



Security Council

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Special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2226 (2015), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) until 30 June 2016 and requested me to provide, by 31 March 2016, a report containing proposals for the further downsizing and possible termination of UNOCI, taking into account security conditions on the ground and the capacity of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to take over the security role of the Operation, a request reiterated by the Council in its resolution 2260 (2016). In accordance with those resolutions, a multidisciplinary strategic review mission led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat visited Côte d'Ivoire from 8 to 20 February 2016. The present report comprises the findings of the strategic review and my recommendations concerning the future of UNOCI, as well as an update on major developments since my report dated 8 December 2015 (S/2015/940).

II. Major developments

Political developments

2. During the period under review, the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, initiated a series of consultations with stakeholders aimed at furthering national reconciliation and social cohesion. On 7 December 2015, the President met with the chamber of traditional chiefs and kings, who advised that reconciliation and the easing of political tensions would be facilitated by measures such as releasing confiscated assets belonging to persons associated with the former President, Laurent Gbagbo, accelerating the release of persons detained for alleged involvement in the 2010-2011 post-elections crisis, encouraging the return of persons remaining in exile, supporting the reintegration of former combatants and evicting illegal occupants from national forests. The chiefs and kings also advised Mr. Ouattara to use his presidential pardon whenever applicable. On 8 December, Mr. Ouattara met with religious leaders who also underscored the importance of expediting judicial processes for persons detained in connection with the post-elections crisis, and requested support for establishing an interreligious dialogue platform.



3. Also on 8 December, Mr. Ouattara met with the president of the Commission nationale pour la réconciliation et l'indemnisation des victimes des crises survenues en Côte d'Ivoire, who encouraged him to continue direct dialogue with the political opposition, with a view to consolidating national reconciliation. The president of the Commission also proposed the establishment of special judicial chambers to expedite pending processes for persons detained in connection with the post-elections crisis, as well as the provisional release of detainees and the granting of presidential pardons or amnesties within the limits of the law. He further recommended the undertaking of renewed efforts to encourage the return of persons in exile, while underscoring the importance of addressing issues relating to property rights and land, particularly with respect to women and vulnerable persons.

4. In a televised address to the nation on 31 December, Mr. Ouattara announced the granting of a presidential pardon for 3,100 prisoners, as well as the release of individuals detained in connection with the post-elections crisis. He also reaffirmed his intention to hold a constitutional referendum and legislative elections in 2016.

5. The Government tendered its resignation on 6 January, as requested by the President. On the same day, the Prime Minister, Daniel Kablan Duncan, was reappointed. The formation of a new Cabinet of 36 ministers, including nine women, was announced on 12 January. With the exception of one minister appointed from civil society, all members of the Government are from the ruling coalition, the Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP). The Government includes new ministries of human rights and public liberties, and solidarity, social cohesion and victims' compensation.

6. Mr. Ouattara met with a delegation of the former ruling Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) led by its president, Pascal Affi N'Guessan, on 21 January. Among the issues discussed were the status of persons detained for alleged violations committed during the post-elections crisis, the unfreezing of bank accounts and the return to Côte d'Ivoire of persons living in exile. Also discussed were structural issues such as political party financing, access to the state media and the demarcation of electoral constituencies. Subsequently, on 9 March, the Government approved the provisional release of 70 out of 300 persons detained in connection with the post-elections crisis whose release had been sought by FPI, as well as the unfreezing of bank accounts belonging to four associates of Mr. Gbagbo, including his sister.

7. On 15 February, former President Henri Konan Bédié, the president of the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), announced that an agreement had been reached with Mr. Ouattara to create a unified party. The new party, to be called RHDP, would comprise all willing members of the coalition, specifically the ruling Rassemblement des républicains (RDR), PDCI, the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement démocratique africain (PDCI-RDA), the Mouvement des forces d'avenir (MFA), the Union pour la Côte d'Ivoire (UPCI) and the Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI). Efforts were initiated to put in place the proposed party's infrastructure and legal framework and to engage party members.

8. On 22 February, Mr. Ouattara presided over the conclusion of a seminar on the government's programme of work, during which all ministers presented their priorities and planned actions for 2016. The programme, which is consistent with the national development plan, prioritizes five goals for 2016, specifically

strengthening of institutions for peace and good governance; structural transformation of the economy; improvement of living conditions; promotion of youth and women; and emergence of a “new Ivorian”.

National and international justice

9. On 25 January, the trial resumed of 24 military officers charged in connection with the 2002 assassination of General Robert Guéï and his family. On 18 February, the military court sentenced General Dogbo Blé, the former head of the Garde républicaine; Commander Anselme Séka Yapo, former head of the close protection detail of the former First Lady, Simone Gbagbo; and Daléba Séry to life imprisonment for murder and complicity in murder, while 10 of the accused were sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. The remaining 13 were acquitted.

10. On 28 January, at the opening of his trial at the International Criminal Court, Mr. Gbagbo pleaded not guilty to charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including complicity in murder, rape, inhumane acts and persecution. The co-accused, Charles Blé Goudé, also pleaded not guilty. During opening statements on 1 February, Mr. Gbagbo’s defence council argued that he was the victim of an international conspiracy aimed at installing Mr. Ouattara in power by force.

11. On 4 February, Mr. Ouattara announced that no other Ivorian would be transferred to the International Criminal Court, as the Ivorian justice system was fully operational. Some opposition figures denounced this statement as fostering the perpetuation of one-sided justice.

Security situation

12. The security situation remained stable but fragile. For most of the reporting period, the environment was characterized by labour and student strikes, youth demonstrations and intercommunal conflict. There were also incidents of sexual violence, including the rape of children; clashes between the Forces républicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI) and communities; and violent crimes such as armed robbery and banditry. A terrorist attack on a beach resort in Grand-Bassam on 13 March, for whose commission al-Mourabitoun, a group based in northern Mali and affiliated with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, claimed responsibility injected a new dynamic into the security situation.

13. An unknown number of heavily armed assailants opened fire on civilians at three beachside hotels in Grand-Bassam. Twenty-two people were killed during the attack, including 16 national and foreign civilians, one of whom was a child, and three Ivorian defence personnel, as well as three assailants. In addition, thirty-three people were injured. Ivorian security forces responded rapidly to the situation; and UNOCI placed its quick-reaction forces on alert, reinforced its presence near the attack, at the Abidjan international airport and mission premises, and deployed to an area of Abidjan, where the assailants had reportedly been present earlier in the day. The following day, Mr. Ouattara convened an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers during which measures were adopted to enhance security, including the deployment of security forces to all strategic sites and areas open to the public.

14. Other security incidents occurred during the reporting period. A FRCI post was reportedly attacked on 27 December in the Nougoua village, near the Noé border post with Ghana. No casualties were reported. One Ivorian and one Ghanaian national were arrested and detained in connection with the attack. A workers strike in Ferkessédougou on 22 January degenerated into violent clashes between protestors and Ivorian security forces, resulting in at least one death. On 20 February, detainees at the prison in Abidjan staged an uprising during which some of the prisoners were armed with assault rifles. One guard and 9 prisoners were killed during the exchange of fire, and 10 prisoners were injured.

15. On 6 March, community members in Assuéfry, near Bondoukou, clashed with FRCI during protests against the continuous extortion practised by soldiers. FRCI fired on the protesters, which resulted in the death of three persons and the injury of one. One person remains missing. The President deployed a team led by the Minister in charge of Defence to calm the situation; the presence of gendarmerie was also reinforced. Earlier, on 25 January, community members in Kouassi-Niaguini, near Boudoukou, clashed with FRCI during protests against extortion by soldiers.

16. On 2 March, the Government adopted a decree establishing a national centre for the coordination of early warning response, in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The mechanism is intended to prevent conflict, fight terrorism and reduce response times following crisis alerts.

Regional developments

17. On 8 January, Mr. Ouattara was elected president of the West African Economic and Monetary Union. He succeeded the President of Benin, Boni Yayi.

18. Mr. Ouattara and Mr. Affi N'Guessan attended the 29 December swearing-in ceremony of the President of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. Subsequently, Mr. Kaboré expressed concern regarding the security threat to Burkina Faso posed by elements of the security apparatus of the former President, Blaise Compaoré, who had taken refuge in Côte d'Ivoire following the failed coup in September 2015. On 18 January, the Ivorian presidency issued a statement denouncing the decision of Burkina Faso to issue an international warrant for the arrest of the Speaker of the National Assembly, Guillaume Soro, for his alleged involvement in the attempted coup, and indicated that the matter would be settled through diplomatic channels. On 21 February, three members of the Burkinabè presidential security regiment which had perpetrated the attempted coup were extradited from Côte d'Ivoire to Burkina Faso to face justice. On 23 February, the media reported that Mr. Compaoré, who had been living in Côte d'Ivoire since having been deposed in October 2014, had been granted Ivorian citizenship in November 2014. An international warrant for the arrest of Mr. Compaoré for his alleged role in the 1987 killing of former President Thomas Sankara was issued on 4 December 2015 by the authorities of Burkina Faso.

III. Strategic review of Côte d'Ivoire

19. The strategic review mission conducted from 8 to 20 February was led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and comprised representatives of the

Department of Field Support, the Department of Safety and Security, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and UNOCI, as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representing United Nations development and humanitarian agencies, funds and programmes.

20. The strategic review team met with a broad cross section of stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire, including Mr. Ouattara; the Prime Minister and Cabinet members; the Speaker of the National Assembly; the national commissions responsible for social cohesion, reconciliation and human rights; members of the donor and diplomatic community; the leadership of the army, police and gendarmerie; political parties; civil society; UNOCI leadership, staff and uniformed personnel; and the United Nations country team. In Liberia, the review team consulted with UNMIL, the United Nations country team, members of the diplomatic community, and the leadership of the national security agencies. The team visited Maryland and River Gee counties in south-east of Liberia, near the border with Côte d'Ivoire, and the villages of Grabo, Olodio and Tabou in south-west Côte d'Ivoire, near the border with Liberia.

Findings of the strategic review

1. Political environment

21. Côte d'Ivoire continues to consolidate the gains made since the violence that marked the contested presidential elections of 2010. The peaceful conduct of the October 2015 election, which resulted in the re-election of Mr. Ouattara to a second and final term, was an important milestone, whose achievement was attributable not least to the acceptance by most stakeholders of the transparency and credibility of the election. Meanwhile, processes likely to result in the further consolidation of the political dispensation over the course of 2016, and its possible realignment ahead of the presidential succession in 2020, are on the horizon.

22. The Independent Electoral Commission advised that two electoral processes were planned for late 2016, including a constitutional referendum and legislative elections. The referendum could help to address structural issues at the root of the Ivorian crisis, as one of the proposed amendments aims to revise article 35 of the Constitution, which sets out the eligibility criteria for presidential candidates, including the requirement that both parents be Ivorian citizens by birth. This provision could also trigger debates within the ruling political coalition, given that some PDCI members were the architects of article 35. Some opposition figures who were consulted welcomed the constitutional review. Many interlocutors, including national institutions responsible for human rights, civil society and political parties, had not yet been involved in preparations for the referendum, and expressed the view that the process should be as inclusive as possible.

23. Members of the political opposition, including those who boycotted the 2015 presidential election, have indicated that they would participate in the legislative elections, provided that conditions were in place to enhance their legitimacy. Those conditions would, in their view, include revisions to the electoral law, the demarcation of electoral districts and the establishment of a more independent

Independent Electoral Commission, which they considered to be dependent on the Government. While the Government has not formally requested United Nations support for the electoral processes in 2016, many stakeholders were of the view that the presence and support of UNOCI were essential, including with respect to human rights monitoring, which would enhance perceptions of the legitimacy of the electoral outcomes. In that regard, they pointed to violations of political and civil rights committed during the pre-election period in 2015, and expressed concern that such rights may be more seriously curtailed during the legislative elections. Meanwhile, the proposal to merge the RHDP coalition into a single party, as described in paragraph 7 above, could trigger the formation of new parties or coalitions ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

24. All interlocutors stressed the need for continued efforts aimed at taking forward a meaningful and comprehensive national reconciliation process, including political dialogue and community-level social cohesion. Mr. Ouattara announced that he would prioritize reconciliation within the nation during his second term, and opposition members engaged by the strategic review acknowledged that important gestures had been made to this end, including the release of persons detained in connection with the post-elections crisis and the return of frozen or confiscated assets. However, some interlocutors also pointed to deficits undermining reconciliation. In the absence of political and institutional reforms, efforts aimed at political accommodation remained, in the view of some, superficial or arbitrary. Some interlocutors noted that judicial proceedings at both national and international levels had thus far focused only on violations allegedly perpetrated by Mr. Gbagbo and his associates during the crisis of 2010-2011, contributing to perceptions of victors' justice and impunity.

25. While economic growth was strong, averaging 9 per cent annually for the past four years, large segments of society, including youth, have yet to fully benefit from the prosperity of Côte d'Ivoire. Government officials recognized that this could be a destabilizing factor, and informed the strategic review team that it would prioritize more inclusive growth. Some interlocutors expressed the view that social cohesion was undermined by the impression in some communities, particularly in the west of the country, that policies had been put in place to benefit people from the north and foreigners at the expense of the indigenous population, particularly with respect to land use.

26. While noting these concerns, government officials stressed that national reconciliation and social cohesion were long-term, complex processes. Thus far, the Government's reconciliation agenda had been dominated by a reparations programme, initiated in 2015 which, to have a positive impact, would need to be inclusive of all victims. Meanwhile, the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission had finalized its report and recommendations for taking forward national reconciliation in December 2014, but to date its report has not been made public and the hearings held over the course of its three-year exploration of the Ivorian conflict have also not been made public, thereby weakening its potential impact.

2. Human rights situation

27. The human rights situation has improved since the post-elections crisis. However, important challenges remain. Former rebel commanders allegedly

responsible for past atrocities and human rights violations continue to hold positions of authority, including within the armed forces. Meanwhile, associates of Mr. Gbagbo tried in 2015 for crimes against the State have not yet been brought to justice for grave human rights violations committed during the crisis. Government officials assured the review mission that there would be no impunity for serious human rights violations and that judicial proceedings for alleged perpetrators on both sides would begin shortly.

28. An estimated 700,000 people in Côte d'Ivoire have remained stateless or at risk of becoming stateless, or lacked the documents required to prove their nationality. As a consequence, a large segment of society is ineligible for access to basic services, including children whose birth was never registered. The Government has ratified all international conventions concerning statelessness, and also reformed legislation to allow stateless persons and others born in the country to apply for citizenship if they have lived in Côte d'Ivoire for decades. However, implementation remains a challenge. Meanwhile, a proposed national action plan for the eradication of statelessness has not been finalized or approved.

29. Côte d'Ivoire remains on the list of countries examined by my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and continues to face serious challenges with respect to sexual and gender-based violence, including against children. A national strategy to combat sexual violence was adopted by the Government in 2014, but implementation has been limited to the initial steps, such as community mobilization.

30. In 2015, Côte d'Ivoire was removed from the list of countries examined by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. However, significant challenges remained. Approximately half of reported human rights violations involve children. Children in conflict with the law are particularly vulnerable, as they are often detained in inappropriate conditions; urgent reforms in the juvenile justice and penal system are thus required.

3. Security-related issues

31. The security situation continued to improve, although challenges remained. Most of the strategic review's interlocutors were preoccupied to a great extent by the threat to Côte d'Ivoire posed by the spread of violent extremism and terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel.

32. The south-west is the only part of the country assessed as facing a threat of a military nature, owing to periodic armed attacks against national security institutions, most recently on two FRCI camps in Olodio on 2 December 2015, during which 7 soldiers were killed and 14 were seriously injured. Security personnel who were consulted advised that recent attacks, unlike attacks committed between 2012 and 2014, were not cross-border in nature and were motivated by factors internal to Côte d'Ivoire. There is particular tension resulting from an influx into the area of persons from other parts of Côte d'Ivoire and foreigners, who are seen as illegally exploiting land in collusion with FRCI, which is perceived by some in indigenous communities as an occupying rebel force.

33. The security environment is also impacted by the accessibility of unauthorized weapons, contributing to the high incidence of violent crimes, including banditry. In November 2015, arms caches were found in Guiglo, in the Kouroukoro village near

the border with Mali, and in the Kokonou village near the border with Ghana. An arms cache was also discovered in Duékoué in January 2016.

34. Intercommunal conflict, primarily over land and boundary disputes, is also a source of insecurity. In the west, Man, Odienné and Toulépleu continued to have a high incidence of such conflict, as do Abengourou, Aboisso and Bondoukou in the east and Korhogo in the north. Conflict between communities and illegal miners, most of whom are foreign, continues to be an issue in Aboisso, Bouna and Daoukro.

Security sector reform

35. Important advances were made during Mr. Ouattara's first term with respect to the operational effectiveness and governance of the security sector, as well as the expansion of service provision. Notwithstanding operational deficits, national security institutions are performing their statutory functions with greater understanding of their roles as well as enhanced capacity. However, most government officials expressed the view that efforts to equip the army and law enforcement services appropriately are hampered by the arms embargo remaining in effect. Regional security councils in bringing together state and non-state actors such as civil society could be an important mechanism for decentralizing security services and addressing community-based insecurity. However, the effectiveness of these councils has been undermined by trust deficits, including between communities and security institutions, between civil administration and security institutions, and among the various services of the security apparatus.

36. FRCI has made improvements as a result of legislation increasing civilian oversight and enhancing the effectiveness and affordability of the armed forces, for example, through plans to achieve a ratio of 60:40 between operational costs and investment, including in training and equipment, by 2020. However, significant challenges remain, such as those posed by parallel command and control structures, lack of internal cohesion, indiscipline and shortcomings in operational capability. Some of the strategic review's interlocutors expressed concern that former commanders of the Forces nouvelles dominate the leadership structure of FRCI and that ethnic and other differences between FRCI soldiers and the population in some areas have contributed to brutality, extortion and other infractions. Armed robberies and other violent crimes continued to be committed by informal armed elements associated with FRCI. Challenges also remained with respect to gender balance. FRCI commanders conceded that the current 2 per cent representation of women is inadequate and advised that efforts would be made to reach a proportion of at least 20 per cent.

37. The national police service has made progress, but its effectiveness is impacted by an overcentralized governance structure, which undermined command and control, as well as a lack of budgetary autonomy, which hampers daily operations and planning. Reform proposals aimed at restructuring and strengthening trust between civil society and the security forces, included in the internal security planning act adopted by the Government and submitted to the National Assembly on 6 January 2016, remain to be implemented. While the gendarmerie remains intact with respect to its internal discipline and infrastructure, its centralized, overhierarchical command structure requires reforms to enable the delegation of authority to local commanders so as to enhance effectiveness. A new law on internal security programming provides for measures that give budgetary control to the

gendarmerie, which represents an important step. Efforts are also under way to maximize complementarity between the police and the gendarmerie by optimizing synergies, including the establishment of an inter-force cooperation mechanism focused on terrorism.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

38. National disarmament and demobilization activities concluded on 14 August 2015. UNOCI handed over the primary site for disarmament and demobilization, the Anyama camp in Abidjan, to FRCI on 30 October 2015. As of 31 January 2016, a total of 69,506 former combatants had entered the national programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration conducted between 2012 and 2015, of which 60,133 are considered reintegrated. The remaining caseload of 9,373 ex-combatants is enrolled in, or waiting to commence, reinsertion activities. Additionally, there are an estimated 2,000 former combatants in Liberia who may be ineligible for any assistance, as combatants returning from exile cannot benefit from reinsertion activities unless they are registered in an appropriate government database.

39. Throughout the disarmament process, a total of 43,510 armaments, including 14,121 weapons, were collected. Many interlocutors pointed to the discrepancy between the number of former combatants enrolled in the process and the number of serviceable weapons handed over. Efforts are required to ensure greater transparency, including with respect to access to the database of former combatants, so that the tangible impact of the programme can be clarified.

4. Humanitarian situation

40. The humanitarian situation has improved since the post-elections crisis of 2010-2011, with estimated requirements for life-saving interventions decreasing from \$400 million in 2012 to under \$50 million in 2015. The focus of intervention has therefore shifted towards supporting the equitable access to basic social services. Despite the positive trend, however, many people in Côte d'Ivoire remain in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

41. The post-elections crisis triggered the displacement of some 300,000 Ivorian refugees to Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Togo, with Liberia hosting some 220,000 refugees at the peak of the crisis. Approximately 50,000 refugees remain in neighbouring countries, including Liberia (just under 28,000), as well as Ghana (11,450), Guinea (6,560), Mali (1,000) and Togo (2,270). There are also 300,000 internally displaced persons, primarily in Abidjan and the west.

42. In July 2014, the Ivorian authorities closed the country's borders with Guinea and Liberia, as a preventive measure, following the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in those countries. Those borders have remained closed as of 15 March. However, with the agreement of the Ivorian Government, voluntary repatriation facilitated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resumed through humanitarian corridors on 18 December 2015. As of 15 March, 10,195 Ivorian refugees had been repatriated. UNHCR is planning to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of 25,000 Ivorian refugees in 2016 and 8,000 in 2017, while about 5,000 refugees are expected to opt for local reintegration. The UNOCI force provides physical protection for return operations, thereby facilitating an environment conducive to repatriation and reintegration efforts.

43. The fact that foreigners, who are primarily economic migrants, constitute approximately 24 per cent of the population of Côte d'Ivoire sometimes results in tensions with indigenous communities in areas of the country. Although a national strategy on migration was adopted in 2014 with support from the International Organization for Migration, the management of migrants is hampered by uncertain statistics and suffers from inadequate coordination among various ministries. Meanwhile, protected forests and national parks are illegally occupied by thousands of migrants from neighbouring countries. Over 20,000 people are occupying Mont Péko National Park, of which 95 per cent are foreign nationals. These occupants, including vulnerable groups, require support for relocation and the provision of basic and other services, while the communities into which they are relocated also need support. The Ivorian and Burkinabè authorities have agreed to begin the voluntary repatriation of occupants from Mont Péko to Burkina Faso in 2016.

5. Border assessment and regional issues

44. The situation in the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border area has improved since a similar assessment conducted in 2014. However, as described in paragraph 32 above, the situation in south-west Côte d'Ivoire remains fraught, with continuing instability exacerbated by communities' palpable distrust of FRCI, land conflict, and intercommunal disputes aggravated by the migration into the area of persons seeking to exploit the land. Stability is further undermined by periodic attacks triggered by the encroachment upon land of persons who are not from the area. Interlocutors stressed that a lack of social cohesion linked to the delay in the broader national reconciliation process impacts negatively on efforts to sustain peace and stability.

45. On the Liberian side of the border, there was considerable concern about instability in the contiguous area in Côte d'Ivoire. Interlocutors pointed to cases of killings or disappearances under unknown circumstances which had not been fully investigated. This included the rumoured presence in Vye Island of armed persons engaged in nefarious activities in the absence of any intervention by the security forces of either country.

46. There remain serious shortcomings with respect to the delivery of basic social and security services on both sides of the border. On the Liberian side, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Liberia National Police are being increasingly deployed, but lack sufficient personnel, logistics and mobility. The Armed Forces of Liberia, meanwhile, have deployed small, temporary detachments to investigate reports of the illegal encroachment upon land of foreign farmers in Grand Gedeh and River Gee counties. The UNMIL force will cease operations in April and withdraw from the border in May, in keeping with the drawdown for UNMIL pursuant to Security Council resolution 2239 (2015). While FRCI is better equipped and has sufficient personnel, there is still a need to take the required steps to bolster trust with the population.

47. While most of the Ivorian refugees remaining in Liberia have expressed their intention to return home, many have concerns about the security situation and lack of access to basic services, and fear the occupation of their lands by foreigners. There is a risk of the exacerbation of land disputes and intercommunal clashes in areas of return. The World Food Programme estimates that approximately 13 per cent of the population in the west faces food insecurity. It is essential that there be a

national commitment to facilitating the return and reintegration of the displaced, ensuring equitable access to services, and respecting their rights.

48. The cross-border security strategy adopted by the Mano River Union in 2013 has yet to be fully implemented. Initial steps have been taken, however, to establish joint border security and confidence-building units for bringing together border communities, which, if given adequate support, have the potential to defuse tensions and address threats.

Recommendations of the strategic review

49. Taking into account the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the border area, it is recommended that the mandate of UNOCI be extended for a final period, until 30 June 2017, including a two-month period of mission closure, as described in paragraph 61 below. Until 30 April 2017, UNOCI should have a prioritized mandate focused on the tasks identified as being most essential for consolidating the progress made over the 12 years of its deployment in Côte d'Ivoire.

50. Specifically, the mission should continue to play a role with respect to facilitating nationally owned processes such as reconciliation and social cohesion, as well as support institutional reforms. Going forward, it is envisaged that the support provided by UNOCI to the Government in the areas of reinsertion of former combatants and security sector reform would be provided in this context, given that many of the challenges posed by these processes are political in nature. UNOCI uniformed personnel would continue to provide operational-level advice and mentorship to their national counterparts. ONUCI FM, the mission's radio station, would continue to play an important role with respect to disseminating messages of peace, while also communicating information to the population regarding the forthcoming transformation of the United Nations engagement in Côte d'Ivoire. Ahead of the electoral processes, it would also be critical to keep watch on the media environment in order to mitigate inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech.

51. The mission should also retain a strong human rights mandate, including support for the national reconciliation process, while also engaging in monitoring and early warning activities and the development of national capacity to promote and protect human rights. UNOCI should also retain its mandate to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, with an emphasis on physical protection. It is further recommended that UNOCI and UNMIL, with the respective country teams, continue to support the border stabilization initiatives of the Ivorian and Liberian authorities, in collaboration with such regional partners as the Mano River Union and ECOWAS.

52. In light of the improvement in the ability of the national defence and security services to perform their functions, and with the closure of the mission on the horizon, it would be appropriate for the Ivorian authorities to fully assume UNOCI security responsibilities in the months ahead. It is therefore recommended that the protection-of-civilians mandate of UNOCI be limited to in extremis support for Ivorian security agencies in protecting civilians in the event of a deterioration of the security situation, which, taking into account the reduction of the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment, could pose the risk of a reversal of peace and stability in the country.

IV. Proposed adjustments to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

Military component

53. As indicated in my previous reports, UNOCI has been progressively drawing down, reducing the force from its peak strength of 9,792 in 2012. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2260 (2016), UNOCI withdrew 1,468 troops between January and March 2016, including an infantry battalion (750 troops), two military task forces (533 troops), aviation (31 personnel) and a support company (154 personnel). By 31 March 2016, UNOCI will have reached 3,969 out of its authorized strength of 4,000 military personnel, including two infantry battalions (1,606 troops) deployed in the west, a 650-troop-strong quick-reaction force based in Yamoussoukro, two task forces (861 troops) deployed in Abidjan and associated enablers (594 personnel), as well as 97 staff officers and 192 military observers.

54. Consideration of the necessary strength of the force for the period ahead took into account a thorough threat assessment, a troop-to-task analysis and the capacity of the National Armed Forces. It also took into account the priority tasks of the UNOCI military component for the duration of the mission's deployment, including facilitation of humanitarian assistance and support for border stabilization initiatives amid a continuing military threat in the south-west part of the country, as well as the proposed scope of the UNOCI protection-of-civilians mandate.

55. Specifically, it is proposed that there be a reduction of an additional 1,969 troops, which would leave 2,000 personnel by 31 August 2016. This would be achieved by repatriating two infantry battalions (1,065 troops); one company from the battalion deployed in the south-west (200); one company from the headquarters protection unit (156); and associated enablers, specifically engineering (175), a military hospital (56) and signals (90), as well as 135 staff officers and 92 military observers. The 2,000 remaining troops would include one infantry battalion deployed in the south-west (650); the quick-reaction force (650); a headquarters protection unit (300); and associated enablers, specifically aviation (176) and signals (66), as well as 58 staff officers and 100 military observers consolidated at nine team sites, primarily in the west. As a result of the proposed reductions, UNOCI will not be able to respond positively should a request for electoral security support be forthcoming. In 2017, final reductions would include the infantry battalion deployed in the south-west and one aviation unit in February; the quick-reaction force and its aviation unit as well as all military observers in March; and headquarters elements, specifically the protection unit, and signals and staff officers, in April.

56. As the quick-reaction force established within UNOCI pursuant to Security Council resolution 2162 (2014) remains a critical asset, it is therefore planned that the force will be among the last military units repatriated from Côte d'Ivoire. Options are being explored to enable the unit to remain a tool for regional peace and stability beyond the life cycle of UNOCI, further to its original concept. Subject to meeting the conditions detailed in Council resolution 1609 (2005), it is recommended that, if redeployed to another peacekeeping operation, the unit should continue to fulfil a mandate to provide in extremis support to UNMIL and its successor mission, along the lines of the provisions of Council resolution 2162

(2014). Specific proposals will be included in my future reports on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and UNMIL further to a lessons-learned exercise, including on the utility of a similar tool in other contexts. Taking into account the joint letter dated 29 January 2016 from the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Mr. Ouattara addressed to me, as referred to in my thirty-first progress report, dated 22 February 2016, on UNMIL (S/2016/169, para. 22), and provided that all necessary agreements and authorizations are received, the unit could be placed on standby during the 2017 electoral period in Liberia for possible deployment, if warranted by the security situation.

French forces

57. In its resolution 2226 (2015), the Security Council authorized the Forces françaises en Côte d'Ivoire to provide support to UNOCI, within the limits of the forces' deployment and capabilities. That support continues to be necessary. Meanwhile, collaboration continues in supporting FRCI, as well as tripartite meetings held twice monthly, which bring together FRCI, UNOCI and the French forces.

Police component

58. The authorized strength of the UNOCI police component stands at 1,500 personnel, including 500 individual police officers and 1,000 officers deployed in six formed police units. For the duration of their deployment, United Nations police will focus on consolidating progress made in enhancing the capacity of national law enforcement agencies. It is recommended that the strength of the individual police officers progressively decrease, reaching 250 by December 2016, with a focus on mentoring and operational-level support to the national police and gendarmerie, as well as the transnational crime unit. The police component's deployment would be aligned to the regional areas of operational responsibility of the national police and gendarmerie, with team sites decreasing from 23 to 12 by the end of 2016. Support at the tactical level will cease. The remaining 250 individual police officers would be repatriated progressively, with none remaining by 30 April 2017. The eight customs officers are no longer required.

59. Consideration of the necessary strength of formed police units took into account a thorough threat assessment and analysis of the capacities of national law enforcement agencies, as well as the deployment of UNOCI force and the proposed scope of the protection-of-civilians mandate. It is therefore recommended that three of six formed police units be repatriated immediately during scheduled rotations in March and April 2016. One of the units remaining would be deployed in Abidjan, a city of strategic importance with limited force presence, as well as one each to Bouaké and Daloa, areas with frequent incidents of public disorder and intercommunal violence. All units would be downsized from 180 to the standard 140 personnel. The three remaining units would be repatriated in March and April 2017.

Civilian component

60. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 69/258 B of 25 June 2015, UNOCI has 1,225 civilian posts, including 713 national and 512 international posts. Adjustments are under way to enable achievement of a phased drawdown of civilian staff, taking into account priorities for the substantive mandate of UNOCI for the final year of its deployment, as detailed in paragraphs 50 and 51 above, while also ensuring that the mission retains the requisite expertise. The civilian field presence would also be consolidated.

Support implications

61. By 30 June 2017, the full closure of the mission would be complete. This would include all associated tasks such as the closure of facilities, removal of equipment, final payments and other administrative requirements. A team specialized in such tasks, overseen by appropriate leadership, would operate from 1 May to 30 June 2017, and would also finalize the transition to the United Nations country team, as well as any political facilitation deemed appropriate by the Government.

62. The drawdown of the mission would proceed in parallel with the final year of mandated operations. Consequently, the write-off or transfer of UNOCI assets to other peacekeeping operations, the United Nations country team or the Government is under way. Appropriate mechanisms and procedures are also in place to ensure that the closure of UNOCI is completed in an environment-conscious manner. Consideration is being given to transferring over to the United Nations country team, UNOCI headquarters at Seboko, which, pending government approval, would serve as a United Nations House.

63. The Government has expressed its wish to retain ONUCI FM after the closure of the mission. The radio station would be operated by the Fondation Félix Houphouët-Boigny in the context of its programme in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the culture of peace. Discussions are under way to develop a detailed operational plan, taking into account the associated costs, as well as the need to guarantee equal access by all segments of Ivorian society, impartiality and editorial independence.

Safety and security of personnel

64. The assessed risk to United Nations personnel and installations in Côte d'Ivoire is low to medium, with the greatest threat being posed by criminal activity. Preparations are under way to ensure the provision of security for the United Nations country team following the closure of UNOCI.

65. During the 13 March attack on Grand-Bassam, as described in paragraph 13 above, a United Nations Volunteer was killed and a UNOCI police officer was severely injured. Both were among the beach-goers and were not specifically targeted. Security has since been reinforced at United Nations installations.

Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

66. Issues of conduct and discipline become more acute during mission closures. UNOCI will therefore enhance its capacity in this area.

67. During the period under review, two cases of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded, in addition to one allegation of serious misconduct. There were additional allegations of five incidents of category 2 misconduct. Investigations are under way.

V. Future of the United Nations in Côte d'Ivoire

68. Given the positive trajectory in Côte d'Ivoire, no United Nations successor mission is recommended following the withdrawal of UNOCI, which is consistent with the views of the Government. However, the United Nations will continue to accompany Côte d'Ivoire through the United Nations country team, which will provide support, consistent with the mandates of the respective agencies, funds and programmes, and within the limits of available resources. The process of transitioning tasks performed by UNOCI to the Government, the United Nations country team or other partners, which began in 2013, has therefore taken on a renewed urgency.

69. During the final period of its mandated operations, UNOCI will focus on transitioning remaining priorities towards the United Nations country team and other partners, with a view to consolidating gains, while also facilitating the efforts needed to address longer-term challenges which will remain following the closure of the mission. Options for engaging the country team in the mandated tasks of UNOCI while the mission is still deployed, supported by the mission's budget, will be pursued as appropriate, in keeping with the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Peace Operations (see [S/2015/446](#)) and the report constituting my response thereto ([S/2015/682](#)). It would be particularly relevant for UNOCI, as a long-standing mission, to engage with the United Nations country team and other partners in delivering on identified priorities for mandate implementation. Such an approach would also assist the United Nations country team and other partners in building the capacity and sustaining the momentum needed to continue priority work after the closure of UNOCI.

70. The United Nations will work closely with regional and other stakeholders, in particular multilateral and other partners, in developing and implementing the strategy by which its engagement in Côte d'Ivoire is transformed. The engagement of the African Union and ECOWAS in complementing the work of the United Nations country team following the departure of UNOCI would be essential.

VI. Financial implications

71. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/258 B of 25 June 2015, appropriated the amount of \$402.7 million for the maintenance of the Operation for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (see my report on the budget for UNOCI for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 ([A/70/753](#))). My proposed budget in the amount of \$320.7 million for the maintenance of the mission for the

period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 has been submitted to the Assembly for its consideration during the second part of its resumed seventieth session. It should be noted that proposed requirements are based on the prevailing mandate and scope of the mission.

72. As at 14 March 2016, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNOCI amounted to \$128.1 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as of the same date amounted to \$2,602.8 million.

73. Reimbursement of troop and formed police costs has been made for the period up to 31 January 2016, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2015, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VII. Observations

74. When UNOCI deployed in April 2004 at the request of the Ivorian authorities, Côte d'Ivoire was a country split in half, north and south divided by a militarily enforced zone of confidence, and in the grip of a political stalemate. Ceasefire violations were prevalent, as were serious human rights violations against civilians. Once a beacon of peace, stability and prosperity in a region racked by vicious civil wars, the Côte d'Ivoire of 2004 was at the edge of a precipice. However, the country did evolve: Peace agreements were implemented and the zone of confidence was dissolved. Despite the setback experienced in connection with the contested 2010 elections, which resulted in a crisis during which approximately 3,000 people were killed and a further 600,000 were displaced, the country continued to evolve. Five years after the post-elections crisis of 2010-2011, Côte d'Ivoire is well along on the path to enduring peace and stability, as well as economic prosperity. I wish to congratulate the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire for their determination, which has made this positive evolution possible.

75. However, consolidating peace requires the full commitment of all citizens to a comprehensive and meaningful process of national reconciliation. Among the objectives of such a process must be defining and agreeing on a shared sense of *nation*, as well as on the responsibilities of the citizens of that nation. Such questions are particularly pertinent and potentially fraught for Côte d'Ivoire, as, notwithstanding the progress that continues to be made, the wounds inflicted by the Ivorian conflict and brought to light during the post-elections crisis, have yet to heal.

76. I welcome the efforts of Mr. Ouattara to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders with a view to furthering political dialogue in the spirit of national reconciliation. I further welcome the receptive spirit in which the President's overtures have been received. It is a positive sign that the full membership of the Ivorian political class intends to play an active and constructive role in the electoral processes that are to unfold later this year. At the same time, reforms must go forward with a view to addressing structural injustices. I therefore welcome the planned constitutional referendum, which provides an important opportunity for agreement on a new, shared sense of nation. I underscore the importance of ensuring that the process is fully inclusive.

77. Healing the wounds of the past, and addressing the grievances of the present, will also require action aimed at addressing the root causes of the Ivorian conflict, including with respect to land tenure, nationality and identity, as well as the consolidation of an effective and accountable security sector. While I welcome the efforts made in this regard, a continued instability triggered by issues relating to land and belonging makes it clear that more decisive action is required, including in the context of the process of achieving the social cohesion.

78. I remain concerned by the continuing perceptions of one-sided justice and impunity for human rights violations, and reiterate my call for all perpetrators of human rights violations, irrespective of their political affiliation, to be held accountable. Persistent human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, are also deeply concerning. Urgent action is required to fight impunity for such crimes and to ensure the protection of civilians, particularly women and children. The development of the capacity of national institutions to promote and protect human rights must remain a priority if peace in Côte d'Ivoire is to be sustained. This would involve the strengthening of the National Human Rights Commission, including through granting it constitutional rank and full autonomy in compliance with the Paris Principles. The United Nations will continue to extend the necessary support for these initiatives, in close collaboration with the Government.

79. I remain deeply troubled by delays in the investigations of major cases such as the killing in June 2012 of seven United Nations peacekeepers, as well as the attack in July 2012 on the Nahibly camp for internally displaced persons. I reiterate that the Government is responsible for bringing the perpetrators of those international crimes to justice.

80. I am outraged by, and condemn in the strongest terms, the terrorist attacks on innocent civilians in Grand-Bassam on 13 March. I reiterate my deepest sympathy for and condolences to the families of the deceased, as well as the steadfast solidarity of the United Nations with the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Such reprehensible attacks have no justification. All perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of terrorist acts must be brought to justice in accordance with international law. I welcome the resolve of regional leaders to work closely together to counter the scourge of violent extremism and terror, which cannot be contained by borders. The United Nations remains committed to helping to strengthen such regional collaboration and supporting the development of comprehensive strategies for addressing this growing threat.

81. The Ivorian security services have made progress, as demonstrated by the welcome improvements in the security environment and by their swift and effective response to the terrorist attack of 13 March. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in the south-west part of the country where the Ivorian Armed Forces have failed to gain the trust of the population, which has contributed to periodic attacks and continued instability amid ongoing refugee return operations. I urge the Government to take forward critical reforms within the security sector, with a view to addressing worrying challenges that undermine trust and reconciliation. It is equally important to explore options for addressing the outstanding caseload of former combatants, while ensuring that they all have sustainable reintegration opportunities, with a view to ensuring that they are constructive members of Ivorian society.

82. The year 2016 will be an important one for the consolidation of the political dispensation in Côte d'Ivoire. It will also be a year during which structural and other reforms critical to the national reconciliation and social cohesion process will advance. With continued good progress in these and other ongoing processes, it would be appropriate to conclude that the situation in Côte d'Ivoire no longer poses a threat to peace and stability in the region. In line with the findings of the strategic review, I therefore recommend a final extension of the mandate of UNOCI until 30 June 2017. I further recommend that the mandate of UNOCI be adjusted to reflect the priorities identified in paragraphs 50 to 52 above. Finally, I recommend further adjustments of the UNOCI military and police components, as detailed in paragraphs 55, 58 and 59 above, which would bring the authorized strength of UNOCI to 2,000 military and 670 police personnel. Provided that conditions remain conducive, all UNOCI military and police, as well as almost all civilian personnel, would depart the country by 30 April 2017, with the full closure of the mission completed by 30 June 2017.

83. The trajectory of Côte d'Ivoire is positive and consequently no successor United Nations presence is recommended beyond that of the country team. However, there is a clear risk that, unless additional resources accompany the transfer of critical residual tasks to the Government or the United Nations country team, those tasks may no longer be performed, which would potentially undermine the sustainability of the gains achieved thus far. I therefore call upon all stakeholders, particularly bilateral partners and other donors, to provide the resources needed to facilitate the transformation of the United Nations engagement in Côte d'Ivoire.

84. I would like to thank my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Aïchatou Mindaoudou, for her excellent leadership, and all United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel for their commitment to peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire. My appreciation also goes to the troop- and police-contributing countries, donor countries, regional and multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations that continue to provide invaluable support to Côte d'Ivoire. I wish also to pay special tribute to the essential role played by the African Union and ECOWAS throughout the Ivorian peace process, which facilitated the achievements attained by UNOCI, and without which the country might not now be entering the final phase of the peacekeeping presence.

Annex I

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire: military and police strength

Country	Military component			Total	Police component	
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops		Formed police units	Police officers
Argentina						3
Bangladesh	13	10	729	752	180	
Benin	9	7	368	384		57
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	3			3		
Brazil	4	3		7		
Burkina Faso						45
Burundi						29
Cameroon	1			1		24
Central African Republic						
Chad	6			6		16
China	6			6		
Democratic Republic of the Congo						6
Djibouti						
Ecuador	2			2		
Egypt		1	174	175		
El Salvador	3			3		
Ethiopia	2			2		
France		8		8		6
Gambia	3			3		
Ghana	6	8	97	111		2
Guatemala	5			5		
Guinea	2			2		
India	9			9		
Ireland	3			3		
Jordan	8	11		19	482	9
Kazakhstan	2			2		
Madagascar						2
Malawi	3	1		4		
Mali		1		1		
Mauritania					140	
Morocco		4	715	719		
Namibia	1			1		
Nepal	3	1		4		
Niger	5	3	864	872		40

<i>Country</i>	<i>Military component</i>				<i>Police component</i>	
	<i>Military observers</i>	<i>Staff officers</i>	<i>Troops</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Formed police units</i>	<i>Police officers</i>
Nigeria	2			2		
Pakistan	12	13	277	302	189	
Paraguay	1	1		2		
Peru	2			2		
Philippines	3			3		
Poland	2			2		
Republic of Korea	2			2		
Republic of Moldova	2			2		
Romania	6			6		
Russian Federation	10			10		
Rwanda						8
Senegal	6	5	731	742		16
Serbia	3			3		
Spain		1		1		
Switzerland						1
Togo	7	6	465	478		43
Tunisia	8	3		11		38
Turkey						3
Uganda	5	2		7		
Ukraine		3		3		9
United Republic of Tanzania	2	2		4		
Uruguay	1			1		
Vanuatu						11
Yemen	9	1		10		11
Zambia	2			2		
Zimbabwe	2			2		
Total	186	95	4 420	4 701	991	379

Annex II

