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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/311](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually on persistent and emerging challenges to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, including the root causes of conflict and conditions to advance sustainable development, as well as on the approach and support of the United Nations system. Progress made on the peace and security and development in Africa is highlighted, persisting and emerging conflict trends and their root causes are

Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, which will be hosted by Egypt. Contributions to the African Union Peace Fund increased from \$80.6 million in 2018 to about \$112 million as at May 2019. The annual observance of the “Africa amnesty month” in September further encouraged the voluntary surrender of illegally possessed weapons, consistent with its “Silencing the guns in Africa” initiative. In September 2018 and December 2018, respectively, the African Union launched its “Youth for peace Africa” programme and convened the second FemWise-Africa General Assembly, both of which were aimed at enhancing the participation of young people and women in its conflict prevention and mediation efforts. Its ongoing efforts to promote gender-transformative education systems in Africa, based on the strategic plan of the African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa, for the period 2018–2020, helped to accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 and related targets in Agenda 2063. The launch of its African Women Leadership Fund in June 2019 constituted a milestone in realizing the goals aimed at gender equality and the empowerment of women of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The Fund is intended as an innovative impact investment fund to help to address structural barriers and deliver inclusive growth in Africa.

10. Other institutional developments included the transitioning of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development Agency into the African Union Development Agency to coordinate and execute priority regional and continental development projects towards the realization of Agenda 2063. The African Peer Review Mechanism that was established within the framework of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development was further integrated into the African Union and, in its decision Assembly/AU/Dec.631(XXVIII), the Assembly of the African Union requested the Mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. With its considerably expanded mandate, the Mechanism will serve at the forefront of the work of the African Union in monitoring progress on critical governance issues, in line with the benchmark commitments contained in both Agendas. Furthermore, the African Union took concrete steps towards operationalizing the African Union Humanitarian Agency and convened its first mid-year coordination meeting with the regional economic communities, held in Niamey in July 2019.

11. Those gains notwithstanding, a number of challenges have persisted during the reporting period. Many African economies face risks with regard to growth from the tightening of monetary policies and qa w i

uncontrolled spread of the Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with heightened concern of its spreading to neighbouring countries, and the adverse weather conditions such as Cyclones Idai and Kenneth that caused extensive damage and mass displacement in the Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Three of the challenges highlighted above are discussed further below.

A. Proliferating insurgency and extremist and terrorist actions

14. Insurgency, terrorism and violent extremism remained persistent threats to peace and security, human rights protection and sustainable development in Africa during the reporting period. There was an increase in the geographical scope and frequency of the activities of insurgent, extremist and terrorist groups. Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, groups affiliated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), ISIL in West Africa Province, ISIL in Greater Sahara and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin continued their attacks against civilians and military targets, undermining both State and human security in Burkina Faso\$ at (ed , t unifa m a i

however, and necessitates an integrated, coherent, coordinated and collaborative approach at all levels in order to ensure meaningful results.

B. Rule of law deficits and a persisting culture of impunity

18. The rule of law is a key principle of governance and a vital component of the social contract between Governments and their citizens. It is measured by factors including the levels of responsiveness, capacity, effectiveness, accountability, inclusiveness, credibility and transparency of institutions that are at the front lines of service delivery, governance and crisis response and by the degree and quality of citizens' participation. The rule of law is a catalyst for, and also an enabler of, sustainable peace and development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16, and Agenda 2063.

19. In the period under review, progress was made in promoting the rule of law and ensuring access to justice, including in the Central African Republic, where the Special Criminal Court commenced its hearings. Several countries embarked on constitutional and security and justice reforms, passed freedom of expression laws that promoted press freedom, strengthened legislative oversight capacities, adopted policies to uphold the rights of women and young people, including in elections, and reinforced the capacities of relevant institutions to combat terrorism, organized crime, corruption and illicit financial flows.

20. Challenges remained during the period under review, however. In a few countries, such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and South Sudan, armed groups continued using sexual violence as a tactic of war and terror, with impunity. Many incidents of rape, forced marriages and sexual slavery targeted at women and girls, as well as the recruitment of boys by armed groups, were reported. Attacks on education also continued, with the abduction of students and teachers, including in Cameroon, where about 170 students were abducted from a secondary school by separatists in February 2019 and later regained their freedom. Continued trafficking of migrants in Libya, as well as allegations of brutality and excessive use of force by law enforcement and security personnel in several countries, especially in the context of counter-insurgency and counterterrorism efforts, were reported. The failed coup attempt in the Amhara region in Ethiopia and the excessive use of force by the military against protesters in the Sudan that both occurred in June 2019 undermined the rule of law and constituted violations of the rights of citizens. It was therefore encouraging that, on 5 July 2019, an agreement was reached in the Sudan between the Forces for Freedom and Change and the Transitional Military Council, on the establishment of transitional governing bodies. As I previously urged the parties, it is important that all stakeholders ensure the timely, inclusive and transparent implementation of the agreement and resolve any outstanding issues through dialogue.

21. Other shortfalls in the rule of law, as outlined in the African Governance Report, included the selective application of the law, disregard for public procurement rules and procedures, failure to respect court decisions, neglect of local and customary practices for dealing with crime and incumbent presidents manipulating the law and legal processes to retain power. Political vigilantism, used by incumbent and opposition political parties alike to advance their own interests, posed threats to democratic governance and the rule of law in several countries, notably in Ghana.

22. Improving and upholding the rule of law requires eliminating impunity and investing in coherent and long-term strategies that promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and ensure access to justice for all by building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, consistent with

Sustainable Development Goal 16. That imperative remains an integral element of the work of the United Nations as it continues to assist national authorities, in collaboration with regional and subregional organizations, in sustaining actions to promote the rule of law.

C. Intensification of resource-based conflicts: focus on land and water

23. Natural resource-based conflicts, in particular over diminishing renewable resources such as land and water, are not a new phenomenon in Africa. Natural resources have historically been a direct, causal and sustaining factor of wars and violent conflicts on the continent but also a vital aspect of efforts to resolve armed conflicts, especially when they form a negotiated part of peace agreements. The effective and sustainable management and equitable distribution of the benefits of natural resources are essential for preventing violent conflict and the related displacement.

24. During the reporting period, there was an intensification of intracommunal and intercommunal conflicts linked to natural resources, notably land and water, in particular the increasingly deadly fight between farmers and herders. It was compounded by the effects of climate change, weather-related disasters and environmental stresses, including drought, floods, extreme heat, land degradation, desertification and the effects of natural resource extraction, as described in the previous report. As countries in the Sahel belt region, in particular those that surround the shrinking Lake Chad Basin, as well as those in the Horn of Africa, experience the adverse effects of climate change, land tenure-related conflicts quickly assume dangerous dimensions. As noted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO),⁴ that scenario is contributing to worsening food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger in Africa, which currently has the highest prevalence of undernourishment, affecting more than 256 million people.

25. In March 2019, the Secretary-General issued a guidance note,⁵ in which it was indicated that, over the coming decades, competition and conflicts over diminishing land and water resources would increase, owing to the growing pressures of climate change, population growth, increased food insecurity, migration and urbanization. There will be profound and devastating effects on agriculture, which is the livelihood mainstay for over 80 per cent of Africans, of whom the majority are women. The far-reaching consequences of those changes in land and water availability for livelihoods and food security calls for collective action to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of natural resources and to combat desertification, land degradation and biodiversity loss. Investments in renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture are urgently needed as a foundation for climate-resilient sustainable development and for achieving Sustainable Development Goals 13 and 15 and the targets set out in Agenda 2063.

26. In September 2019, the Secretary-General will convene a climate action summit to step up ambitions and accelerate collective national political commitments for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and global climate action. African leaders are encouraged to come with actionable and bold plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions, aligned with their national development plans, to reduce

⁴ FAO International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018: building climate resilience for food security and nutrition* (Rome, FAO).

⁵ Guidance note of the Secretary-General, "The United Nations and land and conflict", March 2019.

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to work closely with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Group of Five for the

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September 2018, the United Nations, the African Union, the Government of the Niger, the secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel and ECOWAS convened a regional conference on combating impunity, access to justice and human rights in the context of emerging threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, at which a declaration was adopted outlining areas for accelerated action. OHCHR implemented a technical cooperation project with the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a compliance framework to prevent, mitigate and address violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that could be implemented by the Joint Force in the conduct of their counterterrorism operations.

43. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict pursued her global advocacy and engagement with warring parties to end and prevent violations against children in armed conflict, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. In collaboration with the African Union and the European Union, a new advocacy and media campaign was launched in April 2019, entitled “Act to protect children affected by armed conflict”. UNICEF played a critical role in defending the rights of children associated with armed groups, assisting in securing their release and enrolment in reintegration programmes and supporting the development of related national strategy documents in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan. Building on the comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa, UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF and UN-Women assisted the countries of the region in addressing the plight of children and young people on the move, preventing violent extremism, strengthening the participation and civic engagement of children and young people and their education and skills development and promoting adolescent health.

44. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the African Union developed a common regional approach to human security and the protection of human rights for conflict-affected populations by facilitating countries in bringing national law and policies into conformity with global political instruments and the development of a collaborative results-based action plan, including for the Great Lakes Region. UNFPA supported African countries facing emergencies and protracted crises in providing life-saving services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls through the minimum initial services package and leading or jointly leading the coordination of efforts to prevent and address gender-based violence.

45. Millions of people were also reached with life-saving humanitarian assistance in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Sudan. Between July 2018 and April 2019, the Emergency Relief Coordinator approved \$184 million in grants from the Central Emergency Response Fund for life-saving humanitarian assistance in conflict settings in Africa, nearly 60 per cent of which was approved through the rapid response window for internal displacement, refugee operations, disease outbreaks and drought in 11 conflict-affected countries, including for response to new outbreaks of measles, cholera and Ebola virus disease.

46. Given the urgency to move from delivering short-term life-saving aid to reducing the needs of people and their risks and vulnerabilities to longer-term recovery, the United Nations system, in collaboration with other partners, continues to advance the implementation of the new way of working. UNHCR supported the roll-out of the comprehensive refugee response framework, as outlined in the global compact on refugees adopted by the General Assembly in December 2018, in eight

47. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, WFP, the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR and other relevant United Nations entities, supported the efforts of the African Union towards operationalizing its Humanitarian Agency, including the convening of the fifth session of the African Humanitarian Architecture programme, in Livingstone, Zambia, in March 2019. The law and policy training programme enhances the capacities of African States to effectively implement normative frameworks on forced displacement and humanitarian matters. More than 500 senior and mid-level officials from States members of the African Union have been trained under the programme.

48. In May 2019, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in collaboration with UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Global Communications, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union organized the Africa dialogue series at United Nations Headquarters, which contributed to raising global visibility of the African Union theme for 2019. The event showcased positive narratives of Africa's solidarity, progress, best practices and lessons learned in hosting refugees and internally displaced persons. The recommendations set forth in the context of the dialogues will feed into the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit of the African Union and the Global Refugee Forum of UNHCR.

D. Inclusive economic growth and sustainable development

49. The United Nations system support and approach also focused on promoting inclusive economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. Efforts in that regard are addressed in the report of the Secretary-General, entitled "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support" (A/74/193), which should be read in conjunction with the present report.

50. In addition, in the context of demographic change and climate threats, FAO implemented approximately 40 specific rural youth employment programmes, including for young refugees and internally displaced persons, to support the implementation of the road map of the African Union for harnessing demographic dividends through investments in youth and the commitments of African Governments to reducing youth unemployment by at least 2 per cent annually. UNFPA scaled up the Sahel Women's Demographic Dividend Initiative, which addressed vulnerabilities, facilitated economic gains for women and empowered young people. In the Niger, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the African Development Bank

implementation of the two Agendas. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States also mobilized international support and resources for implementation of the programmes of action for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to address specific structural challenges in those countries, consistent with the 2030 Agenda.

53. The Department of Global Communications applied a cross-cutting communications approach to promoting Africa's peace and security and development priorities. It published numerous reports on its digital platforms, websites and in the *Africa Renewal* magazine that helped to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities in the Sahel and African Continental Free Trade Area, among other things. Articles highlighting the role of young people and women have boosted the advocacy work of the United Nations entities addressing those issues.

IV. Towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa

54. The magnitude of forced displacement in Africa remains great, notwithstanding the solidarity and leadership of countries of the continent in managing the problem. According to UNHCR, there were 6.3 million and 18.6 million refugees and internally displaced persons, respectively, in Africa by the end of 2018.⁷ Seven of the 10 highest refugee-

society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, bilateral donors and international financial institutions. Consulting and engaging with diverse displaced populations, including women, men, girls, boys, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples and other groups, whether in rural or urban areas, camps or among the general populace, is paramount to finding durable solutions. The meaningful inclusion and participation of displaced persons and host populations, in particular, contributes to fostering tolerance, social cohesion and integration.

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