



Security Council

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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 20 December 2010 (S/2010/661), the President of the Security Council agreed to extend the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) until 31 December 2013 and requested me to report to the Council every six months on the implementation of the revised mandate of the Office.

2. The present report, which covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2013, provides an overview of national, cross-cutting and cross-border developments in West Africa and outlines the activities undertaken by UNOWA in the areas of good offices, preventive diplomacy and political mediation, in addition to efforts to enhance regional capacity to tackle threats and challenges to regional peace and stability. It also provides a description of the cooperation of the Office with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union and the African Union to promote peace and stability in the region. Pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 16 July 2013 (S/PRST/2013/10), it provides an update on initial efforts by UNOWA in support of the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Lastly, it contains recommendations regarding the renewal of the mandate of UNOWA.

II. Developments and trends in West Africa

3. Since the issuance of my previous report, dated 28 June 2013 (S/2013/384), the landscape in West Africa has been dominated by the political and electoral crisis in Guinea, the incomplete political transition in Guinea-Bissau, the installation of an elected government in Mali and security tensions in north-eastern Nigeria. The growing threats of terrorism, violent extremism and cross-border organized crime, compounded by weak State institutions and the inadequate ability of Governments to provide basic social services, remained major challenges to peace and stability in the region. High rates of food insecurity and malnutrition, in addition to displacement caused by violence and natural disasters, continued to characterize the humanitarian situation in the region.



A. Political developments and trends

4. In Mali, significant steps were taken towards the re-establishment of constitutional order and territorial integrity. A two-round presidential poll, held on 28 July and 11 August, resulted in the election of Boubacar Keita as President. On 8 September, he appointed a new government. The Government undertook a number of dialogue initiatives, including a national reconciliation conference for the north, held from 1 to 3 November, to exchange views on reconciliation and social cohesion, local governance and decentralization and the development of the northern regions. On 2 November, the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali held its sixth meeting, in Bamako. The Group expressed concern over the security situation in Kidal and called for the speedy and effective implementation of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement of 18 June 2013, which pertained to the presidential election and inclusive peace talks. Meanwhile, the process of returning State control over the northern regions continued, but basic services are yet to fully resume.

5. In Guinea-Bissau, there has been limited progress in restoring constitutional order. The Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, at an extraordinary summit held in Dakar on 25 October, urged the transitional authorities and the other political actors to expedite preparations for the holding of general elections before the end of 2013. That request notwithstanding, the Transitional Government announced on 31 October that it would conduct voter registration from 1 to 22 December 2013. On 15 November, it announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held on 16 March 2014. In the meantime, the military continued to interfere in politics and governance and to perpetrate violations of human rights, against the backdrop of a further deterioration in the country's socioeconomic conditions and security situation.

6. In Mauritania, differences between the largest opposition coalition, the Coordination de l'opposition démocratique, and the Government persisted, leading to a breakdown in the political dialogue process on 7 October. The dialogue had been launched on 30 September to discuss conditions for the participation of the opposition coalition in the legislative and municipal elections scheduled for 23 November. It constituted the first attempt by the parties to engage in a structured discussion in more than four years. In Burkina Faso, senatorial elections were held on 28 July, amid controversy between the Government and the opposition on the establishment of the Senate. The opposition objected to the elections out of concern that the incumbent President would then use the newly established Senate to modify the Constitution so as to allow him to contest the presidential election in 2015. The inauguration of the elected Senate, initially planned for September, has since been postponed to enable the Government to step up efforts to promote dialogue and build national consensus on the establishment of the Senate. In Nigeria, political tensions fuelled by ethnocentric and inter-party and intra-party manoeuvring in the lead-up to the presidential election to be held in 2015 continued to rise.

7. In Togo, inclusive legislative elections were held on 25 July, following dialogue between the Government and the opposition, facilitated by national stakeholders with the support of the United Nations and the group of ambassadors of France, Germany, Japan and the United States of America. In Guinea, legislative elections were held on 28 September after tense political negotiations facilitated by my Special Representative for West Africa, Said Djinnit. In Ghana, the court hearing

of the petition filed by the candidate of the New Patriotic Party in the run-off of the presidential election held in December 2012, Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo-Addo, ended on 29 August with the Supreme Court confirming the validity of the election of John Dramani Mahama as President.

B. Security developments and trends

8. The security situation in the Mano River basin, the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel continued to be of concern during the reporting period. Insecurity was compounded by weak and underresourced government institutions and agencies, the porosity of national borders, increased proliferation of small arms and light weapons, high numbers of unemployed young people prone to manipulation by extremist groups, unhindered cross-border movements of armed groups and transnational organized crime.

9. In the four States members of the Mano River Union (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), illegal movements of armed groups across porous borders and rising ethno-political extremism continued to affect the security situation. In July, ethnic tensions turned violent in Nzérékoré, south-east Guinea, leaving more than 216 people dead, 438 injured and some 30,000 displaced. In a collective effort to resolve peace and security challenges in the border areas, the States members of the Union developed and adopted a cross-border strategy on 25 October.

10. Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea increased during the reporting period. From January to October, the Global Integrated Shipping Information System of the International Maritime Organization recorded 47 cases of piracy, of which 29 (62 per cent) occurred off the coast of Nigeria. Six ships were hijacked and subsequently released. Moreover, criminal activities, including hostage-taking, increased in the reporting period, in particular in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

11. In the Sahel, the crises in Libya and Mali continued to affect neighbouring countries. Although significantly weakened, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and other terrorist groups continued to pose a threat in Mali and surrounding countries. The deadly suicide attack against a checkpoint of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in Tessalit on 23 October and the abduction and killing of two journalists of Radio France Internationale outside Kidal on 3 November, in addition to other attacks against the Malian armed forces, illustrated the prevailing insecurity in the region. The security situation in Mali was also affected by clashes between the Malian armed forces and armed groups and incidents of intercommunal violence.

12. In Nigeria, the activities of suspected Boko Haram elements in the north-eastern States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe and the military operation launched by the Government against Boko Haram have led to a significant increase in violence and reports of massive human rights violations, including loss of life. The persistent insecurity and the increase in attacks on soft targets such as schools and teachers have slowed development activities and severely impeded the delivery of public administrative and social services, with serious consequences for children's access to education. The situation has also had a negative impact on food security and livelihoods. On 7 November, the Senate approved the President's request to extend the state of emergency in those north-eastern states for an additional six months.

C. Economic, social and humanitarian developments and trends

13. According to ECOWAS, the economic growth in West Africa in the first semester of 2013 was sustained during the reporting period, confirming earlier forecasts of growth of between 6 and 7 per cent for 2013. Unemployment was estimated at more than 10 per cent, however. Weak employability persists, in particular among young people and women, owing mainly to poor education systems and poor-performing economies in most of the countries.

14. Food insecurity and malnutrition rates remained high in several countries in West Africa, including Mali and the Niger. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, some 500,000 people were affected by floods throughout the region, including 233,000 in the Niger. The region saw a positive downward trend in cholera cases, however, with 50 per cent fewer cases recorded in 2013 than at the same time in 2012.

15. Insecurity and social tensions continued to affect the civilian population in many countries of the subregion. In Nigeria, for example, at least 5,400 people are reported to have been internally displaced in areas affected by Boko Haram and more than 45,000 refugees and returning migrants have fled to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. Meanwhile, humanitarian interventions continued to be severely underfunded in the region.

D. Human rights and gender developments and trends

16. Political tensions and election-related instability and the rapidly evolving threat of terrorism continued to have a negative effect on human rights in some countries in West Africa. Reports of human rights violations increased in areas of north-eastern Nigeria affected by Boko Haram. In Guinea-Bissau, an increase in reports of intimidation, threats and restrictions of freedom of expression and assembly were of particular concern, as were serious human rights violations during violent intercommunal clashes in July in Guinée forestière, Guinea. Efforts to tackle human rights violations in West Africa continued to be hampered by weak institutions and malpractice, in addition to the lack of capacity and reluctance of national authorities to combat impunity fully.

17. With regard to gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's participation in peace and security efforts in West Africa, in August, Nigeria joined 12 of the 15 States members of ECOWAS and Mauritania in adopting a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, in line with the regional plan of action adopted in Dakar in September 2010.

18. In September, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance visited Mauritania. He highlighted the existence of slavery-like practices in Mauritania and called upon the Government to enforce existing laws criminalizing the practices.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. Good offices and conflict prevention

19. During the period under review, UNOWA provided good offices for the consolidation of democratic processes and institutions throughout the region, in particular in Guinea and Togo.

Guinea

20. On 3 July, following protracted negotiations facilitated by my Special Representative for West Africa, the parties signed a political agreement that paved the way for the participation of opposition parties in the electoral process. It provided for the holding of legislative elections within 84 days and outlined a series of tasks to be undertaken by the Independent National Electoral Commission with the support of international partners. A follow-up committee, composed of parties to the agreement and international partners and chaired by my Special Representative, was established to monitor the implementation of the agreement, with the support of other technical bodies. The mechanisms created a space for continued inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders and helped to mobilize and streamline technical and financial support by partners for the electoral process.

21. In accordance with the agreement, the Independent National Electoral Commission reviewed the electoral lists from 13 to 27 July and reopened the registration of candidates, enabling 18 additional political parties, mostly from the opposition, to register candidates. The finalization of the register of voters and the establishment of polling stations presented significant challenges for the Commission, however, triggering renewed calls by the opposition for a further postponement of the elections. As a result of intensive efforts by my Special Representative, with the support of international members of the follow-up committee, the Guinean stakeholders agreed to postpone the elections by four days to allow for some of the challenges to be addressed. With the concurrence of the Guinean authorities, in order to avoid delays in the counting process, the United Nations deployed helicopters from the United Nations missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to provide logistical support, including transportation of tallying sheets from remote constituencies.

22. On 28 September, 70 per cent of the estimated 5 million eligible voters went to the polls. International electoral observers generally concurred that the elections were conducted smoothly, except for some logistical challenges. Following the release of the first batches of provisional results by the Independent National Electoral Commission, in which the ruling party, the Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée, took an early lead, the opposition coalition rejected the results, alleging massive electoral fraud, and demanded that the elections should be cancelled. It also suspended its participation in the implementation mechanisms provided for in the agreement of 3 July. In an effort to break the deadlock, my Special Representative, in his capacity as international facilitator, convened a meeting of the international members of the follow-up committee in Conakry on 8 October. Following the meeting, the group, which included representatives of ECOWAS, the European Union, France, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United States, issued a statement in which it identified irregularities in 8 of the 38 electoral constituencies and urged the Commission to submit detailed reports on those cases

to the Supreme Court for its consideration. The group also called upon all parties to remain calm and to use legal channels to resolve concerns relating to the elections.

23. On 18 October, after a delay of some 18 days caused by disagreements in the process of vote counting in Matoto constituency in Conakry, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced the comprehensive provisional results. Opposition parties responded positively to calls for calm and withdrew their threat to resume demonstrations. According to the results announced, the presidential majority won 53 seats, while the main opposition parties gained 51 seats. Ten smaller parties won the remaining 10 seats. It should be noted that 25 women won seats in the election, representing 22 per cent of the membership of the new National Assembly. Both the ruling party and opposition parties filed petitions with the Supreme Court to challenge the election results in a number of constituencies. The Supreme Court pronounced its judgement on 15 November, rejecting the claims made and upholding the provisional results announced by the Commission. My Special Representative convened the eighteenth and last meeting of the follow-up committee on 16 November. It was attended by all members of the committee, including the opposition and the presidential majority, in addition to international partners. At the end of the meeting, my Special Representative read a statement to the press in which the committee thanked the Guinean parties for their collaboration and congratulated the political parties, the Government and all relevant stakeholders on the smooth holding of the legislative elections, the shortcomings and inefficiencies notwithstanding.

Niger

24. During the period under review, the Niger continued to face serious socioeconomic and security challenges. The spillover effects of the crises in Libya, Mali and northern Nigeria continued to affect its security and stability. Moreover, the strong commitment of the Government to tackling terrorism and violent extremism further exposed the country to security threats. The President and other national stakeholders highlighted those increasingly difficult security challenges to my Special Representative during his visit to Niamey on 23 and 24 July. A joint ECOWAS-UNOWA early warning mission to the Niger from 21 to 25 October raised concerns about the security threats along the country's border with Nigeria, especially in those areas affected by Boko Haram. The mission also took note of increasing food insecurity in the country, caused mainly by fluctuating rainfall, flooding and locust invasions, and the negative impact of the insecurity in north-eastern Nigeria on the local economy. Unemployment among young people was also highlighted as a major concern, especially in the context of rising extremism.

25. In August, the President appointed a government of national unity. The move triggered the break-up of the governing coalition and resulted in new political configurations in the National Assembly. Meanwhile, on 29 October, four French citizens who had been kidnapped on 16 September 2010 during raids by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb on a uranium mine under development by the French nuclear company Areva, near Arlit, were released after three years in captivity, in part as a result of the efforts of the President. As part of my visit to the Sahel, I visited the Niger on 6 November. In my meetings with the President, we discussed the need for more regional cooperation in combating terrorism and organized crime, the importance of women's empowerment and the need to boost economic growth and relieve demographic pressure.

Togo

26. On 25 July, legislative elections were conducted in Togo. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission, an estimated 66 per cent of voters turned out to vote. My Special Representative visited the country on the eve of the elections to advocate peaceful, free and fair elections, among other things. International observers reported that the elections were generally free and fair. On 12 August, the Constitutional Court validated the provisional results announced by the Commission on 30 July, according to which the ruling Union populaire pour la République obtained 62 of the 91 seats, followed by the Sauvons le Togo coalition with 19 seats, the Arc-en-Ciel coalition with 6 seats, the Union des forces du changement with 3 seats and Sursaut Togo with 1 seat. On 1 October, the new parliament opened its first session.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

27. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, chaired by my Special Representative, continued to make progress in implementing the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002 on the land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria. I am pleased to report that the special transitional regime of five years, established under the Greentree Agreement, came to an end on 14 August. This was confirmed in a joint declaration adopted and signed by the heads of delegation of Cameroon and Nigeria and my Special Representative at the end of the twenty-third and final meeting of the Follow-up Committee established to monitor the implementation of the Agreement, held in Geneva on 21 and 22 October. In accordance with the joint declaration, Cameroon is now fully exercising its rights of sovereignty over the totality of the Bakassi zone, as stipulated in the Agreement.

28. Regarding the border demarcation, the parties have agreed upon 1,893 km of the estimated 2,100-km land boundary. Following the final mapping working session, held in New York in June, at which the parties agreed upon modalities and legal considerations, the first set of maps on the scale 1:50,000 have been submitted to the parties for their consideration and approval.

29. Progress was also made on the emplacement of pillars on the boundary line. Following the decision of the Mixed Commission of April 2013 to resume the construction of pillars in the southern and central sections of the boundary, the procurement of engineering work for the construction of 323 of the remaining 920 boundary pillars was launched by the United Nations in July. The project steering committee and technical monitoring team met in Ikom, Nigeria, from 9 to 12 October to discuss the workplan and agree upon the schedule of operations. From 25 October to 12 November, security and logistical assessments were conducted in the areas affected by construction activities, as were awareness-raising activities targeting local communities.

30. Confidence-building measures launched by my Special Representative during the first half of 2013 to promote small-scale socioeconomic projects benefiting the affected populations along the common border between Cameroon and Nigeria also continued during the reporting period. On 15 September, the Government of Nigeria approved a United Nations programme document on socioeconomic projects for the communities affected by the ruling of the International Court of Justice. A feasibility study of the selected projects and related costs continues. Proposed socioeconomic

projects were also reviewed by United Nations agencies in Cameroon and transmitted to the Government on 26 September.

B. Enhancing regional capacity to tackle cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security

31. During the period under review, UNOWA continued to promote integrated subregional responses to threats in vulnerable areas of the region. It also continued to support regional initiatives on security sector reform, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and counter-terrorism, in cooperation with key partners such as the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

Sahel

32. Pursuant to the request by the Security Council in the statement by the President of 16 July 2013 (S/PRST/2013/10) that UNOWA establish an effective and detailed coordination mechanism to prioritize activities and to ensure coordinated implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, my Special Representative convened the resident coordinators of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, together with the United Nations regional directors, in Dakar on 18 September. The Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel also participated. The participants agreed upon a two-layer coordination mechanism, including a steering committee and three regional working groups to cover each of the strategy's goals of governance, security and resilience. They also validated the implementation matrix for the strategy and agreed that the resident coordinators would coordinate United Nations efforts at the national level and the regional working groups would coordinate United Nations involvement and support at the regional level.

33. My Special Representative and my Special Envoy for the Sahel, Romano Prodi, jointly visited the Niger and Côte d'Ivoire on 6 and 7 October. They met the Heads of State of the two countries and discussed the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. On 2 November, in Bamako, my Special Representative provided a briefing to the Follow-up and Support Group on the Situation in Mali on efforts being made by United Nations entities in the region to support the implementation of the strategy. My Special Representative also participated in the second ministerial meeting of the African Union on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, held in N'Djamena on 11 September.

34. I visited four countries in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger) from 4 to 7 November, together with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Presidents of the World Bank and the African Development Bank and the Commissioner for Development of the European Union. Our visit signalled the strong commitment of the international community to supporting, in a coordinated manner, the countries of the region in addressing continuing challenges, including through the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. On the margins of the joint visit, the Government of Mali organized a

ministerial meeting on the Sahel in Bamako on 5 November, during which the participants agreed upon the establishment of a regional coordination platform. The platform, which would be led by Mali for the first two years, would be supported by a technical secretariat, co-chaired by the United Nations and the African Union, with the participation of all relevant multilateral institutions.

Mano River Union

35. Following a high-level meeting on the strategy for cross-border security in the Mano River Union convened by my Special Representative in Dakar on 29 June, UNOWA initiated the process of drafting the proposed strategy, in line with the request contained in Security Council resolutions [2000 \(2011\)](#), [2062 \(2012\)](#) and [2066 \(2012\)](#). At a meeting of the steering committee established to spearhead the development of the strategy, held in Bamako on 29 July, the chief executives of ECOWAS and the Union and my Special Representative agreed upon the way forward in drafting the strategy. Thereafter, the strategy was jointly developed by the States members of the Union, with the support of the secretariat of the Union, ECOWAS and UNOWA and in close cooperation with the United Nations missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and the United Nations country team in Guinea.

36. On 25 October, the strategy was adopted by the Heads of State of the Union, meeting on the margins of the extraordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, held in Dakar. They also endorsed the establishment of a follow-up committee, co-chaired by the secretariat of the Union, the ECOWAS Commission and UNOWA and comprising representatives of the States members of the Union, to develop detailed action plans and devise a mechanism to mobilize resources for the implementation of the strategy. UNOWA will continue to contribute to the mobilization of support for the implementation of the strategy, including financial support.

Gulf of Guinea

37. Sustained regional efforts continued to be made to tackle piracy and other crimes in the Gulf of Guinea, which continue to pose serious threats to the countries of the region and beyond. As indicated in my previous report, on 24 and 25 June, the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission met in Yaoundé for a regional summit on maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. In response to a request made in the declaration adopted at that summit, ECOWAS convened a meeting of the chief executives of the three bodies on 26 October in Dakar, with the support of the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and UNOWA. The participants endorsed the operationalization of the coordination and cooperation mechanism for the implementation of the regional strategy against maritime insecurity adopted at the Yaoundé summit. They validated the interregional working group for the conceptualization of the mechanism and endorsed a joint workplan for the three bodies for the period from November 2013 to March 2014. The meeting was preceded by two expert meetings, held in Libreville and Dakar on 29 July and 25 October, respectively, organized with the support of UNOCA and UNOWA.

38. The Heads of State and Government of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, meeting in Malabo on 9 and 10 August, reiterated their concern about the rise of illicit maritime activities in the subregion. UNOWA continues to participate in an informal experts group, the Group of Eight Plus Friends of the Gulf of Guinea, which supports the efforts of Member States and regional organizations in tackling the maritime insecurity issue.

Security sector reform

39. UNOWA continued to support security sector reform initiatives in the region. In July, I appointed Fernando Gutiérrez Díaz de Otazu as the new senior security sector reform adviser to the Government of Guinea. He has been providing strategic guidance on security sector reform to the Government, under the supervision of my Special Representative and with technical support from the UNDP country office and the European Union.

40. In Guinea, the Strategic Orientation Commission, which is the highest body of the National Steering Committee for Security Sector Reform and is chaired by the President, met on 15 November in Conakry to adopt a national defence and security policy, which will guide strategic decision-making regarding defence and security institutions. My Special Representative attended the meeting. The policy was prepared following a series of national and regional consultations on communities' perceptions of their security, organized with the support of the United Nations. The senior security sector reform adviser co-chaired the regional consultation workshop in Conakry with the Guinean Minister and Adviser to the President on Security Sector Reform and other stakeholders, from 21 to 23 October. The adoption of the policy constitutes a major step forward in the security sector reform process.

Drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

41. On 28 October, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and my Special Representative co-chaired a high-level regional donor conference on transnational organized crime in West Africa, hosted by the President of Côte d'Ivoire, who serves as the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS.

42. On 29 October in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, my Special Representative convened a second meeting of the High-Level Policy Committee of the West Africa Coast Initiative. The five States members of the Committee (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone) were represented, along with the United Nations missions in the region. The participants commended the commitment of national authorities to engaging in the Initiative and highlighted the valuable role of the transnational crime units in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Representatives of Côte d'Ivoire announced the country's intention to establish a national transnational crime unit in the near future. The High-Level Policy Committee endorsed all the recommendations submitted by UNODC in its capacity as head of the Programme Advisory Committee of the Initiative, including regarding the strategic reorientation of the Initiative's activities. The heads of delegation of the five States members of the Initiative and partners (the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat/UNOWA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNODC and the

International Criminal Police Organization) formally endorsed the Initiative's new focused strategic orientation.

Counter-terrorism

43. On 17 September, my Special Representative organized a symposium with the resident coordinators in the region on the symptoms of religious and ethno-political extremism and their impact on stability in West Africa. Experts from think tanks and academic institutions, in addition to the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations, including representatives of the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat and of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, also participated. They considered holistic approaches to addressing the factors conducive to the spread of extremism and terrorism in the region and how best United Nations entities could assist in dealing with the phenomenon and its impact on peace, security and stability. They underscored the nexus between security and development, stressing that there was a need for inclusive governance that was responsive to the basic socioeconomic needs of the people, in particular good education and youth employment.

44. UNOWA participated in an informal workshop jointly organized by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Government of Nigeria on 31 October and 1 November in Abuja. The participants endorsed and discussed key elements of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in addition to the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan adopted in Yamoussoukro in February. They noted the rapidly evolving threat of terrorism in the region, emphasizing that there was a need for strong political will on the part of Governments to make counter-terrorism measures more relevant, implementable and productive, while ensuring full respect for human rights and the rule of law. They also underscored the importance of building community resilience. They strongly recommended enhanced cooperation between international partners to achieve practical, coordinated and coherent results, especially through the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner, with due regard to development and international human rights considerations.

45. UNOWA also supported the first evaluation visit of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to Mauritania, conducted from 3 to 7 November. The visit was aimed at reviewing the Government's compliance with Security Council resolution [1373 \(2001\)](#) and identifying potential areas in which to support the Government in meeting its international obligations in the framework of the resolution. During the visit, the Mauritanian authorities discussed their counter-terrorism strategy, including dialogue with young people, and measures in place to combat terrorism, including the creation of a specialized anti-terrorism investigative and judicial unit to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate terrorism offences.

Human rights and gender

46. During the reporting period, UNOWA conducted a study on civil society engagement in governance, human rights and the rule of law in relation to peace and security initiatives in the subregion. It reconfirmed the important role of civil society and established a mechanism to enhance such engagement.

47. UNOWA and regional partners undertook a midterm review of the implementation of the regional plan of action on Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security and [1820 \(2008\)](#) on sexual violence in conflict. The review process was an opportunity for UNOWA and United Nations peacekeeping missions in the subregion to renew their joint commitment to working in synergy towards the implementation of those important instruments. In November, the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and UNOWA agreed upon an action plan to advance the regional plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

48. From 14 to 28 September, the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in West Africa, jointly coordinated by UNOWA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, conducted a mission to Conakry to support the Women Situation Room, which was established to collect information on women's role in the elections, provide rapid responses to gender concerns arising on election day and promote the peaceful conduct of the poll using information and communications technology.

C. Inter-institutional cooperation

49. UNOWA continued its consultations and cooperation with United Nations entities in the region and with regional organizations in support of efforts to promote peace, stability and development.

United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

50. On 29 August, my Special Representative convened the thirteenth meeting of regional directors and representatives of United Nations agencies based in Dakar to review key challenges facing the region. He also convened, on 17 September in Dakar, a third regional retreat for resident coordinators and regional directors, at which the participants focused on challenges relating to electoral tensions, asymmetric security threats and development and humanitarian issues in West Africa. On 28 November, he convened the twenty-fifth high-level meeting of heads of United Nations peace missions in West Africa to review the situation in the region and to ensure sustained coordination of regional efforts.

Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

51. My Special Representative continued his cooperation with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the Secretary-General of the Mano River Union in efforts to promote regional peace and stability and good governance. Those contacts, which included meetings in Abuja, Dakar, Lomé, Bamako, Conakry and Monrovia during the reporting period, bore tangible results, such as the development and adoption of a strategy for cross-border security in the Union, the validation by the chief executives of ECOWAS, ECCAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission of the regional coordination and cooperation mechanism for the implementation of the regional maritime strategy, the successful organization of a high-level regional donor conference on transnational organized crime in West Africa, in Abidjan, and the deployment of a joint UNOWA-ECOWAS early warning mission to the Niger. As international facilitator for the Guinean dialogue process,

my Special Representative maintained close contacts with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, who both extended to him their full support. My Special Representative also kept African Union officials informed with regard to his efforts in Guinea.

52. During the reporting period, my Special Representative participated in a number of meetings convened by ECOWAS. He attended the forty-third ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, held in Abuja on 17 and 18 July. He also attended the extraordinary session of the Authority that was held in Dakar on 25 October, at which a significant breakthrough was achieved towards regional economic integration and the liberalization of trade. The Heads of State and Government reached consensus on the way forward regarding the common external tariff, the Community integration levy, the economic partnership agreement and the West African monetary integration programme. In a similar vein, on 24 October in Dakar, the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the West African Economic and Monetary Union held its seventeenth ordinary session, at which the participants considered the Community integration levy and reviewed the process of harmonizing common external tariffs between the Union and ECOWAS. They also agreed to set up a regional civil aviation safety agency and to establish a cultural development institution.

IV. Renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa

53. In anticipation of the expiration of the mandate of UNOWA on 31 December 2013, I deployed a team from the Department of Political Affairs to Dakar and Abuja from 6 to 13 May to work with UNOWA to review the activities of the Office and the current political, security and socioeconomic environment in West Africa. The mission also held informal consultations with Security Council experts in New York on 3 May. While in the region, the mission consulted ECOWAS, the heads of United Nations entities, including resident coordinators, and UNOWA.

54. The findings of the assessment exercise can be summarized as follows. First, since its establishment in 2002, UNOWA has played a lead role in providing good offices, preventive diplomacy, mediation and facilitation of political negotiations. The good offices of my Special Representative and the collaboration with ECOWAS and the African Union have been crucial in the context of international efforts to restore constitutional order in a number of West African countries, such as Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, the Niger and Togo. UNOWA has also been instrumental in highlighting and advocating international support for critical regional and national efforts to tackle cross-cutting and transnational threats to peace and security in West Africa, including unconstitutional changes of government, youth unemployment, the role of security institutions during electoral processes, transnational organized crime, porous borders and the rising threat of terrorism. UNOWA has, over the years, organized a series of consultations leading to the adoption of important regional frameworks, such as the Dakar Declaration on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of February 2010, the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa of May 2011 and the Bamako Declaration and Strategic Framework on Impunity, Justice and Human Rights of December 2011.

Such instruments have contributed to reinforcing the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008) and provided guiding principles for engagement in electoral or transitional processes in Benin, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal and Togo, among others.

55. Furthermore, UNOWA has coordinated United Nations efforts in the region in support of regional initiatives and helped in building synergies with ECOWAS and the Mano River Union in particular. In this regard, UNOWA developed a clear distinction between, on the one hand, its key operational functions of preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation, and its regional advisory and advocacy roles in respect of cross-cutting and cross-border issues, on the other. The promotion of respect for the rule of law, human rights and good governance, for example, and the provision of advice to regional bodies and national Governments fall under the latter category. In this connection, the assessment highlighted the need to manage the sometimes unrealistic expectations of what UNOWA can do, especially in respect of providing significant financial, technical and logistical assistance to regional institutions.

56. Second, overall, West African States have made commendable efforts to consolidate their democracies, promote good governance and respect for the rule of law, develop their economies and deepen regional integration. They continue, however, to face complex domestic and transnational challenges to stability, peace and security. These are related mainly to factors such as relatively weak State institutions; growing socioeconomic inequalities and high levels of unemployment, in particular among young people; a sharp increase in the activities of transnational organized criminal networks, religious extremism and terrorism in the face of limited national and regional capacity to respond; a resurgence of military interference in the affairs of the State and unconstitutional changes of government; violations of human rights, impunity, social injustice and inequity in the context of extreme poverty; piracy and maritime organized crime; cross-border movement of armed groups; violent contestation of electoral results; corruption; and continuing environmental degradation in a region that has one of the world's highest rates of population growth.

57. Third, a remarkable paradox of the past decade in West Africa has been the discrepancy between the impressive rate of economic growth — averaging 6.9 per cent per annum compared with the continent's 4.5 per cent per annum — and the limited progress in socioeconomic development and peace consolidation. This state of affairs has eroded State resilience to internal and external challenges throughout the region.

58. Fourth, these conditions are likely to prevail in West Africa in the coming years. In addition, the following factors are likely to shape developments in the region: presidential elections in at least eight West African countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Togo, from 2014 to 2016; and a significant drawdown of some United Nations peace missions in the region, which will considerably increase the pressure on relevant national institutions to deliver public safety and national security. Should the States of the region be unable to effect political reforms and their economies fail to generate employment, West Africa may witness an increase in political and social tensions, which would compound the challenges mentioned above.

59. Fifth, ECOWAS and Mano River Union officials, in addition to all United Nations entities in the region, unanimously praised the preventive diplomacy, good offices and mediation efforts of UNOWA. United Nations entities also recognized the role of UNOWA in facilitating political access to both national and regional leaders. The resident coordinators were especially appreciative of the advocacy role of UNOWA in placing their respective programmatic and humanitarian concerns high on the agenda of individual Member States and regional institutions. They were also unanimous in their appreciation for the high-quality analyses and briefings that they received from my Special Representative and UNOWA officials, while regretting that they received such products in an ad hoc and unstructured fashion.

60. With regard to the strength of UNOWA, the assessment exercise revealed that the absence of resources to systematically produce high-quality analyses of the political, socioeconomic and security dynamics in West Africa has limited the Office's ability to anticipate and preventively engage in some of the crises in the region. This underscores the importance of investing more resources in early warning and early preventive action in West Africa.

V. Observations and recommendations

61. West Africa continues to face numerous peace and security challenges as a result of instability in the Sahel, the continuing effects of transnational organized crime, the rising threat of terrorism, limited socioeconomic development, internal ethnopolitical tensions and governance and human rights challenges. This state of affairs underscores the need for regional action and initiatives supported by international partners. I welcome, in this regard, the various initiatives by national Governments and stakeholders, with the support of international partners, to tackle existing and emerging threats to peace and stability in West Africa.

62. My recent joint visit to the Sahel with the leaders of the World Bank and the African Union, the African Development Bank and the European Union demonstrated strong commitment by the international community to helping to address priority concerns identified by the countries of the region. I commend my Special Representative for his role in establishing a United Nations-wide regional coordination mechanism for the implementation of the United Nation integrated strategy for the Sahel. With effect from 1 January 2014, the Office of my Special Envoy for the Sahel is expected to move to Dakar, where it will be co-located with UNOWA.

63. I commend the countries of West Africa for their efforts to strengthen regional cooperation and integration while maintaining focus on peace and security issues. In this regard, I welcome the development of cross-border security strategies, such as that adopted for the Mano River Union by the member States concerned, with the support of ECOWAS and UNOWA.

64. In most post-conflict countries in West Africa, the root causes of conflict are yet to be fully addressed, while emerging transnational challenges pose new obstacles to stability. It is critical that all efforts be made to prevent any reversal of the hard-won gains made by national authorities supported by current and previous peace missions. Adjustments to peace operations should be based on a careful assessment of the situation in the country and the subregion. I should like to stress

that prudent planning is required in order to ensure that United Nations missions are adequately equipped and sufficiently strong to meet their mandated tasks.

65. I remain concerned about the increasing threat to peace, stability and development in West Africa posed by transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking. The extent to which these illicit activities can provide income to armed groups moving across porous borders, especially extremist groups in the Sahel, is particularly worrisome. As transnational organized crime networks shift their operations in response to enforcement efforts, there is a need to adapt and strengthen the approach to combat the threat. The West Africa Coast Initiative remains a good model of cooperation to confront drug trafficking and consumption and I urge international partners to contribute financially thereto to ensure its full effectiveness.

66. I commend the Heads of State and Government of the Gulf of Guinea countries, in addition to ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, for their strong commitment to tackling the threat of piracy and armed robbery at sea in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the implementation of the decisions adopted at the Yaoundé summit. I reiterate my call upon the international community to support those efforts.

67. The final meeting of the Follow-up Committee to monitor the implementation of the Greentree Agreement, chaired by my Special Representative and held in Geneva on 21 and 22 October, and the assumption of full sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula by Cameroon marked the end of the implementation of the Agreement. I commend the Presidents of Cameroon and Nigeria for their exemplary leadership with regard to this innovative example of peaceful resolution of border disputes, with the support of the United Nations. I also commend the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for its accomplishments on the demarcation of the boundary between the two countries and encourage both Governments concerned to continue their efforts to resolve the remaining areas of disagreement, with a view to completing the mandate in compliance with the ruling of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002. The Follow-up Committee provided a framework for constant engagement between the delegations of Cameroon and Nigeria and contributed to the strengthening of cordial relations and cooperation between the two countries.

68. While there remain considerable challenges to stability, peace and security in the country, the restoration of constitutional order in Mali illustrates that success can be achieved through decisive collective action by the international community against threats to international peace and security. I welcome the efforts by the Government of Nigeria to tackle the crisis in the north-east of the country and I encourage the authorities to firmly uphold international humanitarian and human rights norms and standards in the conduct of military operations. There should be full and impartial investigations into all allegations of abuse and those detained must enjoy due process of law and acceptable conditions of detention. I also stress the importance of minimizing the negative impact on the affected populations, including displaced people.

69. I commend the leaders and the people of Guinea for engaging in a constructive dialogue process that enabled the holding of legislative elections and the completion of the political transition. I encourage them to maintain that constructive

engagement with regard to all outstanding issues in the post-electoral period. I commend the President for his personal commitment to pursuing security sector reform and reform of the criminal justice sector, with the support of the United Nations, the European Union and other international partners.

70. I encourage the Mauritanian stakeholders to resolve their differences regarding the legislative and municipal elections by engaging in a productive and inclusive dialogue before the presidential elections scheduled for 2014. I also reiterate my call upon the stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to continue working towards the timely holding of free and fair elections for the restoration of constitutional order. The United Nations stands ready to continue to support ECOWAS and other partners in the process.

71. In view of the conclusions of the review of the activities of UNOWA, I recommend that the mandate of UNOWA be extended for a period of three years, until December 2016. I also recommend that the mandate continue to focus on the following four strategic objectives:

(a) As key operational functions of UNOWA, monitor political developments in West Africa, engage in preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation, and assist regional institutions and States to enhance their respective capacity in those fields;

(b) Provide advice to and assist regional institutions and States to enhance their respective capacity to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security, in particular election-related instability and challenges relating to security sector reform, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism;

(c) Promote good governance and respect for the rule of law, human rights and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention and conflict management initiatives in West Africa;

(d) Continue to provide political support and advice to the United Nations presences in West Africa, as requested.

72. To better align the efforts of UNOWA with the evolving regional context, I recommend the creation of a dedicated analytical unit within the Political Affairs Section to better inform good offices efforts and to support timely preventive action. The unit would specifically monitor regional political, socioeconomic, security, humanitarian and human rights developments and trends and produce regular, high-quality analytical reports. It is anticipated that this need will continue to grow over the coming years in view of the persistence of instability and insecurity in the Mano River basin, the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel, in addition to the planned drawdown of some United Nations peace missions in the Mano River basin.

73. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of West Africa, the ECOWAS Commission, the African Union and the Mano River Union for their continued cooperation. I also extend my gratitude to the United Nations entities in West Africa, civil society organizations and other partners for their continued collaboration with UNOWA in the implementation of its mandate. I should like to express my particular appreciation to my Special Representative, the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their efforts to advance peace and security in West Africa.