States in the region to continue coordinating their responses through the Multinational Joint Task Force. Multinational cooperation remains the most effective way to tackle those groups, which pose a common risk to the subregion.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Algeria, Sierra Leone and my own country, Mozambique — and Guyana (A3+). We thank Ms. Danielle Nlate for her important briefing.

The A3+ would like to express its profound gratitude to Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), for his comprehensive reach and insightful briefing. We highly commend his exemplary leadership and his team's dedication in addressing the complex and multifaceted challenges facing Central Africa. The A3+ warmly welcomes the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2024/7 on UNOCA in November — a significant milestone as the previous presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/17), which was adopted in the context of mandate renewal, dates back to 2018. We commend the Security Council's renewed attention to that critical regional mechanism, which plays an essential role in promoting peace, security and development across Central Africa. We emphasize our strong support for UNOCA's mandate. We call for the provision of adequate financial resources to enable it to effectively carry out its critical work in addressing cross-border challenges and advancing stability and development in the region.

The political situation in Central Africa remains characterized by a blend of notable progress and challenges that require our attention. In Chad, the announcement by the Government of legislative,

provincial and municipal elections for December is a welcome development. That represents a great opportunity for the advancement of democracy, national reconciliation and trust. The decision of some political actors to boycott the elections raises serious concerns about the inclusivity and fairness of the process. To address the situation, we urge the parties to engage in a constructive dialogue. In Gabon, the peaceful holding of the constitutional referendum represents a significant step. The adoption of reforms aimed at enhancing inclusivity, given the eligibility criteria for presidential candidates, is a commendable step towards success. We trust that the electoral framework will be further streamlined in order to guarantee the fairness and credibility of the upcoming presidential elections in Gabon. The A3+ urges the transitional authorities to maintain open channels of communication with all political actors, civil society organizations and the broader Gabonese society in order to build trust and ensure stability in the country.

The political landscape in Cameroon is a matter of concern, as demonstrated by the repeated postponement of elections and the extension of legislative terms. The situation is further compounded by the ongoing crisis in the north-western and south-western regions, where armed separatist violence and allegations of human rights violations have been reported. We strongly condemn attacks on schools. We urge the resumption of classes, as today's children are tomorrow's hope for a better and peaceful Cameroon. The A3+ encourages dialogue as the most viable path forward to address the root causes of the crisis and restore peace, with the protection of civilians as a top priority. The dire situation in the north-western and south-western regions calls for an urgent, inclusive and Cameroonian-led resolution. The A3+ underscores the imperative to respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cameroon.

Central Africa is still facing security challenges, with persistent threats to regional peace and stability. The A3+ commends the Multinational Joint Task Force on its efforts to counter Boko Haram and its affiliates. Those efforts have yielded measurable progress, as evidenced by the decline in violent incidents. However, the continued capacity of the groups to launch attacks, particularly against military installations and civilian populations, demonstrates that the threat has been far from eradicated. Sustained vigilance and enhanced coordination among the member States of the

Multinational Joint Task Force are crucial to building on the progress achieved to date. Its operational capacities must be reinforced, including through collaboration and resource-sharing improvement, in order to address conflicts and insecurity in the Central African region. In the same vein, we welcome regional cooperation, including the bilateral agreements between the Central African Republic, Chad and other neighbouring States to enhance border security and intelligence-sharing, as a positive development. In that context, it is crucial for all States in the region to continue their joint efforts within the Multinational Joint Task Force framework in order to ensure sustained progress, address any emerging threats and restore stability to the region.

The worrisome figures on the dire humanitarian situation in Central Africa underscore the devastating impact of armed conflict, climate change and public health crises on the region's most vulnerable populations. The escalating farmer-herder clashes, driven by resource scarcity and shifting weather patterns, highlight the worsening impacts of climate change in the region. Besides displacement, the subregion faces severe food insecurity caused by climate-induced disasters, such as flooding and drought, exacerbating vulnerabilities and fuelling conflicts, particularly over natural resources. Public health systems are also under strain owing to the mpox outbreak, which disproportionately affects women and children. Despite comprehensive response plans by humanitarian actors, significant funding gaps persist, with less than half of the required resources secured. That is a stark reminder of the need for urgent and coordinated international action to bridge those gaps and provide life-saving assistance. We call on Member States to step up their contributions to bridge those gaps and provide life-saving assistance.

The A3+ commends the efforts of regional organizations, including the Economic Community of Central African States and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, in addressing shared challenges. Their leadership in areas such as counter-terrorism, economic integration and transboundary security is vital. Similarly, the A3+ acknowledges UNOCA's initiatives to promote the participation of women in governance, to support electoral processes and to address the climate-security nexus, which are all exemplary actions. The resilience of the countries of Central Africa and their peoples in the face of adversity is remarkable and deserves our unwavering

support. The A3+ stands ready to assist those countries in their pursuit of peace, stability and prosperity.

Ms. Jurečko (Slovenia): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his comprehensive briefing today. I also thank Ms. Nlate for her testimony.

Slovenia welcomes the adoption last month of the presidential statement (S/PRST/2024/7) on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). Through that statement, together with its extension of UNOCA's mandate for additional three years, the Security Council was able to demonstrate its strong backing for the important work of the Regional Office in promoting peace and security in the subregion.

In my remarks today, I would like to briefly touch upon three issues facing central Africa.

First, we take note of the political developments in the subregion. We welcome the orderly conclusion of the constitutional referendum in Gabon in November, which marks an important milestone in the country's transition towards constitutional order. We also take note of the announcement of legislative, provincial and municipal elections scheduled to take place later this month in Chad.

As several countries of the subregion enter into an intense pre-election period, we share Special Representative Abarry's assessment of the importance of the integrity of electoral processes and the protection of human rights. Arbitrary arrests and detentions of members of opposition parties, journalists, human rights activists and community leaders must end. In order for elections to bring stability, they need to take part in an inclusive and free political space, with the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women, as well as the inclusion of youth and marginalized groups. We encourage all countries of the region to continue making use of UNOCA's good offices and expertise in support of their electoral processes.

Secondly, we remain concerned about the security situation in some parts of the subregion. With regard to the persisting violence in north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon, we urge the Government of Cameroon and the warring parties to silence their guns, denounce violence and engage in genuine political dialogue to resolve long-standing grievances and address pressing humanitarian needs. Slovenia strongly condemns all violations of international humanitarian

law and all violations and abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cameroon. Especially concerning is the continuous denial of the basic right to education, which is severely affected by enforced school closures. Cameroon's endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration commits the Government to doing its utmost to see that places of education are places of safety. We urge all parties to protect schools, teachers and students and allow them to continue to learn and secure their future.

The reports of the surrenders and arrests of the elements of Boko-Haram-affiliated and splinter groups in the Lake Chad basin are a welcome development. Nevertheless, the regional security cooperation arrangements are essential and must be preserved. There is a sense of urgency to build trust in the region, and we call on all countries affected by the crisis to continue their cooperation through the Multinational Joint Task Force. Regional arrangements — stemming from years of mutually beneficial cooperation, exchange of information and intelligence and building early warning systems to keep pressure on Boko Haram and other militant groups — are irreplaceable at a time of a persisting terrorist threat.

Finally, prolonged droughts in the past years and recent floods across the subregion serve as a stark reminder of how climate-induced disasters continue to present one of the underlying multipliers of insecurity and instability in the central African region, exacerbating food insecurity and degrading livelihoods. The testimonies of the communities on the ground speak volumes about how the lack of access to water influences the increasingly fatal farmer-herder conflicts. As the fields of maize, rice and wheat end up devastated after erratic rains, local insecurities present a breeding ground for recruitment of at-risk and marginalized youth. We encourage UNOCA to continue its work, together with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the Economic Community of Central African States, other regional organizations and the wider international community, on the climate and peace and security agenda.

In conclusion, Slovenia would like to express its sincere appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and his team for their efforts and to offer its full support to UNOCA and its mandate.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Abarry for his briefing

and listened carefully to the statement delivered by the civil society representative. In connection with the Secretary-General's most recent report on the subject of today's meeting (S/2024/865), I would like to make the following points.

First, we need to maintain the overall positive momentum of the situation in the region. Over the past six months, the situation in Central Africa has been largely stable, with positive progress in the political and peace processes: Gabon held its constitutional referendum within to the agreed time frame; Rwanda successfully held general elections; and Chad continued to promote the peace and reconciliation process. Those developments should be recognized and welcomed.

Currently, many countries are actively preparing for general or local elections. We hope that all the different political factions in the countries concerned will step up dialogue and consultations, bridge differences, forge consensus and steadily advance the political process. The international community should provide timely, targeted and constructive assistance to support countries of the region in pursuing development paths that are tailored to their national contexts.

Secondly, we must support countries in the region in safeguarding common security. During the reporting period, the security situation in Central Africa eased somewhat, and there was an overall downward trend in violence in the Lake Chad basin. Nevertheless, the security challenges — including the persistent and grave threat posed by terrorism, the ongoing threat to regional security posed by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, the emerging spillover of the conflict in the Sudan, the prominent problem of weapons diversion and the increasing conflicts over resources — cannot be effectively addressed by any one country alone. China supports the countries of the region in strengthening the concept of a community of common security, deepening their coordination on security affairs, reinforcing their security mechanisms and fostering synergies to safeguard regional security. The international community should sustain its investment in security in Central Africa and support the countries of the region in jointly buttressing their security defence.

Thirdly, we need to help the countries of the region to achieve development. For historical and practical reasons, Central African countries are still confronted by significant development challenges. Rapidly embarking on a fast track to development is

not only an urgent task shared by the countries of the region but also the key to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty leading to chaos, which in turn perpetuates poverty. The international community should step up its response to humanitarian appeals for Central Africa, while strengthening assistance for economic development and the improvement of livelihoods in those countries. At the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held in Beijing in September, China proposed 10 partnership initiatives in support of Africa's development, including by granting least developed countries zero-tariff treatment for 100 per cent of tariff lines, among a series of practical measures that will benefit Central African countries and inject strong impetus into the region's development.

Recently, frequent extreme weather events in Central Africa have caused floods and droughts in many countries, triggering a series of severe consequences such as displacement and food shortages and exacerbating the already daunting humanitarian challenges faced by those countries. Developed countries should honour their latest funding commitments made at the twenty-ninth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Baku. They should also provide practical assistance to Central African countries in tackling the climate crisis and help them to build their resilience to climate shocks.

Recently, the Security Council once again renewed the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and issued its first presidential statement in five years on the situation in the region (S/PRST/2024/7), thereby fully reflecting the attention and importance that it accord to the situation in the region.

China will continue to support the work of Special Representative Abarry and UNOCA in the hope that they will leverage their current mandates and resources and strengthen coordination and cooperation with other United Nations offices and missions in Africa and the United Nations country teams on the ground in order to make a greater contribution to the promotion of peace, stability, development and revitalization in the region.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Ms. Daniele Nlate for their contributions.

Switzerland reiterates its full support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the region. The commitment to regional

preventive diplomacy in order to build lasting peace has remained a priority for Switzerland throughout our mandate on the Security Council. We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), as well as the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2024/7, to which Switzerland is fully committed. That is a clear message of unity from the Council, both for the region and the work of the Special Representative, as well as an indication of its readiness to support the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States.

Allow me to emphasize three points.

First, Switzerland will continue to be committed to ensuring inclusive political processes aimed at establishing lasting peace in Central Africa. A strong and robust civil society that can express itself and participate in political dialogues is the backbone of such processes. In that context, the constitutional referendum held on 16 November in Gabon and the legislative and local elections in Chad to be held at the end of this month constitute important opportunities to ensure inclusive processes, which are crucial for any peaceful society. In that regard, we commend UNOCA's preventive diplomacy efforts and encourage the Special Representative to continue his engagement with women civil society leaders in order to strengthen the meaningful participation of women in all political processes.

Secondly, the security and humanitarian situation in parts of the region remains alarming. As we heard today, the intensification of armed conflict, intercommunal violence and forced displacement have led to a worsening humanitarian crisis in Chad, the Central African Republic and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The protracted violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and armed groups in north-west Cameroon and the Lake Chad basin continues to pose a serious threat to regional security. As is often the case, women and children are paying the heaviest price. Switzerland calls on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law under all circumstances, in particular to allow and facilitate the full, rapid, safe and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid to all civilians in need. That also implies respect for and the protection of humanitarian personnel, as emphasized in resolution 2730 (2024). That is long overdue.

Thirdly, the subregion remains vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as illustrated by the recent

floods in Cameroon and Nigeria, as well as the serious food insecurity prevalent in Chad. As co-Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, Switzerland has been working for the past two years to mitigate the security risks associated with climate change. In that context, under the leadership of Switzerland and Mozambique, members of the Informal Expert Group visited the Lake Chad basin region via Nigeria earlier this month, together with climate advisers from UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. We were able to witness at first hand the impact of the effects of climate change on insecurity in parts of the region, and therefore can attest to the urgent need for the Council to act. We will continue to advocate the mitigation of emerging climate change risks and the strengthening of adaptive responses.

At our annual exchange with the African Union Peace and Security Council during the Swiss presidency of the Security Council, both Councils stressed the need to pursue political processes to tackle the root causes of conflict and instability in Central Africa. Switzerland will continue to intensify its diplomatic efforts to strengthen dialogue between all actors with the aim of overcoming the obstacles to lasting peace and stability in the region. We call on the Security Council and the international community to unanimously support UNOCA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the implementation of their mandate.

Mr. Egas Benavides (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Abarry for his detailed briefing, and I acknowledge the participation of Ms. Nlate as a representative of civil society.

Throughout the past two years, as a member of the Security Council, Ecuador has followed the important work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and its joint work with the countries and organizations of the region — in particular the Economic Community of Central African States — which are key to addressing the root causes of violence and building sustainable peace. I would like to take this occasion to reiterate my country's support for Special Representative Abarry and the work of his Office to promote inclusive political dialogue, preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding. The recent adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2024/7, on UNOCA, and the extension of its mandate is a positive step.

A solid and stable institutional framework is key to improving the living conditions of the population and

tackling the root causes of violence. At a time when seven countries in the subregion are preparing to hold elections, it is important to remember that the free participation of citizens, including women and young people, will be important for consolidating democracy and institutions and advancing towards development. The progress made in political transition processes, as well as in security sector reforms and in disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants in the region, is laudable.

Nonetheless, political polarization and violence persist and security problems have clearly not disappeared. Ecuador continues to insist on the need to address the structural causes of conflict in order to end violence and insecurity. The fight against poverty and inequality, intolerance and exclusion cannot be postponed. Access to financing for development and climate finance requires the strengthening of national institutions and a commitment to the fight against corruption.

The humanitarian consequences of violence and insecurity disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups, namely, women, youth, children and the elderly. The situation in Central Africa is worrisome: food insecurity, massive displacement and natural phenomena have given rise to urgent needs. The war in the Sudan has led to a massive influx of refugees into Chad and the Central African Republic. Given that reality, the international community must intensify its efforts to provide the necessary humanitarian aid.

The challenges that Central Africa faces are complex and multidimensional, but they are not insurmountable. More than 22 years ago, in its presidential statement of 31 October 2002 (S/PRST/2002/31), the Council pointed out that

“despite its enormous potential which could make it one of the poles of development of the continent, Central Africa has 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 UNOCA's work to that end is vital to promote respect for the rule of law and the consolidation of strong and representative institutions as the cornerstones of inclusive and just societies. Sustainable peace will only be possible if it goes hand in hand with development.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and Ms. Nlate for their briefings today.

We convene today after notable achievements in the Central African region. The adoption of the presidential statement on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) last month (S/PRST/2024/7), the first in five years, signifies an important step.

The Central African region, with its potential and challenges, continues to warrant the unwavering commitment and support of the international community. With the region entering a demanding calendar of elections and transitions over the next two years, we echo the Secretary-General's call for ensuring the integrity of electoral processes and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The full participation of all political actors and societal groups and the acceptance of electoral outcomes are critical.

Malta welcomes the electoral needs assessment missions requested by Chad, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. We encourage further dialogue among those countries, the United Nations, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and others in transition or pre-electoral periods. We also commend the work carried out by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, and we welcome the recent conference, organized by UNOCA in Sao Tome and Principe, on unconstitutional changes of government. We look forward to the implementation of its recommendations.

The interplay of climate change with peace and security in the Central African region deserves our attention. Extreme weather events, such as erratic rainfall and droughts, exacerbate land degradation, which, in turn, disrupts food security, fuels local conflicts over depleting resources and induces displacement. During last week's visit by the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, Council members had the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of the Lake Chad basin's vulnerability to climate shocks. Those accounts included their impacts on local communities and internally displaced persons, particularly on women, children and youth. Better integration of early-warning systems and climate-sensitive approaches into peacebuilding strategies is needed. Such efforts would strengthen resilience-building and disaster preparedness within communities.

In that regard, we welcome UNOCA's support of ECCAS in developing a comprehensive regional strategy for peaceful transhumance in Central Africa. We also commend the Lake Chad Basin Commission for revising the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region. The work of the Climate, Peace and Security Adviser at UNOCA also deserves to be recognized, and we hope that there can be further collaborations with the Climate, Peace and Security Adviser at the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to analyse intersecting climate-security risks between West and Central Africa.

Children's basic rights remain under threat. We are deeply concerned by attacks on schools in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon, resulting in the closure of most public schools in the country's north-west region. We urge parties to engage in genuine dialogue, and we call for intensified efforts to protect children, including the commitment to their enjoyment of the right to quality education. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and its splinter groups. In order to effectively target their offensives, regional security mechanisms, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force, must be continuously supported. The European Union remains an important partner in those efforts.

In conclusion, the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and his team at UNOCA requires the Council's continued support. Preventive diplomacy, mediation and cross-cutting thematic approaches should remain at the core of our engagement with the people of Central Africa.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his briefing. We also listened very carefully to the statement made by Ms. Danielle Nlate.

Russia supports the work being done by the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) with the aim of strengthening peace and security in the subregion. We note the Office's mediation work through direct contact with the parties in problem areas. It is important that it is also conducted in coordination with regional mechanisms and associations. We believe that UNOCA is an important instrument of international preventive diplomacy.

The challenges facing the countries of the subregion are complex. We attach particular importance to regional efforts to develop coordinated approaches to countering terrorism. We are concerned about the continuing destructive potential of Boko Haram and the activity of groups affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the region. We note the effectiveness of the actions of African States within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force deployed to the region. We call for providing them with predictable funding and assistance from the international community.

We are concerned about the continuing violence in north-west and south-west Cameroon. We favour the search for a political formula to resolve the differences in the regions affected by armed conflict.

We welcome progress in the transition process in Gabon. We note the commitment of the transitional authorities to return the country to constitutional governance within the agreed time frame. We congratulate the Gabonese on the adoption of the new basic law, and we support their intent to restore Libreville's membership in the African Union.

We note with satisfaction that there is growing stabilization in the situation in the Central African Republic. With the support of bilateral partners, including Russia, and that of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, Bangui managed to overcome the most difficult phase of the fight against armed gangs. We welcome the adoption in July of resolution 2745 (2024), which fully lifted the sanctions measures against the Government of the Central African Republic. That decision, given the dynamics of changes on the ground, was long overdue. We also congratulate our Central African friends on the lifting of export restrictions under the Kimberley Process. We do hope that that timely step will contribute to the further development of the country and strengthen its economic sovereignty.

We welcome the strengthening of the official dialogue between the Central African Republic and Chad on issues relating to border cooperation. We advocate enhancing joint efforts between the two countries to eliminate cross-border challenges and threats.

We are seriously concerned about the difficult humanitarian situation in the region. The number of refugees, internally displaced persons and persons in need of some form of humanitarian assistance remains

high. The crisis in the Sudan is creating additional difficulties. We are in favour of an increase in targeted support to the States of Central Africa.

We join the Secretary-General's call for reform of the international financial institutions and a comprehensive restructuring of external public debt. That issue is of particular importance to the Central African region, because the countries concerned are obliged to dedicate the lion's share of their national resources to servicing international loans.

We would like to state our opposition to a matter that is being actively promoted by delegations within the United Nations, namely linking climate with issues of peace and security and including the issue on the Security Council's agenda. We believe that measures to provide assistance in climate change adaptation and mitigation should be dealt with by the specialized funds and programmes of the United Nations. The Security Council has its own mandate and the number of tasks that it has to deal with unfortunately keeps growing.

Russia will continue to support the United Nations entities working in the region and will extend the necessary assistance to States on a bilateral basis.

Mr. Cho (Republic of Korea): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and Ms. Nlate for their insightful briefings today.

The long-awaited adoption last month of presidential statement S/PRST/2024/7, on the Central African region, reaffirmed the Security Council's recognition and support for Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). We hope it will effectively guide their collaboration with the countries and organizations of the region in order to prevent conflict, promote sustainable peace and consolidate peacebuilding.

I would like to underscore three key points today.

First, strengthening democratic institutions, fostering political inclusivity and advancing gender equality are indispensable to lasting peace and development. That is particularly critical as seven of the 11 Central African countries are approaching a pre-electoral period. While we welcome electoral developments in the region, sustained efforts are needed to uphold the integrity of electoral processes, safeguard political freedoms and secure civic spaces. In that context, ensuring the full, equal, meaningful and

safe participation of women, alongside their increased representation, is essential to lasting peace. We also reiterate the Secretary-General's call for an inclusive political and Cameroonian-led resolution to resolve the continued conflict and persistent violence in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon.

Secondly, the growing impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa demands urgent attention. Countries such as Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Burundi have faced severe flooding, while Angola has endured the region's worst drought in more than 40 years. Both extremes have led to widespread food insecurity. Moreover, climate change has intensified competition over dwindling resources, fuelling armed conflicts, transhumance-related disputes and inter-communal violence and affecting women and children disproportionately. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan, with its large-scale displacement, has further compounded those challenges, in particular in eastern Chad. In that regard, we commend all efforts to develop region-specific approaches and initiatives. We encourage UNOCA, especially through its Climate, Peace and Security Adviser, to continue assessing related risks and enhancing the region's capacity to respond effectively.

Thirdly, strengthening collaboration with regional organizations and within the United Nations system is vital for providing comprehensive and cross-border support. Examples of effective initiatives include the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, joint visits to the Lake Chad basin by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel, and cooperation between UNOCA and Economic Community of Central African States on revising the regional protocol on peaceful transhumance. We also welcome the Peacebuilding Commission's continued engagement, particularly with Sao Tome and Principe, and the Peacebuilding Fund's initiative to promote social cohesion and socioeconomic opportunities in eastern Chad. We encourage deeper collaboration between regional entities and the Commission to advance long-term stability and development.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its unwavering support for Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry, UNOCA and regional

organizations in their tireless efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Central Africa Region.

Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abdou Abarry and Ms. Nlate for their briefings.

France welcomes the three-year renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). It also welcomes the adoption on 1 November of presidential statement S/PRST/2024/7, the first one since 2019, which reaffirmed the Council's full support for the work of UNOCA and the Special Representative in the context of the major challenges facing the region.

The forced displacement of people caused by the conflict in the Sudan is continuing. The humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences in the countries in which those people are taking refuge — Chad, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic — are disastrous. The stability and security of the countries of the region are also affected by climate change. We have seen that with the floods in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Implementing concrete solutions to deal with such hazards must remain one of UNOCA's priorities.

UNOCA plays an important role in supporting the transition processes under way in several countries in the region. Those processes must continue to ensure the full participation of all sectors of society, including young people and women. That is in the interests of both the people themselves and the long-term stability of the countries.

The Special Representative's mission of good offices is essential for responding to the crises that persist in the region, both in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. France encourages the Special Representative to continue to work with the Cameroonian authorities to find a solution so that all populations can live together in peace.

The progress in the transition in Gabon is encouraging. The new Gabonese Constitution has just been adopted by referendum. Preparations for the next stages, notably the elections, must continue. France supports the efforts of UNOCA to secure that process.

In the Central African Republic, the Government's efforts to implement the peace process are to be commended. The holding of local elections on 13 July

2025, the first ones held since 1988, will be an essential step in the nationwide extension of the process. France has announced a contribution of €2 million to support the organization of those elections, in particular the revision of the electoral register currently being prepared. It is encouraging the Central African authorities to create conditions conducive to the holding of free, transparent and inclusive elections.

France will continue to support the work of the Special Representative and UNOCA to assist the countries in the region.

Mr. Mikanagi (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry and Ms. Daniele Nlate for their insightful briefings.

I would like to make three points today.

First, Japan welcomes the continued progress in political transitions in the Central African region, especially the peaceful conduct of the constitutional referendum in Gabon and the announcement of legislative, provincial and municipal elections to be held in Chad. Regarding the referendum in Gabon, Japan, through the United Nations Development Programme, supported the organization of a workshop to build the capacity of a civil society network to monitor elections. On the day of the vote, a total of 250 civil society poll monitors were dispatched nationwide to contribute to ensuring transparency. Several countries in the Central African region are entering a pre-electoral period. We commend each country for moving forward with their preparations and appreciate the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) for its efforts to create environments conducive to peaceful, transparent, inclusive and credible elections. We note with concern the reports of restrictions on civic space in some countries. The protection of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential not only for the successful conduct of elections, but also for lasting political stability.

Secondly, Japan remains concerned about the security situation in the region, including continued violence committed by Boko Haram splinter and affiliated groups in the Lake Chad basin region. Japan respects Chad's efforts on this matter and extends its condolences to the Chadian soldiers who lost their lives as a result of the recent attacks by Boko Haram. We welcome the continued and coordinated efforts of the concerned countries in the region.

Thirdly, extreme weather events, such as severe floods and drought, which have been exacerbated by climate change, show the urgency of tackling the issue at the national, regional and international levels. Japan commends the organization by UNOCA, together with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations and other United Nations organizations, of a capacity-building workshop on climate, peace and security in Central Africa in Ntoun, Gabon, from 2 to 4 October, in order to share best practices among stakeholders, including the Economic Community of Central African States.

Lastly, Japan welcomes the adoption of the statement by the President of the Security Council on UNOCA (S/PRST/2024/7) on 1 November, after nearly five years since the previous one (S/PRST/2019/10) was issued. We believe it provides useful guidance on the Security Council's priorities in Central Africa and supports the work of UNOCA.

As we leave the Security Council at the end of this month, we remain committed to continuing to play our part in promoting peace and stability in the region.

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

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his report (S/2024/865) and observations on the challenges in the Central African region. And I thank Ms. Nlate for her informative briefing.

It is vital that we support the democratic and peaceful aspirations of the people of Central Africa and address the pressing challenges facing the region: mitigating the humanitarian impact of the Sudanese conflict on Chad and other neighbouring countries; building democratic institutions and countering the continuing threats from Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province in the Lake Chad region.

The tragic conflict in the Sudan and the dire humanitarian situation there continue to reverberate throughout the region. Chad and the Central African Republic are collectively hosting more than 750,000 new refugees from the conflict. We express our appreciation to the Governments of Chad and the Central African Republic, local communities and non-governmental organizations for welcoming those refugees.

The United States continues to provide robust humanitarian aid to help ensure that the needs of

refugees, their host communities and others are being met. Last year, the United States was the largest provider of assistance to the Sudan and neighbouring countries. Additionally, we continue to press the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to expand humanitarian access, ensure the protection of civilians and return to negotiations.

As Chad prepares for local and legislative elections on 29 December, we call on the Government to enhance the inclusivity and transparency of the electoral process. We similarly encourage Gabon to continue to make progress on its own path towards elections and to include civil society in the process. The constitutional referendum, held on 16 November, was a positive step in that direction.

United States assistance is focused on supporting Gabon's progress towards free and fair elections, with inclusive electoral processes. We urge Gabon to establish, in a timely manner, a democratically elected Government in 2025 that represents the will of the Gabonese people.

For its part, the Central African Republic is scheduled to hold its first local and regional elections since 1988 in July 2025. The elections are a critical element of decentralization and building local institutions that are responsive to citizens' needs. The United States urges the Government and opposition to engage constructively and transparently ahead of, during and after the elections.

As the largest bilateral donor to the Central African Republic, we welcome the opportunity to work with the Government, civil society and partners to help the country address the institutional challenges that have held back the Central African Republic's advancement for too long. The United States remains committed in supporting the Central African Republic's stability and steps towards prosperity, including through approximately \$250 million annually in assessed contributions for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We were glad to see the Security Council unanimously extend MINUSCA's mandate for another year (see S/PV.9783). MINUSCA is making vital contributions to strengthening governance, supporting security sector reform and providing critical support for local elections.

We remain concerned that MINUSCA has faced repeated, predominately Russian-backed attempts

to undermine it, including blocking Mission patrols and spreading disinformation about the Mission. It is in the collective interest of the Council that we support the important work of the Mission instead of undermining the contributions of its troop- and police-contributing countries.

Overall, we cannot let terrorist groups impede or degrade democratic progress. The United States condemns Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province and all groups that attack civilians and displace populations. Now more than ever, we need all members of the Multinational Joint Task Force to remain engaged in the fight against Boko Haram.

The legacy of the Lord's Resistance Army, which remains active, demonstrates how a lack of accountability can perpetuate violence. The United States supports efforts by regional States to combat

those terrorist groups and implement holistic strategies that address the underlying drivers of terrorism and ensure justice.

Finally, the United States welcomes the Security Council's 1 November presidential statement (S/PRST/2024/7) supporting the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the first in five years. And we look forward to further engagement with the Security Council to support Central Africa's democratic and peaceful aspirations.

I 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.