

**Delegation from The Gabonese Republic**  
***Position Paper for the United Nations Security Council***

The issues before the Security Council are: The impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts (POC). Bearing in mind that both topics are of crucial importance to international peace and security and hence the well-being of Gabonese people throughout the world, the Gabonese Republic looks forward to constructive discussions in the Security Council.

**I. The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security**

For more than two years the COVID-19 pandemic is now showing its devastating effects on a globalized world with more than 400 million cases reported and a death toll of more than 5.7 million people around the globe. As Secretary-General Guterres emphasized in his report to this very committee in May of last year, the pandemic and its effects pose great risks to people and societies around the world, especially those affected by conflict. It is a failure that so far these people of all have received the least help and the least vaccine doses. The global ceasefire the Secretary-General appealed for on that basis has so far only proven to work partially, as many old and new conflicts still threaten consistent and effective countermeasures against a worsening pandemic situation. Especially in Central and Western Africa, the Gabonese Republic notices a worsening situation, as not only ongoing and renewed conflicts are influenced by the international crisis that is COVID-19, but also insufficient food supply, health care and infrastructure. The developing but still fragile Gabonese economy has suffered severely under the pandemic's effects and will most likely not survive another year of pandemic crisis. The Gabonese people, as people throughout Africa and other developing countries, are suffering severely and need help from the international community. What is needed most is not money or food, the people of developing countries need a perspective, an end to this crisis, which can only be provided by immunization. With only 3-4% of people in Central Africa vaccinated and a key vaccination rate of 70% throughout Africa to effectively end the pandemic, it is critical to immunize as many people as possible as quickly as possible. Africa needs vaccines, in masses, to provide its people with security and health strong enough to build a better future for them, for their countries and for Africa as a continent and a community. International Peace and Security deeply relies on an African continent moving forward, not backwards. To strengthen the African states in their struggle with the pandemic, Gabon calls upon all member states to begin or extend their commitment now in whatever way they deem sensible.

The Gabonese Republic is committed to the fight against COVID-19 and the process of post-pandemic recovery of the African continent. Gabon is strongly engaged in the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), of which it is a founding member, and the African Union, a key institution with the concept of "African Solutions to African Problems" at its center. While the only acceptable and right way to tackle the problems of developing countries is to do it in ways these countries can cope and deal with, the need for financial support and expertise from developed countries is still immense. Both institutions have proven to be helpful in the fight against COVID-19, though both still need financial and logistical support of the United Nations and the international community. Gabon therefore supports all efforts which the Secretary-General and the Security Council as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) have shown to put an end to the crisis and its devastating effects on people affected by conflict. We highly support the urge for a global ceasefire Secretary-General Guterres and the Security Council enunciated on several occasions, such as through Security Council resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2565 (2021). Gabon also supports the Security Councils' call for the strengthening of national and multilateral approaches and international cooperation combating COVID-19 in situations of armed conflict, post-conflict, and humanitarian emergencies, while reiterating the necessity for a central distribution management system the current initiatives lack. Hence, the Gabonese Republic also welcomes the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access initiative (COVAX), which in our opinion lacks the necessary efficiency and scale to have a significant impact on the development of the pandemic in Africa.

The Gabonese Republic therefore advocates for stronger commitment to initiatives combating the devastating development of COVID-19 in Africa by the international community. Gabon proposes the instatement of a UN Vaccine Bank (UNVB), gathering vaccine doses from member states and distributing them in a fair manner and according to a phased plan, starting with the regions with the lowest vaccination rate. States and initiatives as well as vaccine producing companies should deliver any remaining doses to the UNVB, which will cooperate with the World Health Organization and regional organizations to make the distribution of vaccine doses as efficient as possible.

## II. The Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

The Gabonese Republic flatly refuses and condemns all actions of violence, threatening or insult against civilians during armed conflicts and stresses the importance of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts (POC). Present measures against these actions as well as Peacekeeping-Operations (PKO) so far fail to secure the situation and prosecute the responsible individuals and parties within their mandate. With great concern Gabon observes the devastating violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) not only on the African continent but in several regions affected by armed conflicts. With over 20,000 civilians reported dead or injured across 10 conflict zones in 2020, the Gabonese Republic observes an urgent need for optimizing POC on the ground. As several conflicts are ongoing in Central Africa and within the direct surrounding of the Gabonese Republic, we see with great concern that the people of neighboring countries are suffering from the inhumane actions of conflict parties. The ongoing conflict in the Central African Republic as well as in the greater Congo Basin imposes a great threat to the humanitarian situation in the whole region and might destabilize it for decades. Both the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) are actively engaged in the region, as they are in several other conflict regions on the African continent. Although they are both trying to protect civilians affected by conflict, their work however is not always going in the same direction, further complicating the process, and making successful protection of the broad civilian population difficult.

Gabon fully commits to the principles of International Humanitarian Law and the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949). During conflict civilians must be treated humanely, must not be threatened, insulted, or harmed. Gabon therefore supports all Security Council resolutions on the topic of POC, especially Security Council resolutions 1265 (1999 and 2417 (2018), as well as the initial Presidential Statement 1999/6, adding to the topic and reaffirming the importance of the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure during conflict. The Gabonese Republic also welcomes the efforts by all UN Peacekeeping Missions around the globe and especially in Africa to protect civilians lives and the infrastructure keeping them alive, especially the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), while reiterating the necessity to enhance the effectiveness of those missions. While Gabon welcomes the efforts taken by all United Nations and United Nations Organization bodies implementing the Security Council's decisions on POC in their missions in peacekeeping, humanitarian aid and infrastructure building and the cooperation between these bodies and organizations with the African Union, its sub-organizations, such as the Department of Peace and Security (DPS) of the African Union Commission (AUC), and regional organizations, we also see the need for improvement, as all measures seem to be insufficient so far. Especially differences in training for peacekeepers and humanitarian aiders and in the approaches to conflict situations, which directly derive from the training and socialization the operatives received, should be further professionalized and aligned with international standards, such as the 2019 POC Policy and the 2020 POC Handbook, both by the United Nations Peacekeeping Office.

Hence, the Gabonese Republic advocates for an improvement and extension of cooperation between the United Nation's bodies and the African Union, as it is the regional institution overseeing all conflicts, developments, and missions in Africa. In that regard Gabon specifically calls for an enhancement of cooperation between UN Peacekeeping and the African Union, asking all UN Peacekeeping-Operations and Humanitarian Missions to offer their expertise and training resources to the Department of Peace and Security of the African Union Commission and its operations. Gabon promotes the idea of open-access resources for the training of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Missions operatives and therefore calls for a constant development of the universal frameworks and training programs by UN Peacekeeping, especially the 2019 POC Policy and the 2020 POC Handbook. Further, we propose joint training camps, where Peacekeepers and Humanitarian Aiders from different parts of the world can learn and grow together, enabling them to have a better understanding of their co-workers and the people they strive to protect. These camps should be hosted by both the UN side and the regional side of the cooperation, ideally in a surrounding as realistic as possible, aiming at a lasting sensitization of the trainees. The goal must be to enable Peacekeepers and Humanitarian Aiders to respond to as many different situations as possible in the most sensible way, for Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Aid to be a lifechanging asset for all civilians under influence of armed conflicts.