



Security Council

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Letter dated 1 August 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 10 August 2018 on the Central African region ([S/PRST/2018/17](#)), as well as my letter dated 24 August 2018 to the President of the Council on the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) ([S/2018/789](#)) and her response dated 28 August 2018 ([S/2018/790](#)).

In the aforementioned statement, the Security Council requested me to conduct a strategic review regarding the scope of the mandate and activities of UNOCA and to present recommendations to it, by 1 August 2019, on areas of improvement, including the coherence of United Nations activities in countries in the subregion under the UNOCA mandate, or new or refocused priorities. The Council expressed its intention to consider those recommendations, including any proposed changes to the mandate, by 31 August 2019.

In response to the request of the Security Council, I appointed Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah (Mauritania) (former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa; for Somalia; and for Burundi) to lead the strategic review team, which included representatives from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations/the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The strategic review was conducted in three phases: (a) from 28 May to 4 June 2019, consultations were held in New York with United Nations officials, members of the UNOCA Integrated Task Force, representatives of United Nations field presences, members of the Security Council and representatives of the States members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and think tanks; (b) from 5 to 14 June, consultations were held in Libreville, Brazzaville and Yaoundé with representatives of UNOCA, Government officials, and representatives of political parties and regional and subregional organizations and mechanisms, including the African Union, the diplomatic community and civil society; and (c) from 17 to 20 June, debriefing meetings were held in New York with Secretariat officials, members of the Integrated Task Force, members of the Council, and representatives of States members of ECCAS and States members of the International Organization of la Francophonie.



The review team conducted a thorough analysis of the context in the Central African subregion, including the challenges and regional trends in the political, security, humanitarian, human rights and socioeconomic fields. The team submitted its report on 27 June 2019.

Main findings of the strategic review

In its report, the review team noted that, since the last strategic review of UNOCA in March 2015, the Central African subregion has continued to face serious peace and security challenges, which were likely to increase in the coming years in the context of multiple elections and ongoing security, humanitarian, human rights and socioeconomic issues.

UNOCA enjoyed strong support and buy-in across the subregion through its work in conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy, its support for regional and subregional initiatives, its coordination of United Nations presences in Central Africa and its reporting and analysis provided to Headquarters and other United Nations entities. In particular, UNOCA was highly appreciated for its good offices and early-warning services.

UNOCA partners expressed their wish for more frequent visits by my Special Representative for Central Africa to the countries of the subregion. In a vast subregion such as Central Africa, they felt that UNOCA needed to be more visible, and called for its stronger engagement, in particular in enhancing efforts to raise the awareness of electoral processes and human rights issues.

In general, little concern was raised about the possible duplication of mandates between UNOCA and other United Nations presences in Central Africa. A strong need was identified for UNOCA to continue rallying actors in the subregion in support of the peace process in the Central African Republic, in close consultation with MINUSCA. However, UNOCA partners saw limited space for the Office to engage in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, given the presence of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region. Partners requested further sharing of information and consultations between UNOCA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the Office of my Special Envoy for Burundi at both the leadership and working levels.

The review team noted that the coordination role of UNOCA was valued, as were the good relations and regular contacts maintained by my Special Representative with the United Nations resident coordinators in the subregion. The ongoing contact between UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) was welcomed, and UNOCA partners requested enhanced cooperation on interregional issues such as the Lake Chad Basin crisis, transhumance, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and other issues included in the Lomé Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism, jointly adopted by the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States in July 2018.

The team highlighted that the relationship between UNOCA and ECCAS was key to the success of preventive diplomacy efforts, while noting that capacity remained a limiting issue. In this regard, the team identified preventive diplomacy as one area in which there could be an expansion of activities. Partners requested UNOCA to be more involved in the ongoing ECCAS reform process and also requested that the mandate of UNOCA be aligned with the outcome of that process, once concluded. Regional and subregional organizations appreciated their working relations with UNOCA and requested more frequent interaction with the Office.

UNOCA partners called for more support from the Office for regional initiatives and work on cross-border, cross-cutting and thematic issues, including: maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea; 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); transhumance and related illicit trafficking and insecurity; forced displacement, including in relation to refugees, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the systematic consideration of climate change and socioeconomic concerns in UNOCA interventions; women, peace and security; and youth engagement in conflict prevention. Further engagement with civil society and national human rights institutions was also identified as a need, in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

The limited operational capacities of UNOCA were frequently cited as a limiting factor, in particular in terms of travel and communications.

Observations and recommendations

I welcome the report on the strategic review, which validates the conviction of the United Nations Secretariat that the regional offices are a forward platform for conflict prevention.

In the eight years since its inauguration, UNOCA has made noticeable contributions to conflict prevention and management in a complex subregion, including through the good offices of my Special Representative for Central Africa. The Office has been instrumental in preventing and mitigating election-related crises and promoting inclusive political dialogue and reform processes in Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, Gabon, and Sao Tome and Principe. UNOCA has remained engaged in the crisis in the Central African Republic and has promoted bilateral cooperation with the country's neighbours, while encouraging coherence among regional and international actors. UNOCA has bolstered cooperation on peace and security with regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union, ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. UNOCA has also increased its cooperation with UNOWAS on regional and subregional initiatives. UNOCA has further ensured coherence and coordination in the peace- and security-related activities of United Nations entities in Central Africa. The Office has continued to serve as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Having reviewed the report, I have the honour to put forward the following recommendations regarding the mandate of UNOCA, for consideration by the Security Council:

(a) **Mandate of UNOCA remains valid.** In this regard, with reference to the aforementioned exchange of letters I had with the President of the Council in August 2018 (S/2018/789 and S/2018/790), the work of UNOCA should be enhanced in the areas identified below:

(i) **Early warning and analysis, with a gender perspective.** UNOCA, in cooperation with regional partners, should focus on conducting regional research and analysis, in particular on transnational issues that have an impact on the stability of Central Africa; such work will continue to benefit Headquarters, Member States and United Nations country teams and presences in Central Africa;

(ii) **Good offices in non-mission settings.** UNOCA has a particular advantage in working in such settings: my Special Representative for Central Africa has

used his good offices in Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe, and the good offices of UNOCA will be particularly needed during the upcoming electoral cycle in the subregion;

(iii) **Support for and strengthening the capacity of ECCAS.** ECCAS has a key role to play in addressing the regional and subregional peace and security issues identified in the review, and the strengthening of ECCAS must remain one of the top priorities of UNOCA, including through: support for ECCAS in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation and early warning; support for the ongoing ECCAS reform process, which should culminate in the emergence of ECCAS as a stronger subregional organization; enhancement of UNOCA efforts, in close collaboration with ECCAS, in the area of women, peace and security, including by assisting States members of ECCAS in the development of their national action plans for the implementation of Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#); and enhanced engagement of UNOCA with young people in the area of conflict prevention and in the implementation of Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#);

(iv) **Strengthening partnerships with civil society and supporting subregional civil society networks.** UNOCA is currently working with ECCAS on establishing a subregional network of civil society organizations;

(b) **Ensuring a clear division of labour between UNOCA and other United Nations entities.** The following efforts should be made in this regard:

(i) **Rallying of regional support for the peace process in the Central African Republic, in close consultation with MINUSCA.** UNOCA should continue to facilitate the revitalization of the joint bilateral commissions between the Central African Republic and its neighbours, although there is little value in the Office engaging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or in Burundi; UNOCA should continue to organize the annual meeting of my special representatives and envoys, regional directors of United Nations entities and United Nations resident coordinators in Central Africa; my Special Representative for Central Africa should continue to participate in the separate annual meeting with my Special Envoys for the Great Lakes Region and for Burundi; and enhanced cooperation, information exchange and sharing of lessons learned should be promoted among UNOCA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, the Offices of my Special Envoys for the Great Lakes Region and for Burundi and other United Nations regional presences, including the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and the Regional Office for West and Central Africa of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;

(ii) **Maintaining good cooperation with United Nations resident coordinators and relevant regional offices.** UNOCA should build on its good relations with the United Nations resident coordinators and with relevant regional directors of the Development Coordination Office to further support cross-border initiatives; UNOCA and UNOWAS should enhance their cooperation, including on various interregional issues such as the Lake Chad Basin crisis, transhumance, forced displacement and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea;

(c) **Resource requirements.** I have instructed the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in coordination with UNOCA and other relevant United Nations entities, to assess the reasonable resource requirements for UNOCA to implement its mandate as presented in the review to ensure the establishment of achievable goals.

I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah and the members of the UNOCA strategic review team for the important work that they have undertaken and for the submission of their findings and recommendations. I also take this opportunity to thank UNOCA and all entities of the United Nations system in Central Africa for their continuing efforts to advance the cause of peace and security in the subregion.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**
