



African Union



# Report of the **Fourth Annual Governors' Forum of the Lake Chad Basin Commission**

5 - 7 JULY, 2023  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
N'DJAMENA, CHAD



**Report of the Fourth Annual Governors'  
Forum of the Lake Chad Basin Commission**

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**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**5-7 JULY, 2023**

**ORGANIZING TEAM :**

Lake Chad Basin Commission and the RS-SRR Secretariat

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Lake Chad Basin Commission expresses its sincere thanks to the various institutions and actors who supported and assisted its organization of the fourth edition of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum.

The Government of the Republic of Chad deserves special thanks for their hosting of, and participating in, the Forum.

The African Union Commission, the United Nations Development Programme and the NORCAP which have extended ongoing technical support to the Lake Chad Basin Commission, including towards the organization of the Forum, the Civil Society Organizations meeting, also deserve our gratitude.

The financial support of Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the European Union, and the African Development Bank was highly instrumental to the success of the Forum. We are therefore most grateful to these donors for their support in this regard.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission also wishes to extend special thanks to the Governors of the region for their participation and for making the Forum a successful one. The active engagement of all meeting participants is as highly appreciated.

The Commission warmly thanks the Secretariat for their exceptional hard work in organizing and making this fourth LCB Governors' Forum a resounding success.

Lastly, we would also like to extend our appreciation for the rapporteurs; Prof. Obiora Chinedu Okafor, and Prof. Awalou Ouedraogo. Their meticulous and detailed recording of the events played a key role in the success of the Forum, including the production of this report.





# FOREWORD

The Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (RS SRR) provides a framework for addressing the humanitarian and security challenges in the region and lays the groundwork for early recovery and long-term development. Importantly the RS SRR underlines that a regional approach and strengthened coordination between regional and critical actors is critical.

Since the adoption of the RS SRR in 2018, the Lake Chad Basin Commission has continued to strengthen its regional role as a convener of all the actors, from community to international levels, implicated in the implementation of the RS SRR. The Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum is a key platform for facilitating regional dialogue and coordination of all actions and efforts related to the RS SRR.

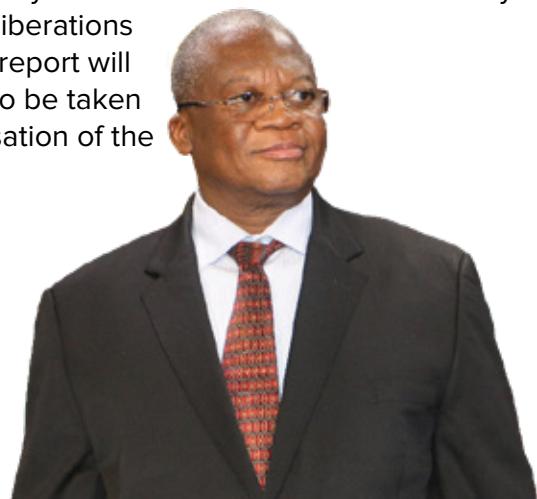
Since its inception in 2018, the Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum has satisfactorily provided the space for constructive engagement, dialogues, exchange of ideas and best practices, and identification of critical cross-border interventions that would help restore stability and development in the region. In 2018, the Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum provided us with the opportunity to advance discussions and conversation on the approach and content of the RS SRR. In 2019, the Governors Forum consolidated the steps made in 2018, and launched the Lake Chad Regional Stabilization Facility. At the 2019 Lake Chad Basin Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum, the governors domesticated the RSS through the Territorial Action Plan (TAP) and mandated the Secretariat to provided technical guidance for the development and elaboration of the TAPs across the eight territories. The eight Territorial Action Plans (TAPs) were launched at the 2021 Governors Forum.

I believe the Fourth Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum is the most inclusive iteration of the forum yet with its diversity of over 400 participants and speakers, further consolidating the position of the Governors' Forum as a genuine regional platform for strategic policy and programme direction for humanitarian, development, and peace actors at all levels in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region. I am therefore delighted to present to you the outcome of the fourth Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum meeting. This year's meeting also serves as a symbolic bookend for the first five-year implementation phase of the RS SRR and launches deliberations into the next phase. I am therefore convinced that the report will help in reminding us of the commitments and actions to be taken at different levels and institutions to advance the realisation of the RS SRR across the Lake Chad Basin region.

*H.E. Mamman Nuhu*

**H.E. Mamman Nuhu (Amb.)**

Executive Secretary, Lake Chad Basin  
Commission & Head of Mission, Multinational  
Joint Task Force (MJTF)





## STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

# UNDP REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA

In the complex and dynamic landscape of the Lake Chad Basin region, UNDP, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission's stabilization programme – implemented under the regional leadership of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and local custodianship of the Governors of the region has been both the paragon of resilience and a beacon of hope. It has introduced a commendable blueprint on doing development in crisis contexts. Progress made over the past five years is testament to the power local ownership and collaboration in improving conditions for countless lives.

The metamorphosis witnessed: from inception of joint operations revitalizing state presence in several remote and border areas, to the return of over 400,000 internally displaced persons to their homelands gives all of us hope. Yet, the looming shadow of insurgent threats persists, reminding us of the volatility that grips communities in the Lake Chad Basin and those tirelessly working to support them.

The challenges are multifaceted—climate-induced development decelerations, menacing food insecurity, and lost opportunities for livelihoods for those reliant on the Lake Chad's resources. These adversities demand more than a reactive response. They require an approach firmly rooted in tackling the root causes of these adversities. They require strong development investments.

This is why UNDP is supporting the Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum as the most important political and pivotal platform for uniting regional stakeholders and visionaries to confront the intersecting challenges of humanitarian development, and peace crises. From governors to community leaders, the 4th Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum served as the vessel for essential discussions, capturing progress made and agreeing on solutions to obstacles on the path to sustainable peace and development. What makes it extraordinary is its emphasis on cross-border interventions - a reflection of strategic unity in a complex landscape.

Looking ahead, UNDP is resolute in its pledge to support the leadership and communities of the Lake Chad Basin in their efforts to sculpt a future of stability, growth, and inclusive development.

The upcoming Forum in Nigeria in 2024 will build on this progress and guide the next phase of stabilization work as a step forward in our collective efforts to regenerate the Sahel.

*Ahunna Eziakonwa*

**Ahunna Eziakonwa**  
Director, UNDP - RBA





## STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

# GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHAD

I am delighted to have welcomed you, on behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno to Chad at such a critical time in the history of our country and the Lake Chad Basin region.

In 2018, the governors from the Boko Haram affected areas in the region established the Governors Forum to serve as an annual interactive platform where the governors and other development actors, including policymakers, international organisations, civil society groups, academics and the public can have a dialogue on how to collectively transform the region into a peaceful and prosperous region for everyone. The deliberations that emerged from this first forum was instrumental in developing the Regional Stabilization Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (RS SSR).

Five years after the adoption of the RS SRR we have seen significant improvements on the ground as well as in the cooperation between the territories affected. The successful execution of the 4th Governors Forum in N'djamena in July is one example of this; the Governors agreed, among much else, to upscale and enhance joint efforts towards stabilizing, building peace, and fostering sustainable development, across the Lake Chad Basin, through enhancing livelihoods and infrastructure, maintaining and improving security, promoting dialogue, and improving cross-border cooperation.

Over the past year and a half, we have seen over 90 000 people dissociated from Boko Haram. This positive development stood at the centre of the Fourth Forum with instructive discussions on community-based reintegration as well as transitional justice. The framework of the RS SRR aids in ensuring context-specific solutions are developed that are fit for the region. Transitional justice processes should be designed and implemented in a manner that recognises international processes, procedures and standards and ensures that acceptable community practices are part and parcel of the reintegration process.

Following the Forums in Maiduguri, Niamey and Yaoundé, I am delighted that the fourth Forum was held in N'djamena, Chad. Chad under the Leadership of its illustrious Head of State, His Excellency Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, is happy to have hosted, the Forum and to witness the level of discussion and engagement that cut across the humanitarian, development, and peace spectrum. It is my strong conviction that the quality of the discussion and deliberation will contribute to the quality of programme and policy that will emerge in the coming months to address the crisis in our region. As a nation, we believe that the problem in Lake Chad Basin is regional, and we are committed to supporting a regional platform such as the Governors Forum as a credible space for advancing common solutions to common problems in the region.

*Moussa Batraki*

**Moussa Batraki,**  
Minister of Economic Foresight and International  
Partners-Republic of Chad





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The fourth meeting of the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development (the Governors' Forum) was held from 5-7 July 2023 in N'Djamena, the Republic of Chad. The meeting was convened by the Lake Chad Basin Commission with the technical support of the United Nations Development Programme and the African Union Commission. The meeting was attended by the governors of the Far North and North regions of Cameroon, Hadjer-Lamis and Lac provinces of Chad, Diffa Region of Niger, and Borno State of Nigeria. The governors of Adamawa and Yobe States were represented at the meeting. Also in attendance were representatives of the African Union, the African Development Bank, the United Nations (UN) System, other multilateral and bilateral institutions, donor governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), and the media.**

The meeting built upon the earlier Governors' Forum meetings held in May 2018 in Maiduguri (Nigeria), in July 2019 in Niamey (Niger) and in October 2021 in Yaoundé (Cameroon). It provides the political platform and endorsement for the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region (the RS-SRR). The 2023 Forum advanced the deliberation2023 and comes of the first three meetings, considered improvements in the region from 2018 to 2023, and explored critical areas of focus for the Strategy beyond the current life span of the Strategy by the end of 2023. The 4<sup>th</sup> Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum also consolidated the position of the Governors' Forum as a genuine regional platform for strategic policy and programme direction for humanitarian, development, and peace actors in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region.

The three-day event provided invaluable political and strategic space for stakeholders and actors in the region to deliberate on several key issues across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) spectrum that are peculiar to the region, crucially assess lessons learned so far from the implementation of the RS-SRR and consider ways of improving the implementing of the strategy as it reaches the end of its first phase. :

## THE FUTURE OF THE RS-SRR:

The role of the RS-SRR was recognised, and participants emphasised the need to ensure the continuation of the RS-SRR beyond its current life span of August 2023. All partners are called upon to reflect on lessons learnt over the past five years and the opportunities for the next iteration and phase of the Strategy. The Forum noted that a paradigm shift is required in the next iteration of the RS-SRR implementation to take into consideration the contextual changes and reordering of priorities. The Forum noted changing socio-economic and political conditions in the region, the need to deepen cross-sectoral and cross-border partnerships to tackle the multi-layered and complex crisis in the region, the urgency of the operationalisation nexus approach, the need for a flexible yet predictable funding mechanism for the next phase of the RS-SRR, the cross-cutting and multi-sectoral nature of women and youth agenda and the importance of a coordinated, context-specific and community centred approach to managing the exit from Boko Haram.



## **SCALING UP THE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS MADE OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS:**

While affirming the progress made in the past five years, the Forum recognised the contribution of the UNDP-led Regional Stabilisation Facility (RSF) for the Lake Chad and noted that the RSF has proved that the Concept of Regional Stabilisation is working. The Forum noted the urgent need to scale up interventions to reach critical populations and to build scale. The mobilisation of crucial financial resources within a comprehensive yet flexible financial mechanism is crucial for the next phase of the Strategy.

## **THE SECURITY AND HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT OF THE REGION:**

Presentation by the Force Commander shows that progress has been made in securing the Lake Chad Basin territory amidst the persistent attacks by Boko Haram groups. The improved security situation is due to the combined responses by the MNJTF, national military forces, and vigilante groups, which have combined to reduce the capacity of the insurgent groups in the region. However, insurgents continue to launch attacks at both civilians and military targets, leaving communities and humanitarian actors at high risk. This situation is complicated by the opportunities and risks associated with demobilising the large numbers of ex-fighters/ associates who have surrendered to the authorities in the affected countries. Despite the progress made through stabilisation and developmental initiatives across the region, the humanitarian situation in the area remains a concern. The Forum noted and urged humanitarian actors working in the region to exhibit greater buy-in to locally generated ideas and initiatives and to find a pragmatic approach that supports local ownership and respects humanitarian principles.

## **COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF EX-BOKO HARAM ASSOCIATES.**

The mass surrender since May 2021 after the passing of Abubakar Shekau created opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-associates. Despite progress in policy development, member states and sub-national authorities are still struggling with the surrender surge. The 2023 Governors Forum offered partners the opportunity to rethink approaches that are coordinated, community-based and cover the spectrum of socio-economic and psychological needs of both communities and ex-associates. Community-based rehabilitation and reintegration should be expanded and strengthened across the region, taking greater account of the views, interests and needs of victimised communities and the necessity for the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of both displaced persons and rehabilitated former members of Boko Haram and ISWAP. Ensuring the mainstreaming of transitional justice in the rehabilitation and reintegration process is critical in ensuring context-specific solutions that are fit for the region. Transitional justice processes should be designed and implemented in a manner that recognises international processes, procedures and standards and ensures that acceptable community practices are part and parcel of the reintegration process.

To avoid providing a negative incentive to join these insurgent groups, approaches by partners must ensure that affected communities are placed at the centre of their intervention and that support is provided to communities that are first and foremost victims as well as ex-associates. Therefore, lessons from the Borno model should be drawn and shared with other territories and member states to promote a uniform approach across the region. In addition, the rehabilitation



and reintegration approach must pay attention to the special needs of women, children, and young people.

### **SUPPORTING, TRAINING AND REINTEGRATING MEMBERS OF VIGILANTE GROUPS:**

The operation of self-help and vigilante groups in the affected communities presents both opportunities and risks. While in most cases, they have served to protect the communities, including supporting and working closely with the formal security agencies, there are still questions around their compliance to human rights standards. Efforts to secure affected communities must, therefore, take into consideration the role of the self-help or vigilante groups, including the design of an appropriate support package that would cater for their capacity building, financial support and a robust demobilisation and reintegration plan. Demobilisation and reintegration plans for the self-help and vigilante groups should be similar to any support provided to ex-Boko Haram associates, including paying attention to post-service support to ensure the sustainability of reintegration process.

### **DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR FORCED DISPLACEMENT:**

Significant progress has been made in reducing forced displacement in the region. Evidence shows that, at least 400,000 internally displaced persons have returned to their communities since 2019. Nevertheless, ensuring continued support towards voluntary and dignified returns should be crucial for RS-SRR partners. These goals cannot, however, be met without scaled-up financial and other support, enhanced partnerships, and new ways of working. Therefore, the role of national and sub-national authorities in tackling forced displacement remains key for any sustainable solution for IDPs and refugees in the Lake Chad Basin region.

### **CLIMATE SECURITY:**

There is a significant, link between climate change and the current crisis in the LCB region. Climate shocks have contributed immensely to socio-economic depression in the region and contributed to the area becoming a fertile ground for Boko Haram and ISWAP recruiting. These climate shocks have also helped foster and exacerbate the region's farmer/herder conflicts. Efforts are being made by many national and sub-national administrations to ameliorate the effects of these climate shocks (mitigation and adaptation), including through harnessing local knowledge and input (especially from farmers and herders), and consulting members of local communities (including women).

### **THE ROLE OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND CIVIL SOCIETY:**

There is a crucial need to enhance the participation and inclusion of women and youth, and that of civil society, from the beginning and across the full cycle of RS-SRR implementation. This inclusivity was underscored as essential to the optimal success of the programs and projects undertaken to advance RS-SRR goals.

Finally, it was agreed that the next Governor's Forum will be held in Nigeria in 2024, where the governors will report on progress toward the realisation of RS-SRR goals and continue their deliberation on plans to implement the second phase of the strategy.



# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Over the past two decades, the Lake Chad Region (LCB) has been severely impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency and other related conflicts. The impacts range from massive internal and cross-border displacement, the destruction of the social fabric of societies and property, human rights abuses, disrupted public services, and diminished capacities of government institutions. In partial response to the security and conflict challenges, the governments of the four riparian countries established a joint military task force called the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015 to launch a coordinated military counter-offensive against Boko Haram. The establishment of the Taskforce was later followed by the development of a Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience (RS-SRR) by the Lake Chad Basin Commission with the support of the African Union and UNDP in 2018. The Strategy provides a robust framework for addressing the region's complex and urgent security, humanitarian, and development challenges. It recognises the need for a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, coordinated set of sub-national, national, and cross-border efforts for the region's long-term stabilisation, recovery, and resilience.

The RS-SRR's nine (9) pillars and forty (40) strategic objectives have provided the frame for developing initiatives and programmes to ameliorate and end the crisis in the region. The RS-SRR also required its localisation through the Territorial Action Plans (TAPs) (<https://communityconnect.cblt.org/topic/territorial-action-plan-tap-strategic-summaries>). These TAPs have been prepared and adopted by each of the eight states/regions/provinces most affected by Boko Haram in the LCB region. The RS-SRR builds on inclusivity, local ownership, and a **New Way of Working**. Over the past years, the RS-SRR has become a locally anchored and multi-partner effort that has led to rebuilding the social contract between the government and communities by providing essential infrastructure and basic services, security, and livelihood opportunities for affected communities. The implementation of the Strategy has also recorded successes in developing and harmonising regional policies, sharing best practices, and producing evidence-based research for influencing policy.

The Lake Chad Basin Governors Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development (the Governors' Forum), an integral part of the RS-SRR, has served as the most important political platform for cross-border and regional interaction with various stakeholders and interlocutors. Over the years, the Forum has established itself as a platform for stakeholder exchanges and the main platform for political dialogue in the LCB. Since the last Governors Forum in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in October 2021, there have been significant contextual developments and shifts in the conflict pattern in the region. The MNJTF has recorded significant success in the fight against Boko Haram groups by launching two military operations: Operation Yancin Tafki II in December 2021 and Operation Lake Sanity from March to June 2022. Combined with the other efforts to stabilize and develop the affected communities, these operations have led to the rebuilding of new communities and restoration of social order across the LC region. It has also created significant opportunities for displaced persons and refugees to return to their homelands with dignity.



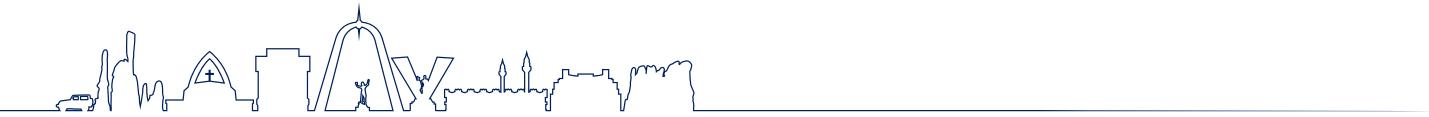
The combined impact of the death of Shekau in May 2021 and the upscaling of the military offensive against the insurgent groups that operate in the region has triggered massive surrender and the defection of Boko Haram associates. These surrenders have, in turn, simultaneously created a challenge in ensuring comprehensive and effective management of mass exits from the insurgent groups as well as an opportunity for a community-centred rehabilitation and reintegration process, which recognises the role of transitional justice in the reintegration process. The impact of the insurgency on the affected communities and the discontent from the killings led to the emergence of vigilante groups in some countries in the region. These groups have gained recognition from their communities, governments and security actors but have also come under criticism for alleged human rights violations. Moreover, the question of the future of the vigilante groups post-insurgency remains unaddressed.

After nearly 13 years of conflict and insurgency, the insurgent groups (Boko Haram and ISWAP) continue to attack and unleash violence on communities, producing around 2.9 million internally displaced (IDPs), including 2 million in Nigeria alone. The Governors and Governments of the region have prioritised the return of IDPs and refugees to their home communities. They have also co-convened Governors' Forums that have provided the best opportunity for stakeholders (including Governors, donors, the African Union, UN entities and local CSOs) to interrogate options for localised and comprehensive solutions for IDPs and Refugees.

Changes in the climatic and environmental conditions in the region have led to struggles for scarce resources, inter-communal conflict, youth unemployment and restiveness. These urgent issues must be addressed locally, regionally, and globally to strengthen community resilience and pathways for sustainable livelihoods. Similarly, whilst the insurgency has led to severe regional humanitarian and development challenges, conflicts between farmers and herders also continue to create tension. As a result, the Fourth Governors' Forum paid particular attention to the options for addressing the climate security and conflict linkage in the region while interrogating the dynamics between farmers and herders towards long-term sustainable solutions.

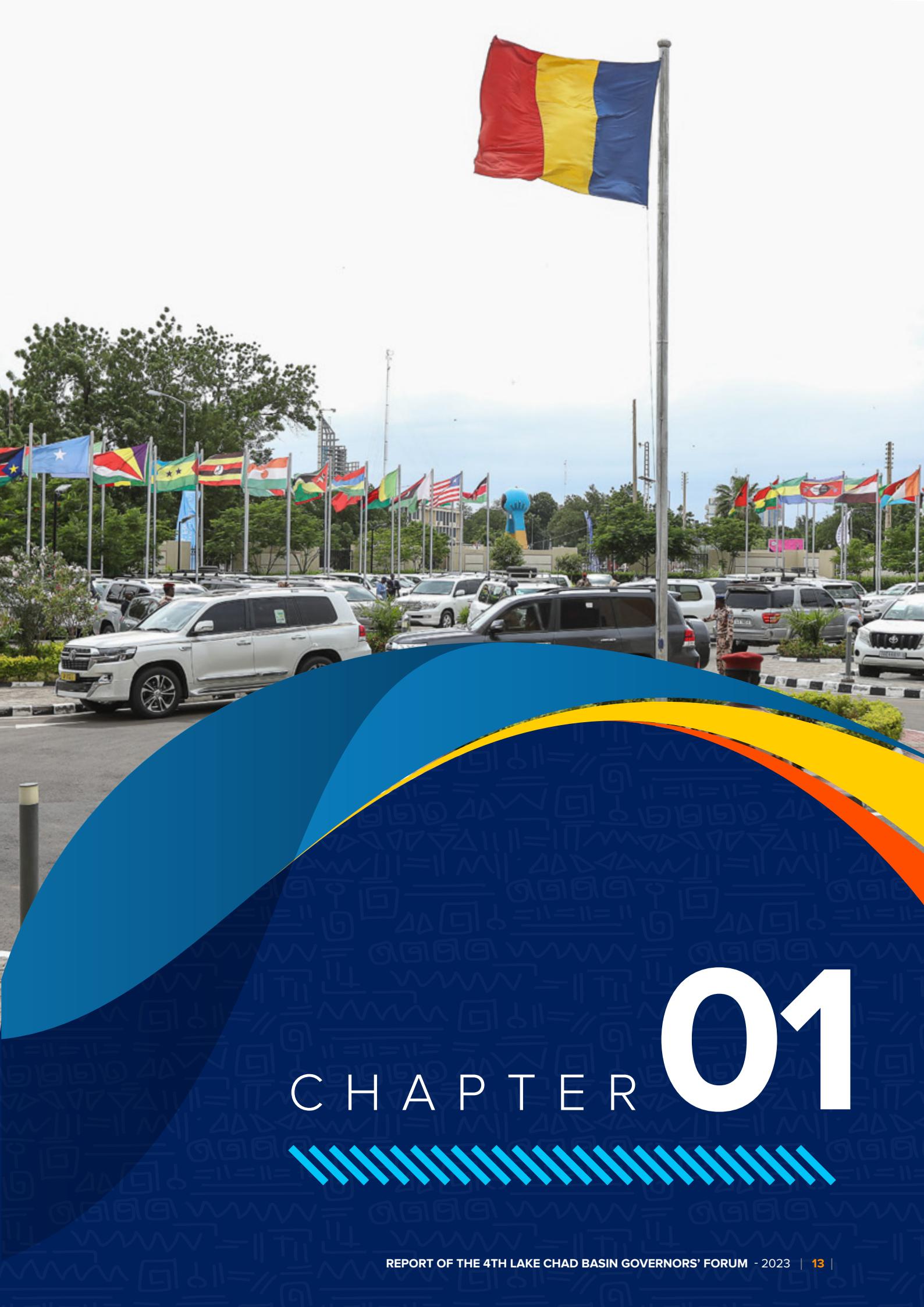
### **The Role of the Governors and the Forum in RS-SRR Implementation**

The Governors of the eight most affected territories and their annual Forum have central roles in RS-SRR implementation for two main reasons. First, the RS-SRR recognises the impact of local and territorial realities on the humanitarian, development, and security challenges in the region. This recognition underpins the acceptance and appreciation of the nexus between local realities and peculiarities, and regional complexities. Related to this is its recognition of the imperatives for taking a regional approach to addressing the crisis through the establishment and utilization of platforms and structures that promote regional and cross-border dialogues amongst key stakeholders and interlocutors.



Second, political cooperation is recognised by the RS-SRR as the foundational principle upon which its implementation rests. The RS-SRR also recognizes that the Forum serves as the primary mechanism for cross-border political cooperation amongst the Governors as well as the means of domesticating and giving political ownership of the implementation of this Strategy at the territorial levels to the political actors closest to the affected communities.

As intended, the LCBC Governors' Forum has become firmly established and entrenched as the most important and relevant cross-border platform for political cooperation in the LCB region. The fourth Forum offered an opportunity to the eight Governors to strengthen ownership of the Forum process and created opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation and engagement with the Governors to consolidate gains and advance regional cooperation on key priority areas as the implementation of the Strategy completes its first stage. The fourth Forum addressed several closely interconnected themes in a cross-cutting way. An overarching focus of the fourth Forum was on the opportunities and risks that present themselves in RS-SRR implementation in the coming years. The chapters that follow provide insight into these discussions and debates, their broad outcomes, key messages, recommendations, and action points.



# CHAPTER 01





## Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience: Progress Over the Last Five Years

### **Acknowledging the Progress Made Since the Inception of the RS-SRR:**

The Forum was held at a time when the first phase of the RS-SRR is coming to an end and good practices have already yielded substantial progress in the area of stabilization; with more than 18,000 Boko Haram fighters laying down their arms in 2022 alone. The security of lives and property have been significantly enhanced in the region. And despite the region's overall fragility, a remarkable number of pockets of stability have emerged within it. This improvement is partly the result of the military operations and other actions undertaken by states and territorial governments of the LCB region, including through the MNJTF, national military forces, local vigilante groups, and other actors. Despite these improvements, there is now increasingly acceptance of the importance of balancing between kinetic and non-kinetic solutions to the crisis in the region. Therefore military actions must be accompanied by the intensification of socio-economic development in the affected areas.

In the last few years, significant degrees of stabilization have been achieved in the affected areas of the LCB region, with military operations successfully restoring state presence in several border and other areas in the region. As a result, more than 400,000 IDPs have returned to their localities of origin and reintegration projects have been promoted to foster recovery for-affected communities. To reinforce the current progress, it is important to promote renewed local ownership of RS-SRR programs and projects, and in each case from its very beginning. While many such examples of the progress that has been achieved in RS-SRR implementation are highlighted in other parts of this report, in order to provide a picture of the overall context within which the deliberations of this Fourth Governors' Forum took place, it is important to discuss key aspects of this improving situation in the most affected communities in the region.

With the assistance of RS-SRR donors (including the ISG, RSF, the African Development Bank and the World Bank), basic infrastructure and services in the affected areas have also been strengthened to a significant extent, and social indicators have improved appreciably. Large numbers of destroyed homes, schools, health centres have either been rehabilitated or built. Many roads have either been built or re-built. Key government agencies have also returned to many of the affected localities. As a result, life has been restored to a host of formerly empty villages and whole swathes of territory in the region, including in the Banki/Amchide areas of Adamawa State of Nigeria and the Far North Region of Cameroon. In addition, living standards in the region have progressively improved to an appreciable (though still insufficient) extent, among the people of the eight most affected states/territories. Significant increases in the involvement of women and youth at all stages of the design and implementation of territorial policies and projects were also reported.

The increasing surrender of ex-Boko Haram fighters/associates to the authorities in the region presents an opportunity for even greater progress to be made in building peace and advancing sustainable development in the LCB. These measures will further advance the goal of stabilization in the area. Despite strong opposition from victimised communities, progress has been made in the reintegration of these ex-fighters into the community. Important efforts are also underway to institute locally available and contextually-relevant transitional justice mechanisms to facilitate reintegration and foster healing within affected communities.



Additionally, much progress has been achieved in other areas, including the adoption and implementation of the TAPs, the reintegration of ex-fighters, cross-border cooperation, the mobilization of funds, and the inclusion of women, youth and civil society groups.

Since the last Governors' Forum, the LCBC has worked hard with its partners to advance RS-SRR implementation and has recorded appreciable and significant successes. These successes include the establishment of the Lake Chad Civil Society Organizations Platform (CSO Platform), the Knowledge Management Platform (KMP) and a regional platform across pillar working groups (PWGs). The LCBC is also working with UNDP and other partners to build on an innovative Multi-Partner Delivery Fund, designed as a more flexible funding mechanism.

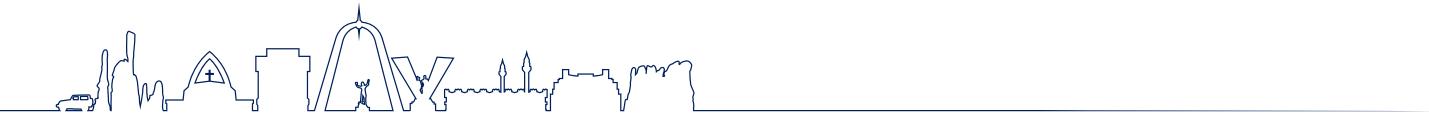
Yet, the region is now at a critical crossroads and the next phase of the RS-SRR presents an excellent opportunity to sustain the foundations for long-term development of the region. This will ensure that communities move from stabilization to sustained stability. This new paradigm shift is what UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Africa, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, has referred to as the move toward "stabilization 2.0". The concrete implementation of the RS-SRR has "restored hope and dignity" across the LCB region.

### **Recognizing the Importance of Scaling-Up, Building Trust and Continuing Mutual Support among RS-SRR Partners:**

Some RS-SRR partners have scaled up their actions and interventions since the third Forum in Yaoundé, Cameroon. These include the Office of the UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, the World Bank, and the European Union. The RSF, territorial governments, and other partners have also supported each other in implementing and scaling-up RS-SRR programs and projects.

The considerable progress made so far in initiating and scaling up RS-SRR implementation in the region also underscores that the RS-SRR' implementing partners have, "over time, shown proof of concept" as "a robust framework for the humanitarian/development nexus." Nevertheless, there remains an opportunity to renew and boost the focus and effort on scaling-up projects that have contributed to the success enjoyed so far at showing proof of concept. To this end, greater attention should be paid by RS-SRR partners to providing durable, longer-term, solutions to the crisis in the region, in its various dimensions.

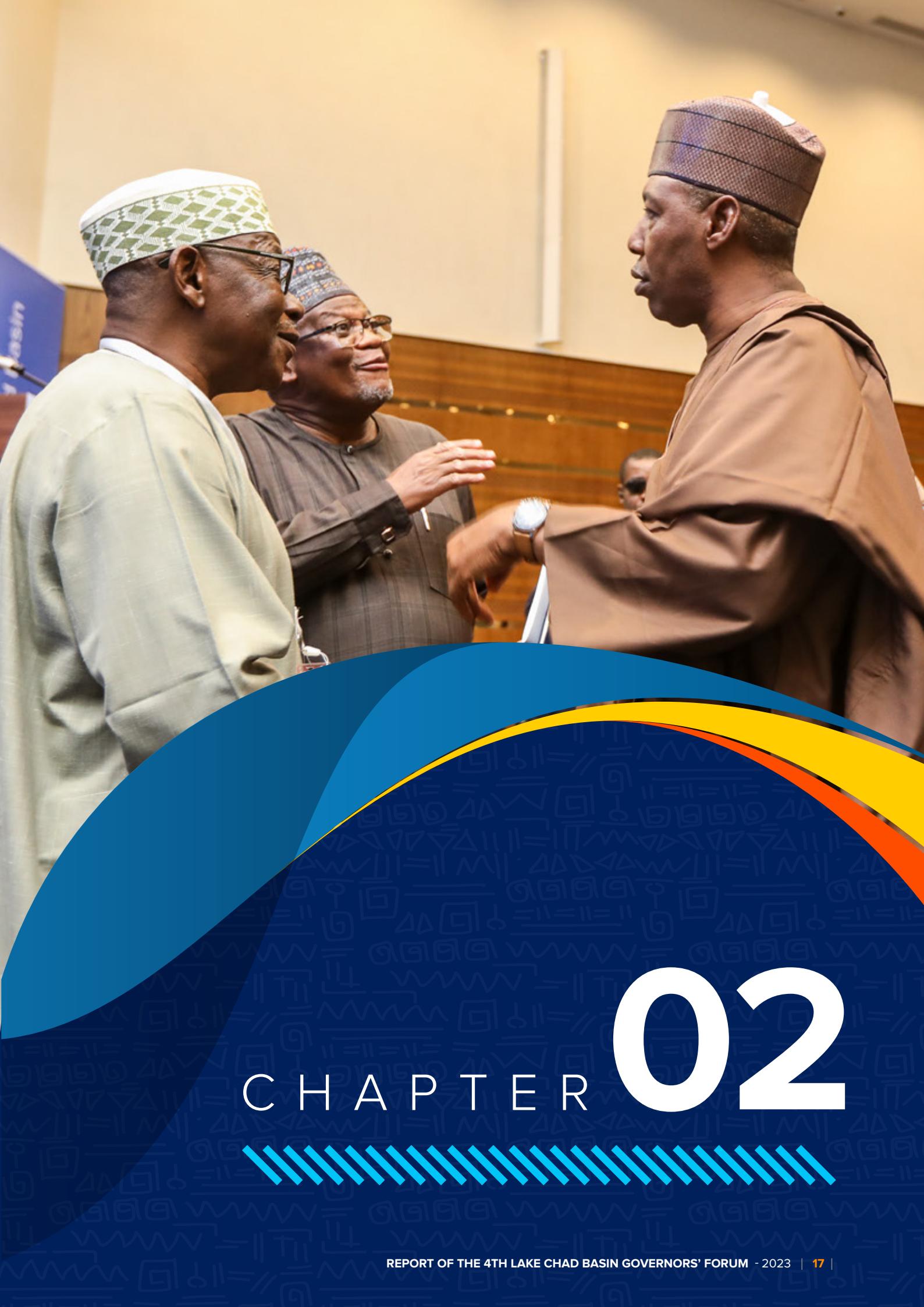
In the light of all the improvements so far recorded in stabilizing the region, and the gaps that still exist, it is now even more imperative for RS-SRR partners to focus more of their efforts and resources than has hitherto been the case on developing the next phase of the RS-SRR. In so doing, greater emphasis should be placed on socio-economic development in the region, as well as on augmenting the growing confidence of the population in the progressive restoration of security, peace and sustainable development in their various communities.



## **Key Recommendations and Action Points:**

RS-SRR partners should:

- strengthen their partnerships in order to create more durable solutions to the various dimensions and aspects of the crisis in the region;
- devote a much greater share of their attention and resources to the socio-economic development of the most affected communities in the region, as a way of achieving more rapid and robust success in the achievement of RS-SRR goals;
- redouble their efforts to vastly improve the hydraulic capacity of the Lake Chad and regenerate the surrounding basin, in order to facilitate socio-economic development in the region and turn it into a zone of peace;
- increase their financial and other support for the implementation and monitoring of the TAPs;
- work together to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and extend the presence of the state to all “ungoverned spaces” within the most affected territories in the region.



## CHAPTER 02



## A Shifting Security Context and the Humanitarian Situation in the Region

### **A Complex and Evolving Humanitarian Situation:**

The now protracted Boko Haram-induced crisis has been characterized by a broad pattern of violent attacks on civilians. This has resulted in the proliferation of IDP and refugee camps and the need for urgent humanitarian assistance to be extended to millions of people in the region. From 2015 to 2020, there was a dramatic deterioration in the security, and thus the humanitarian, situation in the most affected areas. More recently, the region has experienced a more undulating pattern of violent attacks, with a steep decline being recorded early in 2021, followed by a relatively small uptick later that year. Despite a marked reduction in such incidents between 2021-2023, violent attacks are still recorded in the region. This uncertainty in the security situation has resulted in fluctuating displacement numbers, as well as challenges ascertaining humanitarian support for IDPs. While there has been a reduction in the numbers of persons housed in IDP and refugee camps as a result of the return of large numbers of displaced persons to their hometowns and villages, the overall need for humanitarian assistance in the region has not diminished to the desired extent. Although there is no humanitarian solution to the crisis in the region, there is still a critical need for the extension of humanitarian assistance to affected communities in the region. Being multi-dimensional, the humanitarian crisis in the region requires a multi-sectoral, multi-level, and multi-stakeholder approach. This complexity is embedded in the RS-SRR implementation framework.

### **An Improved but Still Fragile Security Environment:**

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has continued to carry out its activities and operations towards the attainment of its mandate. Its mandate is to, amongst other actions, create a safe environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, by significantly reducing violence and other abuses against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence, in full compliance with International Humanitarian Law and the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy. The Force recognizes that its actions create the conditions necessary for Governors in the Region to deliver their developmental projects to their peoples in line with national and sub-national plans, and the RS-SRR. National armed forces and vigilante groups have also contributed significantly in this regard.

### **Character of the Continuing Threat:**

The areas of reach of the threat elements operating within the region are as follows: the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) operates from remote bases on the Lake Chad Islands; the Shekau faction of the Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-da'wah wa'l-jihad (JAS) operates from the Mandara Mountains and enclaves within Nigeria; and the Bakura faction, also of the JAS, perpetrates its criminal activities from the fringes of the Lake Chad Basin across the borders of the Republics of Niger, Nigeria and Chad. The preferred means of terrorists' attack on troops remains the employment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Other forms of terrorist actions include direct and indirect attacks on troops, ambushes and propaganda. Predatory attacks on civilian communities have also been witnessed. These were attacks carried out mainly to loot foodstuff, medicines, livestock and other household items, as well as to kidnap persons for ransom. Such attacks, involving kidnappings, killings and other atrocities, continue to occur in the region, if at an appreciably lesser rate.



### **The MNJTF's Counter-Insurgency Approach:**

The MNJTF has adopted a multipronged approach to curb the activities of the terrorists. Its concept of operations covers kinetic and non-kinetic efforts coordinated by the MNJTF's Headquarters. The MNJTF conducted 7 major operations and several subsidiary ones in the past years. Its operations in the past several months focused on the degradation of the capacity of terrorists within the fringes of the Lake Chad Islands, while enhancing local support to isolate them and induce more surrender. The importance of non-kinetic actions in winning counterinsurgency operations cannot be overemphasised. As such, the MNJTF has conducted a series of non-kinetic activities across its areas of operation. The MNJTF has deployed influence/information operations and Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) projects. These efforts permitted the return of IDPs, facilitated stabilisation initiatives (such as the Joint Action Plans developed by UNDP), and expanded the size of the area in which humanitarian actors could undertake their important work. These efforts were complemented by the actions taken by national armed forces and civilian vigilante groups.

### **Increasing Deployment of IEDs by Insurgents:**

Although the overall threat level in the LCB region continues on a downward trend, there has been a worrying increase lately in the use of IEDs, particularly in the Far North Province of Cameroon and corresponding areas on the Nigerian side of the border. These IEDs target the MNJTF and national armed forces and take a significant toll on civilians. As such, the urgent need remains to clear remnants of Boko Haram fighters from their bases on the Tumbuns (islands on the fringes of the Lake Chad) from which they continue to launch attacks on the surrounding areas and beyond. The Tumbuns serve as their logistics hub, secure havens, and staging grounds. Their occupation of these islands also facilitates their generation of funds through illegal fishing and farming activities. The MNJTF needs urgent and greater support to be able to achieve this crucial, if not pivotal, goal. One key area of need is enhancing its amphibious and naval capabilities in and around Lake Chad. Receipt of additional funds by the MNJTF will also enable it to expand its capacity to secure the many ungoverned spaces that dot the region and help mitigate the crisis.

### **An Improved Situation on the Whole:**

One of the indices of the improvement in the security situation in the region, is the relatively large numbers of Boko Haram fighters who have surrendered to the authorities in various countries in the region. For example, over one hundred and ninety-nine (199) repentant Boko Haram fighters have surrendered to the authorities since 2021. The improvements being experienced in the security environment in the region have provided more of an enabling environment for the conduct of humanitarian aid operations, the return and resettlement of large numbers of displaced persons to their hometowns and villages, and the implementation of other RS-SRR goals. For example, the MNJTF Sector 3 in Nigeria has also worked closely with the UNDP for the return of approximately 40,000 IDPs in Nigeria, including the return to Ngarannam. In January of this year alone, about 3,200 displaced persons returned to their ancestral homes in Bagatoulorom (Sector 2-Chad) owing to improved levels of security. This number continues to rise, though many returnees are yet to receive tangible support for their rehabilitation and reintegration into their home communities.

Overall, however, the emergent (though rapidly evolving) security situation in the most affected areas in the region is appreciably better than it has been in previous years, though still quite fragile and



risky. Swift and even more robust action is therefore required in order to prevent the region from relapsing into a more violent environment.

### **A Growing Population and Increasing Humanitarian Needs:**

The population of the region is expected to double over the next two decades, and a large percentage of this population will be made up of young people. Without adequate investment in physical infrastructure and in basic services such as education, health and decent jobs, social protection will be undermined, and youth unemployment will grow. In such a context of severe deprivation where legitimate means of livelihood remain inaccessible, many young people may see violence as a viable means to earn a living. This presents a significant risk going forward.

### **Foundational Principles of Civilian Protection: “Do no harm” and safe humanitarian access:**

To enhance the protection of civilians, it is important that humanitarian principles are incorporated into the national laws and policies of the four affected countries in the Lake Chad Basin. The “do no harm” principle was emphasized as the foundation for protection efforts, which include increased monitoring of, and accountability for, human rights violations. The need for collaboration between humanitarian, development, peace and stabilization actors in integrating risk assessments and protecting civilians was stressed. There is also a need for humanitarian actors to enjoy cooperation from national and sub-national governments in accessing those in need of assistance in the region.

### **Shrinking funding:**

In a context of expanding needs, the funds available for addressing the LCB crisis has continued to shrink. Despite the huge number of people in need of humanitarian assistance humanitarian actors regularly struggle to secure funding to scale up assistance. Humanitarian actions in Africa are often considered less worthy of funding than humanitarian needs in other regions of the world. The funding pledged for addressing the Ukraine crisis alone is more than the combined funding made available for addressing the crises in the four LCB countries. Addressing pressing humanitarian needs in the Lake Chad basin will require US\$2.8 billion over two years. Yet in 2022, only 55% of this fund was received.

### **Key Recommendations and Action Points:**

#### ***RS-SRR partners should:***

- infuse much more resources into the MNJTF and other pro-government security actors in the region;
- continue to develop and implement a holistic approach to the humanitarian crisis in the region, focusing much more on socio-economic development alongside humanitarian assistance;
- enhance consultation and coordination among various actors and sectors to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus;
- pay greater attention to the need for durable solutions to the humanitarian crisis in the region, and ramp-up funding to make this possible;



- enhance their efforts to reinvest in the rehabilitation of infrastructure and income-generating activities for returning displaced populations;
- make greater effort to promote and ensure access to essential services at the local level for displaced persons;
- paying close attention to repentant women by creating employment opportunities for them and taking action to empower them;
- make greater effort to ensure that access is provided to humanitarian organizations to undertake their work;
- prioritize the protection of civilians and integrate robust risk assessments into their projects;
- show greater recognition of the fact that sexual violence is often used as a weapon, putting women and children at risk, and take steps to prevent it as well as punish those who perpetrate such acts in the region;
- enhance their efforts to monitor, report and address human rights violations, and to strengthen the rule of law and address sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls.

***LCB states and local authorities should:***

- make more efforts to protect humanitarian actors and facilitate their access to those in need;
- redouble their efforts to protect the rights of displaced persons and ensure the safe passage of humanitarian aid.



# CHAPTER 03



## Community Reintegration and Transitional Justice

### **Reintegrating Ex-Insurgents:**

Given the urgent necessity of rehabilitating and reintegrating into the community, ex-Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters who have surrendered to the authorities, it is important that LCB States, territorial administrations, donors and partners redouble their efforts to meet this challenge, including through the provision of the necessary human and material resources. There is also an urgent opportunity for RS-SRR partners to work harder and more intentionally in its phase two to actively generate even more such mass exits from insurgent groups. One important component of this effort must be to actively institute the kind of meaningful socio-economic developmental measures that will discourage people in the area from joining insurgent groups. Additionally, the perception by people in the affected areas in the LCB of being secure or not is often as important to sustaining the trend of mass exits, if not more important.

### **Locally-adapted Transitional Justice Processes:**

Furthermore, there is also a need to institute locally-adapted transitional justice (TJ) mechanisms in affected areas of the region to smoothen the reintegration of ex-fighters into their various communities. Such TJ mechanisms must leverage on existing local institutions and systems. In this connection, the fact that in the Diffa Region of Niger, the affected communities themselves have the final word on whether repentant Boko Haram and ISWAP ex-fighters are to be forgiven was seen as a noteworthy and scalable good practice. The importance of appropriate and effective TJ in community reintegration is underscored by the fact that the sheer numbers of those who surrender has meant that not all of them can be prosecuted criminally. This last point is reinforced by lessons learnt from TJ efforts that have been made elsewhere on the African continent.

### **Community-Based Reintegration:**

Many factors underlie the community-based approaches to reconciliation and reintegration across the Lake Chad Basin region. The circumstances surrounding the penetration of border and other communities by Boko Haram insurgents, the victimization of populations by their own youth, and the suspected complicity of individuals among them (that often motivate village-wide searches for associates of Boko Haram), all present conflicting factors that cause the ambivalent attitudes of the community to the reintegration of individuals whom they struggle to designate as “repentant.” The establishment and operationalization of community-based reintegration processes, in which the views, interests, and needs of the affected communities are centred, is a major regional priority.

### **Strengthening Existing Transitional and Criminal Justice Systems:**

There is an urgent need to strengthen and harmonize the transitional and criminal justice systems of the affected LCB countries. One reason for this is to effectively undertake the investigation and prosecution of persons associated with Boko Haram as well as pursue other forms of accountability. Another is to ensure that persons associated with Boko Haram and other violent extremist groups, members of vigilante groups, and returnee youth, are rehabilitated according to a common regional approach linked to broader reintegration activities and including psychosocial support, health, nutrition and vocational training and income-generating activities.



## **Moment of Opportunity:**

We are currently in a moment of opportunity to revamp the approach taken in the implementation of the RS-SRR's reintegration goals, including through the intensification of gender-based and child-sensitive approaches. Without doubt, the latest comprehensive studies on the issue show increasing acceptance of returnees into the affected communities as a result of efforts made by many RS-SRR partners, especially national and sub-national governments, such as Borno state of Nigeria and the Diffa Region of Niger. There is therefore some robust evidence of social and public support of a transparent demobilization process with a clear government message.

## **Women and Children:**

By holistically considering the lived experience and the whole journey of the individual involved with an armed group, the idea of "the male adult returnee" can be deconstructed. As conceptualized in Pillar 3 of the RS-SRR, the returnee must be screened and disarmed according to a common regional gender-based approach in line with international and continental standards. Emphasis is placed here on an effective and sustainable rights-based management process, for returnees and vulnerable community members, while supporting sustainable social, political, and economic reintegration.

Along these broad lines, there is a need to pay particular attention to the treatment and reintegration of women and children formerly associated with Boko Haram and ISWAP, including through the signing, and implementation, of protocols for the rapid handover of children suspected of having association with Boko Haram to relevant civilian child protection actors, as well as providing access for child protection actors to all centres holding children, in accordance with applicable international obligations, and the best interests of the child.

## **A Tight Poverty/Insurgency Nexus:**

These reintegration efforts also face the emergent challenge of managing the mass exodus of insurgents in a way that greatly reduces recidivism. Most people in the Lake Chad Basin Region remain in abject poverty leading to a plethora of crises in the forms of insurgency, electoral violence and crime. Such poverty amounts to an absolute denial of human rights wherever it occurs. Therefore, the message of states and non-states actors to the returnees cannot be: "leave the insurgency – welcome to poverty". Post-reintegration poverty is one of the greatest risks for the success of RS-SRR implementation in the LCB.

## **CBRR Policy:**

In addition, a regional CBRR policy that builds on work led by the Borno State Governor on reconciliation and reintegration has been produced and disseminated. This policy also relates to the Pillar Paper on Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (RS-SRR goal 4). Its more detailed objectives are to foster harmonised and comprehensive national CBRR policies, strategies and programmes across the region; provide prescriptive content and minimum common features for national CBRR policies, strategies and programmes; provide "whole-of-Government" and "whole-of-society" guidance on CBRR to national and sub-national governments in the four Lake Chad Basin countries and their national and international partners. Remarkably, Borno State has now adopted its own Reintegration Policy.



## **Challenges:**

National and sub-national governments in the region currently face some serious challenges in sustaining and ramping up their efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate repentant ex-insurgents within their various jurisdictions. These challenges include the difficulty of managing sheer numbers in the face of tens of thousands of ex-fighters leaving their former groups in places like Borno State of Nigeria and the Diffa Region of Niger; the paucity of rehabilitation centres that can accommodate these large numbers of ex-fighters at one and the same time; the lack of funding to provide and run such centres, provide needed services, and equip ex-fighters to thrive socio-economically once they have been reintegrated; and limited access in these areas to psycho-social services.

## **Key Recommendations and Action Points:**

### ***RS-SRR partners should:***

- sustain and scale up the efforts made so far to implement a regional transitional justice framework for the region that leverages existing local systems and institutions, and ensures sustainable recovery and long-term resilience of communities;
- 
- ensure the broader operationalization of community-based reintegration schemes that takes better account of the experiences, feelings and needs of the affected communities;
- 
- provide significantly more funding and other support for the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-fighters in the region;
- 
- also ensure that a significant level of funding and other support is provided for the socio-economic development of the affected communities in order to stem resentment within these communities regarding the support extended to ex-fighters. This will discourage members of such communities from joining insurgent groups in order to take advantage of the perceived benefits that ex-fighters receive from RS-SRR partners.

### ***The LCBC should:***

- sustain its efforts to conduct a systematic analysis of the character and coexistence of the formal and traditional justice systems in LCB regions, including the role and consideration of women's and youth rights in traditional transitional and restorative justice systems.



# CHAPTER 04





## Durable Solutions for Forced Displacement

### Continuing Human Suffering:

Millions of people in the LCB are trapped in protracted displacement and experiencing profound human suffering. Every day, conflict, maldevelopment and disasters continue to force people in the LCB to flee their homes. Although very large numbers of previously displaced persons from the affected communities have now been resettled, notably in Borno, as of 2022, it is estimated that the crisis in the LCB region has left 2.9 million people displaced internally within their own countries and in other countries. As such, renewed efforts to prevent displacement; are now more urgent than ever.

### The Progress made so far:

Significant progress has been made in responding to displacement in the region. For example, the number of refugees decreased overall in 2022 (and in one community in Adamawa state of Nigeria, returnees now outnumber those who never fled). Other examples include the facts that the Kampala Convention has now been domesticated in some of the affected countries; necessary domestic legal frameworks have been agreed upon and instituted in some of these countries; and there are ongoing discussions to return persons displaced across international boundaries to their home countries.

### Scaling-up Support:

It is important, however, to underscore the need for all RS-SRR partners to scale-up their financial and other support to assist national and sub-national authorities with their efforts to provide protection and sustainable comprehensive solutions to the difficult situation faced by refugees and IDPs in the region. Resources made available by RS-SRR partners for supporting displaced persons have decreased at a time of sustained, and even increased, need.

### Durable Solutions:

Another important set of issues connected to scaling-up financial support are the ways and means of achieving durable solutions for the millions of IDPs and refugees in the LCB region. The focus on durable solutions builds on the vision of the United Nation's Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement (<https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/>), which has three overarching goals; help IDPs find a durable solution to their displacement, better prevent new displacement crises from emerging, and ensure those facing displacement receive effective protection and assistance. These three goals can be achieved through moving away from a dominant humanitarian model that focuses almost entirely on aid (to the displaced) to a comprehensive, integrated and durable approach.

There is also a need to place the enhancement of livelihoods and socio-economic development much closer to the centre of efforts to respond to displacement in the region. Toward this end, RS-SRR partners must build upon and scale-up relevant pilot projects in the region. RS-SRR partners must also work smarter in the next phase of the program to achieve even more success in these regards. Working smarter will include ensuring greater cost effectiveness, strengthening partnerships, and working with and delivering many more programs and projects through locals. Further, the agency and sovereignty of the affected states must also be respected. This means that other RS-SRR actors must follow government-led processes.



As such, achieving durable solutions will require a shift from the narrow humanitarian model to a more comprehensive and holistic model in which humanitarian, development and peace actors come together to provide protection and life-saving assistance, restore livelihoods, build basic public services and infrastructures to absorb IDPs who are returning while ensuring that other members of the community are not left behind.

### **Agency, Displacement and Return:**

In better tackling mass displacement in the region, RS-SRR partners must draw upon a full range of options. Displaced persons in the region must retain their rights to choose if and or when to return (even in adverse conditions). Such a choice must be free and informed. And such returns must occur in conditions of safety and dignity. Local communities must also be at the centre of the effort to choose from a range of solutions to the displacement experienced by their members and this should not be limited to return to the places in which displaced persons previously lived. It must be recognized, nevertheless, that the leadership of the relevant national and sub-national authorities in the process is essential to achieving durable solutions to displacement in the region. As importantly, local civil society groups and even many victims themselves also have important roles to play in both protection and return.

### **Key Recommendations and Actions Points:**

#### *RS-SRR partners should:*

- scale up their efforts to prevent displacement by addressing the drivers, and reducing the risk, of displacement. This entails taking actions that will inhibit the generation or exacerbation of the conditions that force people to flee from their homes;
- ramp up their efforts to design and implement regional frameworks that will ensure that the return of displaced persons in the region to their communities is voluntary and safe, in line with international humanitarian laws and guidelines;
- create favourable conditions for the return of IDPs by promoting job creation
- enhance their efforts to ensure inclusive participation in efforts to prevent and manage displacement, especially by women, youth and civil society groups.
- strengthen partnerships and responsibility-sharing. While the role of the government remains key, addressing the crisis in the region requires a multi-stakeholder effort. Thus, the role of other actors such as the private sector, civil society, international community, and other stakeholders must remain crucial.
- scale-up funding to support national and sub-national governments in implementing their efforts to respond to mass displacement in the affected areas in the region.



***National and sub-regional governments need to:***

- invest in policies, laws and programmes that focus on displacement as well as disaster risk reduction (while considering how future disasters can interact with existing inequalities). This will help to reduce the risk of protracted displacement.

***Donors should:***

- ensure the much more rapid disbursement of funds allocated by them to RS-SRR projects targeted at managing displacement in the region.



# CHAPTER 05





# Vigilante and Government-Affiliated Security Actors in the Lake Chad Region

## **A Broad and Complex Concept:**

In a recent UNPD study, “Understanding and Managing Vigilante Groups in the Lake Chad Basin Region” (<https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/understanding-and-managing-vigilante-groups-lake-chad-basin-region>), it is recognized that vigilante groups are generally understood as groups which concerned citizens have formed and/or joined for self-protection under conditions of local disorder. They are largely composed of and led by young men but can also have female members. These groups do not necessarily seek to challenge state power by their actions. To the extent that their *raison d'être* is community protection, vigilantes are neither militias nor gangs, who typically pursue their own political or economic interests. At the same time, vigilante groups fit rather awkwardly with civil society and grassroots movements. Vigilante groups draw their legitimacy from multiple and, at times, competing sources. Populated mainly by community members, predominantly (but not exclusively) young men, vigilante groups deliver political and public goods that range from maintaining law and order, to establishing public norms of compliance with local populations, to providing dispute resolution services.

## **A Child of Necessity:**

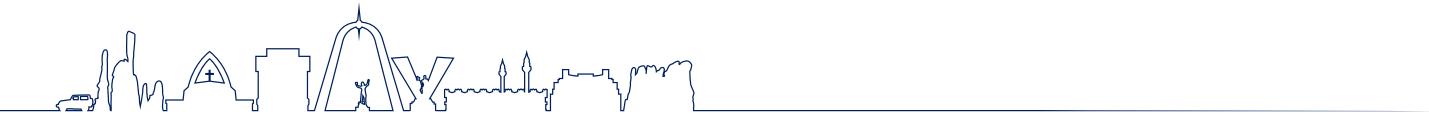
The importance of the role of vigilante groups and government-affiliated security actors in stabilization efforts in the region cannot be over-emphasised. They are largely viewed as heroes and “children of necessity” by their communities. Given the inadequacy of the numerical strength of troops deployed to combat the insurgency by many of the affected countries and the MNJTF, vigilante groups emerged to fill a critical vacuum and defend their communities from attacks by insurgents. Members of these groups are recruited locally, are deeply embedded in their communities, and tend to know the cultural geographies of their communities much better than government troops.

## **Necessity for Adequate Training and Oversight:**

There is a need to ensure that the activities of such groups comply with national and international laws, and that they are supported to raise their operating standards. Complaints have been levelled against many such groups in the past, including by women who have alleged maltreatment, mishandling and abuse. In many of the most affected territories, members of these groups already receive relevant training and re-training from national and sub-national governments and other partners (such as UNDP). It should be acknowledged, however, that in some territories (such as Borno and Adamawa States of Nigeria, and the Far North Region of Cameroon) vigilante groups are checked by community elders and pre-screened by the government.

## **Reintegrating former Vigilantes:**

An important issue in this connection is how to reintegrate members of vigilante groups into the formal military or civilian sector following the anticipated end of the insurgency in the region. The current situation in the region presents both opportunities and risks in this regard. As the opportunities they present outweigh the risks, there is an opportunity to ramp-up support for existing national processes in Nigeria and other countries in the region which are aimed at re-training former members of vigilante



groups at vocational centres and the like (for e.g. Borno State of Nigeria has opened three such centres, rehabilitated nine others, and is building three more). There is also an opportunity to support efforts to absorb them into conventional organizations, such as the Borno State Transport Agency. Members of such groups are also well-suited for jobs as community police officers or forest guards. It is important in all cases that access to livelihoods is provided to de-mobilized members of vigilante groups. For example, Borno State has pledged to provide twice the support that it offers to ex-Boko Haram and ISWAP fighters to its youth who do not join such insurgent groups (including members of vigilante groups). It is also important that such reintegration processes include consultations from the very beginning with the affected communities.

The risks that present themselves in the process of reintegrating former members of vigilante groups into regular society include their inadequate or hasty demobilization. Disbanding a crucial component of the security architecture of the affected communities presents the critical risk of heightening and sustaining the crisis. There is also the risk of giving ex-insurgents more favourable treatment than the members of vigilante groups who defended their communities against them. Selective de-mobilization appears to be the preferred option.

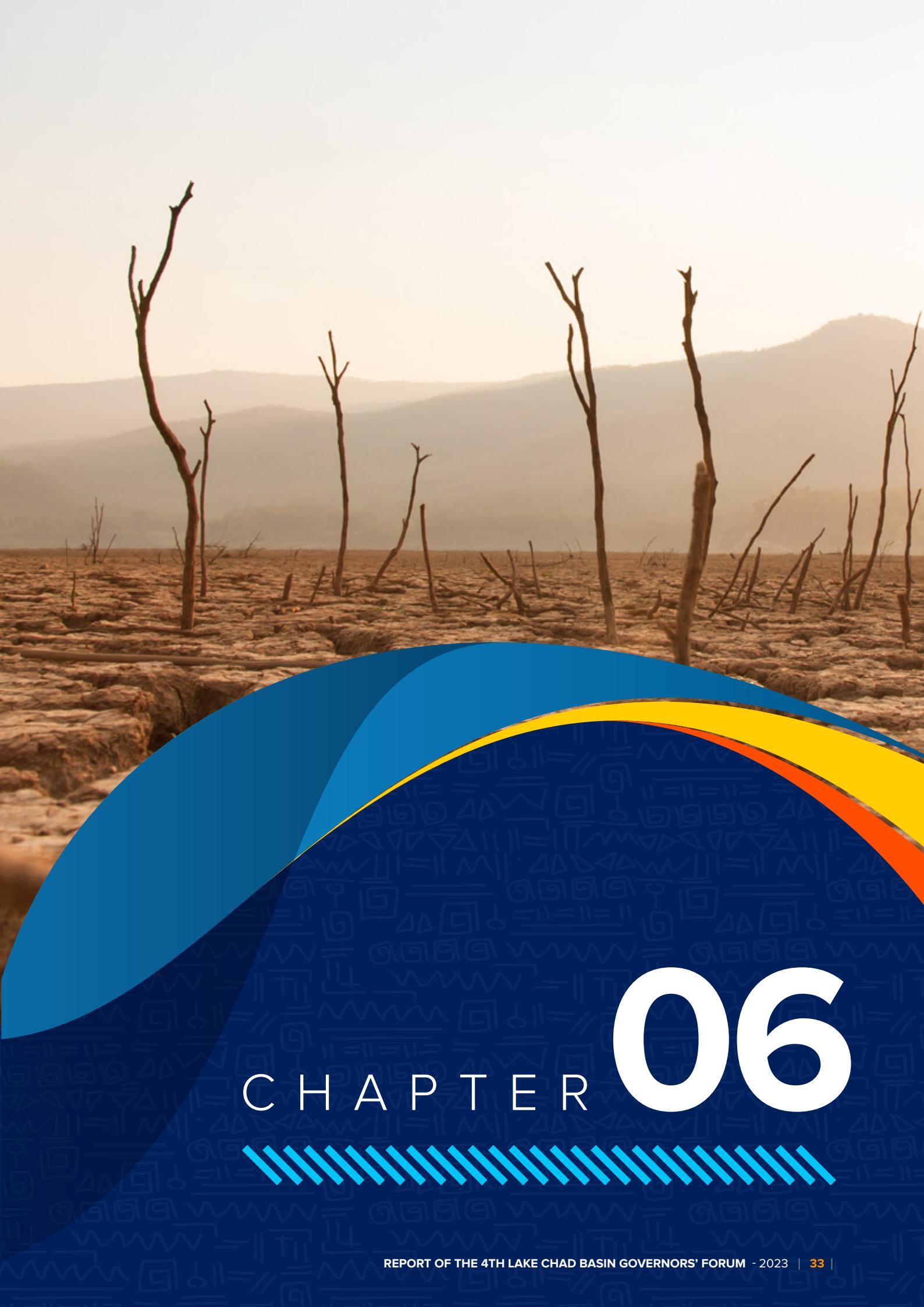
### **More Support to Government-Affiliated Security Actors:**

There is a need for donors and other partners to agree to, and prioritize, the provision of much more material and other support to the various local vigilante groups that operate in the most affected states/territories. Their members tend to leave their livelihoods as farmers and herders, and sacrifice time they would otherwise spend with their families, in order to help secure their various communities. Without more support being extended to them, these groups are likely to lose many of their members who will likely return to their previous occupations in order to earn a livelihood.

### **Key Recommendations and Actions Points:**

*RS-SRR partners should:*

- continue their joint reflection on the role of vigilante groups and other government-affiliated security actors in the region, and adopt operational guidelines and actions aimed at enhancing control and professionalization of these groups in adherence to international legal standards;
- build on existing structures, processes and mechanisms to re-integrate vigilantes and government-affiliated security actors into civilian life (rather than creating new ones) and invite Governors, as well as national actors and international partners, to include such arrangements in their efforts to ensure peace and security in the region;
- ensure respect for the principle of equity in the allocation of resources and training, and enhancement of livelihoods, as between ex-fighters being reintegrated into their communities and the citizens of affected communities (including the members of vigilante groups).



# CHAPTER 06



## Climate Security Challenges in the Lake Chad Basin

The impacts of climate change, and human vulnerabilities to the disasters, violent conflict and dysfunction that it either produces or exacerbates, are increasingly well-recognized. The link between climate change, resource scarcity, and insecurity in the LCB region, and the negative impact of this linkage on local economies, are also established. For example, in 2022, very heavy rains and resultant flooding significantly impacted human life, property, farmlands, and livestock in the Lake Chad Basin, affecting 5.5 million people, killing almost 1,000 people and putting 1 million hectares under water (70% of this being agricultural land). The forgone agricultural production could have nourished over 5 million people. What is more, the severe shrinking of Lake Chad over the last several decades, due in part to climate change, has also had a negative impact on resource availability, and therefore peace, in the region.

### **A Global Concern:**

In his remarks to the High-Level Opening Session of COP27 (<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27>), the UN Secretary-General contended that “our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator”. This observation highlights the state of the science. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>) found that the world is not on track to achieve a climate-safe future. Yet, although climate change has already had an adverse impact on billions of people and ecosystems, action to adapt to the climate crisis is lagging well behind what is needed to stave off its worst impacts. Given the specific character of its local context, this assessment is particularly alarming for Lake Chad Basin States.

### **Agriculture and Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities in the LCB:**

Across the entire region, climate change will increasingly cause adverse impacts on agricultural production through diminishing water supplies, increases in extreme events like floods and severe storms, heat stress, and increased prevalence of pests and diseases. Prior to the current crisis, the LCB was the food basin of the countries in the broader West and Central African region. However, the food sector in the area has been severely impacted by climate change (which is partly responsible for the shrinking of Lake Chad to only about 25% of its original size, drought and soil degradation in the region, and other negative impacts). This has exacerbated food and water insecurity in the LCB. As a result of these climate-change induced shocks, community socio-economic depression and grievances, inter-communal conflict, and vulnerability to violent extremism, have all become pronounced. While some progress has been made in improving agricultural productivity in the affected areas, with hundreds of people in local communities being allocated land, much more funding is needed to revive access to means of livelihood (such as farming, fishing, and herding) for affected communities in the LCB.

### **Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience:**

Part of the challenge in addressing the negative impacts of climate change on food and water security in the region, and ending the conflicts they spur, has been a lack of financing for mitigation, adaptation and resilience, as available finance is roughly 10% of what is needed. In any case, even this amount is not reaching those on the front lines, such as smallholder farmers whose livelihoods are entirely dependent on favourable climate conditions. In the meantime, the number of people suffering acute food insecurity has increased. And this has occurred just as the war in Ukraine, supply chain



disruptions, and the continued economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, have also pushed food prices to all-time highs. Nevertheless, efforts are being made in parts of the LCB, such as in Adamawa State of Nigeria, to foster mitigation, adaptation and resilience. This has been done, in part, through the introduction of high-yielding breeds of cattle to greatly reduce the need for cattle keepers to hold large numbers of these animals and thus significantly ameliorate the quantity of grazing lands they require. This is expected to greatly reduce herder/farmer conflicts in the area. Overall, there is a need to harness local knowledge and input from the very beginning of any mitigation or adaptation project, through consultations with farmers, pastoralists and other citizens. The key input of women, youth, civil society, and the private sector must also be sought and incorporated.

### **Key Recommendations and Action Points:**

#### *RS-SRR partners should:*

- develop a regional integrated plan for mitigation, adaptation and resilience to improve water management and sustainable farming practice; introduce drought-resistant crops and farm animals; and enhance drought forecasting;
- .....
- enhance their collaboration to increase their climate finance contributions aimed at transforming agricultural practices in the region;
- .....
- focus more of their efforts on capacity-building and training of local farmers in the context of mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- .....
- ensure that a pillar on climate security is added to the RS-SRR in the design of its second phase. Failing this, climate security should be more explicitly integrated into the strategy.



# 07

## CHAPTER



## The Future of Stabilisation, Recovery, and Resilience:

### The Next Phase of the RS-SRR

The fourth Forum took place at a historical juncture in which the implementation of the RS-SRR is moving towards the end of the first phase. This provides a unique opportunity to RS-SRR stakeholders to take stock and envision improvements in the ways and means of implementing the strategy. RS-SRR partners firmly committed, at the Forum, to working with each other to upscale and enhance joint efforts towards stabilizing, building peace, and fostering sustainable development, across the LCB. They expect to do so, in the main, through enhancing socio-economic development, livelihoods and infrastructure; maintaining and improving security; the greater restoration of state authority; promoting greater dialogue; and improving cross-border cooperation.

### A Complex and Multilayered Crisis:

The crisis in the region is complex and multi-layered in its origin and character. Its contributing factors are also varied (including extremism, climate change, population growth, and poverty, amongst other factors). This understanding of the character of the crisis necessitates the need to move away from the hitherto heavy focus on stabilization and humanitarian assistance, toward a greater stress and accent on socio-economic development. Further emphasis should also be placed on enhanced cross-sectoral partnership and engagement in order to more holistically and effectively tackle the crisis in the region.

### A Paradigm Shift to a Nexus Approach:

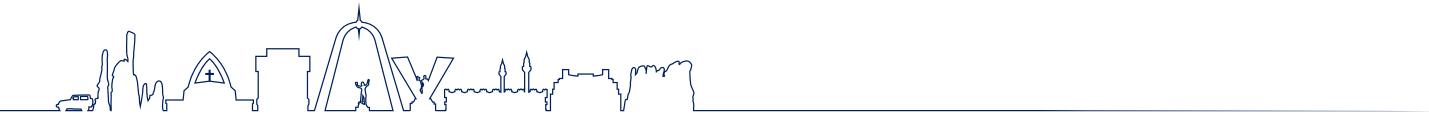
Given the multi-layered and cross-sectoral character of the crisis in the region, no one actor (states, governors, NGOs, donors, or multilateral institutions) can resolve the crisis on its own. As such, the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus must be strengthened if the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin crisis is to be turned into regional opportunities. This new approach will point to enhanced opportunities, pathways, and options for managing new investments and partnerships, and underscore the role of RS-SRR implementers in finding genuine solutions through shared best practices among partners.

### Improving Access to Funding along the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Continuum:

The effort to address the humanitarian situation and the other dimensions of the crisis in the region requires much more funding and resources if it is to become as effective as is desired. This calls for advocacy, as well as partnerships with bilateral and multilateral institutions, foundations and private sector donors. Greater coordination among donors and partners in allocating and managing funding for RS-SRR implementation is also necessary to more effectively address the crisis in the region.

### Scaling-up and Re-structuring Funding:

The expansion and sustainability of access to funding for RS-SRR implementation is of immediate priority. Without a significant increase in the provision of funding, it will be difficult to achieve key RS-SRR goals. Thus, a major constraint that undermines the implementation of durable solutions to various dimensions of the crisis in the region is the lack of adequate access to funding. In the light of this great and urgent need, the creation of the new Multi-Partner Delivery Facility (which is designed,



in part, to offer sufficient flexibility to cover certain gaps in the existing RS-SRR funding regime) is a welcome development. There is a pressing need to finance multisectoral approaches and promote multi-agency partnerships. Engaging with different stakeholders will allow knowledge, expertise and resources to be pooled. This will help to avoid duplication and ultimately increase efficiency and effectiveness. The Multi-Partner Delivery Facility responds to this need. The increasing role of the African Development Bank in providing financing for the implementation of the RS-SRR is another important development in the current regard.

#### **A Special Emphasis on Women and Youth:**

The greater inclusion of women, youth, and civil society actors across the full cycle, of design to implementation of programs and projects, is extremely important to the successful implementation of the RS-SRR.

#### **Scaling-up Exchanges of Best Practices:**

Overall, the continuation and scaling-up of the exchanges of best practices by various actors within the region was viewed as key to a more effective implementation of the RS-SRR.

#### **A Necessary Extension of the RS-SRR Beyond 2024:**

A lot of challenges and gaps remain in RS-SRR implementation, necessitating the extension of a second phase. Furthermore, if RS-SRR implementation is to improve significantly on the successes it enjoyed in its phase one, there is a need, going into its phase two, to swiftly expedite, expand and deepen the implementation of the RS-SRR pillar(s) that focus on socio-economic development and enhancing livelihoods.

#### **Key Recommendations and Action Points:**



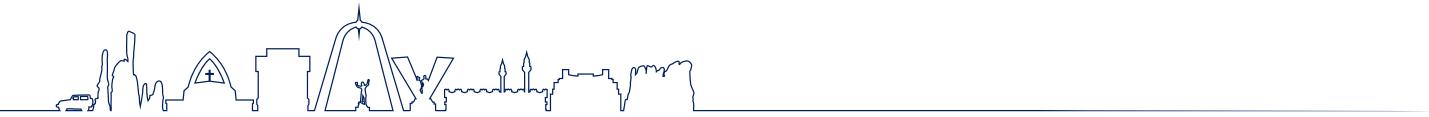
***RS-SRR partners should:***

- significantly increase their focus on, and attention to, the socio-economic development of the region and sustainable solutions to the crisis;
- work together to secure more durable funding, including by expanding the partnership base and including the private sector, to address the increased ambitions for stability in the region;
- ensure that the Special Multi-Partner Delivery Facility, as a key support mechanism for the next phase of RS-SRR, is rapidly scaled up;
- establish new and more efficient forms of dialogue, coordination with the goal of strengthening of the HDP nexus;
- scale up exchanges of best practices among RS-SRR partners;
- deepen the inclusion of women, youth and civil society groups in RS-SRR implementation.

***The LCBC should:***

- organize, in a timely fashion, a joint donors conference, given the pressing need for collaboration among this category of RS-SRR actors.

The fourth Governors' Forum enabled the governors of the most affected territories in the Lake Chad



# CONCLUSION

Basin (LCB) region and RSS partners to deliberate on the progress made towards the implementation of the RSS over the last five years or so, while identifying both a) opportunities for more concerted efforts to further stabilise and develop the region, and b) risks that these efforts are likely to encounter in the coming years.

The Forum noted the significant progress that has been made so far in RS-SRR implementation, as exemplified by:

- the markedly improved (though still fragile) security situation in the region as a result of the efforts of the MNJTF, national armed forces and vigilante groups;
- the multitudes of livelihoods that have been enhanced in the affected communities;
- the mass exit from insurgent groups that operate in the region of thousands of now repentant ex-insurgent fighters;
- the appreciable (though still limited) success enjoyed in the rehabilitation and reintegration of these repentant insurgents into their communities;
- the return of thousands of forcibly displaced persons to their communities;
- the increased funding that has been provided and the new, more flexible, multi-partner delivery fund that has been recently established;
- and improvements recorded in the status and situation of the civil society, women, and youth in the affected communities.

All of these facts point firmly to the partial attainment of RS-SRR goals during the first five years of the implementation of that strategy.

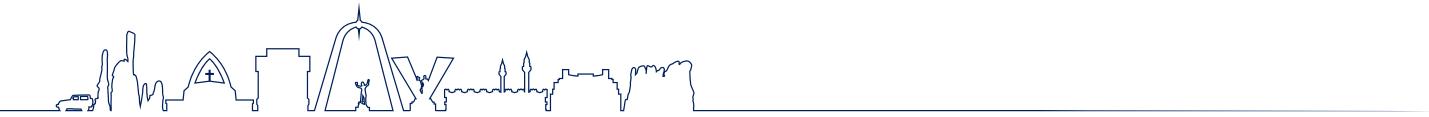


The main challenge, now that proof of concept has been clearly offered, is to adequately scale-up these successes and associated good practices and implement more durable solutions to the various dimensions of the crisis in the region. Other key challenges do, of course remain, such as:

- a significant lack of access to funding for RS-SRR implementation;
- the need to deepen cross-sectoral and cross-border partnerships;
- the necessity for greater attention to implementing a nexus approach;
- how to place more of an emphasis on the socio-economic development of the region;
- adapting to, and mitigating, the climate shocks that make the region a fertile recruiting ground for extremist groups;
- tackling the forced mass displacement that continues to afflict the LCB region;
- effectively rehabilitating and reintegrating thousands of ex-insurgents as well as ex-vigilantes;
- establishing much greater equity in the levels of support provided to ex-insurgents and affected communities;
- instituting locally-adapted, and therefore more effective, transitional justice;
- and ensuring that civil society, women and youth are better mainstreamed into RS-SRR implementation.

It is against this background that it is now well-understood that as RS-SRR reaches the end of its first phase of implementation, nothing less than a paradigm shift is needed to take advantage of the many opportunities that are evident as well as better manage entailed risks. This will require even greater political cooperation to implement.

RSS partners are therefore to be commended for pledging their continued financial and technical support to the efforts being made by LCB countries, the governors and other RSS partners, to end the crisis in the region in as short a period as possible, while ensuring the enhanced socio-economic development of the affected communities.



# ANNEXES

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- **Annex A:** Concept Note and Meeting Agenda
- **Annex B:** Fourth Governors' Forum Final Joint Communique
- **Annex C:** Attendance List
- **Annex D:** Photo Gallery
- **Annex E:** Video Gallery
- **Annex F:** Press Media





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