

## 7. Armed conflict and peace processes in sub-Saharan Africa

### Overview

*There were at least 15 countries with active armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in 2019: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. Eight were low-intensity, subnational armed conflicts, and seven were high-intensity armed conflicts (Nigeria, Somalia, the DRC, Burkina Faso, Mali, South Sudan and Cameroon). Almost all the armed conflicts were internationalized, including as a result of state actors (whether directly or through proxies) and the transnational activities of violent Islamist groups, other armed groups and criminal networks. The conflict dynamics and ethnic and religious tensions were often rooted in a combination of state weakness, corruption, ineffective delivery of basic services, competition over natural resources, inequality and a sense of marginalization. Two other cross-cutting issues continued to shape regional security: the continuing internationalization of counterterrorism activities, and water scarcity and the growing impact of climate change (see section I).*

*There were two new peace agreements in sub-Saharan Africa in 2019: in the CAR and in Mozambique. There were also 20 multilateral peace operations active in the region (two less than in 2018), including several large-scale operations in countries that were experiencing armed conflict such as CAR, DRC, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. The number of personnel serving in those multilateral peace operations (97 519 on 31 December 2019) decreased for the fourth year in a row and reached the lowest point since 2012.*

*In the Sahel and Lake Chad regions (section II), all of the armed conflicts (in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria) worsened in 2019. The security challenges are linked to the rise of violent extremism and the proliferation of armed non-state groups, such as Boko Haram, which has spread from Nigeria across the Lake Chad region. The violent extremist groups are interwoven with rural insurgent groups, feeding off intercommunal tensions and exploiting grievances of marginalized communities. Armed conflict fatalities increased significantly in Burkina Faso in 2019, due to a broadening of three interconnected layers of conflict: the government's conflict with heavily armed Islamist groups, increasing clashes between armed ethnic and Islamist groups, and intercommunal violence.*

*There were two main challenges in Central Africa in 2019 (section III): the implementation of a new peace agreement in the CAR between the government*

*and armed groups, and a period of political transition in the DRC. In the former, the UN panel of experts on the CAR reported in December 2019 that the agreement's implementation 'remained limited', while the political changes in the latter were accompanied by an increase in insecurity and political violence in the eastern provinces and an ongoing health emergency from measles and Ebola outbreaks.*

*The Horn of Africa (section IV) contains some of the most fragile countries in the world, derived from a complex mix of limited or uneven access to natural resources, intergroup tensions, poverty and economic inequalities, and weak state institutions. Relatively peaceful transitions of power in Ethiopia (in 2018) and Sudan (in 2019) and the implementation of a 2018 peace agreement in South Sudan led to significant decreases in armed violence in these three states. However, the armed conflict in Somalia remained one of the deadliest in the world.*

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