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Situation in South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2514 \(2020\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to 15 March 2021 and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the Mission's mandate every 90 days. The report covers political and security developments, the humanitarian and human rights situation and progress towards the implementation of the Mission's mandate since the previous report dated 9 December 2020 ([S/2020/1180](#)).

II. Political and economic developments

2. The parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan made progress on the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity. On 30 December, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, appointed deputy governors for six states. The incumbent Transitional Government of National Unity was allocated Jonglei, Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Western Equatoria while the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) was allocated Eastern Equatoria, Lakes and Unity. On 22 January, Mr. Kiir appointed deputy governors from the Other Political Parties coalition for Warrap, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Central Equatoria. Significantly, SPLM/A-IO and the Other Political Parties coalition adhered to the 35 per cent quota for women in their appointments. The reconstitution of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly and the appointment of the Council of States, however, remained pending. The absence of county commissioners continued to affect the provision of social services, conflict mitigation and humanitarian action.

3. On 29 January, following a six-month impasse over the position of Governor of Upper Nile, Mr. Kiir appointed Budhok Ayang Kur and James Tor Monybuny as Governor and Deputy Governor, respectively, of the state. On 28 January, he replaced the Governor of Warrap, Bona Panek Biar, with General Aleu Ayieny Aleu, stating subsequently that he had done so to improve law and order. On 30 January, the new officials were sworn in.

4. With regard to the Abyei, Greater Pibor and Ruweng administrative areas, representatives of the incumbent Transitional Government of National Unity and



SPLM/A-IO agreed on 18 January to allocate 55 per cent of administrative posts to the incumbent Transitional Government of National Unity, 27 per cent to SPLM/A-IO, 10 per cent to the South Sudan Opposition Alliance and 8 per cent to the Other Political Parties coalition.

Implementation of the Revitalized Agreement

5. From 7 to 13 December, the senior commanders of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the opposition participated in a training course on leadership, peacebuilding and reconstruction, held in Nairobi.

6. The Joint Military Ceasefire Commission reported that, while it had registered 87,000 soldiers, the planned graduation and deployment of those forces had been further postponed. The lack of a coherent security strategy and funding impeded progress on the implementation of the transitional security arrangements and left cantonment and training in dire straits. On 28 January, at a reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission seminar on the transitional security arrangements, the Chair of the National Transitional Committee, Tut Gatluk, stated that Mr. Kiir had ordered the graduation of the necessary unified forces at the earliest possible opportunity.

7. Following the review of the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act 2011 (Amendment) Bill of 2020 and the Southern Sudan National Audit Chamber Act of 2011, the National Constitutional Amendment Committee concluded a two-day stakeholder validation workshop in Juba on 1 December. The stakeholders proposed the inclusion of gender-based budgeting techniques and capacity-building for legislators, among other things. On 28 January, the Committee started to review the draft amendments to the Petroleum Revenue Act and the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act. On 28 January, the Committee reported to the First Vice-President the financial constraints that it faced and sought support from the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity.

Peace process developments

8. From 1 to 5 December, SPLM/A-IO held its sixth national conference, in Juba, at which it reiterated its commitment to the Revitalized Agreement and called upon partners to work together to address the challenges faced in the peace process. The party recommended, *inter alia*, increasing the benchmark for the participation of women to 40 per cent, establishing an independently managed fund for the implementation of the Agreement, holding parties accountable for the past actions of defectors once they have joined them, and graduating the necessary unified forces.

9. From 3 to 5 December, the Community of Sant'Egidio convened talks in Rome between the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance and the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity on the cessation of hostilities and a declaration of principles that was pending from the talks held in October. However, the parties were unable to agree on several issues, deferring them to the next round.

10. On 5 December, Brigadier General Kennedy Ongie, the Commander of Section 9 of the Tafeng Division of SPLM/A-IO in Eastern Equatoria, defected to the National Salvation Front (NAS). On 10 January, the Chair of the Communication Committee and Spokesperson for the National Democratic Movement, David Lawrence Lual, resigned from the party, arguing that its leadership was flawed. On 22 January, the Khartoum-based faction South Sudan United Front-Progressive Peace announced its intention to return to the original group. On 1 February, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Administration of NAS resigned.

11. On 21 January, Major General Defalla, the Deputy Chair of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, during a meeting of its Technical Committee held in Juba, noted that, although the ceasefire continued to hold, the defections from the opposition forces to the Government were a source of rising tension, in particular in Central Equatoria.

12. On 26 January, SPLM/A-IO issued a press statement accusing government forces of attacking Banketa, Upper Nile, an SPLM/A-IO assembly area. It condemned the attack and demanded an immediate withdrawal of government forces to avoid escalation.

Regional engagements and developments

13. On 20 December, the Vice-President for Gender and Youth Cluster, Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, attended the thirty-eighth Extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Heads of State and Government, in Djibouti. The Summit commended the parties for the progress made in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and appreciated the resumption of the Rome peace talks.

14. On 10 January, the Deputy Chair of the Sovereign Council of the Sudan, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, met Mr. Kiir in Juba and gave him a briefing on the implementation of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan. On 14 January, Tut Gatluak, the Presidential Adviser on Security Affairs, informed the Chair of the Sovereign Council of the Sudan, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, that Mr. Kiir had offered to mediate in the border conflict between Ethiopia and the Sudan over the disputed Fashaqah region.

Other major national developments

15. On 27 January, while closing a peace conference in Juba for Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Mr. Kiir called upon the communities to forgive each other and to coexist peacefully. In the conference communiqué, abductions, revenge and arbitrary killings and cattle raiding were condemned, and calls were made for justice and accountability, security and law enforcement, the strengthening of relationships with neighbouring communities, humanitarian interventions and the provision of socioeconomic and peacebuilding opportunities.

16. In a statement issued on 26 January, the Jieng Council of Elders expressed concern about escalating community violence across the country, the collapse of the economy and the lack of progress in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. It also endorsed the outcomes of the national dialogue and recommended its implementation.

Economic situation

17. The low price of oil has further depreciated the South Sudanese pound. The rising gap between the official rate and the parallel market rate continued to cause hardship and tension. Inflationary pressure has aggravated food insecurity for households, including those hosting a total of 1.24 million internally displaced persons living outside displacement sites.

18. The national budget for 2020/2021 has not yet been approved. The proposed resource envelope for 2020/2021 indicated a fiscal deficit of over 50 per cent of the \$1.3 billion budget, with no clear indication of how it would be funded. However, the Government continued with its public financial management reform agenda, with the National Revenue Authority eliminating unduly applied tax exemptions.

19. Efforts to diversify the economy continued through the promotion by the Government of gum arabic exports and foreign investment as well as tourism. Separately, in January, South Sudan and the Sudan reached an agreement to increase oil production. In January, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, supported by the United Nations Development Programme, launched a review of the national development strategy for 2018–2021 in order to update and reflect national priorities for the transition period.

III. Security situation

20. The security context continued to be dominated by localized and subnational violence, with an overall increase in incidents compared with the previous reporting period coinciding with the onset of the dry season. The linkages between local conflicts and national dynamics continued, a trend that was further underlined by the latest outbreak of violence in Maban. Macroeconomic pressure, political competition for local administration positions, increased pressure on livelihoods and food price increases were layered over pre-existing local and national fissures, spurring localized conflicts. Central Equatoria remained the key hotspot for conflict-related sexual violence, accounting for 53 per cent of the 11 incidents reported.

Greater Upper Nile region

21. In mid-December, conflict broke out in Maban, Upper Nile, as tensions between eastern and western Mabanese flared over the incomplete transitional security arrangements. Initial tensions with SPLM/A-IO soldiers cantoned outside their villages at Liang, Upper Nile, without consistent supplies, led to several clashes in the area between combined National Security Service, SSPDF and Mabanese forces on one side and SPLM/A-IO supported by Mabanese from Beneshowa, Upper Nile, on the other.

22. Intraethnic tensions were the key driver of subnational violence throughout Jonglei. Receding flood waters enabled the movement of armed young people, leading to instances of violence. On 15 January, large-scale clashes among young Nuers occurred in Paguir, Fangak, which reportedly resulted in five dead and 18 wounded. The clashes were reportedly triggered by young people attempting to disarm other local young people without instructions or permission from local authorities. Violence persisted in Pibor and surrounding areas through December and January, primarily between the Kurenens and Lango groups.

23. In Unity, the security situation was defined by inter-Nuer conflict in the areas of Koch, Leer, Mayendit and Rubkona, as well as by cross-border and inter-ethnic tension involving communities in Unity and neighbouring Warrap and Lakes.

Greater Equatoria region

24. Flooding, land and resource disputes and defections served as drivers of insecurity in Central Equatoria. In Terekeka, Central Equatoria, disputes over land and resources led to a series of violent clashes and revenge attacks between Mundari sub-clans. The conflict also spread into Lainya in the southern part of the state as some Mundari groups moved south, bringing the total number of people killed to approximately 70. The movement of the Mundari into Lainya drew NAS into the local conflict. On 7 January, Mundari cattle keepers attacked two cattle camps in Lainya belonging to the Pajulu community. Subsequently, on 12 January, NAS-affiliated armed actors conducted cattle raiding activity against the Mundari, which led to at least 12 deaths. NAS also attacked an SSPDF position at Loka on 25 January.

Nevertheless, an overall decrease in NAS activity was noted compared with the previous reporting period.

25. In Kajo Kaji, Central Equatoria, on 27 December, clashes broke out between SPLM/A-IO and the forces of Major General Lokujo, resulting in the death of three SPLM/A-IO soldiers and the capture of four soldiers loyal to Major General Lokujo. The subsequent deployment of SSPDF acted as a buffer between the clashing forces.

Greater Bahr el-Ghazal region

26. Intracommunal and intercommunal violence and cross-state clashes continued to prevail in the greater Bahr el-Ghazal region. In Tonj North, Warrap, cattle-related conflicts in the second half of December 2020 and January 2021 occurred mostly between Kirik- and Noi-allied communities. Meanwhile, the Luanyjang engaged in fighting with Ananatak communities comprising Thiik, Akok and Jalwau, in Tonj East. Conflict drivers included long-standing grievances, the seasonal migration of cattle, increased mobility, the lack of effective state-level intervention and the loss of cattle and crops owing to flooding.

27. In Lakes, communal violence and cattle raids centred on Cueibet, Rumbek North, Rumbek Centre, Rumbek East and Yirol West, with 15 people killed in Mayath Payam, Cueibet, on 9 December alone. In addition, Dinka Atuot cattle keepers from Yirol West clashed with Moru cattle keepers in Mvolo, Western Equatoria, on 15 December over grazing lands.

IV. Humanitarian situation

28. Humanitarian needs were dire in 2020 and are projected to remain high in 2021. According to the 2021 humanitarian needs overview, some 8.3 million people are estimated to be in need of assistance, an increase of 800,000 people from the previous year.

29. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis, conducted in December, 5.82 million people, or 48 per cent of the population, were projected to face severe acute food insecurity between December 2020 and March 2021. In the same period, it is estimated that 11,000 people would endure “catastrophic” (phase 5) acute food insecurity in Pibor, and an estimated 1.79 million people were likely to face “emergency” (phase 4) acute food insecurity. Some 1.4 million children under 5 years of age were expected to be acutely malnourished in 2021, the highest caseload for acute malnutrition since the start of the crisis in December 2013. Some 483,000 pregnant and lactating women will need treatment for malnutrition in 2021.

30. On the basis of these projections, humanitarian organizations scaled up life-saving operations in areas of most severe acute food insecurity, including Pibor and Akobo (Jonglei) and Aweil South, Tonj East, Tonj North and Tonj South (Warrap). By 31 December, humanitarian organizations had reached over 23,000 people in Pibor and 5,600 in Duk, both in Jonglei, with food assistance.

31. Flooding affected over 1 million people and displaced 480,000 persons between July and December 2020. Meanwhile, humanitarian organizations targeted over 420,000 people for life-saving responses in flood-affected areas. Physical access to Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, however, remained challenging.

32. Subnational violence and insecurity continued to displace large numbers of people. In December, an estimated 46,000 people were displaced by subnational violence, armed attacks on civilians and armed clashes in several locations in Central

Equatoria, Lakes and Warrap. Violence resulted in civilian displacement and casualties in Central Equatoria and Upper Nile in January. Some 8,000 people were displaced in Mundri East, Western Equatoria, and an estimated 13,000 people were displaced by fighting in Maban, Upper Nile. In the meantime, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 4,000 refugees spontaneously returned in December.

33. Humanitarian access deteriorated during the reporting period. As at 1 February, 86 humanitarian access incidents were recorded. Owing to insecurity, 22 aid workers were relocated in four locations. In addition, two humanitarian workers were arbitrary detained. No humanitarian workers were killed.

34. Humanitarian organizations reached more than 7.3 million people with humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2020. This represented 97 per cent of the revised target of 7.6 million people through the humanitarian response plan for 2020, including those reached through coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response activities. As at 31 December 2020, \$1.1 billion was secured against the \$1.9 billion requested in the plan. The steep funding gap affected response activities, in particular water, sanitation and hygiene services, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks.

V. Implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks

A. Protection of civilians

35. Civilians continued to face threats of physical violence, such as killings and injuries, abductions, forced recruitment and sexual violence, including owing to continuing tensions in Jonglei and the flare-up of violence in Central Equatoria, Warrap and Upper Nile. The Mission continued to respond to these threats through a comprehensive approach that combined the proactive, robust posture of peacekeepers, key leadership engagements with military and political counterparts, community-level conflict-resolution initiatives, support for rule of law and justice institutions and other programmatic activities tailored to address root causes of conflict.

36. In Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, interventions to convene communities for dialogue seem to have been successful in mitigating widespread violence, despite rumours of mobilization and sporadic clashes. The Mission facilitated separate consultative meetings between Murle and Lou Nuer young people and traditional leaders in Juba in early December. Both forums resolved to cease hostilities and pursue peace between the communities. On 25 and 26 January, UNMISS further supported the work of the high-level committee, led by the Vice-President, James Wani Igga, by airlifting approximately 100 traditional, youth and political leaders from greater Jonglei to attend a consultative forum led by the committee in Juba in January. The forum adopted resolutions containing commitments to, inter alia, a return of all abducted women and children, the establishment of special courts, the cessation of cattle raiding and revenge attacks, the holding accountable of leaders who aid criminals in their areas and a call for comprehensive civilian disarmament across Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. In parallel, UNMISS peacekeepers conducted regular patrols in Jonglei to project their presence, increase security and support the delivery of humanitarian assistance. On 1 January, the Mission and its humanitarian and international non-governmental organization partners commenced preparations for the launch in February of a multi-agency community violence reduction programme in Jonglei supported by the joint UNMISS and United Nations country team reconciliation, stabilization and resilience trust fund.

37. In response to the surge of violence in Maban, Upper Nile, the Mission engaged with political and community leaders at the national and local levels. It also increased the number of peacekeepers in Bunj and reinforced their capacities. Peacekeepers conducted patrols in the area to build confidence, assess the security situation and reopen roads to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance. From 25 to 27 January, the Deputy Special Representative (Political) for South Sudan visited Maban, where he engaged with key stakeholders, including representatives of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, communities, humanitarian partners and local authorities, and called upon all parties to immediately deescalate the situation and prevent the further loss of life and displacement of civilians.

38. In January, to address intercommunal violence in the greater Tonj area, Warrap, the Mission sought to establish a temporary operating base in Romic but was prevented from obtaining access to the area by the authorities. The Mission also conducted peace campaigns between 16 and 18 December that engaged youth and local leaders in order to encourage non-violent approaches to resolving communal conflict. Furthermore, to mitigate migration-related violence in Warrap and Western Bahr el-Ghazal under a project funded through the reconciliation, stabilization and resilience trust fund, the Mission continued to support state and national authorities in establishing a mobile special court. This included facilitating a workshop from 14 to 18 December for traditional leaders, prosecutors, police and prison personnel nominated to support the court. In addition to investigating crimes, the court served as a rapid response mechanism to deploy to hotspot locations in order to promote accountability at the onset of violence and deescalate tensions.

39. In January, clashes in Central Equatoria involving Mundari cattle keepers prompted UNMISS to deploy peacekeeping forces to Lainya on two occasions to deter violence and protect civilians from further attacks, after which relative calm returned to the area. On 21 January, UNMISS engaged with the Paramount Chief of Lainya, the bishop, youth leaders and elders, who expressed appreciation for UNMISS being in the area and requested its continued force presence.

40. The situation in the former protection of civilians sites in Bor, Wau and Juba – which in 2020 transitioned to conventional camps for internally displaced persons under sovereign control of the Government of South Sudan – remained calm. The Mission continued to monitor the situation, maintained quick-reaction capacity to respond to emergencies and provided critical support to authorities, in particular the South Sudan National Police Service, regarding their responsibility to ensure safety and security in the camps. Implementation of the agreement with the National Police Service on operational coordination, signed on 5 November, is advancing, including through the establishment of coordinated patrol teams, joint security coordination centres and the enhancement of co-location arrangements. The Mission also continued to engage with humanitarian partners who operate in the sites and with internally displaced persons, in support of efforts to promote peaceful co-existence among communities in and around the camps.

41. Joint efforts between the Mission and humanitarian partners on the ground to redesignate the Bentiu protection of civilians site – home to 97,321 people – progressed. During a joint field visit to Bentiu with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on 26 and 27 January, the Special Representative for South Sudan met with the Governor of Unity and signed a memorandum of understanding on the redesignation of the site. During the meeting, the Special Representative reiterated the Mission's commitment to continuing to provide support to the Government in taking on responsibility for security, including through assistance for the South Sudan National Police Service.

42. In Malakal, the Mission convened a joint task force with humanitarian partners to prepare for an eventual redesignation of the Malakal protection of civilians site, which currently hosts 33,137 internally displaced persons. With the delayed appointment of the Governor of Upper Nile and tensions between residents of the site and the town of Malakal, the Mission continued to carefully monitor the situation while maintaining efforts to promote peaceful co-existence in the area. It held two workshops with stakeholders from Malakal and the protection of civilians site, including traditional and youth leaders. Both workshops addressed issues of mistrust and the promotion of social cohesion between the two communities.

43. In support of the implementation of the peace process at the grass-roots level, local conflict management, reconciliation and social cohesion, UNMISS conducted 22 workshops, community dialogues and peace campaigns and disseminated local and national peace agreements in addition to providing capacity-building assistance to traditional authorities, women and young people. A total of 1,883 participants (including 614 women) were reached through such activities.

44. UNMISS continued to support broader protection activities through quick-impact projects. A total of 41 projects with an overall budget of \$2 million were approved by the Mission, with 80 per cent of funding released as at 20 January 2021. About 7 per cent of the budget will target peacebuilding structures; 36 per cent will be used to improve access to basic services to facilitate the dignified, safe and voluntary return of displaced people; and 42 per cent will be used to construct or rehabilitate rule of law facilities aimed at providing justice and security services. The 100 per cent commitment of funds will support interventions targeting peacebuilding, returns and rule of law facilities.

45. As at 1 February, the UNMISS force conducted 54,594 patrols, including 1,170 short-duration patrols, 389 long-duration patrols, 101 dynamic air patrols and 26 riverine patrols. Women were included in 312 of the patrols. A total of 9,460 patrols were conducted in and around protection of civilians sites. Through its regular patrols, the UNMISS force continued to provide protection to women and girls.

46. The United Nations police continued to expand its outwards protection posture and footprint beyond the protection of civilians sites, focusing on deterring and mitigating violence against civilians and building confidence. A total of 170 confidence- and trust-building patrols, 44 short-duration patrols, 23 long-duration patrols, 17 dynamic air patrols and 287 high-visibility patrols was conducted. Of those 541 patrols, 290 included women.

47. Furthermore, the United Nations police, in cooperation with the South Sudan National Police Service and other stakeholders, conducted nine radio awareness programmes intended to raise public awareness of community safety, democratic policing, sexual and gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence, gender equality and human rights. In addition, the United Nations police held 23 training sessions on human rights, community security, sexual and gender-based violence, crime scene management, investigations and COVID-19 preventive measures for 704 South Sudan National Police Service officers, including 212 women. It also conducted 925 technical assistance sessions with the National Police Service during which 5,120 officers, including 1,316 women, received information on those topics. The training programmes are aimed at building the capacity of the National Police Service and other law enforcement agencies, thereby enhancing professionalism, accountability and the community-oriented disposition to further guarantee and foster the protection of civilians and build durable peace.

Rule of law and accountability

48. UNMISS continued its support for national accountability measures for security incidents affecting protection of civilians sites. During the reporting period, 21 persons suspected of being responsible for serious security incidents within the protection of civilians sites in Bentiu and Malakal were detained. UNMISS referred four persons to national authorities for investigation and prosecution. Eight individuals were tried by mobile courts deployed in Bentiu and Malakal, resulting in six convictions, with imprisonment terms from 2 to 10 years.

49. UNMISS also continued to support the national criminal justice chain in promoting accountability across the country. In December, six UNMISS corrections officers were deployed to Wau and Kuacjok to provide case-based mentoring and other technical support to the National Prison Service of South Sudan, facilitate improved prison operations, promote secure and humane conditions of detention and forge stronger links with the entire national justice chain in order to expedite the review of pending cases, including through bail and other alternatives to pretrial detention.

50. On 13 December, the UNMISS-supported mobile general court martial, composed of judges, prosecutors and defence counsel of the SSPDF military justice directorate, concluded its session in Bentiu. It heard 16 cases involving 33 suspects. Trial proceedings were concluded in seven cases, involving nine suspects charged with serious offences such as murder, culpable homicide and robbery. One suspect was acquitted for lack of evidence; the eight remaining suspects were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from two to six years, plus compensation in the form of cattle or cash equivalents to the victims or their families. All convicted service members, who held ranks from private to captain, were discharged from active military service and will serve their sentences in a civilian prison.

51. Between 2 and 9 December, UNMISS supported the Ministry of Youth and Sports in carrying out five inclusive public consultations, including three virtual consultations involving young people from across the country, on the African Youth Charter. The consultations sought to raise awareness of the content and importance of the Charter. Following the consultations, all stakeholders, including line ministries, parliamentarians, independent government bodies and youth-led civil society organizations, unanimously endorsed the Charter and recommended its ratification by the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, once reconstituted.

B. Monitoring and investigating human rights violations

52. As at 1 February, UNMISS documented a total of 155 incidents that negatively affected the human rights and protection situation, including arbitrary killings, abductions, conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detention (including proxy detention), torture and ill-treatment, forced military recruitment and the looting and destruction of civilian property. These incidents resulted in at least 376 civilian casualties (251 killed and 125 injured), including at least 21 women and 17 children. The incidents were attributed to self-defence groups (116); SSPDF (11); SPLM/A-IO (7); NAS (4); the South Sudan National Police Service (3); SPLM/A-IO Riek Machar defectors affiliated with government forces in Wau (3); the National Security Service (2); joint SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO Riek Machar forces (1); joint SSPDF and South Sudan National Police Service forces (1); and clashes between SPLM/A-IO Riek Machar elements and armed young people from the Mabanese community (1). Attribution for six other incidents remained pending.

53. As in previous reporting periods, attacks carried out by self-defence groups continued to account for most of the violence affecting local populations. By early

January, the overall number of such incidents, in particular in Lakes, Warrap and Eastern Equatoria, had risen by more than 30 per cent compared with the same period in 2020. This included a series of clashes around Juba involving armed elements from various communities. Also of concern was an increase in the number of casualties attributed to conventional parties to the conflict (up from 27 to 73 compared with the previous reporting period), as well as the impact on local populations of rising tensions and clashes involving SPLM/A-IO defectors affiliated with government forces in areas of Central Equatoria, Upper Nile and Western Equatoria.

54. UNMISS continued to receive alarming reports of censorship, harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention by the National Security Service of journalists, activists and other civilians expressing views that were critical or dissenting from those of the Government. At least two journalists and human rights defenders were threatened, arbitrarily arrested and detained in connection with their professional activities during the reporting period.

55. The imposition of the death penalty remained of concern, in particular considering inadequate safeguards to protect due process and fair trial rights. During the reporting period, civil society actors secured the release of five death row inmates (including one woman) after successful appeals processes or the acceptance of compensation by victims' families.

56. On 29 January, the Government announced that the Cabinet had instructed the Ministry of Justice to take steps to establish the transitional justice mechanisms provided for in the Revitalized Agreement. However, as at 1 February, the Government had not yet signed the memorandum of understanding with the African Union for the establishment of the hybrid court. Accountability for serious human rights violations and abuses remained low.

57. UNMISS carried out 11 human rights due diligence policy risk assessments before travel and material assistance was provided to non-United Nations security forces in support of the implementation of the peace process.

Children and armed conflict

58. The number of children affected by grave violations decreased from 23 to 11 (four boys and seven girls).

59. Five children (two boys and three girls) were verified as victims of abduction; four girls as survivors of rape; one boy was injured and another was a victim of recruitment and use. Children were most affected in Unity (four girls) and Western Bahr el-Ghazal (two boys and two girls), Central Equatoria (one girl), Upper Nile (one boy) and Warrap (one boy).

60. Violations were perpetrated by, among others, SSPDF (one boy and four girls) and SPLM/A-IO (two boys and three girls). A violation against one boy resulted from crossfire between SPLM/A-IO and an unknown group. No attacks on schools or health-care facilities nor any instances of denial of humanitarian access were verified during the reporting period.

61. In line with the Government's action plan on children associated with armed conflict, between 27 October and 3 December, the country task force on monitoring and reporting supported the establishment of three state-level technical committees in Kuacjok, Wau and Torit, bringing the total number of such committees to nine. The committees constitute the key state-level structures that oversee implementation of the action plan. Furthermore, between 8 and 10 December, the task force delivered a capacity-building workshop in Juba for the specialized military justice sector, drawn from all parties, benefiting 20 participants (17 men and 3 women).

62. In addition, 6,728 people (5,288 men and 1,440 women) across the country, 205 newly deployed UNMISS personnel (146 men and 59 women) and 99 members of armed forces and groups (91 men and 8 women) benefited from child protection awareness-raising, mainstreaming and training sessions.

Conflict-related sexual violence

63. UNMISS continued to observe concerning levels of sexual violence perpetrated by parties to the conflict, self-defence groups or other armed elements involved in localized violence. The Mission verified 11 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involving 16 survivors, including six girls. Victims, whose ages ranged from 13 to 50, were subjected to, inter alia, rape (1), gang rape (3) and attempted rape (1). Incidents were attributed to SSPDF (6) and defected SPLM/A-IO Riek Machar elements allegedly affiliated with government security forces (1), while unidentified armed elements were responsible for four incidents.

64. UNMISS continued to engage with parties to the conflict on the prevention of sexual violence. In January, pursuant to the NAS unilateral communiqué issued by Thomas Cirillo in September 2020, UNMISS delivered three remote training programmes on conflict-related sexual violence to four senior NAS officials, including the group's designated high-level focal point on conflict-related sexual violence, to enable them to disseminate knowledge among the NAS leadership and field commanders. On 27 January, the senior leadership of the Joint Defence Board signed the action plan for the armed forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan. The document – which builds upon the SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO action plans issued in 2019 – standardizes efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence for a three-year period until December 2023. Its public launch remains pending.

65. To mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, in early December national and local authorities, in collaboration with civil society and the United Nations, carried out nationwide awareness-raising activities on sexual and gender-based violence throughout South Sudan. These included a joint campaign by UNMISS and the national and state ministries of gender, child and social welfare to denounce the stigmatization of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, with over 200 participants attending workshops, focus group discussions and radio programmes in locations across the country.

C. Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance

66. As at 1 February, in coordination with humanitarian partners, UNMISS conducted 389 long-duration patrols and 1,170 short-duration patrols across the country to support the delivery of assistance and ensure the protection of humanitarian workers, including through the establishment of temporary operating bases. It provided force protection to 264 integrated missions, enabling access to high-risk areas. In addition, it conducted 801 force protection patrols supporting convoys and humanitarian partners, including non-governmental organizations. The force also conducted maintenance of several key main supply routes, including the Juba-Bor and Mankien-Jonglei roads.

67. The Mine Action Service responded to requests from local authorities, SSPDF, the Embassy of the United States of America, road construction companies and community members to remove and dispose of 290 items of explosive ordnance from residential compounds, along roadsides and in villages in several states.

68. As at 1 February, the Mine Action Service had deployed 20 teams, which had released 1,277,006 m² of land and destroyed 963 explosive items and 60,205 rounds of small arms ammunition. This improved safety for civilians and conditions for the voluntary return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons. Over 18 million m² of land remains contaminated across 18 per cent of payams, primarily located in the Equatoria and on the main return routes of returnees.

69. On 16 December, a grenade exploded inside a tukul in Jur River, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, which killed two boys and injured another three children (one girl and two boys) when one of the boys tried to play with the item. The Mine Action Service investigated the accident, delivered explosive ordnance risk education to the communities and assessed 2,500 m² of the surrounding areas. No additional explosive items were found.

D. Supporting the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the peace process

70. UNMISS continued its good offices with the parties to and partners and stakeholders of the Revitalized Agreement. These included several meetings between the Special Representative and senior officials of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and other representatives in support of the timely implementation of the Agreement. The Special Representative also engaged with regional envoys to coordinate and reinforce efforts. UNMISS supported a joint visit on 23 January to training sites in Rajaf (Central Equatoria) and Maridi (Western Equatoria) by the Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs, Angelina Teny, the Special Envoy of IGAD, Ismail Wais, the Interim Chair of the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Major General Charles Tai Gituai, ambassadors of States members of the African Union and representatives of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. The visit allowed for key government, IGAD and African Union partners to gain first-hand knowledge and promote progress. On 28 January, the African Union, IGAD and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission issued a joint statement expressing concern about the slow implementation of the transitional security arrangements and the lack of food, medicine, shelter and separate facilities for women in the training sites. The partners recommended that the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity improve conditions, graduate the necessary unified forces and publish their redeployment plan. They also called upon the Presidency to engender the political will across all implementing mechanisms to make up for lost time and implement the transitional security arrangements in letter and spirit.

71. On 3 December, UNMISS participated in the inaugural meeting, held in Juba, of the reconstituted working committee on constitutional affairs of the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, which is tasked with monitoring the implementation of constitutional processes under the Revitalized Agreement. UNMISS supported the reconstituted Commission and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in convening a workshop in Juba for women leaders on the constitution-making process, on 2 and 3 December. UNMISS also participated in the working committees of the reconstituted Commission on governance and humanitarian affairs, including by providing technical support.

72. UNMISS continued to promote national and subnational engagement to advance civic and political space through the Political Parties Forum. On 9 and 10 December, UNMISS convened a hybrid Political Parties Forum seminar in Juba, with the

participation of national and state representatives. The attendees reaffirmed their commitment to the peace agreement and the use of dialogue to resolve outstanding issues. They also committed themselves to upholding the principles of transparency, inclusivity and respect for media freedom.

73. UNMISS hosted two radio programmes to bring together working professionals and leaders to exchange views on improving livelihood opportunities and peacebuilding.

74. While UNMISS continued to engage in wide-ranging activities to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in South Sudan, the pandemic created further limitations to its ability to carry out its mandate and was an additional factor in the slowing of the implementation of the peace agreement. The number of in-person meetings with key interlocutors had to be reduced; local capacities to implement the peace agreement, such as required training related to transitional security arrangements, were undermined; and economic challenges due to the pandemic resulted in an increase in violence. Operational costs increased in many mandate areas, for instance owing to the need for physical distancing during helicopter assessment missions. However, UNMISS successfully managed to continue to operate and implement its mandate despite these constraints.

E. Women and peace and security

75. UNMISS continued to engage with key political decision makers and women's networks on the need for improved implementation of the gender provisions in the Revitalized Agreement. The appointment of three female Deputy Governors was a step in the right direction, but the 35 per cent benchmark envisioned in the Agreement remained unmet. UNMISS provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare on a proposed affirmative action bill that, once adopted, would reaffirm the legal requirements for the signatories to the Agreement to include women at all levels and in all structures of government.

76. The force and the United Nations police continued to provide training to personnel on preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence, thereby further strengthening the Mission's overall response to it. In parallel, substantive sections further implemented gender-responsive programmatic activities while advocating the application of gender analysis and the inclusion of women in conflict management, reconciliation and social cohesion efforts, as well as in local peace dialogues, to address gender dimensions at the local level, including through the participation of women peacebuilders.

VI. Mission staffing, status of deployments and conduct and discipline

77. On 1 February, the number of UNMISS civilian personnel stood at 2,643, comprising 884 international staff members (246 women, 27.8 per cent), 1,388 national staff members (198 women, 14.3 per cent) and 371 United Nations Volunteers (155 women, 41.8 per cent).

78. The police strength stood at 1,692 (of an authorized 2,101 personnel), comprising 494 individual police officers (159 women, 32.3 per cent), 1,145 personnel in deployed formed police units (280 women, 24.5 per cent) and 53 corrections officers (14 women, 26.4 per cent).

79. Of the authorized 17,000 troops, UNMISS troop strength stood at 14,830 military personnel: 214 military liaison officers (46 women, 21.5 per cent), 387

military staff officers (68 women, 17.6 per cent) and 14,229 military contingent personnel (678 women, 5.3 per cent).

80. In accordance with the applicable policy, all information on misconduct was processed in a timely manner. As at 1 February, 18 allegations were recorded in the case management tracking system and processed in accordance with applicable procedures and time frames. No allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse were recorded. All identified victims of sexual exploitation and abuse continued to receive support from the Mission's Senior Victims' Rights Officer in South Sudan.

81. The resumption of internal Mission travel – previously on hold owing to the COVID-19 pandemic – enabled outreach and risk management on conduct and discipline to continue in person. Field visits were conducted to Aweil, Rumbek, Bor, Bentiu, Wau and Kuacjok, where town hall meetings were held on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and prohibited conduct. Meetings were held with the gatekeepers of community-based complaints mechanisms in Yambio on 4 December and Bor on 19 January. The Mission continued to work closely with the inter-agency task force on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in South Sudan to integrate risk management activities on sexual exploitation and abuse, promote a common understanding of risks and enhance the coordination of mitigation activities.

Inter-mission support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

82. On 24 December, 300 troops consisting of two companies of the Juba-based Rwanda battalion and two helicopters from the Sri Lanka aviation unit were redeployed at short notice to support election security tasks undertaken by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. The Mine Action Service also conducted three short-notice ammunition inspections to facilitate this inter-mission assignment.

VII. Violations of the status-of-forces agreement, international humanitarian law and the security of United Nations personnel

83. As at 1 February, UNMISS recorded 54 Status of Forces Agreement violations compared with 79 in the previous reporting period. Of those, 50 violations involved movement restrictions by the Government, impeding the Mission's ability to implement its mandate.

84. Access denials to UNMISS patrols continued across the country. The SSPDF Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism continued to insist that all sharing of information and flight safety assurance documents for the Mission's ground and air patrols must be acknowledged by its headquarters in Juba. An additional requirement was further compounded, in some instances, by the Government's insistence on acknowledgement of the sharing of information at both the headquarters and local state level. This resulted in delays, requiring the Mission to either postpone or cancel a significant number of its planned patrols.

85. Notably, of the 50 movement restrictions documented, 47 were a result of sharing of information or flight safety assurance not being acknowledged at either the headquarters or local state level. On two occasions, UNMISS patrols deployed from Wau to Kuajena and Mapel in Western Bahr el-Ghazal were denied access by SSPDF soldiers at the Jur River bridge checkpoint on the outskirts of Wau. The patrols had aimed to verify reports of the presence of armed itinerant cattle keepers in the area and to deescalate growing tensions between the cattle keepers and the local community. On three occasions, in Western Equatoria, UNMISS reconnaissance

flights were cancelled because the SSPDF Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Juba failed to acknowledge the flight safety assurances. In Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, an UNMISS patrol that was intending to establish a temporary operating base was denied access by a Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism officer and threatened with hostage-taking by the SSPDF Division III Chief of Operations in Wanyjok.

86. UNMISS continued to reinforce with relevant authorities the fact that the sharing of information was only for coordination purposes and that UNMISS was not required to obtain approvals for the implementation of its mandated tasks. Nevertheless, security personnel across the country denied access to UNMISS patrols on numerous occasions.

87. The whereabouts of two national staff members arrested in 2014 remain unknown. The Government has neither granted UNMISS access to them nor provided information about their condition, despite regular requests.

88. While progress was noted in early December in the approval of backlogged visas for UNMISS personnel, recurring delays in visa approvals for individual uniformed personnel continued to have a negative impact on UNMISS activities.

89. UNMISS recorded one incident of access denial by SPLM/A-IO, on 12 January, impeding its ability to monitor and investigate the human rights situation at Kedibo police station, Western Equatoria.

90. UNMISS continued to notify the Government of the violations through notes verbales and regular engagements. A monthly matrix of the incidents prepared for the Security Council is also shared with the Government.

VIII. Performance of uniformed components

91. Two UNMISS force units were evaluated by visiting review teams, assessing sector headquarters staff support for troop contingents. Both units were rated above average. No additional force or police assessments could be conducted owing to COVID-19-related restrictions. On 25 January, an integrated team from United Nations Headquarters arrived in Juba to conduct a four-week military and police capability study to assess the performance of uniformed components and examine possible adjustments to the UNMISS military and police structure. The COVID-19 pandemic presented major challenges for UNMISS staff and uniformed personnel. Mandatory predeployment and in-mission quarantine remained a major challenge, as did delays in visa clearances. In combination, they led to prolonged quarantine periods for some units, affected the welfare and morale of Mission personnel and extended tours of duty for uniformed personnel.

Financial aspects

92. The General Assembly, by its resolution [74/293](#) of 30 June 2020, appropriated the amount of \$1,178,515,100 for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. As at 9 February 2021, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNMISS amounted to \$269.0 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$3,173.5 million. Reimbursement of troop and formed police costs, as well as for contingent-owned equipment, has been made for the period up to 30 September 2020, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

IX. Observations and recommendations

93. I acknowledge the progress made on the political front in South Sudan over the past year. During the reporting period, the filling of gubernatorial positions, including the recent appointment of the Governor of Upper Nile, was a significant step forward. I commend the parties and Mr. Kiir for these decisions but also call upon them, as partners in government, to renew their commitment to the timely and effective implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. In particular, I urge them to accelerate the establishment of all institutions of government while adhering to the 35 per cent quota for women.

94. The peace process is at a critical juncture in the current transitional period, which will end with elections. I remain concerned at the lack of momentum in meeting key benchmarks of the peace agreement, in particular the establishment of a reconstituted legislative assembly and transitional security arrangements. Priority must be given to finalizing the overall security strategy to provide a comprehensive and coherent framework for decision-making. While I welcome the stated commitment by the Government to unify armed forces and to graduate soldiers, those troops currently remain in cantonment sites and face dire living conditions. Until they are deployed, resources have to be made available to ensure that they have access to adequate shelter, health care, food and water.

95. I am encouraged that the ceasefire continues to hold. However, I am concerned about increasing subnational violence in several parts of the country. Cattle migration, flooding and a volatile economy owing to the COVID-19 pandemic are driving the conflict, but political actors at the national level also play a role. The violence has resulted in a challenging human rights and protection environment characterized by ongoing conflict-related sexual violence, curtailed freedom of speech and the destruction of civilian and public property.

96. These factors have compounded the already serious humanitarian situation, with a worsened outlook highlighted in the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report. I call upon the international community to close the humanitarian funding gap so that much-needed assistance can be delivered to the more than 1.6 million internally displaced persons in South Sudan.

97. I welcome the positive cooperation with the Government of South Sudan on the transition of three United Nations protection of civilians sites to camps for internally displaced persons, which are now under full government responsibility. I urge the Government to fully protect its citizens in those camps and throughout the country. The transition of the camps has enabled United Nations uniformed personnel, previously occupied with static duties at protection of civilians sites, to be redeployed on more proactive operations to conflict hotspots and areas of return, resulting in an increase in UNMISS protection provided to civilians across the country.

98. The approach by UNMISS to protect civilians in this new context hinges upon its continued ability to move around South Sudan freely, as enshrined in the Status of Forces Agreement and on the increased capacity of government institutions to take a more active role in resolving conflict and ending impunity. I appreciate the fact that violations of the Agreement, including with regard to UNMISS freedom of movement, declined somewhat during the reporting period, and I call upon the Government to ensure that UNMISS can carry out its missions without impediment.

99. Obligations enshrined in the Status of Forces Agreement must also be fully respected vis-à-vis humanitarian workers. I remain deeply troubled by reports of threats and violence against humanitarian workers and call for unhindered and safe

access to all United Nations operations in order to ensure essential support and protection for those in need.

100. I wish to express my gratitude to El-Ghassim Wane and his team for leading the independent strategic review of UNMISS requested by the Security Council in its resolution [2514 \(2020\)](#). In its report, the review team noted the positive impact of the ceasefire of 2017 and the Revitalized Agreement of 2018, but also warned that the underlying dynamics that contributed to the outbreak of civil war in South Sudan continued to exist.

101. Naturally, the Government and people of South Sudan are in the lead on their path towards peace and stability. I reassure them of the continued and steadfast support of the United Nations and recommend that the UNMISS mandate be renewed. The four pillars of the mandate remain valid, and I envisage a continuation of the Mission's key role in protecting civilians throughout the country, while underscoring the primacy of politics and enhancing the strategic political engagement between the United Nations, IGAD and the African Union on South Sudan.

102. I also highlight the recommendation of the strategic review to enhance the role of UNMISS in providing technical support to judicial and law enforcement institutions, as well as the need to factor in electoral and security sector reform expertise. In addition, I foresee a broadening of the functions of the United Nations police to mentor and increase the capacity of the South Sudan National Police Service and, where appropriate, co-locate to build community policing to prevent and respond to crime.

103. Finally, I convey my appreciation to the uniformed and civilian personnel of UNMISS and the United Nations country team, who have continued to work in extraordinary circumstances, compounded by the continuing severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank my Special Representative, David Shearer, who has demonstrated exemplary leadership and commitment to securing peace for the people of South Sudan. I thank the troop- and police-contributing countries and acknowledge the vital efforts to achieve peace of IGAD Heads of State and Government, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Workneh Gebeyehu, the IGAD Special Envoy, Ismail Wais, and the Community of Sant'Egidio. I also express my deep respect and appreciation to the people of South Sudan, who have suffered greatly and deserve lasting peace and prosperity.
