

**Joint Statement on Behalf of A3 (Niger, South Africa and Tunisia) and Saint
Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered by

H.E. Kais Kabtani

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Niger to the United Nations

**Open VTC on the Activities of the United Nations Office in Central Africa
(UNOCA)**

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Mr. President,

I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3+1, namely, Niger, South Africa, Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Let me first express our appreciation to Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary General and head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) for his comprehensive and informative briefing on the situation in Central Africa and on the activities of the Office.

We take this opportunity to commend the work carried out by UNOCA in promoting peace in the region through its good offices, mediation and preventive diplomacy, as well as its efforts in supporting election processes in several countries, in addition to its activities related to capacity-building on several fields.

Mr. President,

The situation in Central Africa has witnessed significant positive progress. However, the situation remains volatile and the region continue facing a number of political, economic, social, humanitarian and security challenges, which were further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this regard, we commend the efforts by the countries of the region aiming at mitigating the impact of the pandemic, especially on the most vulnerable populations, and we share their concerns regarding the need for a more coordinated, solidarity-based response to address the economic and social impacts of the pandemic both at the regional and international levels. In this respect, we highlight the experience of the DRC in the fight against Ebola disease and which we think could be used in the fight against covid-19 in the region.

We equally welcome the IMF Executive Board's immediate approval debt service relief to 25 member countries, including the CAR, Chad, the DRC, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe to support their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are confident that this important decision will help the benefitting countries in coping with the various challenges imposed by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

We took note with satisfaction of the positive response of one armed group in Cameroon to the appeal of the Secretary General and that of the African Union Commission Chairperson for an immediate global ceasefire in the wake of COVID-19.

We look forward to similar steps that will further enhance peace and security in the region and reflect the shared aspiration of the African continent towards achieving the noble objective of Silencing the Guns.

Mr. President,

We welcome the positive dynamics in Central Africa and the continued progress toward improving relations among its Member States especially Angola, Rwanda and DRC.

We also commend the efforts of the Republic of Angola in fighting corruption and in implementing institutional reforms and we welcome the adoption of the institutional reform package for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) which will help in unifying key peace and security institutions under a common regional framework.

The A3+1 praises the Government of Cameroon for taking initial steps toward implementing the recommendations of the national dialogue especially by granting special status to the North-West and South-West regions based on linguistic particularities and historic heritage. However, we express our concern for the continuation of violence in the Far North, North-West and South West regions and we call on all parties to refrain from acts of violence and resort to dialogue as the sole means to resolve their disputes.

While we take note of the organization of legislative and municipal elections in Cameroon on 9 February 2020 and subsequent legislative by-elections on 22 March 2020, we deplore the incidents of violence that marked those elections and appeal to the authorities of Cameroon to further work towards maintaining peace and security.

We call on all armed actors to refrain from attacks against civilians and to respect international humanitarian and human rights law.

In this respect, we align ourselves with the joint statement issued by the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict, Sexual Violence in Conflict and Violence against Children, and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide in which they deplore the continued reports of human rights abuses committed against civilians including women and children in the South-West and North-West regions. We share the Secretary General's call to the Government of Cameroon about the readiness of the United Nations to work with all stakeholders towards a political solution to the crisis in the two regions through meaningful dialogue.

While we share the Secretary General's concern with the tense situation in Chad especially with regard to the intercommunal violence, we are, nevertheless, looking forward to the organization of the legislative and Presidential elections in this country as announced by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) respectively on 13 December 2020 and early 2021. Equally, we are looking forward to the next Presidential elections that will be held in Congo in March 2021 and

With regard to the situation in the Pool region, we welcome the easing of tensions thanks to the Peace Building Fund-led efforts and we take this opportunity to encourage all stakeholders to implement the comprehensive DDR program as a pre requisite to a long lasting peace in the region.

We encourage the steps taken by the Government of Equatorial Guinea towards political rapprochement that led among others to the release of a number of detainees from opposition parties and we welcome the recent dynamics that characterized the bilateral relations between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon through the exchange on 3 March 2020 of official notifications that will allow the entry into force of the Special Agreement, which was signed by the respective Heads of State of the parties on 15 November 2016, and which hopefully will pave the way to resolving their border dispute within the International Court of Justice.

We equally salute the confidence building measures taken by Sao Tome and Principe in the framework of its ongoing efforts toward strengthening dialogue between all political stakeholders.

Mr. President,

While we acknowledge the positive dynamics with the regard to the political situation in Central Africa, we are still concerned with the security situation prevailing in the region. We are deeply concerned by the continued attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram and the high number of civilian fatalities as a result of these attacks as well as the high risk of conflict-related sexual violence.

We are even more concerned by the unresponsiveness of extremist groups to the Secretary General's call for a global cease-fire and we strongly deplore the terrorist activities of the Lord's Resistance Army which undertook several attacks in the DRC;

Maritime Security is another source of concern. The Gulf of Guinea has become the center of worldwide piracy and armed robbery by terrorist groups. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the commitment of leaders of the region with regard to the importance of sustained bilateral cooperation in dealing with this issue.

We share the Secretary General's concern about the effects of climate change and natural disasters on security and stability in the region. The climate change effects have triggered displacements hampering the ongoing efforts to combat the covid-19 pandemic. In this regard, we support the efforts of the United Nations' relevant bodies to systematically integrate dimensions related to climate change and natural resource management into conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and development processes in the region.

Mr. President

The sub-region continues to face humanitarian, socioeconomic and human rights challenges. Food insecurity, malnutrition, measles epidemics in Chad, unprecedented floods in the Congo and continued violence in the North-West and South West of Cameroon, have all exacerbated the humanitarian and human rights crises and triggered displacements and huge waves of refugees.

With regard to refugees, we appreciate Cameroon's efforts in hosting thousands of refugees and asylum seekers from the region. However, we express our concern regarding the ongoing crisis

in the Lake Chad basin which led to the displacement of thousands of people in Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

We emphasize the importance of cooperation between the Governments of the region and regional, sub-regional and international organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other relevant actors. We stress the importance of the ongoing coordination between UNOCA and UNOWAS toward the implementation of the Lomé Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight against Terrorism and Violent Extremism and we welcome the political coordination meetings between both United Nations bureaus aimed at supporting synergies across mandated activities and enhancing regional efforts namely in the field of maritime security and the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

In conclusion, the A3+1 reiterate their continued support to the efforts and activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his able team in the fulfilment of its mandate aiming at further enhancing peace, security and sustainable development in the Central African Region.

Thank You