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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 fifty-second meeting, in Libreville, from 22 to 26 November 2021, and its fifty-third meeting, in Yaoundé, from 30 May to 3 June 2022. As the secretariat to the Committee, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) supported the organization of those meetings, following the easing of restrictions imposed by member States owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Committee continued to provide a forum for its member States to review peace and security dynamics in the subregion, identify common challenges and make proposals for responding to identified threats to regional peace and stability.

During the two meetings, the Committee highlighted the persistence of activities by illegal armed groups in several countries of the subregion, including the use of the illicit trafficking of natural resources to fund those groups and the alleged ties between some of the groups and international terrorist organizations.

The Committee took note of progress made by UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in assessing the impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa and made further recommendations towards strengthening the resilience and preparedness of the region to climate shocks and the development of a regional strategy to address the effects of climate change on peace and security in the subregion.

During its fifty-third meeting, the Committee noted the rise in hate speech and its impact on peace and security, including how it led to violence and a lack of social cohesion among communities. The Committee encouraged ECCAS and UNOCA to

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continue their efforts towards sensitizing the population, in particular political actors, on this rising threat.

Ahead of the fifty-third meeting of the Committee, an international symposium was held in Yaoundé, on 23 and 24 May 2022, to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the Committee. The symposium had as its theme: “Peace and security in Central Africa: a retrospective and future look at 30 years of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in the service of preventive diplomacy”. The Committee unanimously recommended to strengthen cooperation between international and regional organizations so as to respond to persistent security threats that had a spillover effect in other regions including West Africa, the Sahel, the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Guinea.

During both meetings, the Committee adopted ministerial declarations in which it called upon member States and international partners to support the political transition process in Chad. During the fifty-third meeting, the Committee adopted a ministerial declaration on the Central African Republic to support the country’s efforts towards peace and security and a declaration to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of the Committee.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 76/60, entitled “Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa”, the General Assembly encouraged the Committee to further develop collaboration and synergies with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and 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 expressed its satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his support to the Committee and its appreciation for the role played by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in its capacity as secretariat to the Committee. The Assembly welcomed the outcome of the strategic review of the Office and strongly encouraged the member States 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 regular meetings. It also called upon the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-seventh session, a report on the implementation of resolution 76/60.
3. The present report is submitted in response to the above request and covers the activities carried out by the Committee from October 2021 to June 2022.

II. Activities of the Committee

4. During the reporting period, the Committee held two meetings. The fifty-second meeting of the Committee was held in Libreville, from 22 to 26 November 2021. The fifty-third meeting of the Committee was held in Yaoundé, from 30 May to 3 June. All member States of the Committee participated in both meetings, 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.
5. In both meetings, representatives of the following entities participated as observers: ECCAS, Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad Basin Commission, Multinational Joint Task Force and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.
6. The following United Nations system entities participated as observers in the fifty-second and fifty-third meetings: United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Resident Coordinator Office in Gabon participated in the fifty-second meeting, while the Resident Coordinator Office in Cameroon participated in the fifty-third meeting.
7. From 10 to 15 October 2021, the Bureau of the Committee carried out a field visit to Chad to gather first-hand information on the transition process in the country and on the security and socioeconomic situation, in particular the efforts made by

national, regional and international partners to fight Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups and to promote social cohesion.

8. From 28 to 31 March 2022, the Bureau of the Committee conducted a field mission to Bujumbura, Burundi, to visit the centre in charge of the management of small arms and light weapons in the context of 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 (the Kinshasa Convention). The delegation discussed the operationalization of the national commission and the ratification of the Convention.

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

9. In the geopolitical review presented by the ECCAS Commission during both meetings, key developments in the subregion relating to peace and security and ongoing challenges were highlighted, and new threats to stability were identified, such as the proliferation of weapons, the circulation of arms in the subregion, the presence of armed groups in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, terrorism and violent extremism, including the activities of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups in the Lake Chad basin. At the fifty-third meeting, the impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa and the issue of hate speech through the pernicious use of social networks were further emphasized. Transnational crimes were also highlighted, given that they were increasingly affecting the region and needed to be addressed through transregional cooperation.

10. The fifty-third meeting coincided with the commemoration of the Committee's thirtieth anniversary, which was marked by a series of activities, including a high-level scientific symposium on the theme "Peace and security in Central Africa: a retrospective and future look at 30 years of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in the service of preventive diplomacy", at which a series of issues related to peace and security in Central Africa were discussed.

11. Noting that terrorism was not limited to the Lake Chad basin and following an exchange on terrorism and violent extremism in the subregion, member States stressed the need to implement multidimensional strategies to prevent and combat terrorism, including military, humanitarian and diplomatic components, while addressing the root causes of the phenomenon and promoting economic and social development.

12. During the fifty-second meeting, the Committee noted the efforts made towards inclusive national dialogue in Chad, despite challenges related to the adherence of all stakeholders to the dialogue process, the efforts of the Chadian transitional authorities to promote constitutional order and preserve stability and security in the country, and the results obtained in the implementation of the transitional road map in its three priority areas, namely: (a) strengthening security and defence; (b) the organization of the national dialogue and the consolidation of peace and national unity; and (c) the strengthening of good governance and the rule of law. Discussions also related to the work of the entities responsible for organizing the inclusive national dialogue, in particular the organizing committee for the inclusive national dialogue and the special technical committee for the participation of the politico-military actors in the inclusive national dialogue.

13. During the fifty-third meeting, the Committee noted positive developments in the subregion, including the continued engagement of Chad to foster internal stability and the progress made by the country's transitional authorities in preparation for the

upcoming inclusive national dialogue. That dialogue was set to include political actors, politico-military groups and civil society organizations engaged in the transition process in Chad.

14. During the same meeting and following a briefing by the representative of Chad, the Committee noted that the transitional authorities of Chad and the politico-military groups involved in the Doha pre-dialogue in Qatar needed to prioritize reconciliation for a successful outcome. The representative of Chad stressed the need for the diligent implementation of the conclusions of the third meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, which was held in Yaoundé from 4 to 5 October 2021. The Forum had assessed the humanitarian and security situation in the Lake Chad basin; the progress made in the implementation of stabilization interventions; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and the contribution of civil society to the stabilization efforts of the Chadian authorities in the Lake Chad basin. The representative of Chad thanked ECCAS, the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations and other partners for their support.

15. The ministers and heads of delegation issued two declarations: one in Libreville, on 26 November 2021, in which they commended the transition process in Chad and the efforts of the Chadian authorities, and another in Yaoundé, on 3 June 2022, in which they renewed their support for the transition process in Chad and called for inclusivity in the national dialogue.

16. During the fifty-second meeting, the representative of the Central African Republic highlighted the efforts made in implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, fostering institutional stability, safeguarding the constitutional order and promoting democracy, despite persistent insecurity related to the activities of armed groups. The deterioration of the security situation in the Central African Republic, including its impact on the economic and humanitarian situation, and attacks against State institutions, the civilian population and humanitarian organizations remained a challenge. Member States welcomed the declaration of a ceasefire by the President of the Central African Republic and the establishment of a preparatory committee for the inclusive republican dialogue.

17. During the fifty-third meeting, the representative of the Central African Republic highlighted the priorities of the country, which included efforts to tackle transborder crime and the circulation of small arms and light weapons, underscoring that the preservation of national territorial integrity was at the centre of the country's actions. The Committee noted that, despite the prevailing situation in the Central African Republic, the authorities had placed the higher interests of the country and its people above all political considerations by organizing the republican dialogue, held in Bangui, from 21 to 27 March 2022. The Committee called upon all signatory parties to the Political Agreement, in particular the armed groups that had withdrawn therefrom, to put aside their differences, cease all hostilities and re-engage in the peace process and dialogue. They also called upon the authorities of the Central African Republic and all other stakeholders to invest more in confidence-building measures, while maintaining open channels of communication with opposition political parties. The Committee issued a declaration in which it reaffirmed its support for the peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic.

18. During the fifty-second meeting, recalling that adequate financial and human resources were needed to support the States of the subregion to operationalize the maritime safety and security architecture in the Gulf of Guinea, also known as the Yaoundé Architecture, member States noted the interest of the Security Council in

maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and encouraged Gabon to seize the opportunity during its term as a non-permanent member of the Council to strengthen efforts to tackle maritime insecurity in the region.

19. At the same meeting, the Committee noted that Sao Tome and Principe had held presidential elections, on 18 July 2021, in which 19 candidates had participated. A second round had been held, on 5 September 2021, between Carlos Vila Nova, supported by the party Acção Democrática Independente (Independent Democratic Action), and Guilherme Posser da Costa, supported by Movimento de Libertação de São Tomé e Príncipe-Partido Social Democrata (Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe-Social Democratic Party). According to official results, Mr. Vila Nova won the election with 58 per cent of the vote. Turnout for the second round was around 65 per cent. The Committee commended the holding of peaceful elections and the peaceful transfer of power in Sao Tome and Principe.

20. During the fifty-third meeting, the Committee discussed the political and security challenges in the region, including the rising tensions between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Committee encouraged bilateral discussions with regional support to find a peaceful solution.

B. Combating violent extremism and terrorism in Central Africa

21. During the fifty-second meeting of the Committee, the representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission gave a briefing to the Committee on the status of the implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region. During the fifty-third meeting, the representative of the Commission highlighted the persistent challenges related to coordination, monitoring and reporting, as well as the complex interaction between stakeholders, including member States, the United Nations and non-United Nations entities, the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, the African Union, ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States.

22. In both meetings, the Committee recommended strengthening cooperation between UNESCO, the ECCAS Commission and other partners in order to mobilize the necessary means to prevent violent extremism and terrorism, in particular through the education and training of young people.

23. During the fifty-third meeting, the Committee noted the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force and the progress made in combating Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups through the combined results of national, bilateral and regional military operations. According to the Multinational Joint Task Force, the security situation in its area of operations had improved during the months of April and May 2022, largely owing to Operation Lake Integrity, which was aimed at evicting the terrorists and affiliates from their enclaves in all land positions, as well as pursuing them to their bases on the islands of Lake Chad. The challenges related to inadequate armoured vehicles, explosive ordnance disposal equipment, surveillance equipment and drones and communications equipment persisted.

24. The Committee recommended that ECCAS and UNOCA advocate with member States for the rapid review and adoption of a plan of action on the ECCAS Regional Strategy on Counter-Terrorism. The Committee also invited member States to increase bilateral cooperation and implement national and community strategies to contain violent extremism.

C. Promotion of disarmament in Central Africa

25. The Committee noted efforts by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa to engage member States on disarmament initiatives, including in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with an emphasis on the need for gender mainstreaming in all actions related to small arms control. Member States agreed on the need to collectively ensure the effective implementation of the Kinshasa Convention, to which eight members of the Committee were now a party, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Code of Conduct for the Defence and Security Forces in Central Africa. The Committee encouraged those member States that had not yet ratified or deposited their instrument of ratification of the Kinshasa Convention with the Secretary-General to do so.

D. Transhumance and cross-border insecurity in Central Africa

26. Cross-border transhumance in Central Africa remained a source of concern for the Committee. During both meetings, several member States shared their experiences of cross-border transhumance, with the Central African Republic, Chad and the Congo expressing concern at increasingly violent encounters between farmers and herders, including as a result of the settlement of herders in places traditionally dwelled in by farmers, inadequate governance frameworks, absent or obsolete legal frameworks and the presence of armed groups along transhumance corridors. During the fifty-third meeting of the Committee, Chad called for the timely adoption and ratification of the regional protocol on cross-border transhumance, prepared by ECCAS with the support of UNOCA.

E. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea

27. The Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea provided an update on maritime piracy and highlighted a decrease in the number of security incidents since the beginning of 2022. The Committee invited its member States to set up their interministerial authorities in charge of maritime security to serve as national focal points for the implementation of the ECCAS Protocol on the Strategy to Secure Vital Interests at Sea (the Kinshasa Protocol).

28. The Interregional Coordination Centre urged ECCAS member States to encourage the exchange of information between ECCAS operational maritime centres and to activate maritime zone A, covering Angola, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as soon as possible in order to complete the maritime security architecture. It also stressed the importance of strengthening the presence of air units in the naval group in maritime zone D, covering Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

29. UNODC provided an update on trends in maritime piracy and an overview of the activities carried out and planned in the framework of efforts to tackle maritime insecurity. It also reported on the impact of piracy trends on the economies of coastal States. According to a UNODC study of November 2021, entitled *Pirates of the Gulf of Guinea: a Cost Analysis for Coastal States*, piracy is estimated to cost the economies of the Gulf of Guinea countries \$2 billion annually.

30. The Committee highlighted the need to optimize law enforcement in Central Africa. It called on member States that had not yet adapted their legal framework to conclude transfer agreements to facilitate the prosecution and trial of pirates arrested

at sea. It also called for preventive efforts to be made within the communities to help to improve maritime security.

F. Climate, peace and security

31. During the fifty-third meeting, the Committee noted the initiatives, risks and prospects related to the issue of climate, peace and security in the subregion. UNOCA presented the objectives and preliminary findings of its climate, peace and security project, which had been launched in line with the call by ECCAS member States, made at the forty-ninth meeting of the Committee in Luanda, for UNOCA and the United Nations Environment Programme to support the efforts of ECCAS member States to address climate and environmental change-induced insecurity. The Committee further recommended that a subregional consortium of key stakeholders be established to coordinate efforts under the leadership of ECCAS and UNOCA.

32. In addition, the Committee noted the need to develop joint advocacy on the preservation of the tropical forest of the Congo basin, the largest remaining net carbon sink reserve on the planet and crucial to the subregion and the world at large. The Committee supported the idea of compensation for the benefit of the countries of the Congo basin in exchange for the preservation of the forest reserve.

33. During the fifty-second meeting, the Committee urged ECCAS and its member States, with the support of UNOCA, to develop and implement a regional strategy on climate change with a view to preventing and limiting security risks related to the effects of climate change, while strengthening the resilience of populations.

34. The Committee further encouraged UNOCA and ECCAS to engage in joint advocacy with member States on enhanced compensation from the international community, in particular the largest emitters, in accordance with the commitments made at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Committee also urged UNOCA and ECCAS, in collaboration with member States, to develop an expanded regional programme to combat deforestation and promote reforestation in Central Africa for the preservation of the environment and biodiversity.

G. Human rights and democracy in Central Africa

35. The Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa underlined the persistence of various crises that continued to affect the protection and promotion of human rights in the subregion. Those included violence by armed and terrorist groups, which continued to perpetrate human rights abuses against the civilian population, in particular in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

36. The Committee noted the progress made in all member States of the subregion in consolidating democracy, in particular the legal guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms, the holding of regular peaceful elections, the establishment of national human rights institutions in line with international standards, the creation of bodies to combat corruption and efforts to tackle the circulation of small arms.

37. The Committee also noted the efforts by member States to promote and protect human rights, notably by signing and ratifying international human rights treaties; strengthening the rule of law and opening up the democratic space; tackling corruption and impunity; strengthening good governance; taking action to reduce inequalities; and preventing hate speech in Central Africa. Despite those efforts, there were still challenges that needed to be addressed.

H. Women and peace and security

38. During the fifty-second meeting, the ECCAS Commission gave a briefing to the Committee on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security. It focused on analysing the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the resolution, taking into account new trends and emerging challenges that had arisen in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

39. The ECCAS Commission explained that eight ECCAS member States, namely, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Rwanda, had national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), and that three member States – Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe – were in the process of developing them. It also underlined the need to support the latter States in developing their national action plans.

40. The Committee noted that ECCAS was establishing a regional network of women mediators with the involvement of Central African women's associations; however, the regional network required support for capacity-building on community dialogue and cross-border trade.

41. UN-Women recommended that member States fully implement their national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and involve women effectively in decision-making at all levels.

42. During the fifty-second and fifty-third meetings, the Committee heard a briefing on climate, peace and security and the impact of climate change on women, including in relation to humanitarian issues.

I. Impact of hate speech on peace and security in Central Africa

43. The Committee noted that hate speech was preponderant in several countries in the subregion and applauded the ongoing initiatives by ECCAS and its member States to tackle it. More specifically, it welcomed the holding of a regional forum to raise awareness and build the capacities of the media to prevent and address conflicts linked to hate speech, in Douala, Cameroon, from 26 to 29 October 2021.

44. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the initiatives undertaken by UNOCA, ECCAS and their partners through the organization of awareness-raising forums on the negative impact of hate speech in member States and encouraged them to sustain the momentum created to achieve the objective of developing a regional strategy to prevent and combat the phenomenon in Central Africa. The Committee called for a regional forum of Central African ministers of communication and information to be held on the issue, in accordance with the proposal made by the Minister of Communication and Media of the Central African Republic during a regional forum to raise awareness and build the capacities of digital media actors to prevent and address conflicts linked to hate speech, held in Bangui, from 26 to 29 April 2022.

45. The Committee also noted that two other forums were planned: one for media and communications regulators, in N'Djamena, at a date to be decided; and one for all media stakeholders, in Kinshasa, from 21 to 25 June 2022. During the latter, a draft regional strategy and action plan on preventing and combating hate speech by media outlets in Central Africa was adopted. The Committee encouraged the ECCAS Commission and UNOCA to continue working together to propose to member States a draft regional strategy to prevent and combat hate speech in Central Africa.

III. Conclusions and recommendations of the international scientific symposium of the Committee

46. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Government of Cameroon for its initiative to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Committee. It also noted the conclusions and recommendations of the scientific symposium, which, throughout the 30 years of the Committee's existence and the creation of institutions, such as the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa and its organs, the early warning mechanism for Central African and the Central Africa Multinational Force, had contributed towards the establishment of lasting peace in the subregion.

47. The Committee requested member States and their partners to provide the necessary support to further the strengthening of collaboration between ECCAS and UNOCA on joint efforts and actions to monitor issues pertaining to peace and security.

48. Scientific experts, researchers and representatives from eight member States, namely, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gabon, participated in the symposium. In its conclusions, the symposium reiterated that the Committee remained a useful tool for member States and stressed the need for increased focus on human security and the revitalization of the Committee.

49. The Committee noted the need to align its mandate with that of the ECCAS Commission on conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the subregion. The Committee also noted that it remained an essential tool to engage in active preventive diplomacy and would continue to deliver its mandate effectively if it was funded in a sustainable manner.

IV. Administrative and financial matters

50. The Committee reviewed the financial situation of its trust fund and, recalling the Libreville Declaration adopted in 2009, expressed concern regarding the contributions made by member States. The Committee reiterated its appeal to member States to make their contributions, recalled that member States had an obligation to make the minimum yearly contribution of \$10,000 and urged them to honour their financial obligations.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

51. **The United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa remains an important platform for dialogue and cooperation on addressing common risks and threats facing peace and security in the subregion. The subregion continues to face persistent challenges to its stability with new threats emerging, including the prevalence of hate speech. I welcome the interest by member States to collectively address those challenges as evidenced during the open discussions during the fifty-second and fifty-third meetings of the Committee.**

52. **The recurrence and persistence of hate speech and statements inciting violence emerged as one of the major concerns of member States, particularly in a context already marked by sociopolitical tensions, disinformation and misinformation. I encourage member States to develop national strategies to combat hate speech and rally support for ECCAS and UNOCA to develop a subregional strategy to prevent and combat hate speech in the media.**

53. I encourage all member States in the subregion to intensify their engagement with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, the universal periodic review and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, in order to fulfil their international human rights obligations.

54. I welcome the commitment of member States and regional and international partners to continue their efforts to support the political transition in Chad and promote the foundations for lasting peace in the country through multifaceted support, including financial assistance. Similarly, the situation in the Central African Republic is of concern, and I commend the Committee for acknowledging that only through our collective efforts can the cycles of violence in the country, which have far-reaching consequences beyond national boundaries, be overcome. There is a need to foster cross-border security and cooperation in support of the peace process in the Central African Republic and the fight against armed groups. I urge all stakeholders to fully implement the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region joint road map for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 2019.

55. I remain deeply concerned by the rise in activities of armed groups, maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea and terrorism and violent extremism in the subregion, in particular in the Lake Chad basin, all of which continue to pose a threat to human security and socioeconomic development and hinder subregional integration. In addition, the trafficking and illegal circulation of arms remains a predominant threat to security in the subregion. I urge member States to collectively address those concerns by staying committed to the implementation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, including through the effective operationalization of the Kinshasa Convention.

56. I am encouraged that member States of the Committee have recognized the climate emergency and the impact of climate change on peace, security and stability in Central Africa. I urge ECCAS and the Committee, with the support of UNOCA, to ensure that the ECCAS regional strategy on climate change is conflict-sensitive and addresses the impact of climate change on peace and security in Central Africa, with a view to preventing and limiting security risks related to climate change, while strengthening the resilience of populations. Central Africa, home to the Congo basin rainforest, the world's most important net forest carbon sink, is a subregion that can play a key role in global efforts to combat climate change. I call upon the international community to step up its support for the region, with a view also to ensuring the preservation of the integrity of the rainforest.

57. In addition, the security challenges related to pastoralism and transhumance still represent a threat to peace and stability in Central Africa. I welcome the progress made in recent years towards the adoption of a regional legal instrument to regulate those issues. I encourage ECCAS to adopt and implement the legal instrument as soon as possible, as it will contribute greatly to preventing and combating violence related to cross-border pastoralism and transhumance. I reiterate the support of UNOCA in this regard.

58. I commend those member States that have put in place national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, and I encourage those States that have not yet finalized such national action plans to do so. I reiterate my call to member States to consider including in their respective national budgets a special window to guarantee the effective implementation of the resolution. I am encouraged by the establishment

by ECCAS of a regional network of women mediators in Central Africa and call upon national and international partners to provide the necessary support required for its effective operationalization.

59. The lack of funding for the Committee has remained a challenge. This consultative mechanism can thrive and continue to play its role only if the necessary means to engage in active preventive diplomacy are guaranteed. I therefore encourage member States to continue to regularly pay their contributions to the Committee's trust fund. Likewise, I also encourage a better alignment of the mandate of the Committee with that of the new ECCAS.

60. I note the international symposium organized to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Committee. I congratulate the Government of Cameroon and all member States for the initiative to commemorate the anniversary, which provided an opportunity to assess the work and legacy of the Committee. It is my hope that the conclusions and recommendations of the symposium will chart a new way forward for the Committee.

61. Electoral governance remains a major challenge for the subregion. The issue of elections continues to be a subject of reflection within the Committee and should remain on its agenda, considering its importance for democracy, peace and security. During the fifty-first meeting of the Committee, in Bujumbura, Burundi, in May 2021, member States recommended the development of a subregional protocol on the management of elections in Central Africa, in line with the Malabo Declaration on democratic and peaceful elections as a means of strengthening stability and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Central Africa, adopted at the fiftieth meeting of the Committee held in December 2020. I welcome this initiative and encourage member States to continue with their reflections on elections and governance.

62. I am grateful to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNOCA and my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA for providing the Committee with efficient technical, administrative and logistical backstopping. I also commend other United Nations entities, for their specialized contributions to the work of the Committee. I look forward to the deliberations and conclusions of the Committee at its fifty-fourth meeting.
