

**Joint Statement on Behalf of A3+1 (Niger, South Africa and Tunisia) and
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered by

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**Open VTC on the Activities of the United Nations Regional Office for 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. We would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in the Central Africa region and for the activities of the UNOCA.

We join our colleagues to welcome Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary General and head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and express to him our appreciation for his important and insightful briefing on the evolving situation in Central Africa region.

Mr. President,

We note with interest that eight of the 11 Central African countries are moving forward with preparations for elections, which constitute an opportunity for their populations to consolidate democratic processes in their countries and an important factor of political stability and sustainable peace. In the same vein, the A3+1 are encouraged by the efforts undertaken by countries of the region to strengthen their response to COVID-19, mitigate its impacts, and enhance their bilateral relations.

With regard to the diplomatic dynamics taking place in the region, we notice with satisfaction the holding on 7 October 2020 of a virtual mini-summit on the Great Lakes region that brought together heads of States of Angola, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. We equally salute the willingness of Burundi and Rwanda to normalize their bilateral relations. We are looking forward to similar high level meetings and diplomatic activities which will further strengthen bilateral ties and pave the way for further security, stability, and prosperity to the region as a whole.

Mr. President,

Security remains the major concern for all of us, for without security there is no peace. In that regard and while we commend the advances by the Government of Cameroun towards dialogue and decentralization in the North-West and South-West Regions, we remain, nevertheless, concerned by the outbreak of violence in this part of the country and we call on all parties to put

an end to fighting and engage in peace negotiations and dialogue as the sole means for finding solutions to all pending issues. The A3+1 also encourages all parties to accelerate the implementation of the outcomes from the Grand National Dialogue.

We are equally concerned by the volatile security situation in some parts of the region exacerbated by violent activities of armed groups such as Boko Haram factions and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Acts of piracy and other maritime criminal activities in the Gulf of Guinea constitute a concern to us despite the decrease in maritime criminality during the period under review. Human trafficking is another major concern that needs to be diligently addressed. In this respect, we value the United Nations' efforts aiming at providing protection mechanisms for vulnerable migrants and strengthening the fight against human trafficking.

This insecurity combined with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic have increased the number of persons in need of humanitarian assistance. The region witnessed large movements of refugees and asylum seekers as well as forced displacements thereby exacerbating malnutrition, food insecurity and epidemics. Increased incidents of human rights violations and abuses against civilians and threats facing students and teachers coupled with high rates of sexual and gender-based violence further demonstrate this gloomy picture of the overall humanitarian situation in the region.

In this respect, we commend the ongoing efforts of the humanitarian actors in providing aid to the people in need. We, however, urge that humanitarian actors be allowed access in places where they are denied. We wish to applaud the UNHCR in the region which has helped in the process of return and repatriation of refugees in close coordination with affected countries of the region.

In this regard, we are pleased about the voluntary return of several Burundian refugees from neighboring countries. This development is indicative of this Council's assertion that the situation in Burundi no longer constitute a threat to international peace and security.

Last but not least, we are concerned about the effects of climate change and environmental degradation severely affecting livelihoods and exacerbating social and communal tensions in the Central Africa region in addition to the impact on development efforts.

Mr. President,

The A3+1 takes note of the Secretary General's report on the Human rights and socio-economic trends in the region which were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as by activities of non-State armed actors. While recognizing the drastic constraints resulting from this situation, we encourage countries of the region to increase efforts aiming at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and contain acts perpetrated by negative forces. We value the contribution of regional financial institutions and groups in alleviating the dire socio-economic situations in certain countries of the Central Africa region.

We seize this opportunity to express our appreciation for the valuable work conducted by Special Representative of the Secretary General and head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and his able team for their unwavering commitment for the region and we fully support their efforts in promoting peace and security in the Central Africa region through good offices, preventive diplomacy and mediation.

We underline the importance of continued cooperation between UNOCA and the Governments of the region as well as between UNOCA and regional and subregional organization such as the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and other relevant actors.

The continued engagement between UNOCA and ECCAS towards the effective implementation of the Lome Declaration on Peace, Security, Stability and the Fight Against Terrorism and Violent Extremism is crucial to regional stability. So too are their coordinated efforts on transhumance-related activities to address farmer-herder conflicts. We also reaffirm the importance of the Stabilization Strategy for the Lake Chad Basin Region and the AU Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA.

We encourage further international support of these initiatives. We equally commend the fruitful cooperation and coordination between UNOCA and UNOWAS aimed at supporting synergies across their respective mandated activities in the region and which contribute to further enhanced coherence and coordination across the region.

In conclusion, the A3+1 shares the Secretary General's observation that the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the political, security, economic and social stability of the subregion. Such a challenging context urgently needs further concerted efforts from all the affected countries through regional solidarity as well as from the international community and all partners on the ground.

Thank You!