



Security Council

Distr.: General
30 May 2024

Original: English

The situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 10 August 2018 ([S/PRST/2018/17](#)), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed about the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) every six months. It provides an assessment of the major political and security trends in Central Africa since the report dated 30 November 2023 ([S/2023/934](#)). It also provides an update on the situation in the Lake Chad basin region, pursuant to Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#).

II. Major developments in the Central Africa subregion

A. Political, peace and security developments and trends

Political developments and trends

2. During the reporting period, the political transitions in Gabon and Chad reached significant milestones, namely, the holding of an inclusive national dialogue and a presidential election, respectively. Throughout the subregion, the political landscape remained relatively stable, despite restrictions on civic space in some countries.

3. In Angola, on 29 February, a bill proposing a redrawing of administrative boundaries and expanding the number of municipalities from 164 to 325 passed the first stage of approval in the National Assembly. The Government explained the restructuring as a measure to address territorial disparities and improve state presence and services. The opposition argued that priority should be given to holding local elections. In April, the Government and the main opposition party, União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) presented to the National Assembly competing draft bills on the institutionalization of local authorities. The UNITA bill and the Government bill each passed the first stage of approval of the National Assembly on 23 and 24 May, respectively. At the regional level, the President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, continued engaging on peace and stability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through the Luanda process.



4. In Burundi, on 8 December, the Supreme Court convicted the former Prime Minister, Alain Guillaume Bunyoni, among other charges, of illegal possession of weapons and plotting against the Head of State to overthrow the constitutional regime. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. On 10 March, members of the political bureau of the main opposition party, Conseil national pour la liberté (CNL), removed the founder and president of the party, Agathon Rwasa, from his position. Among other things, they had accused Mr. Rwasa of a misappropriation of party funds and a breach of the party's legal instruments. He was replaced by Nestor Girukwishaka. In an official letter dated 18 March and addressed to CNL, the Ministry of the Interior of Burundi formally recognized Mr. Girukwishaka as the elected president and legal representative of CNL. Supporters of Mr. Rwasa accused the Government of influencing the change in the party's leadership and attempting to destabilize the party ahead of the 2025 elections.

5. As indicated in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region ([S/2024/278](#)), during the reporting period, the armed group Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED-Tabara) launched attacks in Burundi. Following these attacks, Burundian authorities alleged that Rwanda was supporting the armed group, an allegation which has been denied by Rwanda. Tensions between the two countries escalated, leading Burundi to close its land border with Rwanda on 12 January.

6. In Cameroon, the Government continued to implement the conclusions of the 2019 Major National Dialogue, though violence continued in the North-West and South-West Regions. Two opposition coalitions were established in January ahead of the scheduled 2025 presidential election: the Political Alliance for Change and the Alliance for a Political Transition. On 13 March, the Government declared that neither coalition met the legal criteria to be recognized as a political party and that they were clandestine movements prohibited from engaging in political activities. Activists and opposition members stated that the decision by the Government violated the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and political participation. On 22 March, at the start of the ordinary session of the Parliament, Marcel Niat Njifenji and Cavayé Yéguié Djibril of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement were re-elected unopposed as President of the Senate and Speaker of the National Assembly, respectively.

7. In Chad, the political transition advanced with the adoption and promulgation of a new Constitution, the establishment of a new, permanent electoral management body and Constitutional Council, and the holding of the presidential election. On 17 December, a constitutional referendum was held and on 24 December, the National Committee for the Organization of the Constitutional Referendum announced that the new Constitution had been approved with 86 per cent of votes and a participation rate of 63.75 per cent in the referendum. These figures were disputed by several opposition coalitions and civil society groupings. On 29 December, the new Constitution was promulgated. On 1 January, the President of the Transition of Chad, Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, appointed prominent opposition figure Succès Masra as Transition Prime Minister. In line with the new Constitution, a Constitutional Council and a permanent electoral management body, the Agence nationale de gestion des élections, were established. On 27 February, the latter announced the timetable for the presidential election.

8. Political and security challenges emerged on 28 February, when gunfire erupted in N'Djamena, involving members of the Parti socialiste sans frontières (PSF) led by a prominent political opponent, Yaya Dillo Djérou Bétchi. This followed the arrest of the party's finance secretary by the Agence nationale de sécurité de l'État on the grounds of his alleged involvement in an assassination attempt against the President

of the Supreme Court. Subsequently, PSF members were accused of assaulting the premises of the Agence nationale de sécurité de l'État to free their colleague. Exchanges of gunfire with security forces ensued and later extended to PSF headquarters, where Mr. Dillo and his supporters had sought refuge to evade capture. On 29 February, the Transitional Government announced the death of Mr. Dillo at his party's headquarters, which several opposition members declared to be an extrajudicial killing.

9. On 29 February, the public prosecutor at the High Court in N'Djamena announced the arrest of 26 people and the opening of an investigation into the events of 27 and 28 February. On 1 March, the PSF headquarters were demolished by security forces, and several PSF members claimed that the latter were hunting them down. On 4 March, the Transition Prime Minister, Mr. Masra, pledged that the Transitional Government would launch an investigation into these events in line with international norms and standards. On 13 March, the transitional authorities declared PSF dissolved.

10. On 2 March, the President of the Transition of Chad formally accepted a nomination to be the presidential candidate of a new platform, Coalition pour un Tchad uni, established by the former ruling party and comprising the vast majority of the legally registered political parties in Chad. On 10 March, the Transition Prime Minister, Mr. Masra, also declared his candidacy for the presidential election. On 24 March, the Constitutional Council validated 10 out of 20 presidential candidates, including the Transition President, the Transition Prime Minister, Mr. Masra, and the former Transition Prime Minister, Albert Pahimi Padacké. The group also included one female candidate, Lydie Beassemda of Parti pour la démocratie et l'indépendance intégrales. That same day, a coalition of opposition parties and civil society organizations, Wakit Tama, announced a boycott of the election. In a joint press conference on 27 March, the presidential candidates not validated by the Constitutional Council called for "a relaunch of the electoral process to ensure a minimum of credibility". The electoral campaign was launched on 14 April and ended on 4 May. Some national and international observers, such as the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), were accredited.

11. The first round of the presidential election took place on 6 May in an atmosphere of relative calm. On 9 May, the Agence nationale de gestion des élections announced the provisional results, with Mr. Déby Itno winning 61 per cent of the vote, followed by Mr. Masra with 18.5 per cent. Prior to the announcement, Mr. Masra took to social media to denounce the results to be proclaimed and called upon his supporters to protest peacefully and on law enforcement and military forces to refuse to obey unlawful orders. Upon the announcement of the provisional results, security and defence forces deployed throughout N'Djamena. According to reports, the publication of results was followed by extensive celebratory gunfire, which resulted in at least 10 fatalities and injuries. While most candidates conceded and congratulated the incumbent, on 12 May, Mr. Masra announced that his party had filed an appeal with the Constitutional Council to challenge the provisional results. Mr. Pahimi Padacké, who came third with 16.9 per cent of the vote and had previously congratulated the incumbent, also lodged a complaint with the Constitutional Council calling for the cancellation of the results in some provinces. On 16 May, the Constitutional Council rejected the appeals and confirmed the results, with minor adjustments. On 24 May, Mr. Déby Itno was sworn in as President.

12. In the Congo, leadership disputes persisted within the main opposition parties. In his New Year's speech, the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, designated 2024 as the "Year of Youth", acknowledging youth unemployment as a

critical concern and proposing strategies centred on education, training and job creation.

13. In Equatorial Guinea, on 10 January, the Vice-President, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, unveiled plans to expand the country's military force from approximately 3,500 to over 100,000 personnel by 2034, citing an imperative to safeguard the population and deter any attempts at unconstitutional changes of government. On 21 March, he requested State-owned enterprises to submit financial reports for the fiscal year 2023 and instructed the Prime Minister, Manuela Roka Botey, to implement a travel authorization system for leaders of those enterprises, citing a need to address irregularities related to travel expenses. On 14 May, an order by the Ministry of Defence put the armed forces on maximum alert and closed all borders for undisclosed reasons.

14. In Gabon, the transitional authorities made advances in the political transition, in line with the defined timeline. On 17 January, the Transitional Government was reshuffled, with notable appointments including Alexandre Barro Chambrier, an opposition candidate in the 2023 presidential election, assuming the role of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Economic Prospects. The Ministers-Delegate for Defence and for the Interior were promoted to the positions of Minister for Defence and Minister for the Interior and Security, positions previously held by the Transition President, Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema. On 9 February, an extraordinary parliamentary session amended the Transition Charter to remove the function of Minister for Defence and Security from the Transition President. On 7 March, the former ruling Parti démocratique gabonais announced the expulsion of the former President, Ali Bongo Ondimba, along with his mother, from the party. Effective 2 May, the transitional authorities announced an adjustment to the curfew that had been in place since the military takeover on 30 August 2023, shortening it to three hours.

15. From 2 to 30 April, an inclusive national dialogue took place in Libreville. Attended by 600 participants from various segments of society, including 125 women, the dialogue was chaired by the Archbishop of Libreville. A final report containing recommendations from the 12 subcommissions, was submitted to the Transition President on 30 April. Among the recommendations was a recommendation to maintain the 24-month timeframe for the transition, while providing for a prolongation of the transition by one year if necessary. Another recommendation was that all political parties be suspended pending the introduction of new rules governing their establishment and functioning. The dialogue called for greater national sovereignty, strong restrictions on immigration and restrictive rules for obtaining nationality. Throughout March, several political parties and civil society organizations had expressed concern about the format of the dialogue and requested its postponement.

16. At the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Conference of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), held in Malabo on 9 March, Central African leaders reinstated the full membership of Gabon in ECCAS and rescinded an earlier decision to temporarily move the ECCAS headquarters from Libreville to Malabo.

17. In Rwanda, on 9 March, the Rwandan Patriotic Front ruling party endorsed the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, as its candidate in the presidential election scheduled for July 2024. On 13 March, a court in Kigali ruled that the opposition leader, Victoire Ingabire, was ineligible to participate in the election owing to previous convictions related to "terrorism and genocide denial". On 7 April, Rwanda commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsis.

18. Sao Tome and Principe continued to implement recommendations proposed by the United Nations concerning the reform of the justice and security sectors. On 25 November 2023, the Government had initiated the establishment of a military tribunal aimed at addressing criminal cases and allegations of human rights violations involving military personnel, particularly those related to the alleged attempted coup of 25 November 2022; however, inadequate resources and the appointment of judges without formal legal training on military justice rendered the tribunal non-functional. Nine legislative measures to modernize the judicial framework passed the first stage of approval in the National Assembly. The Government launched efforts to digitalize the justice system, alongside legislative revisions aimed at combating gender-based violence and expediting the adjudication of sexual offences. In addition, the country initiated the establishment of a national human rights commission and ratified the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

19. On 8 January, the President of Sao Tome and Principe, Carlos Manuel Vila Nova, expanded the Government with the addition of three new ministers, bringing the total to 13 ministers. The new Government includes five women, or 38 per cent of the ministerial positions, slightly below the 40 per cent threshold mandated by the Parity Law enacted in November 2022.

Security development and trends

20. In the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, armed violence by separatist groups continued. In statements on social media between 29 and 31 January, a diaspora leader called for the suspension of United Nations access within the regions and said that his pro-separatist group was severing ties with the Organization for its alleged lack of involvement in finding a political solution to the crisis. On 29 January, separatist fighters targeted the Molyko district of Buea, South-West Region, to enforce their “ghost town” order, reportedly resulting in casualties and significant damage to both private and public property.

21. On 11 February, separatist groups attempted to disrupt Youth Day celebrations in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon by enforcing violent “lockdowns”. In Nkambe, North-West Region, an explosion during a Government-run Youth Day ceremony killed a 15-year-old girl and injured some 80 people, a majority of whom were reportedly schoolchildren. On 16 February, two people were killed in a shootout between separatist fighters and security forces in Mbonge, South-West Region. On 21 February, a teenager was killed in another shootout between separatist fighters and security forces in the same area. Authorities have reported 15 abductions by separatist fighters in Mbonge since the beginning of 2024. On 22 February, a fire erupted in the central market of Bamenda, North-West Region, resulting in 30 people being injured, over 300 shops destroyed and significant financial losses. The separatist so-called “Ambazonia defence forces” claimed responsibility for the fire, stating that the aim was to disrupt commercial activities. On 23 March, the second deputy mayor of Babessi, North-West Region, was killed. Multiple separatist groups took credit for the killing on social media platforms.

22. Operations by security and defence forces in the two regions also continued. On 11 January, a customs officer at a checkpoint in Mamfe, South-West Region, opened fire at a transiting commercial transport vehicle. A woman was hit and killed by a stray bullet. On 20 January, security forces entered a health facility in Mbingo, North-West Region, and arrested an armed group commander who had sustained bullet wounds during a confrontation with Government forces. The body of the commander

was later found at the market square in Guzang. It was removed and buried after several days. On 11 April, Government forces reportedly carried out a security operation against armed group fighters in a village in Kumbo, North-West Region, killing four fighters during an exchange of gunfire.

Boko Haram/Lake Chad basin crisis

23. In Cameroon, between 1 December 2023 and 30 April 2024, 232 Boko Haram-related security incidents resulting in 127 civilian fatalities were confirmed and reported by the United Nations, compared with 135 incidents resulting in 40 civilian fatalities for the same period in 2023. In Chad, also between 1 December 2023 and 30 April 2024, 66 Boko Haram-related security incidents resulting in 57 civilian fatalities were confirmed and reported by the United Nations, compared with 23 incidents resulting in 30 civilian fatalities for the same period in 2023. The use of improvised explosive devices by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) continued to rise. In January and February, 18 persons, including 11 soldiers and seven civilians, including four women, were killed by improvised explosive devices in the Lake Chad basin, while seven others were wounded. On 1 January, ISWAP reportedly killed four people and kidnapped a further 19 people during two separate attacks against Christians celebrating New Year's Eve in Fotokol district, Far North Region of Cameroon.

24. The Multinational Joint Task Force maintained its military operations in Lac Province (Chad) and Borno State (Nigeria), resulting in the surrender of some members of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups and the capture of weapons and ammunition. Air strikes by the Chadian Air Force targeted strongholds of the armed groups along the southern rim of Lake Chad near the Chad-Cameroon-Nigeria border. In Soueram, Far North Region of Cameroon, Cameroonian defence and security forces killed some members of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups and seized a significant ammunition cache. Despite these operations, the groups continued to launch attacks in the Region. On 3 January, armed group elements reportedly kidnapped three children between the ages of 12 and 13, and looted food and cattle during an incursion in Zamga, Mayo-Tsanaga Department. On 6 January, armed group elements reportedly killed and wounded civilians, including three women, during an attack in Kangaleri, Mayo-Sava Department.

Lord's Resistance Army

25. On 28 February, a suspected Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) group attacked three communities in the Bas-Uélé Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, looting and burning a community health centre, shops and homes, and abducting 34 people, including 24 children. The group reportedly consisted of approximately 15 men in military attire and armed with automatic weapons. On the night of 4 March, the same group attacked two other communities and abducted four boys, one girl and one male youth. As at 5 March, 30 children, including 19 boys and 11 girls between the ages of 10 and 18, remained captive.

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

26. During the reporting period, three maritime security incidents were reported across the ECCAS zone in the Gulf of Guinea. According to the International Maritime Bureau, on 1 January, six unidentified gunmen boarded a Tuvalu-flagged oil tanker in the waters south of Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea. They opened fire and abducted 9 of the 23 crew members. The abductees were safely released on the night of 29–30 January. In Angola, on 3 January, three unidentified people boarded a firefighting vessel at the Luanda anchorage, looted some equipment and escaped. On

14 January, thieves boarded an offshore supply vessel anchored in Soyo anchorage, Angola, stole equipment and escaped.

Effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters on regional stability, including farmer-herder dynamics in Central Africa

27. In Chad, at least 23 people were killed during clashes between herders and farmers in the southern region of Moyen-Chari in late March. The clashes lasted for several days and resulted in 9 deaths among herders and 14 among farmers, including four women and two children. Intercommunal conflict over land- and water-sharing resulted in some 42 deaths in Djourf al-Ahmar, in eastern Ouaddaï Province in late March.

28. On 9 December, a landmark partnership agreement was signed by the Congo, France and the European Union, aimed at safeguarding the forests within the Congo. Part of a wider strategy to reward countries with extensive forest coverage and minimal deforestation rates, the deal secures \$50 million in initial support for the Congo.

B. Humanitarian developments

29. Armed violence, intercommunal violence, food insecurity, forced displacement and natural hazards exacerbated by climate change continued to drive humanitarian needs in Central Africa.

30. Between mid-November 2023 and January 2024, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congo faced unprecedented heavy rainfall, leading to the overflow of the Congo River and the most significant flooding since 1961. The rainfall and flooding affected 2.19 million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including approximately 1.12 million women and girls, resulting in significant casualties, while destroying 100,000 homes, some 270 health facilities and 1,530 schools, and damaging 1.6 million hectares of farmland. In the Congo, 18 people were reportedly killed, with more than 525,455 people in need, including approximately 268,980 women and girls, and some 1.8 million people affected. Some 43,980 children were out of school, leading the Government to declare a state of emergency. A total of \$3.6 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund was allocated to the emergency, while the Government released \$4 million.

31. Burundi and Rwanda also witnessed heavy rainfall and flooding. In Burundi, heavy rainfall since February has caused floods, landslides, the overflow of rivers and rising water levels in Lake Tanganyika. Some 306,000 people were affected – twice as many as during the same period in 2023. As at 22 May, 29 people had been killed, 175 injured and some 47,000 displaced. A total of \$2.5 million was allocated from the Central Emergency Response Fund to the emergency. In Rwanda, heavy rains and floods had killed 14 people and injured 27 as at 2 May. Damage to roads, bridges and some 120 houses was recorded, while damage to rice and banana plantations was also reported.

32. Southern Angola continued to face food insecurity due to the impact of five consecutive drought cycles, the worst recorded drought in 40 years, which also negatively affected household incomes and livelihoods. Angola hosted 25,250 refugees and some 30,280 asylum-seekers as at 31 March.

33. Burundi hosted some 88,600 refugees and asylum-seekers and had some 79,915 internally displaced persons as at 31 March. The Congo hosted some 80,375 refugees and asylum-seekers as at 31 March.

34. In Cameroon, nearly 2.9 million people, including 21 per cent of the population in the Far North Region, faced acute food insecurity, primarily due to the Lake Chad basin crisis and climatic shocks. As at 30 April, Cameroon had about 1 million internally displaced persons and hosted more than 477,715 refugees, with 357,731 from the Central African Republic, and some 10,690 asylum-seekers. The North-West and South-West Regions had more than 583,110 internally displaced persons and 459,600 returnees as at 30 April. The 2023 humanitarian response plan, requiring \$407 million, was only 35 per cent funded. In 2023, humanitarian partners assisted 1.2 million people. In 2024, it is estimated that almost 3.4 million people in Cameroon will need humanitarian assistance and protection. The 2024 humanitarian response plan, requiring \$371.4 million and targeting 2.3 million of the most vulnerable, was 16 per cent funded as at 23 May. A number of challenges continued to impede efforts to address the needs and rights of women and girls exposed to gender-based violence in crises-affected areas.

35. In Chad, 2.4 million people were food insecure, with an additional 3.3 million, including 500,000 children under 5 years of age, expected to face food insecurity during the 2024 lean season. On 15 February, the Government declared a food security and nutrition emergency, following a poor harvest season in 2023. The Sudan crisis compounded existing challenges in eastern Chad, leaving approximately 2 million people in humanitarian need out of the 2.9 million residents in the provinces of Ouaddaï, Wadi Fira and Sila. As at 10 May, Chad had some 245,620 internally displaced persons and hosted some 1.24 million refugees, with 1.07 million coming from the Sudan. It is estimated that 6 million people needed humanitarian assistance. The 2024 humanitarian response plan, amounting to \$1.1 billion to help 4.6 million people, was only 7.9 per cent funded as at 15 May. The total financial requirements are 23 per cent higher than in 2023.

36. Rwanda hosted some 135,400 refugees and asylum-seekers as at 30 April, the vast majority of them from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lake Chad basin crisis

37. As at 30 April, the Far North Region of Cameroon had some 453,660 internally displaced persons and 200,000 returnees, and hosted 121,000 refugees, while the Lac Province of Chad had some 219,390 internally displaced persons and 23,000 returnees, and hosted 21,500 refugees from Nigeria.

C. Human rights trends

38. The human rights situation in the subregion reflected persistent structural obstacles in various countries to the enforcement of the rule of law and the protection of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.

39. In Cameroon, armed separatist groups in the North-West and South-West Regions allegedly continued to perpetrate serious human rights abuses against civilians, including killings, kidnappings and extortion to finance their activities. Alleged violations of human rights by security forces were also reported. “Ghost town” measures imposed by armed separatist groups restricted freedom of movement and affected access to essential services. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that 246,354 children were unable to attend school since the beginning of the 2023–2024 school year in the two regions owing to insecurity. Approximately 2,875 schools out of 6,970 identified in these regions have remained closed since September 2023, largely as a result of the actions of armed separatist groups. Overall, an estimated 500,000 children are out of school because of violence targeting teachers, students and educational institutions. Government

measures, including the closure of community schools that fail to adhere to national educational requirements, exacerbated the situation, as these schools had served as alternative educational avenues in some communities. In the Far North Region, Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups continued to abuse the human rights of civilian populations.

40. In Chad, on 10 January, the Supreme Court ruled that the mandate of 8 of the 11 commissioners of the National Human Rights Commission would come to an end on 12 February. Accordingly, Mahamat Nour Ibedou, who had led the main inquiry into the deadly protests of 20 October 2022, was replaced as the Commission President.

41. In Gabon, on 11 December, eight members of two staff unions in the electricity and water sectors were detained by the intelligence services, following the announcement of a strike. Union members and civil society organizations claimed that the arrest was an attempt at intimidation. The union members were released three days later, with shaved heads. On 16 March, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment concluded a one-week visit to Gabon and highlighted continued concerns about prison overcrowding and impunity for perpetrators of torture. On 20 March, the Transition Government took note of the recommendations of the Subcommittee. During the visit, the former President, Mr. Bongo Ondimba, announced his family's intention to request an opinion of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention as to the arbitrariness of the detention. On 14 May, the Bongo family lawyers announced that the former President and his two youngest sons had started a hunger strike in protest at their "sequestration" and alleged torture.

42. On 1 March, Equatorial Guinea issued an international arrest warrant against a former Supreme Court president who had fled to Europe in 2020 following accusations of his having orchestrated efforts to destabilize the country and who faced charges ranging from corruption to abuse of power. On 8 April, the National Court of Spain intervened to block a ruling by a Spanish judge to transfer jurisdiction to Equatorial Guinea in the case against Carmelo Ovono Obiang, a son of the President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Allegations against Mr. Ovono Obiang and other high-ranking officials include the kidnapping and torture of four opposition members, including two Spanish nationals, one of whom later died in State custody in January 2023. The ruling has heightened tensions between Spain and Equatorial Guinea, with the latter recalling its Ambassador from Madrid.

D. Socioeconomic trends

43. Growth in Central Africa was expected to slow from 3.8 per cent in 2023 to 3.5 per cent in 2024. The economy of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) space was expected to continue to grow, supported by favourable hydrocarbon prices, thereby strengthening its external position. Although global inflationary pressures have eased somewhat, they remained high and, combined with the continued tightening of financial conditions, could dampen economic growth in the subregion. In addition, the subregion continued to grapple with the repercussions of global and regional crises, resulting in elevated fuel prices in some countries and compelling Governments to retract financial benefits, consequently provoking discontent among populations.

44. In December, the Government announced the withdrawal of Angola from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, citing a misalignment with the country's national interests. On 7 March, the Government of Angola announced the discontinuation of exemptions previously granted to public transportation operators

relating to the removal of a subsidy on gasoline, effective 30 April, to, inter alia, ensure the fiscal sustainability of the Government. The phased removal of fuel subsidies, initiated in June 2023, led to a doubling of gasoline prices. On 22 April, the Government further announced the removal of diesel subsidies, resulting in a 48 per cent increase in diesel prices. On 9 March, the three main trade unions collectively declared a three-phased nationwide general strike demanding an increase in the minimum wage. The first strike took place on 20 March and the second on 22 April. On 19 April, the President of Angola signed a decree increasing public sector wages, to become effective in June.

45. In Cameroon, on 2 February, the Government implemented a 15 per cent increase in fuel prices to compensate for money spent on fuel subsidies in 2023. The decision was accompanied by measures aimed at mitigating its impact on households amid potential inflationary pressures, including a 5 per cent increase in the minimum wage and a 20 per cent increase in civil servant salaries.

46. In Chad, on 13 February, the Government announced a 40 per cent increase in fuel prices. In response, the Federation of Trade Unions initiated a nationwide strike on 17 February, demanding a reversal of the decision. Other unions joined the protest. A coalition of opposition parties called upon the Transitional Government to retract the decree on fuel price hikes, threatening mass demonstrations if their demands were not met. On 25 February, a coalition of political parties and civil society groups called for a “ghost town” operation, to protest the high cost of living and governance challenges in Chad, but the operation did not materialize. On 11 March, the Transitional Government issued a decree making electricity free for low revenue/low consumption families until 31 December 2024, though electricity shortage was recurrent.

47. In Equatorial Guinea, the declining oil production and limited growth in the non-oil sector, stemming from inherent structural weaknesses, have resulted in an expected 5.5 per cent economic contraction in 2024, with continued recession anticipated in the medium term, according to International Monetary Fund projections. The country has grappled with significant fuel shortages since late December.

48. In Sao Tome and Principe, the 2024 Finance Law, enacted on 19 December, resulted in a 15 per cent rise in fuel prices, prompting dissatisfaction among various unions. On 1 March, a consortium of four unions in the education sector started a strike, advocating a fourfold increase in the base salary. Following an agreement with the Government, the strike was suspended on 8 April, for 90 days.

III. Activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

A. Good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation

Burundi and Rwanda

49. Amid heightened tensions between Burundi and Rwanda, the Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region undertook a joint mission to Burundi on 12 and 13 February, where they met with the President, Evariste Ndayishimiye, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Albert Shingiro. The envoys expressed concerns about the escalating tensions and confirmed the readiness of the United Nations to support efforts aimed at resolving the tensions and at fostering peace and stability in the region. The Burundian authorities expressed appreciation for the two envoys’ efforts and

conveyed their readiness for United Nations involvement to address tensions between the two countries.

50. The Special Representative and the Special Envoy later travelled to Kigali on 14 and 15 February. They met with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of regional cooperation, the Minister of Defence and the Secretary-General of the National Intelligence and Security Services. The envoys expressed their concern about heightened tensions between Burundi and Rwanda. They also reaffirmed United Nations readiness to support efforts aimed at resolving the crisis. The Rwandan authorities welcomed their efforts and requested the United Nations to use its good offices to engage with the Burundian authorities.

Chad

51. From 4 to 8 February, the Special Representative travelled to N'Djamena, where he met with transitional authorities, including the former and the then Transition Prime Ministers (Mr. Pahimi Padacké and Mr. Masra), other national stakeholders and international partners.

52. On 11 and 12 March, the Special Representative returned to N'Djamena. The visit was agreed following a meeting between the Special Representative and the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, in his capacity as ECCAS facilitator for the transition in Chad. It was jointly conducted with the President of the ECCAS Commission and the Minister of Tourism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, acting in his capacity as Special Envoy of the ECCAS facilitator. The visit was aimed at defusing political tensions following the death of the opposition figure, Mr. Dillo, and at encouraging the transitional authorities to maintain inclusivity and to ensure that political and civil rights were respected in the lead-up to the presidential election.

53. From 17 to 23 March, UNOCA took part in a follow-up United Nations electoral needs assessment mission to Chad. Participants met with transitional institutions, political parties, civil society, including women's groups, and international partners, who emphasized the continued need for United Nations support to the political transition, including support for civil society, voter sensitization and capacity-building for the electoral management bodies.

54. On 1 April, the Special Representative undertook a joint mission to N'Djamena with a delegation of the Government of Nigeria. They met with the Transition President to discuss the transition process. Nigerian representatives relayed a message of peace and support from the President of Nigeria.

Equatorial Guinea

55. On the margins of the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Conference of the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, held in Malabo on 9 March, the Special Representative met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Equatorial Guinea and discussed issues raised by the United Nations country team, notably the delays in the Government's disbursement of funds to implement United Nations support programmes and delays in issuing visas to staff members. The Minister assured the Special Representative that the Government would take all measures necessary to settle those issues expeditiously.

Gabon

56. On 30 January and 19 March, the Special Representative met with the Transitional Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss progress in the political transition, including the national dialogue and the establishment of a Group of Friends of Gabon.

They also discussed United Nations support to the transition. The Special Representative expressed concern about the strained relations between Gabon and Angola, which followed the proposed temporary relocation of ECCAS headquarters from Libreville to Malabo, particularly regarding the reported intrusion by alleged Gabonese security forces into the residence of the President of the ECCAS Commission, an Angolan citizen, on 17 January.

57. On 21 March, the Special Representative met with the Transitional Minister of the Reform of Institutions, whose responsibilities include the technical organization of the national dialogue, to discuss the dialogue and reiterate United Nations support to the political transition, as well as United Nations readiness to provide technical assistance to the next phases of the transition. The Special Representative stressed the need for the meaningful participation of women, youth, vulnerable groups and political parties in the dialogue and the need to address the concerns raised by civil society and political entities.

58. On 27 March, the Special Representative convened the inaugural meeting of the Group of Friends of Gabon, which aims to engage with transitional authorities, accompany the political transition and coordinate external support efforts. Attendees included regional and international organizations such as ECCAS, the African Union, OIF and the European Union, as well as members of the diplomatic corps resident in Gabon.

Sao Tome and Principe

59. On 15 January, the Special Representative participated in an ambassadorial-level meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission in New York on peace consolidation in Sao Tome and Principe, alongside the country's Prime Minister, Patrice Emery Trovoada. The Special Representative called for strong international support to the country to achieve sustainable peace, in particular through strengthening its justice and security sector institutions.

60. On the margins of the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, the Special Representative met with the President of Sao Tome and Principe, Mr. Vila Nova, who expressed his appreciation to the United Nations for its assistance in coordinating the above-mentioned meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission and reiterated the need for support with respect to the justice and security sector reform.

61. From 13 to 15 May, the Special Representative accompanied the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission on his visit to Sao Tome and Principe, along with the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support and the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the ECCAS Commission, to explore opportunities for strengthening the justice and security sectors. The delegation met with the President, Mr. Vila Nova, the Prime Minister, Mr. Trovoada, and representatives of the Government, National Assembly and civil society.

B. Enhancing subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation

Collaboration with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations, including support provided to the Economic Community of Central African States

62. From 7 to 10 March, the Special Representative attended the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, in Malabo. Leaders addressed the regional integration process and ECCAS reform. On the margins of the summit, the Special Representative held bilateral meetings with

the President of Sao Tome and Principe, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the then Transition Prime Minister Chad and with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Rwanda.

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

63. Between 4 and 8 March, the bureau of the Standing Advisory Committee conducted a field visit to Rwanda to examine successful approaches in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups and to gather pertinent data on interconnected issues, such as refugees and hate speech.

Partnerships with civil society and support to civil society networks

64. On 31 January, at a gathering facilitated by UNOCA, Gabonese women's organizations presented their reports on women's political participation and suggested actionable strategies for the transition period. Key recommendations were focused on ongoing assistance for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

65. On 29 and 30 March, UNOCA supported Gabonese women and youth-led civil society organizations in hosting a symposium on the meaningful participation of youth, women and vulnerable groups in the national dialogue. A resulting road map calls for revisions to the association laws of Gabon, the institutionalization of parity, above and beyond existing quota laws, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in all public policies.

66. Upon request from the Gabon Women's Network of Parliamentarians, on 8 December UNOCA facilitated discussions on women's participation in politics during the transitional period and beyond, with a focus on women's inclusion in political processes and decision-making bodies.

67. In Equatorial Guinea, UNOCA supported a project jointly implemented by the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to enhance the conflict resolution capacities of 110 young women and men, including members of marginalized groups and 10 young persons with disabilities. The training equipped young people to identify, manage and resolve tensions in their communities, families and workplaces and promoted the meaningful participation of women in conflict resolution.

68. In Angola, UNOCA and the Office of the Resident Coordinator continued to support the implementation of an initiative on women's political participation led by a civil society organization. Four trainings were conducted at the provincial level, including a dedicated day for raising awareness among men. The initiative concluded with the launch of an action plan for the integration of gender equality in political party and democratic governance processes.

C. Support to the United Nations, regional and subregional initiatives on peace and security

Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

69. From 5 to 7 December, UNOCA participated in the annual meeting of the Group of Seven Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, hosted in Dakar by the co-presidency of Germany and Côte d'Ivoire. Participants included stakeholders of the Yaoundé Architecture alongside international partners such as United Nations entities, bilateral donors and civil society organizations. On the margins of the annual

meeting, UNOCA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) convened a meeting with representatives of ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to discuss priority activities for 2024.

70. On 18 April, the Special Representative participated in the fourth annual meeting of senior officials of the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Abuja. Participants endorsed the evaluation of the Yaoundé Architecture and revision of the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa (Yaoundé Code of Conduct), a process supported by UNOCA and UNOWAS, in collaboration with UNODC.

Climate, peace and security

71. On 5 December, on the margins of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, UNOCA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), ECCAS, the African Women's Network for Sustainable Development and the Network of Young Leaders for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forests and Wetland Ecosystems convened a side event on climate security in Central Africa. Participants highlighted the interconnections between climate change, biodiversity loss, transhumance, development, peace and security in the subregion. Participants also discussed progress made in formulating the ECCAS regional strategy on addressing climate-induced conflicts and promoting resilient development.

72. From 3 to 7 March, a representative of UNOCA participated as a key speaker in a workshop co-organized by the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, the Francophone Expertise and Training Network for Peace Operations and OIF in Cairo. The workshop aimed to empower participants from peacekeeping training centres in countries in Central Africa that are OIF members with the skills to provide training at the national level on the interlinkages between climate, peace and security.

73. On 15 and 16 March, UNOCA took part in an expert workshop on climate, peace and security in stabilization contexts in the Sahel, with a focus on the Lake Chad basin and the Liptako-Gourma region, led by UNDP in Somone, Senegal. UNOCA contributed to mapping out specific pathways through which climate action can contribute to peacebuilding and security enhancements in the region.

74. On 8 and 9 April, the Special Representative attended a UNDP high-level partnerships forum on climate, peace and security in stabilization contexts in New York, focusing on the Lake Chad basin and the Liptako-Gourma region. In his statement, the Special Representative emphasized Central Africa's active involvement in global, regional and national dialogues on these critical issues.

75. On 4 and 5 May, the Special Representative participated in the Strategic Dialogue on Climate, Peace and Security in Stockholm, organized by the climate security mechanism, the Folke Bernadotte Academy and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Leaders of peacekeeping and special political missions and climate, peace and security practitioners explored how the United Nations could support and address the demands of climate-affected governments and regions through comprehensive, integrated and action-oriented approaches. In his briefing, the Special Representative called upon States and donors to financially support the climate, peace and security agenda in Central Africa, including through the work of

climate security advisers, and underscored the criticality of preventing climate-related conflicts for the achievement of long-term stability.

Transhumance and farmer-herder conflicts

76. On 4 December, UNOCA and UNOWAS held a virtual workshop on the dynamics between farmers and herders. Participants highlighted best practices, launched an online community of practitioners from West and Central Africa and sought support for a regional transhumance protocol, which was in the process of being developed by ECCAS. Meanwhile, UNOCA, UNOWAS and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs finalized a study on best practices for the prevention and resolution of conflicts between farmers and herders in West and Central Africa.

77. On 24 January, UNOCA participated in a virtual discussion hosted by France and Gabon as part of their facilitation of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which addressed cross-border transhumance, the conservation of protected areas, natural resources, human lives, development, peace and security. UNOCA emphasized the link between transboundary transhumant movements, climate change and biodiversity loss, proposing approaches to address these challenges effectively.

D. Enhancing United Nations coherence and coordination in the subregion

Internal United Nations exchanges, collaboration, coordination and joint initiatives

78. During a desk-to-desk meeting in Libreville on 8 and 9 February, UNOCA and UNOWAS addressed issues related to climate, peace and security, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and violent extremism in the Lake Chad basin, among others.

Partnerships with and support to resident coordinators and country teams

79. On 15 February, UNOCA held a virtual meeting with resident coordinators and heads of mission in Central Africa, during which they discussed subregional peace and security dynamics and national peacebuilding efforts. The Special Representative provided an overview of his recent good offices efforts and key challenges facing the subregion, including global economic challenges that affect the socioeconomic situation in Central Africa.

IV. Observations and recommendations

80. The period under review continued to highlight the multifaceted governance challenges in the subregion, which affect social, economic and political development. Recent trends and developments also underscored the importance of concerted efforts by national Governments, regional organizations and the international community to address these challenges. Reforms aimed at strengthening democratic institutions and political inclusivity, promoting transparency and accountability, fostering economic diversification and addressing the root causes of conflict are essential for sustainable development and stability in the subregion.

81. In Chad, following the violent events of 27 and 28 February, the holding of the presidential elections, a key milestone in the transition process, was a welcome development. The tragic loss of several lives during celebratory gunfire following the announcement of the preliminary election results is regrettable. The President, Mahamat Déby Itno, and his Government are encouraged to continue their dialogue efforts with armed groups remaining outside Chad, and to strengthen channels of

dialogue with all national stakeholders so as to enhance the inclusivity of governance in the post-transition period, including by advancing the recommendations of the national dialogue held in 2022. It is critical that the authorities publish a timetable for the legislative, senatorial and local elections and ensure that these elections are inclusive, transparent and credible, as they represent a key opportunity to advance representation, democratization and sustainable peace in Chad.

82. The transition process in Gabon is progressing in line with the timeline set out by the transitional authorities. The country stands at a critical juncture, which provides an opportunity to build strong institutions, reinforce democratic governance and political inclusivity and strengthen the protection of human rights. The transitional authorities and relevant Gabonese stakeholders are encouraged to ensure an inclusive transition process, open political space, respect for and the promotion and protection of human rights and the preservation of social cohesion. The United Nations, in collaboration with ECCAS and other partners, will continue to support the Gabonese authorities and people at this crucial time.

83. I commend the ECCAS facilitator for Chad, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi Tshilombo, who facilitated the return of political opponents to Chad and furthered the inclusiveness of the transition. I also commend the ECCAS facilitator for Gabon, the President of the Central African Republic, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, for his efforts that led to the country's reintegration into ECCAS.

84. The protracted conflict in the Sudan has led to large-scale displacement, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries within Central Africa, particularly in Chad and the Central African Republic. Such an influx of additional refugees strains the already fragile host communities and poses significant humanitarian challenges. I reiterate my gratitude to Chad and the Central African Republic for their solidarity in welcoming those fleeing the conflict in the Sudan. I call upon the international community to increase the humanitarian aid provided to Sudanese refugees and their host communities and to step up efforts towards more resilience and development.

85. I remain concerned about the continued violence in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, which will have a lasting impact on the children of those regions who are denied their right to education, in contravention of Security Council resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#). I reiterate the importance of a political, Cameroonian-led resolution to the crisis and reiterate the availability of the United Nations in supporting such a process. I stress the need for all actors to prioritize the protection of civilians in the affected regions, in accordance with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

86. The situation in the Lake Chad Basin remains of concern. Though significantly weakened, violent extremist groups continue to be a threat and have increased their use of improvised explosive devices, which pose risks for civilians and security forces. I urge international partners to continue their support to the Multinational Joint Task Force and to the revised Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region, which is currently under development.

87. UNOCA will continue to bolster its partnership with ECCAS so as to help prevent conflicts and sustain peace in Central Africa, strengthen national and regional governance, foster sustainable development, address cross-border security challenges and promote the meaningful participation of women, young people and civil society in early warning, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. UNOCA will also continue to support the effective implementation of ECCAS reform.

88. The persistent fragility of peace and security in Central Africa necessitates continued United Nations support, especially in the areas of preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacebuilding and peace consolidation. I therefore recommend that the mandate of UNOCA be extended for another three years, from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2027. I would like to express appreciation to the Governments of the subregion, the African Union, ECCAS, CEMAC, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and other regional and subregional institutions for their continued collaboration with UNOCA. I am grateful to Gabon for its hospitality towards and support for UNOCA.

89. Lastly, I would like to thank my Special Representative, Abdou Abarry, and the staff of UNOCA for their continuing support to regional efforts and initiatives for peace in Central Africa.
