



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

*Provisional*

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Wednesday, 13 December 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

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*President:* Mr. De La Gasca . . . . . (Ecuador)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Spasse
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. França Danese
China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
France . . . . .	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon . . . . .	Mr. Biang
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
Japan . . . . .	Mr. Iriya
Malta . . . . .	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. Shaheen
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

### Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2023/934)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Central African region**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2023/934)**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/934, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Abarry.

**Mr. Abarry** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to wish you every success in your work.

I am pleased to present to the Council today the twenty-fifth report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/934) on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). During the reporting period, I made successive visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Rwanda. I saw first-hand the positive dynamics and resilience in Central Africa, despite the many challenges facing the subregion. As I said (see S/PV.9338) when I presented the previous report (S/2023/389), Central Africa is a region that has considerable potential with regard to its development and stability. That potential is first reflected in the resources emanating from the subsoil of the vast Congo basin forest, one of the world's last remaining net

carbon sinks and aptly referred to as the planet's second green lung. I commend the States of the subregion for their willingness to contribute to the protection of the environment through the various initiatives launched to that end, including the One Forest Summit, held in Libreville, and the Three Basins Summit, which just took place in Brazzaville.

I would also like to welcome the fact that during the reporting period, the States of the subregion demonstrated their mutual solidarity by committing jointly to achieving peace and stability. The Heads of State and Government of the subregion met at least five times over the past six months to discuss peace and security issues. In that regard, I would like to commend the personal commitment of President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of Congo and President Faustin Archange Touadera of the Central African Republic, who have continued their role under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in facilitating the political transitions in Chad and Gabon, respectively. I also commend President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of Angola and African Union Champion for Peace and Reconciliation for his ongoing efforts to restore peace and stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Several situations demonstrate the impact of the United Nations activities in the subregion. First, I am pleased to say that as part of the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Luanda road map, hundreds of former combatants from the Central African Republic have been demobilized and are in the process of being reintegrated into various branches of the defence and security forces. In addition, 70 former combatants from the Lord's Resistance Army have been voluntarily demobilized, and some have already been repatriated to Uganda, thanks to the support of the United Nations, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. That demobilization could help to significantly reduce armed violence in some parts of the Central African Republic.

I was pleased to note the launch of the ECCAS Women Mediators Network with my Office's support. The Network's launch, which was made official at a meeting held in Malabo from 17 to 20 November, demonstrates the importance that the subregion attaches to the participation and inclusion of women in

mediation and other political processes. Such efforts, which UNOCA is committed to supporting, are fully in line with the views expressed at the Conference of Ministers in charge of Gender and the Advancement of Women, held in Libreville on 25 May.

I would also like to mention here that in the face of a rise in hate speech in the subregion and in accordance with resolution 2686 (2023), UNOCA, in collaboration with ECCAS, continued to support the development of a regional strategy to combat hate speech and violence in Central Africa. From 28 to 30 November, UNOCA therefore supported the organization of a regional conference in Douala, Cameroon, that brought together journalists and media professionals to discuss the causes and consequences of hate speech in Central Africa and the means of combating the phenomenon.

In Sao Tome and Principe, we continued to support the authorities in their reform of the justice and security sectors, in conjunction with ECCAS. To that end, in November I visited the country with the ECCAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, to validate the evaluation report, which is an important step that will enable us to support the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, in particular at the Peacebuilding Commission's meeting on Sao Tome and Principe scheduled for January 2024. I would also like to welcome the announcement by the Government of Sao Tome and Principe of its intention to set up an independent national human rights commission, with the support of the United Nations system.

In Chad, despite the many challenges facing the country, including the humanitarian, security, environmental and economic impacts of the Sudanese conflict, the transition process will enter a crucial stage with the holding, on 17 December, of a referendum seeking to provide the country with a new constitution. Indeed, the adoption of that new constitution is a prelude to the organization of the various elections slated to take place in that country in 2024. Here, I would like to point out that one of the critical activities in the process, namely, the revision of the electoral roll, went smoothly. Approximately 900,000 new voters were registered with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme. However, we must note with regret, following that process, the slight drop in the number of women registered in the new electoral roll.

I would like to welcome the policy of outstretched hands adopted by His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Idriss

Déby Itno, President of the Transition, which has enabled many members of the opposition in exile to return to Chad and take part in political life. It was that policy of outstretched hands that enabled Mr. Succès Masra, leader of the political party Les Transformateurs, to return to Chad on 3 November, following an agreement signed with the transitional authorities on 31 October in Kinshasa, under the auspices of His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ECCAS facilitator for the transition in Chad. UNOCA played a major role in achieving that successful outcome. It should be noted, however, that despite that policy of outstretched hands, other political players and certain political and military groups have remained on the sidelines of the transition process, although negotiations are being facilitated with the support of the Community of Sant'Egidio to bring those groups back into the process.

The challenges I mentioned here six months ago have been compounded by the unconstitutional change of Government on 30 August in Gabon, the host country of ECCAS and UNOCA. It was that new development that led ministers from the subregion, meeting in Kigali on 24 November, during the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), to adopt the Kigali declaration on the prevention of and fight against unconstitutional changes in Central Africa. In that connection, a regional conference on the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government is scheduled for early next year in Sao Tome and Principe. That conference will enable the subregion to lay the groundwork for a normative instrument designed to tackle that scourge.

The Sudanese crisis, which I mentioned in this very Chamber when presenting the previous report, unfortunately persists, wreaking its share of destruction and atrocities that are driving even more Sudanese to seek refuge in Chad and the Central African Republic. The conflict also entails its own security risks, with the influx of some 1,000 soldiers from the Sudanese Armed Forces who fled the fighting in Darfur into Chad, against a backdrop of tensions between the two countries. That influx of refugees also creates risks of intercommunal conflict.

Despite United Nations efforts, the humanitarian response is proving insufficient to meet the needs of more than 1 million registered refugees, not counting

those staying with host families. In fact, as part of my assessment of the impact of the Sudanese crisis on Chad, I accompanied Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed on her mission to Chad from 17 to 19 July. That mission, which visited the refugee camps on the border between Chad and the Sudan, enabled us to assess the dramatic situation caused by the Sudanese conflict, the main victims of which are women and children. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to the solidarity and generosity of the Chadian authorities and people, who continue to welcome those thousands of refugees in spite of their own difficulties. Clearly, only a resolution of the crisis in the Sudan will make it possible to address the humanitarian, economic, environmental and security impacts on Chad and other countries, in particular, the Central African Republic.

Whether as a result of the activities of armed or terrorist groups, intercommunal conflicts or environmental crises, the humanitarian situation in central Africa is extremely worrisome. It is estimated that more than 2.6 million people are internally displaced in the subregion, more than 1.5 million face food insecurity and more than 42 million were in need of humanitarian aid in October, while resources to assist them are becoming increasingly scarce. Unfortunately, children are the hardest hit by those various crises.

Aware of that alarming humanitarian situation in the region, UNSAC member States meeting at the fifty-sixth UNSAC session in Kigali adopted a declaration with a view to holding a regional conference early next year in Malabo. That conference will lead to the establishment of a regional agency for humanitarian action and coordination and of a humanitarian solidarity fund. In that regard, I invite the various actors in the international community to contribute to the success of that conference.

As I said at the outset, the coup d'état in Gabon on the night of 30 August was a reminder of the institutional fragility of certain countries in the subregion. It should be recalled that the coup d'état took place following a questionable electoral process marked by non-consensus-based reforms to the electoral framework and by the rejection of independent electoral observation, including that of the ECCAS, of which Gabon was nevertheless to be holding the presidency. As part of my good offices mandate, I drew the attention of the authorities at the time to the need for an inclusive, consensual and open process, which was the only way to maintain peace and

social tranquillity and avoid a repeat of the regrettable events of 2016 in that country.

Faced with the new political situation thus created, we have entered into discussions with the new authorities, with a view, in particular, to advocating a return to normal constitutional order within a reasonable time frame, following an inclusive transition that respects human rights and seeks to safeguard peace, social tranquillity and stability. The new authorities, who have had the people's support from the very first hours of the coup d'état, have shown their determination to give Gabon a new start by organizing consultations with the various social strata ahead of the holding of an inclusive national dialogue in April 2024. They also set out a 24-month timetable for the transition. Therefore, in coordination with the international community, and having consulted the authorities, we are working to establish a group of friends of Gabon to support those efforts effectively, in strict compliance with United Nations principles.

That coup d'état in Gabon follows on from those that have already taken place in the neighbouring West African subregion and entails a need for the international community, in particular the United Nations, to reflect on the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government on the African continent.

In the reporting period, non-State armed groups and terrorist groups continued their violent actions through killings, hostage-taking and the destruction of infrastructure. In the past two months alone, Cameroon was the victim of at least three attacks perpetrated by separatist armed groups, which resulted in dozens of deaths in the north-western and south-western areas of the country. The groups have continued to attack civilians, teachers, medical personnel and hospitals and have gone so far as to impose curfews that restrict access to schools or have destroyed or closed them, in violation of resolution 2601 (2021), which the Security Council adopted in 2021. In that regard, I would like to sincerely thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, for her contribution to the work of UNSAC's fifty-sixth session, which for the first time enabled a discussion of the issue of children and armed conflict in Central Africa.

In the Lake Chad basin, despite the fact that the Boko Haram network's spoiler capacity has been reduced, it has maintained its ability to operate, enabling it to

continue its hostage-taking and other attacks on civilian and military targets. The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee for the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region was held in Abuja on 27 September. The meeting welcomed the convincing results achieved by the Multinational Joint Task Force, although we deplore the fact that once various areas are liberated it has been difficult for States to restore their authority, due essentially to a lack of resources. The sanctions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the Niger, a member of the Multinational Joint Task Force, have also had an impact on the Joint Task Force's mobility and coordination, which are so essential in this struggle.

Maritime security remains a source of major concern for the subregion. In my briefing on the previous report, I mentioned that there had been a drop in the number of maritime security incidents. In this reporting period, the subregion recorded four maritime security-related incidents, including one hostage-taking. However, in that same period, the number of incidents registered in the ECCAS maritime zone was nevertheless fewer than in the ECOWAS maritime space. I welcome the opportunity to point out that international support for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea has increased in the wake of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. Beyond the first decade of the Yaoundé process, the subregion must remain vigilant and step up its concerted efforts with other countries of the Gulf of Guinea, as well as with regional and international partners. To that end, UNOCA will continue to work closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, while also promoting partnership with the Group of Seven++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea with a view to providing coordinated support to stakeholders in the region. Such concerted initiatives are necessary to preserve the security of a maritime route as important as the Gulf of Guinea is, and to effectively counter such illicit activities as trafficking in banned goods and trafficking in persons. We must therefore all remain committed to ensuring safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea.

In the area of climate action, I would like to emphasize that UNOCA is actively engaged in building resilience in the subregion in conjunction with regional actors, ECCAS and its member States,

civil society and United Nations entities. Those efforts include analysis that is based on proof of the linkages between climate and peace and security, efforts aimed at preventing, mitigating and adapting to the negative consequences of climate change and to ensure that climate action supports peacebuilding in the subregion. We should point out that while it is possible to correct the deficiencies observed in several countries in the region, support from international financial institutions is more essential than ever to help their Governments meet their peoples' pressing needs.

I would like to conclude by saying that for the task of building on its positive momentum and addressing the challenges I have mentioned, the subregion has substantial assets — the abundant wealth that lies under the ground, the vitality of its young people and women and the relative political stability in a majority of its member States. In order to better support the subregion, UNOCA is therefore working in close coordination with member States of the ECCAS Commission to use its good offices, with support being provided for the development of regional strategies on issues related to transhumance, the fight against hate speech and climate change. It is our fervent hope that the elections planned for 20 December in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a country whose strategic importance in the region is a given — will be peaceful, in order to entrench democracy in the country and strengthen the process of building a central Africa of peace, stability and prosperity.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Abarry for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the members of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique (A3).

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/934) and thank Mr. Abdou Abarry, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), for his comprehensive briefing and relevant information on the situation in the region.

At the political level, we are encouraged by the dynamic initiatives in several countries of the region that are essentially aimed at strengthening and restoring



institutions, with a view to aligning with the aspirations of the populations. We invite the international community generally and the Council, in particular, to consider those efforts and support the countries of the region in their quest for development and peace. The positive momentum of recent months has been marked by a maintenance of stability in countries facing major security, socioeconomic and political challenges. In that regard, we welcome the significant progress that has been made in the implementation of the Doha Peace Agreement, signed in August 2022 by Chadian stakeholders, especially through the signing of a decree establishing a National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the adoption of a draft revised Constitution and the launch of a revised electoral list, in view of the constitutional referendum scheduled to take place this month. We also welcomed the signing of a reconciliation agreement for those exiled during the events of 20 October 2022, which facilitated the return of the opposition leader Succès Masra. The political progress made in Chad is all the more remarkable in that it comes at a time when the country has been significantly affected by the conflict in the Sudan.

In Gabon, the A3 notes with satisfaction the initiatives taken by the transitional authorities to stabilize the country and ease political tensions, particularly the efforts to strengthen good governance, improve institutions and meet the social and economic challenges of our brother country. We also note the active dialogue between the President of the Transition and the countries of the region. We are encouraged by the announcement of the transition timetable and by the inclusiveness of the ongoing process of reforming the political system, which will be anchored by a national dialogue.

At the regional level, the A3 welcomed the cooperation between the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, which enabled a joint assessment mission to be carried out in the areas of the two regions affected by the terrorist activities of Boko Haram. We also welcome regional cooperation on the important issue of climate change and its impact on security.

From a security perspective, we are concerned about the impact of climate change on the Central African region. While it contributes only marginally to climate change, the region remains one of those most vulnerable to the consequences of climate disruption, particularly

in terms of their peoples' way of life. The recurrence of increasingly devastating floods, the longer duration of droughts and the historic shrink in the size of Lake Chad are perfect illustrations in that regard and contribute to the internal displacement of populations and tensions among communities. Climate change is therefore gradually becoming a key issue in terms of security in the region. We welcome the support provided by UNOCA, whose expertise in climate security is essential in strengthening peacebuilding in the region.

The A3 remains concerned by the continuing activities of armed groups in north-west and south-west Cameroon, who are multiplying their acts of barbarism against the population, particularly women and children, as well as attacking civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. The A3 strongly condemns those acts and calls on the armed groups to renounce violence and return to the process of disarmament and dialogue.

We welcome the continuation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process in the Central African Republic, which is making a major contribution to easing tensions in the country. It is imperative that all armed groups join the process of disarmament and reintegration with a view to achieving lasting peace in the country. It should be remembered that, without adequate funding, the DDR processes that are so important for the stability of several countries in the region are often ineffective and contribute to the resurgence of even more serious crises. The A3 therefore invites all partners to continue their financial support to ensure that the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes set up in the region are completed properly and on time.

The A3 also encourages the strengthening of cross-border cooperation between States in the region and beyond and recalls the example of the joint operations led by the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda against cross-cutting threats. We also welcome the fact that such cooperation to combat cross-border threats is being strengthened at the level of regional offices and between subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of West African States.

The humanitarian issue in Central Africa is still largely influenced by the conflict in the Sudan. Chad and the Central African Republic — two countries

already weakened by internal crises — are bearing the humanitarian weight of that conflict.

The number of people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance continues to grow, having increased from 6.9 million to 7.6 million, according to figures contained in the Secretary-General's report. To prevent the humanitarian assistance system from collapsing, it is imperative that the revised 2023 humanitarian response plan is adequately funded. The A3 echoes the Secretary-General's appeal to international donors and partners to finance humanitarian intervention plans in the region, particularly in Chad, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for Special Representative Abarry and his team and thank them for their tireless efforts on the ground.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his briefing.

I will make four points today.

First, as the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2023/934), the region faces continued risk of instability, highlighted by recent coups and violence. As the recent twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reminds us, that vulnerability is exacerbated by climate change. The United Kingdom encourages Member States in the region to commit to inclusive, credible and accountable political and transitional processes and to engage with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The Council, too, must do its part to support UNOCA's important stabilizing effects in the subregion, including in relation to climate change.

Secondly, when Special Representative Abarry briefed the Council in June (see S/PV.9338), he spoke of the opportunities and challenges in the region through elections and transitions. In that regard, the United Kingdom welcomes progress made on the political transition in Chad. We urge the authorities to ensure that the referendum process is peaceful and inclusive and respects fundamental rights and freedoms. We thank Chad and other States in the region for their continued support to refugees from the Sudan. The United Kingdom has provided \$18 million to support the humanitarian response in eastern Chad.

Thirdly, there is opportunity for a turning point in Gabon. The United Kingdom encourages the transitional authorities to ensure a return to constitutional order through an inclusive and credible transition. We are reassured by the road map to elections in August 2025 and hope to see a genuinely inclusive national dialogue in April 2024. We urge the transitional authorities to fulfil the democratic aspirations of all Gabonese, with UNOCA's support and the engagement of regional partners.

Finally, in Cameroon, challenges to progress remain. The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about the ongoing violence and continues to work with multilateral partners to mitigate its worst impacts on the population, including by supporting human rights defenders and women peacebuilders. We encourage the parties to ensure that dialogue efforts are inclusive.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Abarry for his briefing.

In the light of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/934), I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, the countries in the region have made enormous efforts to maintain political stability and improve national governance. Recently, Cameroon has been actively implementing the outcomes of its major national dialogue and promoting the development and reconstruction of its south-west and north-west regions. The Central African Republic has successfully adopted a new Constitution, while Chad will hold a constitutional referendum soon. The whole world bears witness to those developments. Next year, some countries in the region will start political transitions and hold general elections. The international community should support the countries of the region in following a development path well-suited to their national conditions while respecting their sovereignty and ownership.

Secondly, regional counter-terrorism operations have achieved major results. The Government of the Central African Republic has disarmed a large number of former combatants of the Lord's Resistance Army. Those efforts deserve our full recognition. At the same time, Boko Haram and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have mounted repeated attacks, illegal armed groups and separatist forces continue to threaten the security of countries of the region, and the conflict in the Sudan is affecting the Central African Republic and Chad.

China supports the Economic Community of Central African States in leading the countries of the region to embrace the concept of common security, strengthen collective security mechanisms and work together to tackle security challenges. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) should provide assistance in building regional security mechanisms, while the international community should provide greater financial and technical support for counter-terrorism capacity-building, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Recently, piracy problems are on the rise in the Gulf of Guinea, with a number of fishing and commercial vessels having suffered armed robberies and attacks. The international community should continue to support the anti-piracy actions of the countries of the region and explore cooperation in joint law enforcement operations and the joint escorting of vessels so as to maintain maritime security in the region.

Thirdly, it is important to focus on the root causes of conflict. During the reporting period, UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel conducted a joint assessment on the impact of Boko Haram, which identified economic hardship as a key driver of young people joining extremist groups and engaging in illegal activities. That assessment fully demonstrates that poverty and uneven development can be a breeding ground for extremism, conflict and violence.

During our Council presidency last month, China initiated an open debate on the promotion of sustaining peace through common development (see S/PV.9482). The primary objective of the debate was to have the Council better focus on the intrinsic linkage between peace and development and to propose development solutions for the realization of lasting peace. As many countries in Central Africa face tough challenges in poverty reduction and development, China supports UNOCA placing greater emphasis, in its future work, on addressing the root causes of conflict from a development perspective so as to explore more effective pathways and solutions for achieving lasting peace in the region.

China has been closely following the challenges caused by climate change to the region. At the twenty-eighth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held

in Dubai, Secretary-General Guterres emphasized that developing countries, including in Africa, are in urgent need of financial and technical support to cope with climate change, and he called on developed countries to make clear the status of the delivery of the \$100 billion pledged for climate financing. China calls on the international community, especially developed countries, to respond to the Secretary-General's call and give greater support to the countries of the region.

**Mr. França Danese** (Brazil): I would like to thank Special Representative Abdou Abarry for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Central Africa.

Brazil commends the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa for its role in fostering preventive diplomacy and mediation and enhancing cooperation with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States. Strengthening coordination and partnerships is fundamental to regional peace and security. I would like to underscore three crucial points.

First, we agree with the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/934) on the importance of inclusive, peaceful and credible political processes in building sustainable peace in Central Africa. We are concerned about unconstitutional changes of Government in the region. Addressing the root causes of the problem, including governance issues, is essential. Brazil supports efforts to restore constitutional order, strengthen the rule of law and facilitate inclusive electoral and transitional processes. Civic freedoms, including freedom of expression, must be safeguarded, and political dialogue should be broad-based.

Secondly, the persistent security challenges in the region, including armed conflicts, violent extremism conducive to terrorism and escalating inter-communal tensions, are deeply alarming. We are particularly troubled by the situation in the Lake Chad basin, where hostilities have affected entire communities and shut down hundreds of schools, with a major impact on children's futures. Brazil values regional initiatives and the efforts of States to address those challenges, uphold human rights and incorporate the perspectives of women and young people.

Thirdly, Brazil continues to closely monitor maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. While the uptick in maritime security incidents is limited, it highlights the need for increased cooperation, including through the



Yaoundé Architecture and the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, especially in the light of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé process. As a member of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone and the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, Brazil will continue to support countries in the region through cooperation and joint naval operations, including multinational exercises such as Operation Guinex. We noted the successful conduct of Operation Guinex III in August and September. That exercise supports countries in the Gulf of Guinea in countering challenges to maritime security and improves interoperability between the Brazilian navy and navies and coastguards in the region.

Brazil stresses the importance of addressing long-standing challenges in Central Africa, such as economic development issues and social exclusion, in order to overcome chronic insecurity and achieve long-term stability. We reiterate our full support for Special Representative Abarry and his team and commend them for their untiring efforts on the ground.

**Mr. Olmedo** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his very thorough briefing, and I reiterate France's full support to him.

France commends the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa for its efforts and the work it has done to strengthen ties between the Office and African regional organizations, particularly the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States.

First, regarding the situation resulting from the crisis in the Sudan, France commends the Sudan's neighbouring countries, in particular Chad and the Central African Republic, for their efforts in receiving refugees. The European Union and its member States are contributing to the humanitarian response to the situation, and France, whose humanitarian contribution for this crisis now amounts to more than €55 million, reiterates its solidarity with the Sudanese people and the countries of the region.

Secondly, regarding the political processes in the region, the transitions that have taken place in several countries in recent months should enable a return to democracy and the full participation of all segments of society, including women and young people. We hope that the next stages of those processes will be inclusive, credible and peaceful. In Gabon, the transitional Government has announced a timetable for

its transition, in line with the requests of the African Union Peace and Security Council. We have taken note of the details presented by the Special Representative on that process, including the popular credibility and support it enjoys. In Chad, France calls for the transition to continue and hopes that the 17 December referendum will take place in conditions that are conducive to a peaceful return to constitutional order. The authorities must work with a view to holding free, credible, inclusive and transparent elections.

In Cameroon, France remains concerned about the situation in the north-western and south-western regions. We urge the authorities to pursue dialogue with a view to finding a political solution to the crisis aimed at ensuring the stability of the country as a whole and the security of its inhabitants. In the Central African Republic, France welcomes the authorities' commitment to the peace process. The demobilization of several factions of the Lord's Resistance Army is also an encouraging sign for the country, and the work of enabling the return of people who are still refugees in neighbouring countries should continue.

For my final point, I would like to address the issue of climate change. France is concerned about its effects in Central Africa. The region is facing increasingly fierce weather events. The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/934) outlines the risks that this poses to the stability and security of several countries. In Chad and Cameroon, for example, flooding and the erosion of agricultural lands are displacing populations in areas that are already fragile and increasing competition for dwindling resources. We appreciate the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, in cooperation with subregional organizations, to address those challenges and strengthen our common responses to them. The Council must listen to the voices of the countries of the region on the subject.

**Mr. Iriya** (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his briefing.

As the region continues to face multifaceted challenges, including persistent threats of terrorism and conflict and the fragility of political systems, the good-offices role of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) is essential to upholding fundamental values and strengthening the capacity of subregional organizations for conflict prevention, mediation and the consolidation of peace. In that regard, we appreciated UNOCA's mediation

efforts following the military takeover of power in Gabon earlier this year and welcomed the Gabonese authorities' subsequent announcement of a road map for a democratic transition and presidential elections tentatively scheduled for August 2025.

On the political front, we note two key events that will take place in the region later this month — Chad's constitutional referendum, to be held on 17 December, a milestone in the transition to civilian rule, and the general elections scheduled for 20 December in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is vital that both be conducted in a free, fair, peaceful, transparent and inclusive manner.

On the security front, we remain deeply concerned about the continued violence in north-western and south-western Cameroon and deplore the targeting of civilians and the attacks on schools and hospitals. We call on the Government of Cameroon to engage constructively regarding reconstruction and development in those areas, based on the 2019 Major National Dialogue.

The Central African region continues to face a dire humanitarian situation that is being further exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change, such as food insecurity, forced displacement and conflicts between farmers and herders. Japan commends the efforts of countries and subregional organizations to address issues of climate and peace and security. We further welcome UNOCA's continued engagement with the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States on the development of a conflict-sensitive regional strategy for climate change and resilient development. Now, with regard to tackling the region's multilayered challenges, I want to highlight three points.

The first is the centrality of good governance based on the rule of law. To attain sustainable peace and security, Governments must be able to provide basic services for their citizens and earn the trust and respect of the population. In order to do so, solid and resilient institutions supported by empowered human capital and strong communities are needed. Communities with high levels of trust can collectively face up to the threats of insecurity, radicalization and environmental change.

Secondly, all endeavours must be inclusive and must heed the voices of women, youth and marginalized groups. People must feel that they are the agents of change in their societies. Without that, no Government, institutions or communities can gain trust.

Thirdly, in supporting such efforts, the international community must adopt a holistic approach based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, incorporating the entire United Nations system, as well as international financial institutions, regional organizations and civil society.

Japan has long provided support to countries in the region, notably to countries that are generously hosting large numbers of displaced people, including Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad. Japan reaffirms its continued support in their endeavour to tackle the many challenges and pursue peace and stability.

**Mr. Camilleri** (Malta): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his comprehensive briefing today.

At the outset, let me reiterate Malta's regret that the Security Council has not been able to adopt a presidential statement on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). UNOCA's mandate covers 11 countries, some of which have recently experienced unconstitutional changes of Government. Others are dealing with complex transitions, and many are grappling with terrorism and violent extremism. Intercommunal violence is widespread, piracy continues to pose a threat to coastal States, and two of the main peacekeeping missions in Africa are in this geographical area. It is crucial for the Council to collectively demonstrate its commitment to the region.

Central Africa is one of the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected regions when it comes to climate and environmental shocks. Severe droughts and flooding continue to drive displacement. Rising sea levels have a negative impact on coastal nations, damaging homes, buildings and plantations. We cannot ignore the hundreds of deaths resulting from climate-induced conflicts, especially between farmers and herders, and the increased risks to vulnerable groups, in particular children. The climate crisis is also magnifying structural gender inequalities, as many women in the region rely primarily on climate-sensitive livelihoods. Strengthening women's land rights and connecting them to markets and finance can help to scale up climate adaptation and mitigation. We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry for his tireless efforts in advocating for climate, peace and security. We also commend the work of the climate adviser in the UNOCA team, who is supporting the Economic Community of Central African States

(ECCAS) Commission in the development of a conflict-sensitive regional strategy on climate change and resilient development, a regional protocol on transhumance and a regional consortium.

The increasing number of schools closed during the reporting period is alarming. We echo the strong call by religious leaders in Cameroon for dialogue between the Government and the armed groups, supporting their recent interfaith campaign to reopen schools. Furthermore, armed violence has rendered hundreds of schools in the Lake Chad region non-functional, resulting in the denial of education to thousands of children.

Chad is also strongly affected by the Sudanese conflict, with more than 500,000 refugees and returnees crossing the border. Ethnic fractures continue to grow, and we are deeply concerned about the increased risk of conflict crossing the Sudanese border. Despite efforts by international agencies to address humanitarian needs, the situation remains dramatic. We call for support, including in emergency development, to aid host communities in coping with this emergency. Without a political solution, however, assistance will never be enough. As for Chad's internal transition, we note the conciliatory measures implemented by the transitional authorities. We call on them to ensure inclusivity in all next steps as a matter of priority. The upcoming referendum represents a crucial stride. We hope that it will be carried out calmly, with a prioritization of the fundamental issue of decentralization to effectively address social grievances. We also applaud the synergy between UNOCA and ECCAS in preventing and combating hate speech.

In conclusion, Malta believes that it is crucial to sustain regional collaborative efforts and champion credible and inclusive governance. Through such endeavours, we can pave the way for an enduring peace, resonating with the collective aspirations of the people in Central Africa.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abdou Abarry, for his briefing.

The Russian Federation supports the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), which are aimed at strengthening peace and security in the region. We note the Office's mediation work in direct contact with the parties in problem areas and in coordination with regional mechanisms

and associations. We view UNOCA as an important instrument in international preventive diplomacy.

The challenges facing the countries in the subregion are complex. We attach particular importance to regional efforts to develop coordinated approaches to countering terrorism. We are concerned about the persistence of Boko Haram's destructive potential and the activities in the region of groups associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. We note the effectiveness of African States' efforts through regional multinational armed forces. We believe that there is a need to ensure that they receive predictable funding and assistance from the international community.

We are concerned about the continuation of armed attacks on commercial ships in the Gulf of Guinea. It is important to harness the resources of the international community to enhance the capacity of coastal States to combat piracy. We have observed positive developments in that regard, and we hope that they will be strengthened in this important region. We are concerned about the outbreaks of violence in the north-west and south-west of Cameroon. We believe that it is fundamentally important to renounce violence and find ways to resolve differences through negotiations. We have been following the transitional process in Chad, which is based on the implementation of the inter-Chadian national dialogue recommendations. We note the decisions of the transitional authorities in Gabon to return to constitutional rule within the agreed time frame.

We are following the developments in the Central African Republic closely. With the support of partners, including the Russian Federation, the Central African authorities have managed to overcome the most difficult phase in the fight against those who tried to achieve an unconstitutional change of government by armed means. We will continue to help Bangui in its fight against illegal armed groups and in expanding State presence in regions of the country in order to reach a definitive settlement. We note, in particular, the successful operation carried out by the Central African Republic and Uganda with the participation of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to repatriate former militants of the Lord's Republic Resistance Army.

We are deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in the region. Statistics regarding refugees, internally displaced persons and those in need of some

form of humanitarian assistance point to the need to increase support for Central African States. First of all, that applies to what is happening in the Sudan and the large-scale difficulties associated with the conflict for neighbouring States.

We believe that the key role in crisis prevention and conflict resolution should be played by the States of the region themselves, with the necessary international support. For our part, we will continue to support the United Nations entities working in the region and provide the necessary assistance to the countries of Central Africa on a bilateral basis.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Abarry, for his briefing.

As we heard today, the Central African region is currently facing unprecedented risks to peace and security. Those challenges are mainly regional, so the responses must also be regional. Cooperation among all actors in Central Africa is necessary to build peace.

With that in mind, I would like to highlight three points.

First, the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in certain regions is affecting the whole of Central Africa. Armed conflicts, intercommunal violence and forced displacement continue to exacerbate the humanitarian and security crisis in the region. In the Sudan, for example, the toll on the civilian population of the fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces has been catastrophic. That conflict has caused the largest displacement crisis in the world, with a pronounced impact in neighbouring countries. We remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law. We would like to thank the countries of the Economic Community of Central African States, in particular Chad and the Central African Republic, for welcoming people fleeing the conflict and for keeping their borders open. Those countries need our full support to ensure the dignified protection of refugees and to meet the needs of their own populations.

Secondly, inclusive democratic processes that respect human rights are necessary to consolidate lasting peace in the region. Serious preventive efforts must be prioritized. We welcome the efforts of the Special Representative to advance preventive diplomacy

and build peace. His good offices in Gabon and Chad, in particular, have been indispensable in strengthening the civic space and fostering dialogue between the authorities and the opposition. In that respect, Switzerland supports the transitional authorities in Chad in implementing the recommendations of the sovereign and inclusive national dialogue. In order to ensure peaceful democratic societies, it is essential to ensure full respect for human rights. In that respect, we regret that the civic space is increasingly restricted in certain contexts, notably in Cameroon and Burundi. People's political affiliations, sexual orientation or the occupation of journalists must not be used as grounds for discrimination.

Thirdly, climate change is having a negative impact on peace and security throughout Central Africa, as the Special Representative stressed on several occasions. Extreme weather events are increasingly common in the region. They force people to move, increase their insecurity and have an impact on their ability to realize their fundamental rights. That is why it is commendable that UNOCA has a Climate, Peace and Security Adviser. This capacity provides important support in analysing the risks associated with conflicts over natural resources, which are exacerbated by the harmful effects of climate change.

In response to those challenges, Switzerland supports the strengthening of pastoral livestock farming in Chad, which helps to improve adaptation to climate change. That type of project is essential to regional food security and creates economic opportunities to prevent violence.

We thank the Special Representative and UNOCA, in particular, for its strong focus on conflict prevention, including climate, peace and security considerations, in line with the 2018 presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/17). Switzerland supports the efforts made by Gabon and the United Kingdom for a new declaration. Despite all the crises we are facing, we must continue to honour our commitment to the Central African region. After three years, it is now high time for the Council to send a signal of its support for the valuable work of this Regional Office.

**Mr. Spasse** (Albania): I thank Mr. Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing.

Allow me to raise a few points highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/934). The challenges that Central Africa is facing are multifaceted



and deeply rooted, and are exacerbated by persistent conflicts. That is why we should advocate for solutions that promote inclusive governance and address root causes of conflict. Those solutions can come only through the transparent and inclusive completion of democratic transitions and reforms.

Albania notes the progress made in Chad implementing the Doha Peace Agreement and holding the upcoming constitutional referendum and general elections in 2024. We echo the Secretary-General's call to enhance efforts to promote human rights, including by combating impunity. The establishment of accountable and participatory systems in the region, reflecting the will of the people, is a pivotal force for bolstering legitimacy of leadership, as well as for promoting dialogue and reconciliation.

While we are encouraged by the progress made in Cameroon, particularly with internally displaced persons returns and economic improvements in the north-west and south-west regions, we welcome further efforts to support the national dialogue between the Government and armed groups, aiming at lasting peace and the protection of civilians.

That leads me to the next point — the volatile security situation in many countries of the region, translated into millions of internally displaced persons or refugees living in alarming conditions, deprived of the necessities of life. Regional efforts to fight Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin have been encouraging. However, to break the control of terrorist groups over certain areas where the State authority is absent, more international support should go to the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin and the regional strategy. We also note with particular concern the continued targeting of educational and medical facilities in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon, leaving children robbed of their right to education and with their aspirations crushed under the weight of poverty and insecurity.

Turning the focus to the tragic impact of the Sudanese civil war, we salute Chad and the Central African Republic, which, despite their own challenges, opened their hearts and homes to Sudanese refugees. The international community should not leave them to bear the brunt of this humanitarian crisis alone. Amid these challenges, we must remain vigilant of the environmental degradation of the region's fragile ecosystems and its enormous impact on communities.

The livelihoods of those who depend on natural resources are at risk due to climate shocks, leading to food insecurity, water scarcity, displacement and clashes among communities, as described in the Secretary-General's report. The shared efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Economic Community of Central African States, which we fully support, remain crucial.

As this is Albania's last meeting on this issue, allow me to emphasize that in order to turn the tide and secure a brighter future for the region, we must continue to advocate political solutions. We also have to provide not only increased and effective humanitarian aid, but also education and economic alternatives that can break the cycle of poverty and create a future of hope for the generations to come.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Mr. Abarry, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his informative briefing, and it is a pleasure to welcome him back to the Council.

I would like to first express my country's firm commitment to supporting the democratic aspirations of the people of Central Africa. There are a number of pressing challenges in the region, including supporting inclusive and sustainable democratic transitions in Chad and Gabon, upcoming elections in the Central African Republic and the continuing threat from Boko Haram.

Now is the time for the Government of Chad to take tangible steps towards creating a democratic future. And I encourage Special Representative Abarry to facilitate the full participation of all non-armed political opposition groups in the transition. I commend Chad for opening its borders to the Sudanese refugees, but remain concerned that the crisis may increase instability in the region. The United States repeats its call for Chad to support a peaceful political solution to the war in the Sudan and to prevent the movement of material assistance to either of the belligerent forces there.

The United States similarly reaffirms its commitment to support Gabon in conducting a timely and durable transition to democratic civilian governance and advancing shared security interests in the Gulf of Guinea. We will continue to work closely with the Gabonese people and regional partners to that effect. Since the transitional Government of Gabon announced a detailed timeline, leading to elections by August 2025, the United States has begun to resume bilateral security,

environmental and development cooperation. Those programmes and activities will be restarted in tranches tied to progress the transitional Government makes on its self-imposed benchmarks over the next 20 months.

Turning to the Central African Republic, the United States calls on the Government and opposition to engage constructively and transparently ahead of and during the country's first local and regional elections since 1988. Those elections are a critical element of decentralization and building local institutions that are responsive to citizens' needs.

We continue to be concerned about the lack of overall improvement in the human rights situation in Burundi, and in particular the death in detention of a human rights defender charged with homosexuality. Though he was acquitted of the charge, his referral for medical care was reportedly refused.

Conflict and instability present significant challenges to democracy and democratic transitions. We remain concerned by upticks in violence in Cameroon, particularly in the North-West and South-West regions. We also condemn Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province's continued attacks against civilians, which have displaced thousands in the region. The United States supports regional coordination and efforts by the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat those terrorist groups and implement holistic strategies to address the underlying drivers of terrorism.

The United States stands ready to continue its support to the democratic and peaceful aspirations of the people of Central Africa and looks forward to continuing engaging with the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abarry on these issues. We continue to be in favour of a Council product that would put us on the record on these issues, as well as acknowledge the threat of climate change.

**Ms. Shaheen** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Special Representative Mr. Abdou Abarry for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to reiterate the United Arab Emirates' support for the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). We appreciate UNOCA's critical role in coordinating with regional and subregional organizations to enable countries of the region to address the challenges undermining peace and security with a view to building a stable and prosperous future for their peoples.

As part of today's debate, I would like to highlight three points.

First, addressing the region's security challenges requires a multitrack and coherent approach. That ensures strengthening regional coordination and cooperation to address cross-border threats, such as extremism, terrorism and the illegal trade of weapons, in conjunction with building national capacities and strengthening community resilience to address such challenges. We believe that the recent demobilization of armed groups with the participation of States and actors in the region reflects the importance of multilateral action to enhance regional security and stability. The same applies to the coordinated security response between the Central African Republic and Chad to avoid any repercussions due to conflicts in the region.

It is also necessary to focus on combating extremism and terrorism in the region and to address their root causes along with promoting the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence to build peaceful societies. We therefore look forward to the outcome of the next ministerial meeting in Bangui at which the regional strategy to address hate speech in Central Africa will be discussed.

In that context, we underscore the importance of implementing resolution 2686 (2023), which calls on the United Nations system to monitor and report on hate speech and extremism. It is also important to follow up and support the regional efforts and initiatives to assist communities affected by violence, including the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region.

Secondly, inclusive political solutions must remain the compass that guides transitions and peace processes across the region. Those efforts are critical to building resilient institutions with the participation of all actors, including women and the youth. That requires focusing on constructive dialogue to build trust and overcome obstacles. UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) must also continue their efforts to support the success of political processes in the region. In that regard, we commend the positive steps taken recently in Chad and Gabon.

Thirdly, we must continue to enhance our understanding of the links between climate change and instability in the region as extreme weather events

escalate tensions among communities and exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation.

We look forward to the adoption of the ECCAS Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy, which aims to help communities adapt to climate change. We believe that the participation of the UNOCA Climate Security Advisor in the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in the United Arab Emirates last week, highlighted the challenges facing the region as a result of that phenomenon and its impact on security and stability. When gathering information and assessing the risks associated with climate change, it is important to take into consideration its consequences for the security situation. That will strengthen the preventive approach and early-warning systems.

Lastly, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its commitment to continue working with all partners and UNOCA to achieve peace and stability throughout the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ecuador.

I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Abdou Abarry, for his statement. I underscore the importance of UNOCA's work, including with the countries and organizations of the region, focusing on good offices and addressing the causes of conflicts.

I now would like to highlight the following elements.

On the political front, we are witnessing a wave of instability in the region linked to the discontent of the population with regard to the deterioration of living standards, a lack of jobs and limited access to basic services, among other factors.

We regret the breakdown of constitutional order in a number of countries of the region and urge a return to democratic life. We expect the planned electoral processes to be carried out in a peaceful, transparent and inclusive manner. In that regard, we appreciate the efforts being made, with the support of UNOCA, in preparation for the constitutional referendum to be held in a few days in Chad. We also welcome the transition plan put forward in Gabon and wish success

to President Touadera of the Central African Republic who is leading the political facilitation of the Economic Community of Central African States in that country.

With regard to security, we are concerned about the continued violence caused by non-State groups operating in the region. We reject acts of violence and stand in solidarity with the victims and encourage the countries of the region to continue to cooperate in combating terrorism, while respecting human rights and international humanitarian law.

An additional threat in the region is the expansion of organized crime and its links to the illegal exploitation of natural resources. In the face of that scourge, we encourage inter-State cooperation, as well as cooperation with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, in accordance with presidential statement S/PRST/2023/6, of 7 December.

We also view with concern the effects of the Sudanese conflict and appreciate the reception offered by countries in the region to civilians fleeing the violence.

With regard to the situation in Cameroon, we call on the parties to continue dialogue with a view to ending the crisis affecting the north-west and south-west of the country.

We welcome the progress made by the Central African Republic in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

With regard to the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, we note with concern the reports of restrictions on civic space and arrests during peaceful protests in certain countries of the region. In that regard, we urge the countries of the region to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms as pillars of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our support for UNOCA, whose preventive work is fundamental to the maintenance of peace and security in the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.*