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Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the reporting period, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa held its forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings, in N'Djamena from 3 to 7 December 2018 and in Kinshasa from 27 to 31 May 2019, respectively. As the secretariat to the Committee, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) supported the organization of those meetings.

The two meetings provided Member States with an opportunity to review key developments in the subregion relating to peace and security, discuss responses to ongoing challenges and identify new threats to regional peace and stability. The Committee made recommendations on how to overcome those challenges.

The Committee discussed the lack of adequate funding for subregional peace and security mechanisms, including the Committee itself, and urged Member States to make their contributions in a timely and regular manner to ensure the smooth functioning of those mechanisms. The Committee was also concerned about the lack of adequate capacity and funding for mechanisms established to promote maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

The Committee noted the progress made in the ongoing institutional reform process of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), called for an acceleration of the process and requested that it be regularly updated on the matter. The Committee also called for reinforcing interregional cooperation between Central and West Africa, including within the framework of the Lomé Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism adopted at the first joint ECCAS-Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) summit, held in July 2018.

* A/74/150.



During both meetings, the Committee expressed strong concern over the challenges arising from pastoralism and cross-border transhumance and called for the adoption of regional and national measures to promote peaceful transhumance for the benefit of the States and communities concerned. In that regard, the Committee noted the ongoing efforts of ECCAS towards the adoption of a regulation on pastoralism and transhumance at the subregional level.

The Committee remains concerned with the persistence of activities by illegal armed groups in several countries of the subregion, including the use of the illicit trafficking in natural resources to fund those groups and the alleged ties between some of these groups and international terrorist networks.

The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the control of arms in the subregion, including through the implementation of the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly, to which most members of the Committee are now parties. At the forty-seventh meeting of the Committee, ECCAS, UNOCA and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa signed and launched a joint project on “Supporting African States towards the African Union’s vision of ‘Silencing the Guns’ in Africa by 2020: capacity-building for Central African States”.

The Committee recalled that women have a key role to play in peace and security. Member States reiterated their commitment to promoting the greater participation of women in political and peace processes, including through the adoption and implementation of national action plans on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

The forty-ninth and fiftieth meetings of the Committee will be held in Luanda and Malabo, respectively.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [73/78](#) entitled “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa”, the General Assembly welcomed the efforts of the Committee to address cross-border security threats in Central Africa. The Assembly also reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts in Central Africa and to further sustainable peace, stability and development in the subregion.
2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also expressed its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support to the Committee, also expressed appreciation for the role played by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in its capacity as secretariat to the Committee, and strongly encouraged the States members of the Committee and international partners to support the work of UNOCA. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the assistance needed by the Committee to ensure the success of its biannual meetings. It also called upon the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session a report on the implementation of resolution [73/78](#).
3. The present report is submitted in response to the above request and covers the activities carried out by the Committee from September 2018 to August 2019.

II. Activities of the Committee

4. The forty-seventh meeting of the Committee was held in N’Djamena from 3 to 7 December 2018 and the forty-eighth meeting was held in Kinshasa from 27 to 31 May 2019. All the members of the Committee, namely, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe, took part in both meetings. Both meetings included closed-door ministerial sessions.
5. Representatives of the following entities also participated as observers in one or both meetings: the African Union Commission; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) secretariat; the Central African Economic and Monetary Community; the Lake Chad Basin Commission; the Multinational Joint Task Force; the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa; the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa; the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Mine Action Service; the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS); the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
6. The Bureau of the Committee carried out field missions to Sido, in the Moyen-Chari region of Chad, near the border with the Central African Republic, from 15 to 18 October 2018, and to Dungu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 25 to 29 March 2019. Both visits were aimed at assessing the peace and security challenges arising from transhumance and pastoralism, including links with poaching and the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.
7. The main issues on the agenda of the Committee and its activities during the period under review are set out below.

A. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

8. The Committee continued to offer a unique platform for consultations and the sharing of experiences relating to major peace and security challenges in Central Africa and identifying collective measures aimed at addressing them. The Committee examined the situation in each country of the subregion in order to identify trends that are common to several or all countries or that pose a threat to regional peace and stability.

9. The Committee welcomed positive developments in some countries during the reporting period, including the peaceful conclusion of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the first peaceful transfer of power took place, and the progress achieved through the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, in particular the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic between the Government and armed groups, leading to the appointment of a new Government that includes representatives of the signatories.

10. The Committee expressed its concern regarding the persistence or emergence of situations that represented threats to the stability of the region, including disputed electoral processes, the outcomes of which are met with rejection by some stakeholders; the consequences of the economic slowdown caused by, among other things, the decrease and stagnation in the price of oil and other raw materials and the high level of public debt leading the countries concerned to agree to adjustment programmes with the International Monetary Fund, within the framework of which austerity measures are being implemented; the activities of non-State armed groups; the persistence of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin and the impact of terrorist activities in the Sahel region; the continued disagreements between the Government of the Central African Republic, other political actors and armed groups in the country, notwithstanding the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the appointment of a new Government; and the persistence of humanitarian crises in various parts of the subregion due to violence and the subsequent increase in the displacement of civilians.

11. The Committee was concerned with the growing security challenges relating to pastoralism and cross-border transhumance, including suspected collusion between pastoralists and armed groups active in the subregion, and environmental challenges caused by the presence of cattle in protected areas and national parks, especially in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

12. During both its forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings, the Committee was briefed on the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including improvements in the exercise of civil and political rights since the election of the President, Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, coupled with efforts to strengthen relations with regional and international partners. The delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also expressed concern over alleged ties between armed groups active in the eastern part of the country and global terrorist networks, including Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

13. The delegation of the Central African Republic expressed gratitude to the Committee for its support for the peace process in the country. It said that, notwithstanding some initial challenges, the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was on track and required strong support from the region. The delegation informed the Committee that a meeting of the bilateral joint commission between Cameroon and the Central African Republic had been held in May 2019 and that similar meetings with other

neighbouring countries were planned in accordance with the terms of the Political Agreement. The Central African Republic reiterated its call for the total lifting of the arms embargo and received the support of several Member States at the forty-eighth meeting of the Committee.

B. Disarmament and arms control

Kinshasa Convention and Arms Trade Treaty

14. The Committee reviewed the status of the signature and ratification of legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation of arms in the subregion, in particular the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components that Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly (Kinshasa Convention), which was ratified by the following countries at the time when the Committee was holding its forty-eighth meeting: Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. During the forty-eighth meeting, the Democratic Republic of the Congo informed the Committee that it had deposited its instruments of ratification, while Equatorial Guinea indicated that the Convention had been ratified by both houses of Parliament and that the Government would soon deposit its instruments of ratification. The Democratic Republic of the Congo also expressed interest in hosting the secretariat of the Kinshasa Convention. To date, only three members of the Committee have ratified the Arms Trade Treaty: Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad.

15. The Secretariat of ECCAS also supported efforts towards the establishment of national commissions on the control of small arms and light weapons, in line with the Kinshasa Convention and the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. In that regard, technical assistance was provided to Cameroon, Chad and Gabon, and ECCAS reiterated its availability to extend similar support to other member States. ECCAS also engaged in the preparation of a five-year action plan (2019–2023) for the implementation of the Convention and has begun preparations for the second conference of States parties to the Convention.

Update on the activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs

16. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa briefed the Committee, during both the forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings of the Committee, on its activities in support of national and regional efforts in the area of disarmament and arms control. On the margins of the forty-seventh meeting, ECCAS, UNOCA and the Regional Centre signed and launched a joint project on “Supporting African States towards the African Union’s vision of ‘Silencing the Guns’ in Africa by 2020: capacity-building for Central African States” (see [A/73/731-S/2019/111](#), enclosure I). Within the framework of that project, from 24 to 26 April, the Regional Centre organized a subregional workshop in Yaoundé to review the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention and make relevant recommendations for its effective implementation. National workshops are also scheduled to be held in all 11 ECCAS member States. To reinforce UNOCA and ECCAS action to encourage ECCAS member States that have yet to ratify the Convention to do so, the Regional Centre dispatched two advocacy missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Equatorial Guinea from 3 to 6 October and from 13 to 16 October 2018, respectively. The two Governments committed themselves to taking the steps necessary to ratify the Convention without delay. In partnership with the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, the Regional Centre also organized a subregional workshop, held in Malabo on 5 and 6 February 2019, on the production and transfer of fissile material

for nuclear weapons, during which participants familiarized themselves with the technical and political aspects of the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, exchanged views and discussed challenges and effective ways forward for a future treaty. Representatives from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe participated in the workshop.

C. Armed violence and terrorism in Central Africa

Regional strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa

17. The Committee stressed the importance of the regional strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and the role of ECCAS in coordinating and monitoring its implementation.

Boko Haram

18. The Lake Chad Basin Commission presented the regional stabilization, recovery and resilience strategy for the areas affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region, adopted in August 2018 and endorsed by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in December 2018. The strategy is built around nine pillars, with a total of 40 strategic objectives, and will be implemented in eight regions, states or provinces of the four countries affected. Each State concerned is expected to adopt territorial action plans for the Boko Haram-affected regions following guidelines provided under the strategy. The Commission has established a technical support group, a working group and a secretariat to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the strategy. The high-level conference on the Lake Chad Basin region, held in Berlin in September 2018, marked a new chapter in the implementation of a new way of working in the region, given that the humanitarian, stabilization and resilience needs were part of the conference, going beyond the more traditional humanitarian approach of the conference on Lake Chad held in Oslo in 2017. This joint approach was perceived as more credible and effective, which resulted in more funding for both humanitarian and development interventions.

19. The Multinational Joint Task Force reported on the intensification of attacks by Boko Haram since the last quarter of 2018, to which the Task Force responded with a resolutely aggressive posture that led to some operational successes in recent months. It reiterated calls for stronger regional and international support for its operational capabilities.

20. At the forty-eighth meeting of the Committee, UNOCA briefed the Committee on its activities in support of national and regional efforts to address the Boko Haram threat. UNOCA undertook a high-level tour of the affected countries jointly with UNOWAS and the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, who also covers the Lake Chad Basin. The high-level delegations visited Chad in March 2019 and Cameroon and the Niger in April 2019, while a visit to Nigeria is also scheduled in 2019. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate also participated in the visit to Chad. The objective of the visits was to gather information on the evolution of the Boko Haram threat and on national and regional efforts to address it, with a view to mobilizing increased international support for the ongoing and planned efforts to eradicate the threat and address the root causes and socioeconomic consequences of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin.

21. The Democratic Republic of the Congo informed the Committee that there was credible evidence of collusion between armed groups operating in its eastern region, namely, the Allied Democratic Forces–National Army for the Liberation of Uganda

and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and called for strengthened related regional cooperation and counter-terrorism efforts.

22. The Committee recognized the central role of education in the efforts to combat violent extremism and recommended that ECCAS, UNESCO and UNOCA follow up on the topic and present a report at the forty-ninth meeting of the Committee.

D. Poaching, the use of mercenaries and transnational organized crime

23. Several members of the Committee expressed concern regarding continued allegations of mercenary activities in Central Africa. ECCAS recalled that the issue had been discussed several times by its political organs and during the joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit held in Lomé in July 2018, noting that the sensitivity of the issue required the adoption of a regional strategy by the Committee, with technical support from UNOCA and the ECCAS secretariat.

24. During its forty-eighth meeting, the Committee was briefed by the Institut congolais pour la conservation de la nature on the issue of the illicit trafficking in natural resources acquired through poaching or mining. According to the Institut, the presence of poachers, armed groups, criminal gangs and mercenaries in border areas, as well as armed herders, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the illicit trafficking in arms, porous borders and the prevalence of poverty, represent threats to wildlife, including in protected areas such as national parks. The Institut stressed the magnitude of those threats and their impact on security in and around protected areas and their negative consequences on the preservation of biodiversity, in particular in the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

25. Given the increasingly sophisticated means used by traffickers, including weapons of war, drones and helicopters, the Institut congolais pour la conservation de la nature also noted that significant resources were needed to combat illicit trafficking in natural resources. In that regard, it highlighted the need to strengthen the training, equipping and intelligence and surveillance capacities of “ecoguards” and inter-institutional and cross-border collaboration between defence and security forces.

26. UNODC stressed the importance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in regulating the efforts to combat all forms of illicit trafficking, including trafficking in the proceeds of fauna and flora. It stressed the overall importance of a functioning criminal justice system, both for healing the grievances resulting from conflict and as a tool for conflict prevention. Given the number of protected areas located near international borders, UNODC stressed the importance of including the dimension of natural resources in strategies for improved border management.

27. The Committee noted the importance of the problem and recommended that in-depth studies of the situation be conducted in order to identify appropriate solutions. To that end, technical and financial partners were invited to support regional and national institutions in carrying out the studies to combat trafficking.

E. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

28. The ECCAS secretariat and the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea briefed the Committee on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, noting an increase in security incidents. From 1 to 31 October 2018, the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa

recorded one act of robbery, one act of piracy, one hostage-taking, three boarding attempts and one ship hijacking. From November 2018 to March 2019, it recorded attacks against 10 fishing vessels and 1 cargo ship, as well as one instance of hostage-taking. Meanwhile, regional and national maritime security institutions continued to face capacity challenges. The Interregional Coordination Centre and the Regional Coordination Centre lack adequate equipment, while the national maritime operations centres require more transmission and naval resources for monitoring the area. Furthermore, judicial procedures may be inadequate to coerce and dissuade offenders. Financing for the information-sharing mechanism, stipulated in the Kinshasa Convention, also remains a challenge.

29. The ECCAS secretariat informed the Committee that a revision of procedures for the financing of the maritime safety and security architecture was planned within the ongoing ECCAS institutional reform process. The Committee then made the following recommendations: the implementation of the decision of the Heads of State and Government on the financing of the architecture; the provision by each Member State of major operational equipment; the establishment, in the agreed form, of an authority responsible for coordinating the action of the State at sea by States that do not yet have one; and the establishment of Zone A in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Defence and Security Committee, in liaison with Angola.

30. The Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea expressed gratitude to my Special Representative for Central Africa and to UNOCA for support for resource mobilization efforts. The final communiqué of the forty-eighth meeting of the Committee contained calls upon Member States to fulfil their financial obligations towards subregional security mechanisms (see [A/73/967-S/2019/613](#), enclosure I).

F. Implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Central Africa

31. Strengthening the role of women in peace and security remains a priority of the Committee. At the forty-seventh meeting of the Committee, the ECCAS secretariat presented the status of implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) among ECCAS member States and welcomed the adoption of national action plans by seven States (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda) and encouraged Chad, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe to do the same. ECCAS also noted that increased efforts were needed to enhance the awareness of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) in the subregion.

32. At the forty-eighth meeting of the Committee, UN-Women briefed the Committee on investing in women for peace and security as part of the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). It welcomed the significant progress made at the country level, while noting that challenges remained in the development and effective implementation of national action plans, including the lack of coordination and clarity around roles and responsibilities, inadequate funding and the absence of national ownership. UN-Women added that the lack of regular review of the national action plans and limited alignment with national policies did not allow all areas of concern to be addressed.

33. UN-Women recommended a series of actions at the national and regional levels. Recommendations at the national level included the establishment of an advocacy mechanism for the development and adoption of national action plans in countries that have not done so (Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe); support for the establishment of a coordination and resource mobilization mechanism or

secretariat for countries to ensure the full implementation of their national action plans through budgeted operational plans; the creation of accessible and flexible funding mechanisms and instruments for local women's organizations and networks; support for national bodies in charge of statistics for the integration of the theme of women and peace and security in surveys or data; and the improvement in documentation on good practices at the national level.

34. At the regional level, UN-Women recommended the strengthening of advocacy for the acceleration of the women and peace and security agenda in the run-up to the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), in 2020, as well as the full functioning of the women and peace and security programmes and the availability of resources to enable them to play a better role in advocacy.

G. Human rights

35. At both the forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings of the Committee, the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa briefed the Committee on the human rights situation in Central Africa. The Centre noted the fragility of the respect for human rights in the subregion, with the persistent allegations of infringements on the right to physical integrity and the right to life in many countries during military and police operations; reports of gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions; cases of death in prisons and other detention facilities; and the use of lethal ammunition against unarmed demonstrators. The Centre also highlighted the weakness of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights and the non-ratification of several important international human rights instruments by some countries of the subregion.

36. The United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa made the following recommendations to the members of the Committee: to resolutely commit themselves to the efforts to combat impunity for human rights violations; to guarantee fair trials; to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for cases of torture and the violation of the right to life in police custody or other places of detention; to improve the management of electoral processes in order to ensure the dividends of democracy and peace; to adopt short-, medium- and long-term objectives as part of national human rights policies; to provide national human rights institutions with adequate human, financial and material resources to enable them to carry out their mandates independently; and to cooperate fully with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, the African Union and the subregion. Following the presentation, several State delegates intervened to present efforts that they were doing to improve the human rights situation in their countries.

H. Cooperation with international and regional organizations, with the support of United Nations entities

37. The United Nations continued to mobilize the international community to support regional and national efforts in the area of peace and security, through its regional presences, country teams and peace operations.

38. At the forty-eighth meeting of the Committee, the ECCAS secretariat presented an update on its ongoing institutional reform process, the documents for which were approved by a technical steering committee in January 2019 and at the ministerial level in June 2019. The reform documents will be submitted for adoption by relevant ECCAS bodies, namely, the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State, before being opened for signing and ratification by member States.

39. ECCAS highlighted its efforts to strengthen relations with other regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union and ECOWAS. It also reviewed the status of implementation of the Lomé Declaration adopted at the first joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit, in July 2018, including preparations for a joint action plan for the implementation of the Declaration that was to be adopted by ECCAS and ECOWAS.

40. The Committee recommended holding a meeting as soon as possible between the ECCAS secretariat and the ECOWAS Commission, with a view to adopting the action plan for the implementation of the Lomé Declaration and to discuss other issues of common interest. The Committee also invited the ECCAS secretariat to provide an update on progress in the institutional reform process at its forty-ninth meeting, to be held by the end of 2019.

III. Administrative and financial matters

41. The Committee expressed concern regarding the status of voluntary contributions to the trust fund. It reiterated its appeal to Member States to make their contributions and requested the secretariat to send regular reminders to that effect. The Committee congratulated Rwanda on the regular payment of its contributions.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

42. Pending the conclusion and implementation of the ongoing ECCAS institutional reform process, the Committee continues to offer a unique platform in which the States of the Central Africa subregion meet on a regular basis to exchange views and address major challenges to regional peace and security. The high-level representation of Member States and the increasing number and diversity of entities attending the meetings of the Committee testify to the importance and relevance of the Committee.

43. As pointed out in the present report, the Central Africa subregion continues to face significant challenges in terms of stability. I welcome the commitment of the States of the subregion to overcoming these challenges, as evidenced by the openness of discussions during the forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings of the Committee.

44. Pastoralism and cross-border transhumance emerged as a major source of tension in Central Africa, while at the same time being an important source of income for people in several countries of the subregion and an important factor in regional economic integration. In order to capitalize on benefits while mitigating threats to peace and security, it is now more urgent than ever to strengthen the subregional regulation and management of pastoralism and transhumance. I therefore welcome the ongoing efforts by ECCAS to adopt a subregional regulation of the phenomenon and reiterate the support of the United Nations, through UNOCA and other relevant entities, to these efforts. Regional regulations alone will not suffice to address all the challenges surrounding pastoralism and transhumance in Central Africa. I therefore also urge all the countries concerned to reinforce cooperation mechanisms and to enact national laws, policies and mechanisms to promote peaceful pastoralism and transhumance.

45. I am deeply concerned by the continued activities of illegal armed groups in the subregion, which constitute a serious threat to civilians and affect the stability of States, while heightening inter- and intra-State tensions. Of concern is the illicit trafficking in natural resources by armed groups in several countries of the subregion and a growing suspicion of collusion between some of these armed groups with international terrorist networks. I call upon Member States to collaborate urgently to

address these issues in bilateral and multilateral forums. I welcome in this regard the launch of a joint project on “Supporting African States towards the African Union’s vision of ‘Silencing the Guns’ in Africa by 2020: capacity-building for Central African States” by ECCAS, UNOCA and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. I remain concerned by continued violence perpetrated by the Lord’s Resistance Army and encourage the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to remain engaged through the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army.

46. I am encouraged by progress achieved under the peace process in the Central African Republic, including the recent signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic between the Government and armed groups, as well as measures to implement some key provisions of the Agreement. I also welcome the Committee’s steadfast support for stability in the Central African Republic. I remain deeply concerned, however, about the continuation of violence, including attacks on civilians by some armed groups that are parties to the Agreement. I call for the immediate cessation of these attacks and for adequate measures to be taken against the perpetrators of serious crimes and human rights violations that threaten to derail the fragile peace process. I further welcome the recent operationalization of the Central African Republic-Cameroon bilateral joint commission and encourage the other bilateral joint commissions between the Central African Republic and its neighbours to be established, in support to the implementation of the Agreement.

47. I welcome the solidarity expressed by the Committee to support national efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. I encourage all regional stakeholders to support efforts to achieve a solution to the crisis through inclusive dialogue.

48. The financing of regional mechanisms for peace and security continues to be a major challenge that the members of the Committee need to address in order to ensure that such mechanisms remain relevant and useful for optimizing contributions to regional peace and stability. I call upon Member States to regularly pay their voluntary contributions to the trust fund and to ensure adequate and predictable funding for the Committee. I further encourage Member States to continue to support the ECCAS institutional reform process and to promote increased cooperation with the Regional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa. I also thank UNOCA and UNOWAS for their efforts in reinforcing interregional cooperation between Central and West Africa, including by supporting the finalization of the ECCAS-ECOWAS joint action plan for the implementation of the Lomé Declaration.

49. I am grateful to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNOCA and my Special Representative for providing the technical, administrative and logistical backstopping for the smooth functioning of the Committee. I also commend other United Nations entities, peacekeeping operations and special political missions for their specialized contributions to the work of the Committee. I look forward to the deliberations and conclusions of the Committee at its forty-ninth and fiftieth meetings, to be held in Luanda and Malabo, respectively.