

## CENTRAL AFRICA

<b>Field presence</b>	OHCHR Central Africa Regional Office based in Yaoundé, Cameroon Operation established in 2001
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### Countries of engagement

Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Príncipe, complementing the presences in Burundi, Chad, CAR, DRC and Rwanda

The OHCHR Regional Office conducts subregional activities for all countries in Central Africa

### Engagement with the human rights mechanisms

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Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Príncipe witnessed relative peace, while Burundi, CAR, Chad, DRC and Rwanda were affected to varying degrees by conflict or unstable security situations.

Restrictions on public freedoms remained a serious concern, in particular in electoral contexts, including arbitrary arrest and detention of political opponents, harassment of civil society actors and repression of peaceful demonstrations. Discrimination affected women, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) persons and indigenous peoples, many of whom faced harassment and violence, had limited access to public services and often lacked awareness of their rights. Revenues from the exploitation of natural resources in the subregion had limited impact on the realization of economic, social, cultural rights (ESCR). Administration of justice was hindered by slow proceedings, corruption and a lack of independence and human rights awareness of institutions. Law enforcement agencies at times engaged in human rights violations, including torture. Detention facilities were overcrowded and the conditions of detention were deplorable. NHRIs, set up in seven countries, lacked the independence, knowledge or resources necessary to effectively promote and protect human rights.

While the level of ratification of international and regional human rights treaties had increased, alignment of national legislation and implementation of legislation were major challenges. Engagement with the UPR was encouraging and efforts were made to meet overdue reporting obligations. Implementation of recommendations from human rights mechanisms, however, remained ineffective. While only CAR, Chad and Rwanda have extended a standing invitation to special procedures, there is a de facto open door policy in the other countries.

The United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, functioning as the OHCHR Central Africa Regional Office, was established in 2001, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 53/78 A and 54/55 A. The Centre works for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy through capacity-building, advocacy and advisory services extended to national authorities, NHRIs, civil society and international organizations operating in countries of the subregion.

Over the past biennium, the Centre has become an important player in addressing subregional human rights and democracy challenges. It successfully implemented activities related to its expected accomplishments, notably on the institutionalization of human rights training for justice and law enforcement professionals and prison administration staff. Efforts were made towards supporting State Party reporting obligations and UPR processes, as well as reinforcing NHRIs and their compliance with the Paris Principles. Important progress was also made in the area of transitional justice with a regional conference and two national follow-up activities organized in Cameroon, Burundi and Guinea respectively.

The Centre works with United Nations and regional partners, including the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), United Nations agencies, the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Human rights challenges and opportunities for engagement are included in joint United Nations programming documents, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and the post-2015 development agenda.

### Thematic priorities

- ▶ Strengthening the effectiveness of international human rights mechanisms with a focus on: ratifications and national participatory bodies for reporting and implementing recommendations.
- ▶ Integrating human rights in development and the economic sphere with a focus on: legislation and the post-2015 development agenda; participation in public policies and budget processes.
- ▶ Enhancing equality and countering discrimination with a focus on: legislation; NHRIs; and a non-discrimination agenda.
- ▶ Widening the democratic space with a focus on: legislation on "public freedoms" and protection mechanisms for human rights defenders.
- ▶ Combating impunity and strengthening accountability and the rule of law with a focus on: torture, deprivation of liberty and transitional justice.

- ▶ Early warning and protection of human rights in situations of conflict, violence and insecurity with a focus on: coordination arrangements between UN

and subregional organizations, governments and development partners.

## OHCHR expected contribution

ALL HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL IN CENTRAL AFRICA	
RIGHTS-HOLDERS	DUTY-BEARERS
<p><b>[EA5]</b> ▶ Increased participation of civil society in public affairs in Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.</p> <p>▶ Increased participation in policy design and monitoring of compliance of human rights standards relating to business.</p>	<p><b>[EA1]</b> ▶ National laws and development policies and programmes increasingly comply with international human rights norms and standards, including those relating to business and especially in relation to indigenous peoples and minorities in Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.</p> <p>▶ Significant improvements in legislation and policy relating to fundamental public freedoms in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.</p> <p>▶ Human rights training for justice, penitentiary and law enforcement officials institutionalized, with a focus on torture and dignity of detainees in Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Principe.</p>
	<p><b>[EA2]</b> ▶ Increased ratification of international human rights instruments with a focus on the ICMW, CRPD, ICERD, ICCPR, ICESCR and their respective optional protocols (OPs), as well as on the OPs to the CRC and CAT in Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Principe.</p>
	<p><b>[EA3]</b> ▶ Effective protection mechanisms and measures for civil society actors, including human rights defenders and media actors at risk, established and strengthened in Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.</p> <p>▶ Transitional justice mechanisms established and increasingly operating in accordance with international human rights standards and good practices in Burundi, CAR, Chad and DRC.</p>
	<p><b>[EA4]</b> ▶ Legislation, policies and practices increasingly comply with anti-discrimination and equality standards and an increased number of specialized equality bodies, focal points and NHRIs work on equality and non-discrimination in Cameroon, Congo and Gabon.</p>
<p><b>[EA7]</b> ▶ NHRIs and civil society organizations (CSOs) effectively monitor human rights and engage with treaty bodies, special procedures and the UPR in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.</p>	<p><b>[EA6]</b> ▶ Establishment of participatory standing national coordinating bodies on reporting/replying to individual communications and enquiries; and integrated follow-up to recommendations of all human rights mechanisms in Cameroon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Principe.</p>
<p><b>[EA10]</b> ▶ Coordination arrangements are established between United Nations and subregional organizations, governments and development partners for ensuring prompt responses to emerging human rights challenges.</p>	

By 2017, OHCHR expects to have contributed to the achievement of the results outlined on the table above, in support of national efforts in the different thematic priority areas (colour scheme). OHCHR will pursue these behavioural, institutional and legislative changes in cooperation with relevant partners, using the different strategic tools at its disposal – monitoring and reporting, capacity-building and advisory services, advocacy and awareness-raising (see chapter one) – on the basis of an assessment of the specific context. It is expected that if achieved, these results will contribute to improving the duty-bearers' compliance with their international human rights obligations and to the rights-holders' ability to claim their rights and thereby to the enjoyment of all rights for all in the region.