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United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a summary of the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa during the period from July 2020 to June 2021. The Regional Centre continued to assist Member States, at their request, and intergovernmental and civil society organizations in Africa to promote peace, security, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control of conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, and human security.

In the light of the specific nature of security and disarmament issues in Africa, the Regional Centre continued to emphasize activities aimed at preventing and addressing the illicit trafficking in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, including through capacity-building for civilian authorities, including government officials, members of parliament and national commissions on small arms and light weapons, defence and security forces and United Nations peacekeeping mission personnel.

The Regional Centre supported the efforts of Member States in preventing the diversion of such weapons, in particular to non-State armed groups and terrorist groups. It also provided assistance for the implementation of instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction, including Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#).

The Secretary-General expresses sincere gratitude to Member States and partners for their generous contributions to and support for the Regional Centre and encourages their continuous and increased support commensurate with the growing challenges to human security in Africa, with a view to allowing the Centre to provide enhanced technical and capacity-building assistance to Member States in the region, in fulfilment of its mandate. The Secretary-General is especially grateful to the Government of Togo for its long-standing support, as a host country, to the Centre.

* [A/76/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 75/76, the General Assembly commended the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for its sustained support to Member States in implementing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control activities through seminars and conferences, capacity-building and training, policy and technical expertise, and information and advocacy at the regional and national levels, and welcomed the continental dimension of the activities of the Centre in the areas of disarmament, peace and security.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 75/76, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the activities of the Regional Centre. The report covers the period from July 2020 to June 2021. A financial statement on the status of the trust fund for the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for the year 2020 is contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Functioning and mandate

3. The Regional Centre was established in 1986 in Lomé pursuant to General Assembly resolution 40/151 G. It is mandated to provide, upon request, substantive support for initiatives and other efforts of African Member States towards the realization of measures of peace, arms limitation and disarmament in the region.

4. The Regional Centre focuses its efforts towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, as acknowledged by the General Assembly which, in its resolution 75/76, welcomed the work of the Regional Centre in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and target 16.4, which addresses the reduction of illicit arms flows.

III. Main activities

5. During the reporting period, the activities of the Regional Centre were significantly affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Centre nevertheless successfully adapted and continued to provide assistance to African Member States, reaching an extensive number of online participants. By converting national and regional activities and consultations from in-person to virtual platforms, the Centre supported in particular the efforts to strengthen small arms and other conventional and non-conventional arms control and prevent violent extremism in Africa by assisting with several regional and national workshops and meetings to advance disarmament efforts in Africa. It also organized or participated in a number of important virtual meetings with regional and national stakeholders engaged with donors on ongoing and new projects.

6. During the period under review, the Regional Centre provided support and technical assistance to Member States in Africa to promote disarmament, peace and security through capacity-building and training programmes, practical measures, advocacy, research and the sharing of information. The Centre worked in partnership with the African Union and African regional organizations, other United Nations entities and intergovernmental organizations, academic and research institutions and civil society organizations in the implementation of its programmes, projects and other activities.

7. The Regional Centre continued to raise the awareness of African Member States and other relevant stakeholders on issues relating to weapons of mass destruction, in

particular by providing information and technical advice and assisting in the implementation of such international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction and Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

8. The Regional Centre made extensive use of its social media platforms, including its website and social media accounts, to publicize its work as well as the work and achievements of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and to advance peace education.

A. Peace and security

9. On 20 July 2020, the Centre held a virtual meeting with national counterparts from the Central African Republic and relevant United Nations partners, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, to prepare the ground for the implementation of a regional project to mainstream gender in disarmament covering six African countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone). The meeting was also aimed at exploring alternate options for project implementation within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which strongly limited mission travels. The project is the African chapter of a multi-year global project led by the Office for Disarmament Affairs with funding from the European Union.

10. On 13 August, a similar meeting with national counterparts from Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Mines Advisory Group was cut short owing to sociopolitical instability, delaying project implementation in Mali.

11. A three-day training workshop on gender and disarmament was held from 13 to 15 October in Bangui with national counterparts and relevant United Nations partners to further harness their small arms control practices and policies in support of gender equality and related priorities. A total of 30 government and civil society participants were familiarized with approaches on how to systematically weave gender considerations into national and local small arms control efforts.

12. On 30 October, the Regional Centre held a working session in Lomé with the Consul of Switzerland and an ambassadorial delegation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland for a strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis on violent extremism to inform a future regional project sponsored by Switzerland to address the nexus between arms control and the prevention of violent extremism in Western Africa.

13. On 2 and 3 December, the Regional Centre participated in the fiftieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Africa, which gathered all 11 member States of the Economic Community of Central African States. The ministerial meeting focused on the impact of COVID-19 on peace and security in Central Africa.

14. The Regional Centre participated physically in the fifty-first ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee, which was held from 24 to 28 May 2021 in Bujumbura, Burundi, at the expert and ministerial levels. The participants reviewed pressing peace and security issues in Central Africa, with particular focus on the threats posed by armed groups and terrorist groups to peace and security in the region. The Centre stressed the risks resulting from insufficient measures for the proper management of weapons and ammunition in the region, including accidental explosions of ammunition

depots and diversion of government-owned stocks to armed groups and terrorist groups and criminal networks.

15. The Regional Centre provided support to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the National Commission for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Reduction of Armed Violence in the organization of a training workshop on the integration of gender-responsive measures in the control of small arms and light weapons, which was held from 23 to 25 November 2020 in Kinshasa. The aim of the training course was to support the implementation of the 2018–2022 national action plan for the control and management of small arms and light weapons. Experts from the Ministries of Defence, the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Gender, Family and Children, as well as civil society experts, participated in the event.

16. On 3 February 2021, a virtual meeting was held with the Government of Cameroon to prepare the ground for the implementation of the gender and disarmament project in the country taking approaches similar to those in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo but taking into account the specific context of the country's particular requirements and observations from Cameroonian authorities. Meanwhile, liaison has been maintained with Mali, Rwanda and Sierra Leone for the planning of their respective in-country training workshops within the framework of the gender and disarmament project.

17. From 31 May to 3 June, two workshops on the integration of the gender dimension in policies, programmes and actions to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons were held back-to-back in Yaoundé, in support to the Ministry of External Relations of Cameroon and with the participation, at the opening ceremony, of the head of the European Union delegation in Cameroon. Close to 60 government and civil society stakeholders participated in the workshops initially envisaged for 30 participants, heralding the keen interest of Cameroonian civil servants and civil society organizations in this important topic.

18. Earlier, on 22 February, the Regional Centre participated in a virtual consultation meeting of all United Nations entities operating in Central Africa hosted by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) on the situation in the Congo and preparations for the upcoming elections in a context of persistent disarmament, demobilization and reintegration challenges in the Pool region.

19. On 12 March, the Regional Centre participated in a UNOCA Integrated Task Force meeting on the situation in Chad, ahead of the upcoming presidential election in a security atmosphere marked by threats posed by violent extremists in the Lake Chad basin.

20. On 23 March, the Regional Centre attended a meeting organized by UNOCA of United Nations entities operating in Central Africa to review United Nations priorities in the subregion for 2021. The Centre emphasized the importance of reviving cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States, to support and strengthen 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 (Kinshasa Convention), especially in the light of the recent accidental explosion of ammunition depots in Bata, Equatorial Guinea.

21. On 3 June, the Regional Centre participated in a virtual meeting with United Nations entities in Central Africa on enhancing partnerships towards peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the Central African subregion.

22. On 8 June, the Regional Centre participated remotely in consultations with the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions and UNOCA on ways and means to strengthen cooperation to jointly deliver United Nations peace, security and rule of

law mandates, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, in Central Africa, building on, among other things, the existing Department of Peace Operations-Office for Disarmament Affairs cooperation framework.

23. On 2 April, the Regional Centre held a virtual meeting with the Sierra Leone National Commission on Small Arms to lay the ground for a training workshop in Freetown on gender mainstreaming in small arms and light weapons control and management intended for government and civil society stakeholders.

24. On 25 May, the Regional Centre participated in a one-day workshop on gender mainstreaming in the control of small arms and light weapons in Togo, which was organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Togo Group in collaboration with the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control.

B. Small arms and light weapons and other conventional arms

25. On 17 July 2020, the Regional Centre participated virtually in the biannual meeting of the African Union-Regions Steering Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, a platform of the African Union intended to enhance cooperation, synergy, information-sharing and coordination in support to efforts to control illicit small arms and light weapons and implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives in Africa. On 19 May 2021, the Centre again participated in the biannual meeting of the Steering Committee. The Centre reported in both meetings on its activities during the reporting periods and explored ways to enhance coordination with the African Union and other participating organizations.

26. On 28 July, the Regional Centre participated in a one-week regional workshop organized online by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on the legal provisions of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime for defence, police, customs and justice officials from francophone Africa.

27. To foster effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policies and practices, the Regional Centre is involved in the implementation of the joint Department of Peace Operations-Office for Disarmament Affairs project on weapons and ammunition management in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration training. From 2 to 14 December, the Centre participated in the annual session of the "Effective weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context" initiative aimed at United Nations practitioners involved in peace and security, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform. Given the travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the training workshop was held online.

28. The Regional Centre has also engaged with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on gender mainstreaming in arms control and disarmament. On 15 February 2021, the Centre held a virtual meeting with UNIDIR on the collection of gender-segregated data within the framework of a UNIDIR-led research project on women in weapons and ammunition management.

29. On 24 February, the Regional Centre took part in a virtual coordination meeting with the African Union on the selection of beneficiary countries and implementation modalities within the framework of the joint African Union-Office for Disarmament Affairs African Amnesty Month project, which receives funding support from Germany. On 29 April and 6 and 7 May, coordination meetings were held virtually with the African Union, the Nairobi-based Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light

Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States and beneficiary countries respectively (Madagascar, Niger and Uganda).

30. On 7 March in Equatorial Guinea, a series of explosions at military barracks hosting gendarmerie and military forces in Bata, the economic powerhouse of the country, left 107 persons killed and more than 600 persons injured, resulting in extensive destruction. In response to a request for assistance by the Government, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, which oversees the Regional Centre, responded by promptly initiating an assistance mission under the *SaferGuard* quick-response mechanism, with the participation of the Regional Centre and technical experts from the Ammunition Management Advisory Team, a joint initiative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

31. With the logistical support of the United Nations Development Programme, the mission promptly deployed to Bata and initiated its work under the overall guidance of the Resident Coordinator in Equatorial Guinea. The team visited the explosion site and assisted the Government in assessing the cause of the incident and in identifying and reducing the risks of further explosions and potential environmental impacts, including in liaison with the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team. The team also provided immediate technical advice on ammunition management and explosives safety and security risks on the basis of the internationally accepted good practice. The team assisted the Resident Coordinator in the coordination of international multilateral and bilateral on-site assistance, including from Cameroon, France, Israel, Qatar and the United States of America.

32. In its final report, the team clarified the causes of the incident, explained the chain of events and offered actionable recommendations for national authorities. The Government requested additional assistance in implementing the recommendations, which were aimed at preventing accidents in the future. The Government awarded medals to the members of the team in recognition of their prompt and effective efforts.

33. On 7 April, the Regional Centre participated in a panel discussion of an online workshop organized by the United Nations Mine Action Service with various government, United Nations and non-government stakeholders within the framework of celebrations for the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The Centre provided its perspective on threats and opportunities in mine action in an African continent characterized by a fast-evolving security environment.

34. On 28 April, the Regional Centre participated in an online session with United Nations Mine Action Service headquarters and field programme managers to brief them on its assistance to African Member States on secure weapons and ammunition management.

35. From 17 to 22 May, a joint scoping mission by the Regional Centre, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Service Centre for Africa was deployed to Cameroon to assess the situation of small arms and light weapons control and identify gaps and needs. The result of the mission will inform the planning of project activities financed by the Saving Lives Entity fund intended to address the nexus between the fight against the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and development.

36. On 9 June, the Regional Centre and the Office for Disarmament Affairs held online consultations with the African Development Bank on ways and means to strengthen cooperation in the areas of peace and security, fragility and resilience, including by exploring avenues for the Bank to complement the Saving Lives Entity fund interventions in Africa.

37. From 21 to 24 June in Dakar, the Regional Centre participated in a regional meeting on the operationalization of the Economic Community of West African States

chapter of the African Union's "Silencing the Guns in Africa" initiative, which was organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

38. The Regional Centre participated in a regional meeting on Sustainable Development Goal data collection, which was held from 27 to 30 June in Yaoundé by the Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace, with financial support from the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

C. Weapons of mass destruction

39. The Regional Centre continued to support African Member States by facilitating awareness-raising and dialogue to deter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including on issues relating to controlling or banning the production and transfer of material necessary for the production, transfer or proliferation of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

40. On 1 February 2021, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit in Geneva held a virtual meeting with the Regional Centre to prepare the ground for the organization of a Biological Weapons Convention universalization workshop in Africa. The workshop was held on 4 March, in virtual format, to encourage African States that have yet to join the Convention to do so.

41. On 24 June, the Regional Centre participated in the virtual workshop of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy on nuclear security systems in Africa, with a view to promoting the development and adoption of relevant security norms by African Member States parties to the African Nuclear Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty).

42. On 12, 14 and 16 April, the Regional Centre participated in the African regional workshop on the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities and the amendment thereto and shared the perspective of the United Nations in that regard. The event was co-organized online by the African Centre for Science and International Security and the Nuclear Threat Initiative as a forum for sharing ideas on how governments in Africa could prepare for the review conference. The workshop also provided an opportunity to share implementation challenges and best practices to inform preparations for the review conference.

D. Information and outreach

43. The electronic newsletter of the Regional Centre, *UNREC Focus*, is distributed to several thousand global subscribers, providing information about regional disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control initiatives and the activities of the Centre. The Centre's website, which is available in both English and French, was regularly updated during the period under review.

44. The Regional Centre ensured the coverage of its in-person workshops by various local and international public and private print press and television and radio networks as a means of publicizing its activities, but also for peace education purposes.

45. The Regional Centre continued to make use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr, to disseminate information and news items and to keep users updated on regional disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

IV. Financial situation, staffing and administration

A. Financial situation

46. In 2020, voluntary contributions to the trust fund for the Regional Centre were received in the amount of \$179,685. Information on the status of the trust fund for 2020 is contained in the annex to the present report.

47. The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to the Member States and donors that have contributed to the Regional Centre and thus allowed it to provide enhanced technical and capacity-building assistance to Member States in the region, in fulfilment of its mandate. The Secretary-General is especially appreciative to the Government of Togo for its long-standing support and financial contribution to the Centre.

48. The Secretary-General continues to encourage financial and in-kind contributions to the Regional Centre from African States as a clear indication of the value that Member States attribute to the expertise and technical assistance of the Centre.

B. Staffing

49. The regular budget of the United Nations funds the posts of one Senior Political Affairs Officer/Director of the Centre (P-5), one Political Affairs Officer (P-3) and two General Service staff (G-7 and G-6 Local level). Project personnel are funded through voluntary contributions.

V. Conclusion

50. During the period under review, the Regional Centre continued to discharge its mandate by providing assistance to African Member States and African regional organizations, at their request, in the areas of peace, security and disarmament. The Centre strengthened collaboration ties with partners, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Economic Community of Central African States and other subregional organizations, with a view to achieving synergies in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation in Africa.

51. The Regional Centre assisted Member States, at their request, in strengthening their capacity to combat the illicit proliferation and flow of small arms and light weapons and in implementing international instruments relating to conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction and counter-terrorism, including Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In addition, the Centre conducted or participated in activities relating to the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention, the Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, 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 and the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region and conducted outreach initiatives to raise awareness of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

52. The sustained number of requests for assistance from Member States and regional organizations demonstrated the importance of the work of the Regional Centre in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and security in the African region. The Centre will continue its efforts to optimize the utilization of

resources and expertise through cooperation and the sharing of experiences with relevant stakeholders in the region.

53. The Regional Centre will continue to support African Member States in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control by providing technical and legal capacity-building assistance, facilitating regional and national discussions and consultations, supporting the drafting of national action plans and raising awareness on international instruments and cross-cutting issues, such as gender.

54. The Secretary-General calls upon Member States and other donors to provide the Regional Centre with the financial and in-kind support required to allow it to continue to discharge its mandate and address the needs of African Member States in the fields of peace, security and disarmament, in the pursuit of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Annex

Status of the trust fund for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa for 2020

(United States dollars)

Accumulated surplus, 1 January 2020	673 864
Revenue	
Voluntary contributions ^a	179 685
Investment revenue	13 659
Total revenue	193 344
Less: Expenses and refunds	
Operating expenses	36 581
Refunds/transfers/adjustments ^b	465 609
Total expenses and refunds	502 190
Surplus/deficit for the year 2020	(308 846)
Accumulated surplus/deficit as at 31 December 2020	365 018

^a Consists of voluntary contributions as follows: \$63,141 (Togo); and \$116,544 (European Union).

^b Consists of refunds/transfers/adjustments of \$17,519 to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research; and \$448,090 from/to the trust fund for global and regional disarmament activities.