



## Security Council Briefing on UNOCA, 10 June 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Ms. Francesca Gatt

Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

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Thank you, President, and I also thank SRSG Abarry and President Da Piedade Verissimo for their insightful remarks.

Central Africa holds the potential of immense social and economic growth. Good governance and reforms offer, among others, the key to this potential while fostering trust and inclusivity.

Malta applauds the strategic partnership between UNOCA and ECCAS, particularly in critical aspects such as conflict prevention and mediation, maritime security, and climate change. We support such synergies which can lead to successful initiatives with a positive domino effect in the region.

In this light, Malta welcomes initiatives aimed at reinforcing the justice system in São Tomé and Príncipe, as well as remarkable partnerships with civil society and support to women and youth networks in Gabon.



We also take note of the developments in countries in transition, such as Gabon and Chad, that closed this phase with recent elections. We remain convinced that genuine democratic tools need to be rooted in the core structure of societies.

Regrettably, parts of Central Africa remain plagued by recurrent challenges, including violence fuelled by armed groups, terrorists and armed separatists. We recall the crucial role that dialogue holds in addressing economic, religious, and even ideological fractures.

We condemn in the strongest terms attacks on schools and teachers. In Cameroon, approximately 2,875 schools out of 6,970 have remained closed since September 2023. Overall, an estimated 500,000 children are out of school due to violence targeting teachers, students, and educational institutions. This is unacceptable.



Boko Haram's offensives continue to devastate the Lake Chad basin, with an appalling increase in IEDs. Malta echoes the Secretary General's appeal to support the 'Multinational Joint Task Force' and the revised 'Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery, and Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region', currently under development.

We also highlight the extensive displacement triggered by the prolonged conflict in Sudan. Many have sought refuge in neighbouring countries in Central Africa, especially in Chad and the Central African Republic, heightening pressures on already vulnerable host communities.

President

Climate change and its impacts on security and stability in Central Africa remains a major concern. As natural resources dwindle and extreme weather events increase, agricultural lands become the ground of clashes between herders and farmers. In Chad, these clashes have even resulted into deaths.



Unprecedented heavy rainfall leading to the overflow of the Congo River has caused the most significant flooding since 1961 in the Republic of the Congo and the DRC, ravaging houses, and farmlands. Burundi and Rwanda have experienced similar destruction, while Angola is facing the devastating effects of five consecutive drought cycles, the worst in 40 years.

These climate-security risks can, however, be addressed. Malta fully supports the important work carried out by climate, peace, and security advisors, including the one based in UNOCA. More can be done, by this Council, in recognising the nexus that exists between climate and security, at least geographically, in Central Africa.

We remind the international community of the Congo Basin's remarkable capacity to absorb carbon, widely known as the "lungs of Africa." We thus commend the partnership announced between the Republic of the Congo, France, and the EU at the value of 50 million dollars at COP28, aimed at delivering a sustainable economic model while protecting biodiversity and combating climate change.



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2023-2024

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To conclude, President, Malta supports the tireless efforts by SRSG Abarry and UNOCA, including its mandate renewal for another three years to build on its achievements towards peace and security in Central Africa.

I thank you.