



Security Council

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Situation in Abyei

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 34 of Security Council resolution [2609 \(2021\)](#), in which the Council requested to be informed of progress in implementing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). It covers the period since the issuance of the previous report ([S/2021/881](#)) of the Secretary-General, from 16 October 2021 to 15 April 2022. The report provides updates on, inter alia, political, security, human rights, rule of law and humanitarian developments, as well as progress towards the transition of UNISFA into a United Nations multinational peacekeeping force.

II. Abyei

Political developments

2. During the reporting period, a joint session of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Joint Border Commission was held on 21 October 2021, in Juba, with the Chief of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism representing UNISFA and that Mechanism. In the outcome document of the meeting, the two bodies underscored their commitment to enhancing the awareness of local communities and the wider public of the agreement between the Sudan and South Sudan on the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone.

3. From 26 to 30 November 2021, the Sudanese Co-Chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, Major General Mohamed Alawi Koko, undertook a working visit in the Abyei Area, where he interacted with members of the Misseriya community in Diffra, Goli and the Amiet market and conveyed his commitment to supporting the strengthening of basic service delivery and administration in the northern part of Abyei. On 29 November, he met with UNISFA leadership in Todach (Sector North) and discussed the security situation and the stalemate in the local peace process.

4. On 9 December 2021, the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Kefyalew Amde Tessema, met in Khartoum with senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss operational matters and to update the Sudanese authorities on the progress made in the reconfiguration of UNISFA into a United Nations multinational peacekeeping force.



5. On 22 February 2022, the mission leadership met with seven members of the parliament of South Sudan who were in Abyei at the request of the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, to undertake an assessment of the violence that had erupted in the Agok area (Sector South) in the second week of February between members of the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka communities. UNISFA urged the parliamentarians to help de-escalate tensions in southern Abyei, as the security situation was already deemed volatile because of the continued lack of agreement between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities on transhumance modalities.

6. On 9 March 2022, as part of his familiarization programme, the then Force Commander-designate, Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr, met with senior Sudanese officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence in Khartoum. In Juba, on 14 March, he met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Sudan, the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Presidential Adviser on Security Affairs and Chair of the national committee on the final status of Abyei, the Co-Chair for South Sudan of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, and the Minister for East African Community Affairs.

7. UNISFA leadership met on 1 and 17 March 2022 with administrative and traditional leaders based in Abyei town. On 17 March, the new acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Sawyerr, met with the Juba-appointed Chief Administrator, Kuol Diem Kuol, and the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, Bulabek Deng Kuol, to discuss security, the rule of law, intercommunity dialogue and the mission transition. The Paramount Chief acknowledged the service provided by UNISFA in protecting civilians, as demonstrated by the mission's role in assisting victims of the recent attacks in the area of Agok, as well as its enhanced patrolling to deter future attacks. The mission also provided shelter in Agok to those affected by the violence.

8. On 22 March, Major General Sawyerr paid a courtesy visit to the Khartoum-appointed Chief Administrator in Diffra, Gumaa Dawood Musa Hamdan, and interacted separately with the Misseriya traditional leadership led by the Paramount Chief, Mukhtar Babo Nimir. As he had done with authorities in Abyei town, the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander reassured interlocutors that there would be no security gap during the transition period.

9. On 25 and 30 March, Major General Sawyerr met with the fifth Vice-President of South Sudan, Hussein Abdelbagi Akol Agany, who visited Abyei as the leader of a South Sudanese fact-finding team looking into the outbreak of violence in the area of Agok between 10 and 12 February. In this connection, on 5 April, Major General Sawyerr met with representatives of civil society and of women's and youth organizations based in Abyei town to clarify the mandate of UNISFA and invite them to raise awareness of the peace process in their communities. On 7 April, he interacted with local officials and internally displaced persons in Abathok and Agok (Sector South) to assess how they could best be supported following the attacks of February 2022.

10. No visible progress was made in advancing negotiations on the final status of Abyei.

Conflict dynamics and the security situation

11. During the reporting period, the security situation in the Abyei Area remained mostly calm, despite sporadic incidents, including killings; shootings; cattle-rustling; violence against women, including rape; and migration-related incidents. The continued presence of armed elements also posed a threat to security. Incidents such as those described above occasionally escalated into confrontations between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, and violence between the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka.

12. Armed attacks constituted 22 of the 46 security-related incidents recorded during the reporting period, and an estimated 52 civilians, including three women and one child, were killed in armed attacks, clashes and isolated shooting incidents by unidentified persons. Security incidents also left many wounded and resulted in the displacement of civilians. Sixteen fire incidents occurred during the reporting period, mainly affecting markets and residential areas in Amiet, Abyei town and Agok.

13. On 20 November 2021, Ngok Dinka community members attacked members of the Misseriya community at Um Khariet (Sector North), resulting in the injury of three Misseriya men. In an apparent reprisal attack, on 2 January 2022, a group of 70 armed members of the Misseriya community attacked the Ngok Dinka village of Myordol (Sector South) and killed five Ngok Dinka. One of the Misseriya attackers was also killed. UNISFA troops arrested 11 of the suspected attackers and transferred them to the UNISFA camp in Diffra (Sector North) for further questioning. On 3 January, Misseriya youth and traditional leaders led a peaceful demonstration in front of the UNISFA camp, calling for the release of the detainees. On 7 January, the Misseriya suspects were handed over to Sudanese national authorities for further investigation and prosecution. On 13 January, a group of unidentified armed men attacked the Ngok Dinka village of Akenghial (Sector South), killing one civilian and wounding two. The assailants had fled before UNISFA troops were deployed to the area.

14. Several other armed attacks were recorded during the period. On 30 October, a Misseriya man was attacked by several machete-wielding Ngok Dinka men at the Amiet market (Sector North), sustaining severe wounds. On 3 February, two Misseriya men were shot and killed by unidentified men near Um Khariet (Sector North).

15. On 5 March, Misseriya youth in Goli village blocked the Goli-Todach main supply route to protest the withholding of the remains of a Misseriya man – among four reportedly shot and killed in Unity State, South Sudan, on 16 February – that had allegedly not been returned to his family for burial. On the same day, a group suspected to consist of members of the Misseriya community attacked Mading Tong village. According to the community protection committee, more than 20 villagers were estimated to have been killed, as well as four attackers.

16. As a result of that attack, some 400 people gathered outside the main gate of the UNISFA headquarters on 6 March to seek shelter, before dispersing later the same evening. UNISFA responded by increasing its presence in the area, including through night patrols.

17. From 10 to 12 February, UNISFA responded to violence between members of the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities in Agok, in the southern part of the Abyei Area, over a long-standing land dispute. The clashes reportedly resulted in some 15 civilian fatalities and many wounded, as well as the displacement of over 70,000 people. Further to these security developments, UNISFA supported the evacuation of aid workers from the area as well as the relocation of patients from a hospital in Agok to the UNISFA level II hospital in Abyei town.

18. Following the clashes, on 14 February, members of the Ngok Dinka community protested outside the UNISFA compound in Abyei, demanding the termination of the contracts of UNISFA employees of Twic Dinka origin. An estimated 80 unarmed persons threw stones at mission personnel, forced their way through the main gate and damaged United Nations property. Acting in self-defence, UNISFA troops fired warning shots into the air. During the incident, 3 UNISFA troops and 10 protesters sustained injuries. Of the two protesters admitted to the UNISFA level II hospital, one was subsequently released, and one was evacuated to Juba before being transferred to Kampala.

19. UNISFA engagement with local and traditional authorities in response to the violence contributed to the defusing of tensions and helped to prevent further violence. In a letter to UNISFA dated 24 February, the President of the Abyei Youth Union apologized for the violent protests on 14 February and withdrew the request for the termination of the contracts of Twic Dinka local staff.

20. During the reporting period, there were 3 incidents of armed robbery, 2 incidents of cattle rustling and 13 instances of armed group presence in the Abyei Area. On 24 November 2021, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Tishwin sighted approximately 400 Dinka men armed with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. The Mechanism monitored the movement of the armed elements until they exited the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. On 12 January, 30 unidentified armed men on horseback and camels were sighted in the areas of Mabek and Leu (Sector South).

21. On 16 February, UNISFA sighted four Sudanese Armed Forces soldiers around Farouk (Sector North), armed with a 12.7 mm machine gun mounted on a pick-up truck. On 4 March, the Force sighted an additional six Forces soldiers in Farouk, armed with five AK-47 assault rifles and a machine gun mounted on a pick-up truck. On 14 March, five Forces soldiers armed with AK-47 assault rifles were sighted in the vicinity of Farouk. They exited the Abyei Area at the insistence of UNISFA troops. On the same day, some 20 armed troops of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces in two pick-up trucks were sighted in the vicinity of Maibong (Sector South). UNISFA troops trailed them until they crossed back into South Sudan. On 15 March, five armed troops of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces were sighted in Anthony. They withdrew a few days later, following the engagement by the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander with the Juba-appointed administration.

22. On 5 April, four Sudanese nationals, all from Western Kordofan State in the Sudan, were arrested by UNISFA troops at a snap checkpoint at the Amiet market in possession of one pistol and other ammunition. They were handed over to relevant authorities in Diffra on 6 April. Similarly, on 8 April, four armed Sudanese Armed Forces personnel from Western Kordofan State were apprehended at a permanent UNISFA checkpoint at the Amiet market. They were handed over to relevant authorities.

23. UNISFA forces were attacked twice during the reporting period. On 5 March, an armed group fired on a UNISFA convoy in Agok. No injuries were sustained. On the same day, UNISFA received a letter dated 23 February from the Twic Council of Traditional Chiefs, Warrap State, South Sudan, warning UNISFA to stop patrols south of the Kiir River. On 6 March, a UNISFA patrol was attacked near the Agok airstrip, with no casualties. On 8 March, UNISFA submitted a note verbale to the Government of South Sudan, requesting its urgent engagement with the Twic Dinka traditional leaders, the local administration in Warrap State and relevant units of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces to ensure that attacks against UNISFA ceased. In the note verbale, UNISFA also requested that the Government engage the Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka leaderships to defuse tensions between them.

Reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

24. The reconfiguration of the UNISFA military component is ongoing. As at 10 April 2022, most of the Ghanaian troops had arrived, including staff for the level II hospital in UNISFA headquarters, which is fully functional. More than half of all Pakistani troops had arrived, as had the full headquarters support unit of Nepal. Furthermore, the majority of the Bangladeshi members of the Force Protection Unit had reached the area and taken up responsibilities relating to the Joint Border

Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The Ethiopian contingent departed Abyei on 10 April, with the exception of a rear party that will be repatriated in the near future.

25. Of the 143 authorized military observers, only 85 were on the ground as at 10 April owing to delays in the issuance of visas. Of the 117 authorized staff officers, only 81 were present in the mission, also owing to delays in the issuance of visas.

26. On 16 March, Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr of Nigeria assumed his role as Force Commander and acting Head of Mission. During the reporting period, the Deputy Force Commander, Brigadier General Abu Syed Mohammod Bakir of Bangladesh, and the Chief of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, Brigadier General Alobawone Atogebakoga of Ghana, also assumed their duties.

Freedom of movement violations

27. Some 28 freedom of movement violations were recorded during the reporting period. The figure includes the above-mentioned protest by members of the Ngok Dinka community at the Abyei compound of UNISFA on 14 February. Three of the violations affected the movement of UNISFA personnel in Abyei, while 17 occurred within the headquarters of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Kadugli, Sudan. With regard to the violations in Kadugli, these included the repeated blockade of the gate to the Mechanism headquarters. On several occasions, the blockades resulted in the disruption of flight connections between Abyei, Kadugli and Khartoum. Most of the violations were committed by former employees of Imdad Total Site Services, a contractor of the UNISFA/Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as well as by former international contractors or persons never employed by UNISFA.

28. The violations posed operational and administrative challenges for the activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Kadugli. To address them, UNISFA leadership engaged local and national authorities of the Sudan, in coordination with United Nations Headquarters. UNISFA and the Secretariat also submitted several notes verbales to the Government of the Sudan to request its support. This engagement eventually led to the cessation of the blockades. Since that time, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudanese Police Force have maintained a presence at the gate of the Mechanism compound in Kadugli to ensure freedom of movement and the continuity of operations.

29. On 19 October, a UNISFA water truck from team site 21 (Tishwin) of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism was denied access to the Heglig water point by members of the Sudanese Police Force. On 23 October, a representative of the authorities of Aweil County (South Sudan) refused to grant road and security clearance for Force Protection Unit trucks travelling from Gok Machar (Aweil County) to Abyei as part of the relocation of the Mechanism's Sector 1 headquarters to UNISFA headquarters. On 29 October, the relocation of the last batch of United Nations personnel from the Mechanism's Sector 1 headquarters to its Sector 2 headquarters in Kadugli was temporarily blocked by members of the Aweil community.

30. In addition, on 9 December, a UNISFA convoy transporting assets from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to the UNISFA headquarters in Abyei was held for three hours at a checkpoint near the Amiet common market. On 2 February, two trucks belonging to contractor Ecolog International that were transporting fresh and frozen rations were stopped in Kadugli and held by community members for five days.

31. On 4 December, the mission received a letter from the community of Tonga, in the vicinity of team site 22 of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Abu Qussa/Wunkur, in which UNISFA was requested to provide humanitarian support as a condition for its continued presence in the area. UNISFA continued to engage with the community to avoid any impact on the implementation of its mandate.

32. On 10 December, the 2B Operating Company of the Sudan submitted a letter to the UNISFA/Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in which it reiterated claims made earlier in 2021 that the Mechanism team site was located in its concession block and in which it restated its request to relocate the team site. UNISFA transmitted the request to the relevant Sudanese authorities and has yet to receive a response.

33. On 1 March, members of the Tesi community in Southern Kordofan, Sudan, sent a letter to UNISFA in which they threatened to block the main gate of the base of the UNISFA/Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Kadugli over the perceived lack of employment opportunities for their community. On 2 March, some 100 community members blocked the gate before dispersing after the intervention of Sudan national monitors and representatives of the Southern Kordofan government. A water tanker from the UNISFA/Mechanism base in Kadugli was also denied access to a water point at the village of Muttar Tesima on 4 March over the perceived lack of employment opportunities.

Intercommunity dialogue

34. Intercommunity dynamics have remained strained since the inconclusive Aweil peace conference of February 2021. Delays in the release of the report on the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief in 2013 and in the launch of a joint investigation by both parties into the attacks in Kolom in January 2020 continue to affect relations between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. The communities also continue to disagree on the use of the designation “Ajaira” to describe the Misseriya clan directly involved in the Abyei question. Those challenges notwithstanding, UNISFA continued to engage with representatives of both communities, as well as the Juba- and Khartoum-appointed administrations.

35. To address differences between the communities, UNISFA adopted a three-pronged approach to the local peace process, aimed at building consensus within each community before convening a joint peace conference of traditional leaders. In that context, on 13 and 14 October in Diffra, UNISFA hosted the traditional leaders of the Misseriya community, led by Paramount Chief Mukhtar Babo Nimir, with the participation of Misseriya youth and women representatives, to discuss issues affecting security and peaceful coexistence in Abyei. As an outcome, Misseriya stakeholders adopted a resolution in which their commitment to peaceful coexistence was echoed, and they underscored their readiness to meet with their Ngok Dinka counterparts. On 18 and 19 October, Paramount Chief Bulabek Deng Kuol, traditional chiefs, and youth and women representatives of the Ngok Dinka community were convened by UNISFA in Rumajak/Dokura to discuss the situation in Abyei and the peace process. They adopted a resolution in which they highlighted their commitment to the peace process, and they reasserted the need for traditional leaders of both communities to address matters of a non-political nature that affect them directly, notably the management of natural resources in the area.

36. On the basis of those renewed commitments, UNISFA engaged the community leaders and their respective local administrations to convene a joint peace conference of traditional leaders. After continuous consultations, the venue for the conference emerged as a source of disagreement, with the Misseriya refusing to meet in South

Sudan and the Ngok Dinka refusing to meet in the Abyei Area or in the Sudan. After lengthy negotiations, both communities agreed to meet in Entebbe, Uganda. Substantive preparations were undertaken by the mission, but a few days before the start of the conference, some traditional leaders expressed reluctance to travel to Entebbe for security reasons. Furthermore, differences regarding the composition of the delegations and difficulties pertaining to the issuance of passports eventually made it impossible to hold the conference as planned from 15 to 17 February.

37. During his first meetings in Khartoum and Juba with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan in March, the newly appointed Force Commander and acting Head of Mission, Major General Sawyerr, encouraged both Governments to impress upon the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities the importance of their participation in the joint peace conference of traditional leaders. While UNISFA is confident that the conference can be held by mid-May, the mission continues to explore alternative confidence-building activities.

38. UNISFA has approved, and work has started on, 16 quick-impact projects for the 2021/22 fiscal year. Nine such projects in southern Abyei are focused on improving public spaces in Agok, furnishing shops that will sell local produce in Noong and Summary, setting up and furnishing shops in Dungroup and Mijak, building the Amiet courthouse and installing water pumps at Bokchop and Abathok. Seven quick-impact projects in northern Abyei involve the construction of a new secondary school building in Mekines, an extension of the schools in Goli and Al Ridaya and improvements to the primary school in Diffra.

Law and order issues

39. Law and order efforts continued to be hampered by the absence of the Abyei Police Service, and United Nations police continued to be the only ones ensuring law and order in the area. While the delays in the deployment of formed police units due to visa issues continued, United Nations police managed to respond to many incidents, including public disorder, armed attacks, intercommunal violence and other civil disturbances. During a meeting with UNISFA leadership in Todach on 29 November, the Sudanese Co-Chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee was reminded of the need to authorize the deployment of formed police units, expedite the issuance of visas for additional individual police officers and establish community protection committees in the northern part of Abyei. As it had done with representatives of South Sudan, UNISFA reiterated to the Sudanese Co-Chair the need to agree on a memorandum of understanding on the handling and handover of suspects and reminded the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan of the invitations sent to both parties to attend road-map exercises for the establishment of the Abyei Police Service. To address challenges posed by the increasing population and the construction of new housing and commercial spaces in Amiet, Abyei and Agok, UNISFA established new team sites for United Nations police to support community protection committees covering Noong, Tajalei and Marial Achack.

40. United Nations police continued to build the capacity of the community protection committees and joint protection committees at the Amiet common market to maintain law and order. Stations of those committees recorded a total of 1,070 general crimes during the reporting period, representing a decrease of 377 cases compared with the previous period.

41. United Nations police trained 444 members of community protection committees and joint protection committees in basic policing and respect for human rights. During the reporting period, the number of community protection committee stations increased from 31 to 34, staffed by a total of 810 volunteers, including 135

women. United Nations police are also engaging the administration of Diffra to establish community protection committees in northern parts of Abyei.

42. In addition, United Nations police worked to strengthen the capacity of community protection committees and joint protection committees through a number of initiatives: the provision of portable rechargeable flashlights; the construction of a kitchen in the Abyei detention centre; construction and renovation efforts; and the provision of a new sexual and gender-based violence coordination centre in the Abyei community protection committee station. United Nations police conducted approximately 726 activities related to law and order in Noong and Abyei (Sector Centre), Todach and Diffra (Sector North), and Banton, Tejalei and Agok (Sector South). A total of 307 campaigns were conducted focusing on crime prevention and reduction, and road safety, while 168 were conducted to raise awareness of accountability for sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of women's and children's rights. Further, some 225 pupils, including 110 girls, benefited from campaigns on the prevention of child abuse, including early marriage and female genital mutilation, conducted in 12 schools.

43. United Nations police engaged actively with stakeholders in Abyei, including traditional leaders, community protection committees, religious leaders and the Abyei Women's Association, as well as youth and local authorities, to enhance participation in law and order matters and strengthen the capacities of the community protection committees and joint protection committees. UNISFA corrections officers conducted 284 visits to the three detention facilities in Abyei, Agok and the Amiet common market to provide advice on best practices and on compliance with international human rights standards.

44. United Nations police conducted 1,652 community interactive patrols to mobilize members of the public to participate in peacebuilding initiatives. They also conducted 659 joint patrols, 305 independent security observation patrols and 3 air reconnaissance patrols in tandem with military observers and national monitors from the Governments of South Sudan and the Sudan.

45. A corrections expert from the Justice and Corrections Standing Capacity of the Department of Peace Operations was deployed to UNISFA on 20 February to support the mission with the development of a road map for strategic and operational corrections support in Abyei. In addition, on 20 March, two rule of law experts from the Justice and Corrections Service and the Standing Police Capacity of the Department of Peace Operations were deployed to UNISFA for one month to assist the mission in developing a rule of law support strategy for Abyei.

46. United Nations police currently comprise 48 individual police officers, including 17 women. Entry visas were granted to 10 individual police officers during the reporting period. Currently, there are pending visa requests for 66 of 148 authorized individual police officers. No progress was made on the deployment of the three formed police units as mandated by the Security Council.

Human rights situation

47. The human rights situation continued to be fragile and characterized mainly by repeated cycles of violence along ethnic lines, with a deadly impact on the civilian population. During the reporting period, UNISFA faced challenges documenting human rights violations and abuses in the absence of human rights expertise as mandated in Security Council resolutions, including resolution [2609 \(2021\)](#). However, for the first time since the establishment of the mission, temporary visas were granted to two human rights officers to conduct a mission to Abyei from 20 to 24 March to assess the human rights situation.

48. That assessment underscored concerns about the effective protection of the rights of women and children and the lack of relevant rule of law institutions, which had left a vacuum exposing the civilian population to further harm, as well as the application of statutory and customary law criminalizing offences such as adultery, inappropriate behaviour, witchcraft and suicide attempts, which disproportionately affected women. Early marriage of children is not only a violation of the rights of children but also hinders their right to education and exposes them to acts of domestic violence. In addition, the marked absence of rule of law institutions hindered access to justice and accountability, creating conditions of impunity, which, in turn, can lead to further violations, including the killing of civilians in the context of intercommunal violence. Insufficient protection of economic social and cultural rights, especially the rights to education, water and health care, also contributed to tensions between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities.

Humanitarian situation

49. The Abyei Area continued to face significant humanitarian challenges resulting from outbreaks of violence, the presence of armed elements, population displacement and economic challenges in both the Sudan and South Sudan. Living conditions and access to basic services continued to be affected by limited or non-existent government services, including lack of access to public health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, protection services, and farming and livestock technical assistance. A limited presence of humanitarian agencies in northern Abyei, along with logistical hurdles, insecurity and political sensitivities, remained challenges during the reporting period.

50. The humanitarian community assisted some 240,000 vulnerable people within the Abyei Area, including 120,500 people from the Ngok Dinka and other South Sudanese communities, 28,000 people displaced from neighbouring States in South Sudan, 43,000 people from Misseriya communities and 42,500 seasonal Misseriya migrants, and 6,000 Falata nomads who entered the area in October 2021 and are expected to leave in May 2022. However, the humanitarian response was impeded by access constraints, including insecurity in hard-to-reach areas in central Abyei. Outbreaks of violence in February and March that resulted in the temporary relocation of nearly 800 aid workers and a suspension of activities in affected areas further hindered the humanitarian response.

51. During the February and March violence in Agok, two humanitarian workers were killed and two others were critically injured. Since then, humanitarian operations have been affected in the hardest-hit areas, including areas south of the Kiir River. Services at the main hospital in southern Abyei and nearly all of the 10 primary health facilities in southern Abyei were affected by the violence.

52. Food production is not adequate to cover the food needs of the people in the area, and the entire population in northern Abyei lacks access to primary health-care services, with a critical gap in medicines, trained health-care workers and laboratories, and a limited referral system. The local communities, nomads and displaced people face severe water shortages, and almost all of the communities do not have basic sanitation facilities. A lack of non-food items and substandard levels of housing further exposed families to additional health and protection risks. Around 20,000 unregistered displaced South Sudanese live in northern Abyei.

53. Approximately 70 per cent of children were out of school due to limited facilities, lack of money to pay school fees and the long distance to schools. Displaced children who work in the local markets to support their families' food needs are exposed to sexual abuse, exploitation and child trafficking.

Women and peace and security

54. UNISFA played a key role in facilitating the strengthening of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in community-level decision-making, including through political engagement and advocacy with local authorities. These efforts resulted in garnering the commitment of local leadership to promote the participation of women in local committees responsible for settling disputes. A one-day conference led by UNISFA on 13 December for local leaders, including traditional leaders, on structuring traditional courts to include women contributed to the appointment of a woman in each of the 13 traditional courts in the Ngok Dinka community.

55. To strengthen the agency and role of women in informal peace processes, UNISFA continued to advocate for the participation of women in local peace dialogues. As a result, women participated in two separate peace conferences in the Misseriya (13 and 14 October) and the Ngok Dinka (18 and 19 October) communities, in which, respectively, 3 out of 30 and 2 out of 35 participants were women. The conferences presented an opportunity to expand the political space for women to voice their views, including calls for peace.

56. UNISFA continued its efforts to promote and protect the human rights of women, including the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. The efforts of the mission included monitoring and reporting on sexual and gender-based violence cases, as well as facilitating access to services for the victims, commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence through awareness-raising and training of local communities on the rights of women and advocating for the promotion of their rights. During the reporting period, three sexual and gender-based violence cases were recorded by UNISFA, involving three victims. Two of the cases, involving two victims, were of rape; the third case involved the attempted rape of a seven-year-old boy.

57. To ensure that UNISFA consistently integrated priorities related to gender and to women and peace and security in its analytical and operational efforts across all mission planning, monitoring and reporting processes, UNISFA finalized and rolled out a mission-wide gender mainstreaming strategy for 2021–2024 on 28 October. UNISFA also continued to monitor implementation of the Department of Peace Operations women and peace and security indicators in the mission area to inform decision-making processes at the mission level.

Operations of the Mine Action Service

58. After the forced withdrawal from the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism Sector 1 headquarters in Gok Machar and from the two team sites in Sector 1, the Mine Action Service remained fully deployed to the headquarters of the Mechanism in Kadugli and the two active team sites in Sector 2, enabling 37 ground monitoring mechanism missions.

59. The Mine Action Service assessed 65,308 m² of land and 410 km of routes in the Abyei Area as safe for use by UNISFA, humanitarian actors and the local population. Areas assessed included UNISFA temporary operating bases and patrol routes to enhance Force mobility in accordance with the dry season deployment plan and one suspected landmine-contaminated area. As a result of these activities, six explosive remnants of war were recovered and subsequently destroyed in controlled demolitions. As part of weapons and ammunition management, the Service destroyed three weapons and 41 rounds of small arms ammunition confiscated by UNISFA troops.

60. The Service continued with explosive ordnance risk education. During the reporting period, 490 sessions were delivered, reaching 9,356 community members

(1,715 men, 1,442 women, 3,770 boys and 2,429 girls) living in the Abyei Area. Community members, including children and nomads, were provided with comic books and masks to create awareness of explosive remnants of war, as well as coronavirus disease (COVID-19) mitigation measures. Five awareness-raising sessions on explosive remnants of war were also delivered as part of UNISFA induction training sessions, enhancing the awareness of 87 UNISFA military and civilian personnel, including 15 women.

Abyei joint programme of the United Nations country teams of South Sudan and the Sudan

61. UNISFA, with the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan, intensified efforts to develop the Abyei joint programme proposed in the letter dated 17 September 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/805](#)). Efforts included an assessment mission to the Sudan, Abyei and South Sudan from 19 to 28 February, led by the Department of Peace Operations, including representatives of the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan and of the Development Coordination Office. The team met senior government officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Khartoum and Juba, both Abyei Joint Oversight Committee Co-Chairs, local administration and traditional leadership in Abyei and Diffra, and representatives of civil society, with a particular focus on the needs of women, children and vulnerable groups. Many interlocutors reminded the team of the need for gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive programming, and eventually all expressed overall support for the programme. Stakeholders shared the need for a wide variety of services, including those related to water, health, education, conflict resolution, communication and infrastructure. The team and UNISFA are currently conducting follow-up consultations to address the different viewpoints and priorities expressed by stakeholders, with the aim of finalizing a project document for service delivery that would benefit both communities during the next reporting cycle.

III. Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism: progress on benchmarks

62. Progress has been modest with respect to the seven benchmarks set out in Security Council resolution [2609 \(2021\)](#). The situation in the area of responsibility of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism was, however, generally calm. Requests for security and road clearances, as well as helicopter landing permissions, were promptly approved, and freedom of movement of air and ground patrols guaranteed (benchmark 1).

63. Benchmark 2 required operationalizing the team site in Abu Qussa/Wunkur and action by South Sudan to resolve the challenges with the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism's return to Gok Machar and team sites Safahah/Kiir Adem and Sumayah/War Abar. The general area of team site 22, Abu Qussa/Wunkur, was still under the control of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), despite a call made by the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in its 8 September 2021 decision for their immediate withdrawal. As a result, South Sudanese national monitors have not yet been deployed to Abu Qussa/Wunkur. There was also no progress on the demand by the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in its 8 September decision that the Government of South Sudan take all necessary steps to guarantee freedom of movement in Sector 1 and the urgent return and operationalization of the Sector and team sites.

64. There was also a lack of progress on benchmark 3, regarding the Joint Political and Security Mechanism's decision of 8 September to hold its next meeting in Khartoum in the second half of January 2022. No meeting was held and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism did not receive any communication from the parties or the African Union regarding the matter.

65. Regarding benchmark 4, the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, in its 8 September decision, urged the parties to redeploy their forces outside the safe demilitarized border zone by 31 December 2021. It also requested UNISFA and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to verify the troop redeployment and report back during the next meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. Since its withdrawal from team sites 11 (Safahah/Kiir Adem) and 12 (Sumayah/War Abar) in September 2021 and from Gok Machar in October 2021, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism has been unable to verify the presence of South Sudan People's Defence Forces in the 14-Mile Area. Regular verifications conducted by the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism indicated that SPLM/A-IO was still in control of Abu Qussa/Wunkur.

66. Concerning benchmark 5, and in accordance with the Joint Political and Security Mechanism decision of 8 September, monitoring and verification by the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism confirmed the operations and functioning of four border crossing corridors, including Kosti–Renk, Bentiu–Higlig, Meiram–Aweil and Buram–Raja. These border crossing corridors were opened to traffic and are used by United Nations entities, the civilian population and commercial trucks from both the Sudan and South Sudan. Six other border crossing corridors remain to be opened.

67. Benchmark 6 was not met, as no border demarcation activities or border-related meetings were held during the reporting period.

68. Benchmark 7 required the parties to maintain deployment of national monitors to participate in Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operational activities. Both the Sudan and South Sudan maintained deployment of national monitors in Tishwin. However, South Sudan is yet to deploy its national monitors in Abu Qussa/Wunkur due to the presence of SPLM/A-IO in the general area.

IV. Administrative aspects and mission support

69. As at 11 April 2022, the number of civilian staff stood at 156 international staff, 36 United Nations Volunteers and 83 national staff, against an authorized total of 176 international staff and 90 national staff. Women accounted for 21 per cent of the civilian component.

70. In line with the Secretary-General's directive, UNISFA continues to maintain efforts to increase the number of women serving in the mission. Additionally, the mission has developed a gender implementation plan and workplan for 2021–2023 focused on increasing the recruitment and retention of female personnel.

71. As at 12 April, UNISFA had 1,623 Force personnel, comprising 131 women and 1,492 men (1,483 troops, 69 staff officers and 71 military observers). The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism stood at 306 personnel, comprising 10 women and 296 men (280 troops, 12 staff officers and 14 military observers). Women represented 8 per cent of all military peacekeepers.

72. The police component strength stood at 45 officers, including 16 women, against an authorized total of 640 police personnel (148 individual police officers and 492 formed police unit personnel). This low rate of deployment is due to the non-issuance of visas, in particular to formed police unit personnel.

73. During the reporting period, the Government of the Sudan issued 1,383 visas for UNISFA personnel. Currently, 605 visas remain pending (30 for civilian staff, 422 for military personnel, 86 for contractors, 66 for United Nations police and 1 for a consultant).

74. The Field Technology Service deployed seven communication shelters for troops in the Banton and Todach team sites. The Service provided 14 updated topographical maps complementing the field surveys regularly done for the Abyei box to support Force mobility.

75. During the reporting period, a UNISFA transition task force was established to plan and oversee the reconfiguration of the UNISFA military component. In this context, several infrastructure and maintenance activities were performed and are ongoing in the mission area to ensure adequate facilities for incoming and outgoing troops. Due to increased operations related to the reconfiguration, additional staff were requested through the surge capacity framework. To ensure an adequate presence of operational troops on the ground at all times, it was decided to airlift the contingent-owned equipment required for the rapid operationalization of incoming troops.

76. UNISFA company operating bases remained deployed at Diffra, Goli and Todach (Sector North); Dokura/Rumajak, Noong and Abyei (Sector Centre); and Marial Achak, Athony, Banton, Tejalei and Agok (Sector South). Temporary operating bases for the dry season deployment were established at Dokura 2 and Dungoup (Sector Centre); Rumamier and Leu (Sector South); and Um Kharriet (Sector North). The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli, Sudan, currently has two team sites, in Tishwin and Abu Qussa/Wunkur.

77. Completed infrastructure projects in support of troop rotation, which incorporated environmental considerations, included temporary camps in Banton and Kadugli, and the construction of new troop accommodations in Todach and Dokura/Rumajak. Construction of waste management yards and generator platforms with oil and water separators were completed in Athony, Dokura/Rumajak and Todach.

78. Continued shortages of laterite, sand, gravel and other materials, and delayed road clearances for contractors from the Government of the Sudan, led to the suspension of essential infrastructure works, including those in support of Force mobility projects. The mission also faced a lack of efficient supervision of construction projects due to the non-issuance by the Government of the Sudan of visas for related consultants and delays in implementing critical projects due to strikes by the staff of local contractors in Abyei.

79. On 24 December, the mission acquired the services of an aircraft under standby contract to fill the operational gap as it awaited finalization of positioning of a third fixed-wing aircraft under long-term air charter arrangement, which is still pending technical evaluation.

80. Following the two military helicopter accidents in February and May 2019 and the subsequent suspension of their operations and repatriation of the associated contingent, the mission operated without military helicopters until 17 November 2021, when two Chinese military helicopters were reassigned from UNAMID. One helicopter has not been operational since arrival pending a gearbox replacement. In support of the force reconfiguration, the Aviation Unit has requested two Mi-8 helicopters and the services of Mi-26 helicopters and IL76/C-130 aircraft to augment the current aviation fleet. The two additional Mi-8 helicopters have already arrived and started operations. The mission will also receive Mi-26 support from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan on a cost reimbursement basis.

Culture of performance

81. UNISFA moved forward with its “smart camp” project, aimed at enabling automation and remote control of various processes in the camp. The project established proofs of concept on: (a) remote monitoring of the level of the reservoir containing treated water and recycling it for uses such as dust control, oxidation of vegetation and general use for ablutions; (b) wireless-based environmental sensors used to measure temperature, humidity, smoke, heat and other metrics designed to monitor and provide alarms to technicians to take corrective action; and (c) digital twin mapping using unmanned aerial vehicles. These automations improved resource management by allowing technicians to focus on other urgent tasks. The “smart camp” project is being piloted in the Dokura/Rumajak team site. Upon its successful completion, it will be replicated in all UNISFA team sites.

82. The mission continued to implement the enterprise risk management framework, including an update of the risk register allowing it to assign the required priority to mitigating actions. Additionally, with regard to overall accountability, the mission prepared an action plan to address the deficiencies identified from the internal control assessment exercise following the signing of the 2021 internal controls assurance statement.

Response to the coronavirus disease pandemic

83. Since the UNISFA COVID-19 task force charted a contingency plan and a medical plan to respond to the pandemic, UNISFA leadership has been strictly overseeing the implementation of preventive measures. Since the beginning of 2021, UNISFA has detected a total of 296 positive cases. From the end of December 2021 to early February 2022, the mission experienced a second surge of COVID-19, following the first surge in August 2021. The mission carried out five medical evacuations of severe and critical cases of COVID-19 for treatment outside the mission area: three civilians were taken to Nairobi and two uniformed personnel were taken to Addis Ababa. One of the uniformed personnel, a staff officer, passed away in Addis Ababa in January 2022.

84. A booster vaccination campaign was launched by the mission on 24 January for all UNISFA personnel, including all contractors. This campaign is also providing vaccination to those who missed the primary series of vaccination in 2021 or were partially vaccinated. So far, more than 3,500 booster doses have been provided. All COVID-19 preventive measures are in place. UNISFA monitors global trends related to the disease and will be guided by the directives of United Nations Headquarters and the World Health Organization on the way forward.

Conduct and discipline

85. There were no allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse during the reporting period. Sensitization and awareness-raising were expanded through the training of four United Nations police staff in 2021 and 46 military staff and 5 United Nations police in 2022 as trainers to roll out Conduct and Discipline Unit induction.

86. Induction and refresher training sessions were provided in February and March for 117 civilian, military and United Nations police personnel, including 23 women.

V. Financial aspects

87. By its resolution [2609 \(2021\)](#) of 15 December 2021, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNISFA until 15 May 2022.

88. The General Assembly, by its resolution [75/297](#) of 30 June 2021, appropriated the amount of \$260.4 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNISFA beyond 15 May 2022, the cost of maintaining the mission would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

89. As at 11 March 2022, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNISFA amounted to \$81.3 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,683.0 million.

90. Reimbursement of troop costs and of the costs of contingent-owned major equipment and self-sustainment are in the process of being paid for the period up to 31 December 2021, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VI. Observations and recommendations

91. The 25 October coup in the Sudan, as well as recent political challenges in South Sudan, have led the parties to focus their attention on domestic politics. Nevertheless, talks between the parties should remain a priority. Building on past achievements, including the warming of relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, both parties should rapidly agree on a process and timeline for a political settlement on Abyei.

92. I welcome the meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the Joint Border Commission in Juba on 21 October 2021. However, I regret that the implementation of many of the previous decisions of that body remain pending. I am concerned that, despite the clear direction expressed by the Mechanism, the parties were unable to organize a meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee during the reporting period. The Committee has not convened since November 2017.

93. I regret that, during the reporting period, UNISFA support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism continued to face challenges in the implementation of its mandate. I reiterate my strong call on South Sudan to address the situation as a matter of urgency and to allow the immediate reoperationalization of the Mechanism's Sector 1 Headquarters in Gok Machar, South Sudan, and its team sites 11 (Safahah/Kiir Adem) and 12 (Sumayah/War Abar).

94. I welcome the issuance of visas to two human rights officers to conduct a long-overdue human rights assessment in Abyei and urge the Sudanese and South Sudanese authorities to permit the deployment of human rights expertise to UNISFA, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. I remain concerned that no progress has been made regarding the operationalization of the Anthony airstrip and the issuance of visas for the three formed police units and additional 66 individual police officers.

95. I am deeply concerned about the recent violence and ongoing tensions between communities in Abyei. While I welcome the communities' efforts to reconvene the joint peace conference of the traditional leaders of the communities, it is regrettable that differences regarding the composition of the delegations prevented the conference from taking place in late February as planned. UNISFA will continue to engage with all community stakeholders, including women and young people, to ensure the holding of effective and inclusive peace talks, as well as to promote the right to equal participation.

96. The outbreak of violence between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities in the Agok area in February and March, and its spillover towards Abyei town, is of great concern. I welcome the efforts under way by the Government of South Sudan

to calm tensions and urge the leaders of the affected communities to intensify their efforts to resolve their differences through dialogue.

97. I am deeply concerned by the two armed attacks against UNISFA in early March. These acts of violence pose a major challenge to United Nations operations, and I call on the relevant authorities, consistent with their obligations under the status-of-forces agreement, to investigate the two incidents as a matter of priority. I am also concerned by the repeated restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNISFA during the reporting period, which affect the mission's ability to fully implement its mandate.

98. I encourage the African Union to intensify its mediation efforts, including through possible support to the parties in resuming the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. The United Nations stands ready to support the organization of such meetings. I echo an earlier request of the African Union Peace and Security Council that the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel develop modalities for releasing the report on the killing of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, Kuol Deng Kuol, in 2013.

99. I wish to thank the Sudan, South Sudan and the troop-contributing countries for their support and collaboration in the reconfiguration of the UNISFA military component. I also thank the Government of Ethiopia for its support to UNISFA over the past years. As the end of the dry season approaches and we near the completion of the reconfiguration, I urge all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to enable the remaining movement of personnel and equipment.

100. I thank the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as local leaders and community members in Abyei, for their constructive engagement with the United Nations team developing the Abyei joint programme by the two United Nations country teams. Development and peacebuilding remain key priorities for Abyei, and I look forward to the implementation of the programme to the benefit of both communities, in particular women, children and vulnerable groups.

101. As the Security Council considers the renewal of the mandate of UNISFA, in conjunction with the recommendations of the strategic review submitted to the Council on 17 September 2021, I recommend an extension of the mission's mandate by six months.

102. I thank the outgoing acting Head of Mission/Force Commander of UNISFA, Major General Kefyalew Amde Tessema, for his leadership, and welcome the new acting Head of Mission/Force Commander of UNISFA, Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr. I also commend my outgoing Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and the African Union, including the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, for their active engagement in support of the stabilization of the Abyei Area.

103. I also take this opportunity to thank all UNISFA personnel for their tireless efforts to maintain peace and security, often under very difficult conditions.

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