



COMMUNIQUÉ

Adopted at the Regional Consultative Forum of Civil Society Organisations, Including Women and Youth, Traditional and Religious Leaders and Academics of the Lake Chad Basin, from 16-20 June 2019 in Niamey, Republic of Niger

The Regional Consultative Forum was convened by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and hosted by the Government of Niger, with technical support from the African Union (AU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI). Financial support was provided by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The *overall objectives* of the Regional Consultative Forum are to strengthen the ownership of civil society of stabilization and peacebuilding efforts in the Lake Chad Basin, under the overarching framework of the RSS; to contribute to the full and effective inclusion and participation of civil society in the stabilisation process, with an emphasis on the empowerment of women and youth; and to lay the ground for a constructive partnership between civil society actors and other relevant implementing actors.

Preamble

Recognising the devastating impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on the lives of people of the Lake Chad Basin region and particularly people from North and Far North regions of Cameroon, Hadjer Lamis and Lac regions of Chad, Diffa region of Niger and Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states of Nigeria.



Recalling that the vision for addressing the root causes of the conflict and for long term stabilization, recovery and resilience is put forward in the *Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin* (RSS), formally adopted by the Lake Chad Basin Commission Council of Ministers in August 2018 and endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU-PSC) in December 2018.

Recognizing the invaluable contributions of civil society in the Lake Chad Basin region to fostering stability, recovery and resilience through the framework of the RSS, and **further recognising** the role of civil society to ensure accountability and enhance trust within the communities on the one hand and between civil society and governmental institutions, including the security forces on the other hand, a Regional Consultative Forum with sixty-five (65) representatives of civil society organisations, including women and youth, traditional and religious leaders and academics of the Lake Chad Basin region took place from 18 to 20 June in the capital city Niamey of the Republic of Niger.

Observations

The sixty-five(65) representatives of civil society, including women and youth, religious and traditional leaders and academics who participated at the Forum **express** deep appreciation for the commitment of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to engage and involve civil society groups in the implementation of the RSS and **further acknowledge** the positive contributions and efforts of the governments in the Lake Chad Basin region for stabilization, development, resilience and recovery.

Participants **further note** existing and ongoing interventions by civil society groups and their invaluable complementary contribution to stabilization in the region and **reiterate** that civil society provides enormous positive potential that should be capitalised to promote peace, development and stabilization in the Lake Chad Basin region through technical partnerships and the fostering of synergies with civil society organizations.

Participants also **express concern** regarding the weak presence of governmental institutions in some areas of the Lake Chad Basin region which has caused, inter alia, limited economic, social, health, education, judicial and climate change infrastructure in the region. This has partially caused a negative impact on the relationship and trust between the constituencies and political authorities.

Participants **note** that host communities in the Lake Chad Basin continue to face challenges due to the high number of IDPs and refugees and corresponding tensions due to scarce resources and underline that current approaches and efforts for the humanitarian support and return of the displaced are sometimes not corresponding to the actual needs.

Participants **state** that despite the good intentions, Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) measures to address former Boko Haram members have not necessarily led to the desired outcomes and the reintegration of former Boko Haram members is posing challenges within the recipient communities. Additionally, while both men and women are engaged in the support to Boko Haram, preventive measures and policies often only focus on the male actors.

Participants also **express concern** regarding the level of proliferation of light arms and small weapons and the seemingly lack of policy and management of Civilian Task Forces or vigilantes that would



ensure their transition to civilian life and legal employment. In addition, many young people are exposed to drug abuse, and **note** the lack of dedicated programmes and facilities to treat those affected and to prevent further abuses.

Participants **underline** that despite efforts to mainstream UN resolutions 1325 (S/RES/1325 (2000)), UN resolution 2250 (S/RES/2250 (2015)) as well as *Aspiration 6* of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 on the vital roles of women and youth in peacebuilding and security and on empowerment of women and youth, these groups are often marginalized in the Lake Chad Basin region, and **call** for corresponding protective, preventive, inclusive and participatory measures.

Participants finally **note** that economic activities around the Lake Chad Basin have been weakened by the impact of climate change as well as by restrictions of movement and the presence of the Boko Haram and in the Lake Chad Basin.

Recommendations

Based on the observations, participants **urge** the Lake Chad Basin Commission to create regional dialogue spaces and platforms for inclusive participation of civil society in the stabilisation, recovery and resilience efforts. Furthermore, participants further made the following specific recommendations:

A. **On Inclusion and Participation Participants**

- i. **Urge** national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin to ensure that stabilisation, recovery and resilience priorities are informed and guided by the needs of communities;
- ii. **Request** the national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin to build trust and strengthen collaboration among CSOs and between national and regional authorities and CSOs, especially youth and women led organisations, to deepen state and non-state action interaction and promote inclusivity;
- iii. **Call on** national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin and the LCBC to empower women and youth and promote inclusion of women and youth in decision-making at all levels including appointing women to administrative and leadership positions in line with UN resolutions 1325 (S/RES/1325 (2000)), UN resolution 2250 (S/RES/2250 (2015)) and *Aspiration 6* of AU Agenda 2063;
- iv. **Urge** the LCBC to create a regional youth network and build their capacities to contribute meaningfully to stabilisation, recovery and resilience efforts.

B. **On Governance and Development, Participants**

- v. **Appeal** to national governments and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to enhance the delivery of public services and set up effective accountability and oversight mechanisms to ensure that public services are delivered in a timely and quality manner;
- vi. **Call** on national governments and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to urgently improve access and reduce restrictions of movement to enhance economic activities of the population in the affected areas and to collaborate with MNJTF to ensure protection population within the economic activity zones;



- vii. **Strongly call** on national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin to support the creation of entrepreneurial platforms and initiatives to provide alternative income-generating options for vulnerable groups, such as single-headed households;
- viii. **Urge** national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin and the LCBC to include vulnerable groups such as orphans, single-headed households, persons with disabilities, refugees and IDPs as well as elderly in stabilisation programmes and policies.
- ix. **Request** national governments of the Lake Chad Basin to promote and implement the 1969 OAU Convention on African Refugees and the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

C. On Education, Participants

- x. **Urge** national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin to support the formulation of inclusive educational policies to ensure that all children and youth in the region have access to free and compulsory basic education and provide scholarships for orphans and other vulnerable groups with educational needs;
- xi. **Call** on national governments of the Lake Chad Basin to harmonize, regulate and coordinate Quranic schools and their curricula, to prevent the misuse of Quranic education as a means to promote violence, and to avoid the exposure of children to extremism.

D. On Social Cohesion and Prevention of Violent Extremism, Participants

- xii. **Request** the LCBC, national governments and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to support the establishment of a youth platform for exchange on entrepreneurial best practices to promote youth employment as a key measure for the prevention of violent extremism;
- xiii. **Urge** the LCBC and governors of the Lake Chad Basin to enhance cooperation between youth and women organizations, state institutions and international partners to strengthen efforts for stabilization, inter alia via inclusive local peace committees and other efforts contributing to social cohesion;
- xiv. **Call** on national governments of the Lake Chad Basin to institute adequate measures to protect those engaged in the prevention of violent extremism;
- xv. **Further call** on the LCBC, national governments and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to engage religious and traditional leaders in promoting reconciliation and in preventing and countering violent extremism, through localised and inclusive dialogue processes;
- xvi. **Urge** the LCBC and national governments and governors of the Lake Chad Basin to promote effective and constructive dialogue between civil society and the military;
- xvii. **Request** national governments and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to explore appropriate ways to regulate the activities of vigilantes and other civilian armed task forces to ensure that their members can transition to legal productive civilian lives.



E. On Support to Conflict-Affected Communities, Participants

- xviii. **Further request** national governments and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to create and invest in programmes and structures to provide access to psycho-social support for conflict-affected populations and communities;
- xix. **Call** on national governments of the Lake Chad Basin to support the identification of victims and accelerate rehabilitation measures and provide avenue for restorative justice.

F. On Reintegration, Participants

- xx. **Strongly Call** on national governments of the Lake Chad Basin to harmonize laws and policies in order to foster consistency in efforts and processes for reintegration of former Boko Haram fighters into the communities, and the governors of the Lake Chad Basin to support such measures.

Niamey, 20 June 2019

Cameroon

Chad

Niger

Nigeria

