



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 5 of Security Council resolution [2708 \(2023\)](#), 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 of the Secretary General ([S/2023/777](#)), from 4 October 2023 to 15 April 2024. The report provides updates on, among others, political and security developments, women and young people, peace and security, human rights and the humanitarian situation, as well as on the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. It also provides updates on the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Sudan on Abyei and on UNISFA operations.

II. Abyei

Political developments

2. The Abyei political process continued to be affected by the ongoing conflict in the Sudan, with no progress made during the reporting period. The United Nations continued to engage with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to indicate its readiness to support re-engagement on the final status of Abyei and border issues once conditions permit. In this regard, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa jointly visited South Sudan and Abyei from 18 to 23 February 2024.

3. On 10 and 11 January, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, met with the Juba-appointed Chief Administrator of Abyei and South Sudanese state governors, including those for Warrap, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Unity States, in Juba, to discuss the heightened intercommunal tensions between Ngok Dinka, Twic Dinka and other communities in Abyei and Warrap State. Following that meeting, on 16 January, the President issued a presidential order calling, inter alia, for the cessation of hostilities, continued engagement towards peace and accountability for those who incite violence.

4. As at the end of the reporting period, an estimated 1,400 personnel of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and 300 personnel of the South Sudan National Police Service were stationed in the southern part of Abyei, reflecting the additional troop



deployments that took place in late March and early April 2024. Their presence is in violation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 2011, as well as the demilitarized and weapons-free status of Abyei.

5. UNISFA remained in contact with the Government of the Sudan. It also continued to monitor the conflict in the Sudan with regard to its implications for Abyei and the mission's operations. During the reporting period, UNISFA leadership also conducted four visits to Juba to meet with senior representatives of the Government of South Sudan, as well as with members of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly who represent Abyei and representatives of the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities. On 21 February, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, along with the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNISFA, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), met with the President of South Sudan to discuss, inter alia, key matters affecting Abyei, including the ongoing intercommunal tensions in southern Abyei and challenges in the execution of the mission's mandate as well as that of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

Conflict dynamics and the security situation

6. The security situation in the Abyei Area remained tense, with increased casualties associated with intercommunal clashes in southern and central Abyei. The main threats to security were related to intercommunal clashes, animal rustling and abductions. These dynamics are exacerbated by the proliferation of arms. The relationship between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities remained a concern, while new clashes between the Ngok Dinka and Nuer communities in Abyei broke out during the period under review. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan also affected the security situation, including the continued movement of displaced persons from the Sudan into Abyei, creating tensions over resources.

7. There were an estimated 175 arms-related incidents; 73 of the incidents resulted in an estimated 257 deaths and 207 injuries, including during 13 intercommunal clashes between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities, 7 between the Ngok Dinka and Nuer communities, and 1 between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya. At least four intercommunal clashes appeared to be coordinated attacks during which fighting took place simultaneously in different locations in Sector South, namely in Majbong, Abatok, Kadhian and Korioch, on 19 November, 3 December, 27 January and 4 February, respectively, as described below.

8. Intercommunal fighting between the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities declined, with only one clash recorded during the reporting period, resulting in the injury of two people on 22 February. The signing on 17 December 2023 in Noong, Sector Centre, of an agreement to ensure peaceful transhumance, supported by UNISFA, Concordis International, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), along with continuous patrolling in areas of concern and outreach by the local authorities, traditional leaders and UNISFA, helped to contribute to lower levels of violence between these two communities.

9. Intercommunal clashes between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka communities increased. A total of 13 intercommunal clashes were recorded, resulting in 139 deaths and 51 injuries. The most significant incident occurred on 13 November, when a group of Ngok Dinka attacked an area near Kilo 27, south of Athony junction,

suspected to be an assembly area for armed Twic Dinka. During the attack, Ngok Dinka also clashed with the South Sudan People's Defence Forces at Kilo 27. The incident resulted in an estimated 72 people killed, including several women and children, as well as the death of 20 troops of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces. UNISFA was unable to deploy peacekeepers to the area owing to movement restrictions imposed by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces temporarily stationed at Athony junction following the fighting. On 19 November, armed Twic Dinka launched a reprisal attack on Angath, Wunpeth, Magar and Korioch villages in southern Abyei, killing 31 people, including six children and a former Minister of Infrastructure in the Juba-appointed Abyei administration. On 12 March, a Ngok Dinka armed group attacked the South Sudan People's Defence Forces at Athony, resulting in two soldiers being wounded.

10. During the reporting period, tensions flared between Ngok Dinka and Nuer community members, resulting in a series of attacks and reprisals. On 27 January, the two communities clashed in Nyinkuac, Kadhian and Majbong villages, killing at least 38 people and injuring 61 others. UNISFA deployed a quick reaction force to stabilize the situation, provided medical assistance to the injured and subsequently increased patrols so as to deter further attacks. On 4 February, the communities clashed again in Abatok, Banton and Malual Aleu, resulting in 27 deaths and 11 injuries. UNISFA deployed another quick reaction force to the area and maintained intensified ground and aerial patrols. As a result of the clashes, between 27 January and 22 February, the UNISFA base at Dokura/Rumajak sheltered 2,031 displaced persons. In addition, from 27 January to 29 February, over 2,300 internally displaced persons also sought temporary shelter at UNISFA bases in Sector South, most of them leaving during the day and returning at night.

11. The safety of peacekeepers continued to be a concern during the reporting period, with UNISFA patrols and escorts having been attacked on five separate occasions by armed men from both Twic Dinka and Ngok Dinka communities. On 27 January, the same day as the clashes between Ngok Dinka and Nuer community members in southern Abyei described above, a Ghanaian peacekeeper was killed when armed men opened fire on the UNISFA base in Agok, targeting Nuer internally displaced persons who were seeking shelter at the base. Peacekeepers returned fire and repelled the attack.

12. On 28 January, one Pakistani peacekeeper was killed and four others were injured when a UNISFA quick reaction force that was escorting Nuer individuals in need of medical attention to the Médecins sans frontières hospital in Abyei town was attacked. Investigations by boards of inquiry into the fatalities of the two peacekeepers in January 2024 are ongoing.

13. UNISFA recorded 14 incidents of kidnapping during the reporting period, which affected a total of 44 victims (20 men, 21 women and 3 children). Three kidnapping incidents involved a demand for ransom. Investigations by UNISFA into these incidents are ongoing.

14. From October 2023 to January 2024, a series of protests were held outside the UNISFA headquarters in Abyei town, organized by Abyei civil society organizations. The protests, which occurred on 4 October, 24 November, 10 December, 18 December and 15 January, blocked the UNISFA main gate and temporarily prevented UNISFA personnel from entering or exiting the premises by road. The protesters expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of political progress on the final status of Abyei, the ongoing presence of armed Twic Dinka and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces inside Abyei, and the perceived failure of UNISFA to provide sufficient protection for civilians amid intercommunal clashes.

15. As at the end of the reporting period, UNISFA recorded the presence of approximately 1,700 personnel composed of the South Sudan People's Defence Force and the South Sudan National Police Service in Agok and Kilo 27 in southern Abyei. On 23 February, UNISFA observed patrols of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and South Sudan National Police Service in Korioch and Kuljor, close to Athony in Sector South. The UNISFA patrol informed them that their presence violated the demilitarized and weapons-free status of Abyei. Approximately 30 Diffra oil police were present in northern Abyei until the end of October, when they departed the Abyei area. UNISFA continued to call for the withdrawal of armed forces from Abyei, including in a note verbale to the Government of South Sudan on 21 November. As at 15 April, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces maintained control over three schools and the community protection committee detention facility in the Agok area. UNISFA has continued to bring this matter to the attention of the Government of South Sudan, calling for their immediate withdrawal.

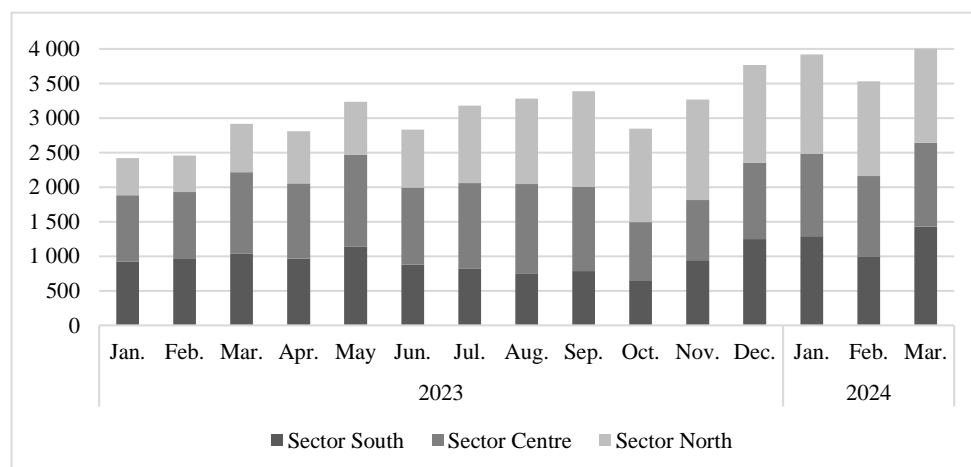
16. On 7 April, an exchange of fire took place between troops of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and guards of the Rumamier County Commissioner near the Agok airstrip, arising from a disagreement over the security perimeter used by the Commissioner's security detail. Three people were killed, including a female member of the community protection committee and a soldier of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces. The Commissioner himself was injured, alongside five others.

17. UNISFA apprehended nine people for illegal possession of firearms and handed them over to the community protection committee in northern Abyei. UNISFA also intercepted seven people transporting arms or ammunition to Amiet market. The Mine Action Service destroyed 24 weapons and 1,154 rounds of ammunition confiscated from community members.

18. Since activating the mission-wide early warning system in October 2022, UNISFA has strengthened the mechanism through networking with the community protection committees, young people, women and other stakeholders in order to enhance information-gathering and early response. UNISFA established a new communication channel for the early warning system by training and equipping the local authorities with single-channel handheld radios.

19. During the reporting period, 23,639 ground and 47 air patrols were conducted in the Abyei area, including jointly with contingents from Sector Centre and Sector North to provide intensified patrolling in the areas of heightened intercommunal tensions in Sector South (see also figure below).

Ground patrols in the Abyei Area, by sector, January 2023 to March 2024



Source: UNISFA Force and Joint Mission Analysis Centre.

Reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

20. The conflict in the Sudan delayed the completion of the reconfiguration process, particularly with regard to the deployment of contingent-owned equipment. Units whose contingent-owned equipment has not yet been fully deployed, namely the Indian infantry battalion, the Ghanaian infantry battalion and the Nigerian base defence company, were supported with United Nations-owned equipment, resulting in their operational capacity being affected only marginally. Given that contingent-owned equipment deployments have been re-routed from their original route through Port Sudan, UNISFA is working closely with the Government of South Sudan to ensure smooth movements for the remaining equipment.

21. The Nigerian base defence company completed its deployment of personnel and the movement of its contingent-owned equipment into Abyei was initiated. The movement of the remaining contingent-owned equipment for the Ghanaian infantry battalion was partially completed, with 5 per cent still pending. The balance of equipment for the Indian infantry battalion is also pending, with 39 per cent currently deployed. Following the earlier deployment of an advance party of 20 Chinese quick reaction force personnel, the arrival of the remaining 130 troops is pending the delivery of their contingent-owned equipment to Abyei.

Freedom of movement violations

22. The South Sudan People's Defence Forces continued to restrict the freedom of movement of UNISFA personnel and troops south of the Athony junction area at Kilo 27, in violation of the status-of-forces agreement and the mandate of UNISFA. On 24 January, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces halted UNISFA road maintenance work between Athony junction and Majbong in Sector South, and on 7 April, South Sudan People's Defence Forces personnel temporarily blocked the passage of a UNISFA verification patrol to Agok following a shooting incident. The mission continued to call upon the Government of South Sudan to withdraw South Sudan People's Defence Forces personnel from the Abyei Area, including in a note verbale on 21 November 2023, and to ensure freedom of movement of UNISFA.

Intercommunity dialogue

23. Amid heightened intercommunal tensions in southern and central Abyei, UNISFA continued its engagement with local authorities, traditional leaders and civil society, including women and youth representatives, to urge them to exercise restraint and de-escalate the situation. Simultaneously, the mission maintained support for reconciliation efforts between Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities by bringing the two communities together in Noong in December 2023 for a dialogue between Misseriya and Ngok Dinka leaders, women, young people and joint community peace committee representatives in Abyei. At the conclusion of the conference, a joint agreement was signed regarding the sharing of resources, the free movement of persons, access to hospitals in southern Abyei for people in northern Abyei affected by disruptions to health care caused by the Sudan conflict, and mechanisms for monitoring and resolving disputes during the cattle migration. The parties were unable to reach a consensus on a mechanism for accountability of individuals who violate the agreement. UNISFA further facilitated meetings of the joint community peace committee and the joint protection committee at Amiet market to support peaceful coexistence.

24. From 22 to 26 January, UNISFA attended a conference organized by the faith-based organization Church Mission Society-Africa aimed at fostering reconciliation between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities. UNISFA organized a session on misinformation, disinformation and hate speech in the context of intercommunal tensions.

25. The efforts of UNISFA to engage community representatives in intercommunal reconciliation initiatives included meetings with Ngok Dinka parliamentarians during a visit by mission leadership to Juba from 6 to 12 February. Following these meetings, UNISFA facilitated transportation for Ngok Dinka parliamentarians to visit Abyei between 22 and 27 February to continue peace efforts already initiated with their Nuer counterparts in Juba. While in Abyei, the parliamentarians urged the local authorities, traditional leaders and armed youth groups to work towards lasting solutions to intercommunal tensions in southern Abyei and support UNISFA in its peace and protection efforts.

26. UNISFA continued to support the joint community peace committee. As a result of advocacy efforts by UNISFA, two women became members of the joint community peace committee, along with two youth representatives (including one woman), thereby improving conflict resolution efforts through greater inclusivity and diversity of perspectives. UNISFA facilitated a total of 25 regular and ad hoc meetings of the joint community peace committee. The joint community peace committee, with support from UNISFA, played a pivotal role in addressing concerns relating to cattle rustling, retaliatory kidnappings, security breaches in the Amiet market, sexual and gender-based violence and killings, through quick and proactive responses.

27. UNISFA continued to provide support to the communities in Abyei through quick-impact civil-military cooperation projects aimed at strengthening the mission's relations with the communities and assisting them in fulfilling their basic needs. Seven quick-impact projects were under implementation, including one project that was completed and handed over. The projects include the construction of an extended immunization programme centre in AmethBek Hospital, in Abyei town, the construction of a road from the main road to the women's and youth centre in Abyei town, two sets of latrines at a primary school in Mulmul village, and construction of a kitchen at the Amiet detention centre. There were continued challenges to implementation in the northern part of Abyei because of the reduced presence of implementing partners owing to the ongoing conflict in the Sudan.

Rule of law

28. On 8 November, the UNISFA rule of law support strategy and its associated action plan were adopted following extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including local authorities, traditional leaders and civil society, including women and youth representatives, and with the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan. The strategy covers responses to serious crime and associated detention by UNISFA and the handover of suspects to the respective authorities. It also contains support requirements for dispute resolution on the ground. UNISFA is coordinating closely with the offices of the United Nations Resident Coordinators in the Sudan and South Sudan on the implementation of the strategy and action plan.

29. In a related development, on 1 December, UNISFA endorsed mission-specific standard operating procedures on the handling of detention. These procedures account for the specific context in which UNISFA operates while adhering to applicable international humanitarian, human rights and refugee laws, norms and standards.

30. No progress was made by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan towards the establishment of the Abyei Police Service, as envisioned in the 2011 Agreement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area. Through a note verbale dated 23 February 2024, the Government of the Sudan consented to the deployment of an additional 10 UNISFA individual police officers, increasing the total to 60 from the previously agreed 50. That is still below the threshold of 148 individual police officers and three formed police units authorized by the Security Council.

31. In the interim, UNISFA continued to promote and support efforts to enhance the rule of law through 53 local community protection committee and joint protection committee stations in Abyei. There are 52 members of the joint protection committee at Amiet market, four of whom are women. A total of 1,223 community protection committee members, including 181 women, have undergone comprehensive screening and profiling in close partnership with traditional and local authorities.
32. Eight training sessions were conducted for community protection committees and the joint protection committee in fundamental human rights, community-oriented policing and traffic management, which benefited 244 members of the committees, including 69 women. The United Nations police also provided prison security management training to 40 community protection members, including 21 women, in Abyei town.
33. UNISFA provided equipment, including rechargeable portable lanterns, reflective jackets, t-shirts, caps, chairs, tables, sanitary supplies and stationery to enhance the operational capabilities of the community protection committees. The United Nations police conducted 1,578 community interactive patrols, including 1,251 joint patrols that also included UNISFA military observers and Sudanese and South Sudanese national monitors, 294 independent security observation patrols and 33 air reconnaissance patrols.
34. UNISFA corrections officers made 315 visits to two detention facilities across Abyei to provide mentoring to community protection committees and the joint protection committee on detention administration.
35. The lack of progress in the political process continued to hinder the creation of a cohesive criminal justice system. In addition, the influx of displaced persons in Abyei town, including those transiting through Abyei en route to other destinations, contributed to an increased need for law enforcement capabilities. On 15 December, UNISFA held a one-day workshop with traditional justice stakeholders on customary law in Abyei town to assess and strengthen the use of traditional justice mechanisms. From 3 to 6 March, a delegation consisting of traditional leaders, customary court judges and women and youth leaders embarked on a three-day study visit to Juba to meet with senior officials of the Government of South Sudan and officials of Central Equatoria State as part of a series of activities to identify and find solutions to the rule of law challenges in Abyei. United Nations police also conducted 55 awareness-raising campaigns for the community protection committees, joint protection committees and local communities to promote social cohesion.

Human rights situation

36. UNISFA conducted 55 awareness-raising programmes to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, benefiting 941 people, comprising 189 women, 185 men, 278 girls and 289 boys. Similar campaigns were also held at three schools, with the participation of 153 pupils, including 71 girls. The UNISFA gender desk continued to act as a referral mechanism for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly women and girls, who are most vulnerable to such violence. A total of 22 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were recorded during the review period, including two attempted rape cases, three rape cases, one defilement case and one attempted defilement case. The remaining cases include 13 domestic violence and 2 sexual harassment cases, which were tried in either the informal criminal courts in southern Abyei or the customary courts in northern Abyei. The attempted defilement case is still under investigation. Of the 13 domestic violence cases, five were settled out of court by the families, three cases resulted in convictions and perpetrators were sentenced to pay fines, in three cases the victims withdrew their complaints from court, in one case the accused was cautioned and discharged by the court, and one

culprit escaped custody. Of the two sexual harassment cases, one resulted in a conviction and a sentence to three months of imprisonment and payment of a fine, while the other case is still under investigation.

37. The human rights situation continued to be precarious, as strained intercommunal relations persisted among the Ngok Dinka, Twic Dinka and Nuer communities. In addition to the clashes described above in January and February in Sectors Centre and South, other incidents, including ambushes, armed robberies, and abductions, especially of women and children, have continued to be documented.

38. UNISFA engaged in a range of human rights-related activities, including human rights advocacy and promotion, interactions with stakeholders and the monitoring of human rights violations and abuses. UNISFA, together with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare of the Juba-appointed administration in Abyei and the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, commemorated Human Rights Day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Diffra, with participation from all segments of the population, including the Khartoum-appointed Chief Administrator, Juba-appointed administration, traditional leaders, organizations of women and youth, and disability associations.

39. Between 7 January and 2 April, the United Nations police investigated four kidnappings and three cases of possession of arms and ammunition. Among the people investigated for the possession of arms and ammunition were eight Sudanese nationals, including four alleged members of the Rapid Support Forces.

40. At detention facilities managed by the community protection committees, 140 of the 512 detainees were held for minor offences. One woman was detained with her infant. Following intervention by UNISFA, 28 men, 6 juveniles and 2 women were released, and detainees seeking medical attention were transferred to a medical facility. A total of 17 awareness campaigns for detainees and 15 detention management campaigns for the community protection committees and joint protection committee were conducted to promote the human rights of detainees. One farming project was initiated to support nutrition for detainees.

Humanitarian situation

41. Communities in Abyei continued to face challenges due to the scarcity of essential commodities such as food and water and the lack of medical facilities and schools. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan also continued to affect the humanitarian situation in Abyei. As at 31 March 2024, Abyei had recorded 17,964 displaced persons who had arrived from the Sudan, many of them continuing to travel to other destinations. A total of 16,739 people were recorded by IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at Amiet market, while 1,225 arrived by flights, landing at the Agok airstrip. Abyei has received 772 refugees and asylum-seekers, the majority of whom originated from the Darfur region in the Sudan. UNHCR processed and assisted 484 individuals to move to the Wedweil refugee settlement in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, South Sudan, however subsequent relocations had to be temporarily suspended owing to insecurity. UNHCR and its partners are conducting a security assessment to determine future plans on relocations. Returnees were granted a three-month food ration to facilitate their reintegration into the community and are being registered for lean season food assistance, a programme that will run for six months starting in March 2024. The World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners are reviewing needs and how to address existing gaps in terms of access to food for refugees and asylum-seekers. A total of 3,500 households of returnees were given multipurpose cash assistance to build shelters and purchase non-food necessities in Abyei.

42. Following intercommunal clashes from 27 January to 4 February, over 2,000 displaced persons, mostly women and children, the majority of whom are members of the Nuer community from the nearby internally displaced persons site, sought refuge at the UNISFA base at Dokura/Rumajak. On 6 February, United Nations humanitarian partners distributed food and non-food items to those displaced; UNISFA provided security for the aid distribution. On 21 February, the Government of South Sudan facilitated the relocation of 893 of the 2,000 people displaced by those intercommunal clashes, who had expressed their intention to return to Unity State, South Sudan.

43. The escalation of intercommunal violence has challenged humanitarian operations. Critical access routes have been affected by the volatile security situation, marked by the presence of armed groups and criminal elements. This has impeded the safe and timely delivery of aid to those in need and affected the prepositioning of supplies by humanitarian partners during the dry season. Four off-duty humanitarian personnel were killed during the clashes between 27 January and 4 February, and health facilities and a humanitarian warehouse were looted and vandalized during the incidents. Some 20,000 people in Abyei are estimated to have been displaced as a result of the violence during this period.

44. The Abyei region has had two consecutive years of unsuccessful harvests due to flooding in 2022 and erratic rainfall and armyworm crop infestations in 2023. From March to April 2024, approximately 67,000 individuals received food assistance for the upcoming half-year, which will ensure their sustenance throughout the lean season from May to August. Nutritional supplies will be distributed to all children under 5 and expectant and nursing mothers. For 2024, food security partners aim to reach host communities, as well as people displaced by the conflict. The assistance consists of general food distribution, supplementary nutrition and a school feeding programme that aims to reach approximately 15,000 children in 18 schools. Respiratory tract infections and malaria constituted the leading causes of morbidity in the period. Owing to the ongoing conflict in the Sudan and its impact on the availability of health care in northern Abyei, critical patients were referred to a medical facility in Abyei town.

45. UNISFA delivered at least 9,373,860 litres of potable water to residents of Abyei and the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. The mission also provided civil-military cooperation activities in the areas of education and health care, including the establishment of primary education facilities benefiting an estimated 900 students. The UNISFA level 2 hospital attended to some 7,668 patients, and a veterinary outreach programme, supported by UNISFA in collaboration with FAO, administered vaccinations to 3,726 cattle.

Women and peace and security

46. UNISFA continued to promote the participation of women in security and conflict management structures in Abyei as part of engagements of the mission with local authorities and traditional leaders, as well as with women's groups and civil society organizations. As a result, 22 women participated in the pre-migration conference organized in Noong in December 2023, out of a total 118 participants. Four women now also take part in the 30-member joint community peace committee. The community protection committees have 1,223 members, of whom 181 are women.

47. The mission held two meetings with a total of 120 women from across Abyei between October 2023 and March 2024, and facilitated a monthly joint women's peace committee meeting. UNISFA conducted 2,916 gender-responsive patrols targeting 4,443 men, 6,171 women and 11,472 children.

48. The mission had planned a series of activities to be held in October in various communities, in commemoration of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which were disrupted by the tense environment following intercommunal clashes in late September 2023. Nevertheless, UNISFA organized two women's volleyball tournaments in October and November in southern and northern Abyei. During both events, the traditional leaders reaffirmed the importance of female sport in promoting peace and reconciliation between communities. UNISFA, together with the women's union and other local entities, also supported the formation of women's football and volleyball teams in the communities. Furthermore, from 17 to 20 November, UNISFA conducted medical outreach, including on breast cancer awareness and screening, as well as on menstrual hygiene, reaching 1,656 people, including 565 women and 746 children. In Sector Centre, on 13 November, menstrual health awareness sessions were held for 300 schoolgirls.

49. On 18 November, UNISFA witnessed the Abyei women's union internal elections, which resulted in new leadership.

50. UNISFA continued to enhance integrated work on gender matters across all components. The gender focal point system was operationalized within all units at UNISFA Force headquarters, bases and team sites so as to ensure the integration of gender considerations into their daily work. Furthermore, a weekly reporting mechanism by gender focal points was established to share information on gender-related activities within their battalions. Six coordination meetings with military focal point officers at company operating bases and team sites were held.

Youth and peace and security

51. The mission coordinated and supported three initiatives to prevent youth involvement in conflicts and armed groups. On 15 December, UNISFA facilitated a workshop aimed at strengthening the traditional justice system of the Ngok Dinka community. Five youth representatives, including one woman, participated in the conference held at the Abyei Women's Centre. From 17 to 19 December, UNISFA supported the holding of the Abyei Youth Union convention, which brought in new leadership and established the groundwork for the next phase of the organization's work. In order to promote confidence-building, social interaction, coordination and cooperation between young people, the Abyei Youth Union decided to create regional branches in the four counties of Abyei.

Operations of the Mine Action Service

52. No movements or deployments by UNISFA, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, humanitarian actors or civilians were interrupted or cancelled owing to landmines or explosive remnants of war. The Mine Action Service assessed 1,523,715 m² of land and 546 km of routes in the Abyei Area as safe for UNISFA, humanitarian actors and the local population. The land assessed included UNISFA temporary operating bases and patrol routes, as well as the clearance of an area in the vicinity of Abyei town to prevent it from being used as a staging post for armed attacks. The clearance of the Makir landmine-contaminated area in the north-west of Abyei was completed on 19 March, while clearance of the contaminated area in Luki continued. All explosive remnants of war and landmines recovered during clearance activities were destroyed.

53. The Mine Action Service continued to support UNISFA in destroying confiscated weapons and ammunition; some 20 assault weapons and 1,388 rounds of ammunition were destroyed during the reporting period.

54. The Mine Action Service continued to deliver explosive ordnance risk education, with 89 sessions delivered to 3,437 people in the Abyei Area, including 304 men, 196 women, 1,544 boys and 1,393 girls. In addition, 296 explosive ordnance risk education briefing sessions were conducted in the communities, reaching 3,252 people, including 1,233 boys, 822 girls, 674 men and 523 women. About 90.9 per cent of the participants demonstrated increased knowledge enabling them to distinguish between safe and unsafe behaviour. Community members were also given customized educational materials to raise awareness of the danger of explosive remnants of war, including drama skits delivered to 2,473 children, notably in northern Abyei. A total of 29 safety training sessions were offered to 840 United Nations personnel and humanitarian actors, 153 of whom were women.

55. The Mine Action Service has continued to provide and maintain 16 mine-protected vehicles for UNISFA peacekeepers under a right-of-use agreement extended to 30 April 2024, pending the expected arrival of additional contingent-owned equipment. Support was also provided to the UNISFA Integrated Force Mobility Team, based on the Mine Action Service self-sufficient clearance team deployment concept.

Joint Programme of the Resident Coordinators in the Sudan and South Sudan in Abyei

56. Implementation of the Joint Programme of the Resident Coordinators in the Sudan and South Sudan in Abyei by the United Nations country teams continued, with the aim of helping to build the conditions necessary for peace in Abyei. While continuing to face operational challenges due to the crisis in the Sudan, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes carried out projects either directly or indirectly through local implementing partners.

57. From April 2023 to March 2024, Save the Children, on behalf of WFP, provided screening services to 3,228 children (1,570 boys and 1,658 girls) and 2,467 pregnant and breastfeeding women from Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, at Amiet market. WFP intends to build on this initiative to scale up its support to the local communities.

58. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), through its implementing partner, the African Christian Ecumenical Alliance, provided psychosocial assistance and gender-based violence case management training to 3,158 women in Rumamier and Mijak Counties in the greater Abyei area. At the women- and girls-friendly space in Abyei town, UNFPA delivered crucial messages on gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation and provided sexual and reproductive health services in available health facilities. The outreach activities also took place at the Abyei primary health-care centre and the Nyinkuac displaced persons site, reaching 1,322 women and 413 men. From September to November 2023, IOM immunized 650 community members, including 316 women in AmethBek referral hospital, Abyei civil hospital, Nyinkuac mobile clinic, Amiet primary health care centre and Dokura/Ramajak primary health care centre. The vaccination efforts, which helped to restrict the spread of diseases and alleviate some of the pressure on already strained health-care services, were primarily focused on children under the age of 5 and women and girls of childbearing age. Recognizing the critical role of water management committees in maintaining water infrastructure and decreasing conflict risks, from 18 to 21 September, IOM trained 34 community members, including 13 women, in water management. In February, WFP complemented previous IOM support to the Abyei Vocational Training Centre by distributing start-up kits to 120 students in the areas of tailoring, catering, masonry and computer skills.

59. In northern Abyei, project implementation continued to face challenges due to the Sudan crisis, including difficulties in deploying staff members and the lack of implementing partners. Such challenges notwithstanding, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) deployed staff to Diffra while its implementing partner, Africa Action Help International, had staff in northern Abyei to implement joint programme activities. From August to December 2023, Global Aid Hand, on behalf of UNFPA, delivered training in gender-based violence case management and psychosocial support services and conducted community-based awareness-raising activities on maternal and reproductive health issues at the women- and girls-friendly space in Diffra, reaching a total of 700 women and girls. The implementing partner further trained 10 local service providers on gender-based violence case management. The training was conducted by a UNFPA-certified trainer.

60. The reporting period also saw the establishment of a community management committee in Goli, comprising 14 men and six women, with support from UNDP in conjunction with the Humanitarian Aid Commission of the Juba-appointed Abyei administration. The community management committee will be the main local decision-making body in the delivery of the project benefits and will play a central role in project implementation. As at January 2024, joint assessments by UNDP and IOM were under way to inform the small-scale livelihood activities envisioned for Diffra and Goli.

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

61. The implementation of the mandate of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism remained affected by the ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces in the Sudan. While Sudanese authorities continued to grant the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism flight clearances for resupply and personnel movement on a case-by-case basis, the closure of Sudanese airspace at the Kadugli airport since April 2023 prevented aerial monitoring operations. Nonetheless, mandate implementation continued in Sector 2 with ground patrols from team sites 21 (Tishwin) and 22 (Abu Qussa/Wunkur). During the reporting period, integrated patrol teams from the two team sites conducted 53 ground monitoring missions.

62. The security situation in Kadugli, the site of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters, has improved slightly since the previous reporting period, with a decrease in clashes between combatants. Significant incidents included attacks by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu) on the Sudanese Armed Forces camp at Damba village, approximately 24 km south-west of Kadugli, on 16 October, and on Sudanese Armed Forces checkpoints at Hagar Almak, about 5 km north-east of Kadugli, on 28 October, with the Sudanese Armed Forces repelling both attacks. On 9 November, suspected SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu fighters ambushed a Rapid Support Forces convoy that was escorting civilian trucks to the Dilling area, with one driver killed. On 30 March, SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu reportedly conducted artillery shelling of the Kadugli airport, followed by air strikes by Sudanese Armed Forces of SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu positions.

63. The Kadugli-Dilling-El Obeid road remained closed throughout the period, with the Sudanese Armed Forces, SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu and Rapid Support Forces personnel stationed at respective roadblocks and checkpoints.

64. Armed South Sudanese and unarmed Sudanese police forces remained deployed within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone around Tishwin. The Government of South

Sudan also deployed roughly 150 Necessary Unified Forces personnel in Fanikan and Tonga, near Abu Qussa/Wunkur.

65. On 24 January, the County Commissioner of Panyikang, South Sudan, and other county officials met with the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism leadership at team site 22 (Abu Qussa/Wunkur) and demanded payment of rent for the land upon which the camp sits, among other compensation. That demand is contrary to the status-of-forces agreement signed between the Government of South Sudan and the United Nations in 2011. UNISFA formally notified the Government of South Sudan of the situation in a note verbale on 4 February, and mission leadership has engaged senior South Sudanese officials with regard to the situation in two separate visits to Juba, on 6 and 21 February. Separately, notes verbales were also submitted to the Government of South Sudan, and officials of the Government of South Sudan were engaged to urge support in facilitating the re-operationalization of Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism Sector 1 at Gok Machar, South Sudan, and its two team sites, which have remained closed since 2021. UNISFA has also engaged the Government of South Sudan with regard to the deployment of South Sudan national monitors at team site 22 (Abu Qussa/Wunkur).

66. On 10 December, a patrol from team site 22 (Abu Qussa/Wunkur) located five explosive remnants of war around Fanikan village. The Mine Action Service has since marked off the area, while plans are under way for proper disposal. The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism provided clean drinking water, medical care, medicine and veterinary services to affected communities at Kadugli, Tishwin and Fanikan.

67. There were no significant activities on the issue of border demarcation and border crossing corridors during the reporting period, and the Joint Border Commission and the Joint Security Committee did not meet. However, border crossing corridors between the Sudan and South Sudan remain open to returnees and other displaced persons fleeing the conflict in the Sudan.

IV. Administrative aspects and mission support

68. As at 29 February, the number of civilian staff in UNISFA stood at 297, including 173 international staff, 35 United Nations Volunteers and 89 national staff, against an authorized total of 192 international staff, 38 United Nations Volunteers and 94 national staff. Women accounted for 28 per cent of the civilian component, including nearly 33 per cent of senior staff positions. The mission also continued to make progress in the recruitment of women to national staff positions.

69. As at 7 March, UNISFA had 3,105 military personnel, with 276 women and 2,829 men. The total comprised 2,854 troops, 124 staff officers and 127 military observers. Included in these figures, Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism personnel accounted for 528 military personnel, 30 women and 498 men, with 488 troops, 12 staff officers and 28 military observers. Women represented 8.9 per cent of all military personnel.

70. As at 7 March, the United Nations police strength stood at 43 individual police officers, of whom 17 were women. Between April and November 2023, the Government of South Sudan approved visas for 30 individual police officers and three experts from the standing police capacity and the Justice and Corrections Standing Capacity.

71. The mission continued with smart camp construction, initiated during the 2023 wet season, with facilities in the UNISFA bases at Agok and Highway nearing completion. The smart camp at Athony is also nearing completion, while those at

Diffra and the Nepal support company and Chinese camps at Abyei headquarters are planned to be completed for occupancy by the end of August 2024. The United Nations smart camp initiative includes the replacement of camp infrastructure, incorporating the principles of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. The camps seek to improve safety and living conditions for peacekeepers through design and construction practices leveraged by Internet of things technology that improves the reliability, resilience, sustainability, safety and security of peacekeepers.

72. The mission continued to move all inbound freight through its southern main supply route, after the main supply route from the north was closed owing to the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan in April 2023. That diversion has created additional challenges, notably an increase in freight charges, longer distances for overland delivery from the closest seaport, additional customs processes and entry points and security concerns on some parts of the route.

Culture of performance

73. In collaboration with the Department of Peace Operations, the mission established a working group to report, monitor, analyse, evaluate and implement preventive and responsive action related to misinformation and disinformation in all its forms. In March, a tabletop exercise was conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the mission's emergency response practices and enhance essential crisis management capabilities. The mission has also continued its regular data collection in the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System platform, working on the revision of existing data and alignment with the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) database.

Conduct and discipline

74. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded during the period. Seventeen allegations of misconduct were recorded during the period and are under investigation. UNISFA continued to implement its strategy to prevent misconduct, in particular to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and prohibited conduct, through induction and refresher training for all categories of United Nations personnel. Training was provided for 181 United Nations personnel, including 10 members of the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse network. Mandatory refresher training was delivered to mission personnel to raise awareness about forms of misconduct, including racism and discrimination, sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as fraud and corruption. Outreach activities were also conducted for the local population through the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse network.

Public information

75. UNISFA continued to monitor online and offline content for misinformation, disinformation and hate speech. The mission proactively communicated on its mandate and activities through social media channels, Internet radio and background briefings with local and international media. Three press statements were issued to debunk misinformation and disinformation, while the partnership with UNMISS and its Radio Miraya station provided a platform to widen outreach to audiences in South Sudan. A group of 24 journalists, members of local authorities and representatives of Abyei civil society were trained in identifying and addressing false narratives, fact-checking and ethical journalism. In March, UNISFA provided three prefabricated buildings to Abyei FM, a non-profit community radio station managed by local journalists, thereby aiding the establishment of a relay station in Abyei town after the abandonment of its infrastructure in Agok owing to security concerns. Support for

Abyei FM will help to fill the current information void and expand the mission's dissemination of messages concerning its mandate and activities. Examples of continued advocacy by UNISFA for action against misinformation, disinformation and hate speech among target groups include a panel discussion on misinformation and disinformation during the 2024 commemoration of International Women's Day and through awareness training conducted with journalists and civil society organizations, held in November 2023 and in January and February 2024.

V. Financial aspects

76. The General Assembly, by its resolution [77/290](#) B of 30 June 2023, appropriated the amount of \$287.2 million for the maintenance of UNISFA for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

77. As at 5 April 2024, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNISFA amounted to \$81.0 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,233.5 million.

78. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 December 2023 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule, and reimbursement for contingent-owned major equipment and self-sustainment has also been made for the period up to 31 December 2023.

VI. Observations and recommendations

79. I continue to remain concerned regarding the impact of the conflict in the Sudan on the situation in Abyei, which is both a barrier to political progress towards resolution of the final status of Abyei and border issues, and a potentially exacerbating factor in intercommunal conflict. While continuing to monitor the situation, the United Nations remains committed to working with the parties, the African Union, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in order to support the political process on Abyei and border issues, including the resumption of the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and Joint Political and Security Mechanism, when conditions allow.

80. The fighting in the Sudan has also cut off a vital supply route from the Sudan, affecting the delivery of humanitarian relief. It is important that the route remain open, as Abyei continues to receive people displaced by the Sudan crisis and amid continued intercommunal violence in Abyei. I urge all parties to work to ensure humanitarian access to Abyei.

81. I remain concerned about the presence of South Sudanese security forces in Abyei, in violation of the 2011 Agreement and the demilitarized status of the area. In particular, I am concerned about the freedom of movement restrictions imposed on UNISFA troops and personnel in southern Abyei by security forces, which undermine the mandate of the mission. I call upon the Government of South Sudan to ensure that its forces end the occupation of schools and the community protection committee detention facility in the Agok area.

82. I welcome the reduction in intercommunal violence reported between Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities and applaud the communities' willingness to engage in dialogue. I pledge the continued support of the United Nations towards efforts at peaceful coexistence.

83. I am concerned, however, by the increase in clashes involving Ngok Dinka, Twic Dinka and Nuer communities in southern and central Abyei, which have led to

significant loss of life and displacement during the reporting period, and call upon local authorities and community leaders to redouble efforts towards de-escalation. I am grateful for the political engagement of the Government of South Sudan with the authorities in Warrap and Unity States and the Juba-appointed administration in Abyei in support of peace. UNISFA and the other United Nations presences in the region remain committed to supporting efforts to achieve peaceful reconciliation of this dispute. On a related matter, I am also concerned about the proliferation of arms that has accompanied the increased intercommunal violence in central and southern Abyei and urge armed groups and other actors to disarm in line with the weapons-free status of Abyei.

84. I condemn in the strongest terms the attacks in January 2024, in which two UNISFA peacekeepers were killed and four others were injured. I convey my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased. The safety and security of United Nations personnel is a paramount concern. I call upon the relevant authorities, consistent with their obligations under the status-of-forces agreements, to investigate the attacks and promptly hold those responsible to account.

85. I urge the parties to the conflict in the Sudan to facilitate the safe resupply, rotation and freedom of movement of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism to and from its headquarters in Kadugli, the Sudan. I also call upon the Government of South Sudan to work with the local communities to facilitate the re-operationalization of the Sector 1 headquarters in Gok Machar, South Sudan, and its team sites 11 (Safahah/Kiir Adem) and 12 (Sumayah/War Abar). I am grateful to the Government of South Sudan for its support in the deployment of contingent-owned equipment and other goods to Abyei through South Sudan and urge officials of the Government of South Sudan to continue working to ensure the smooth passage of cargo.

86. Against the background of displaced persons fleeing the conflict in the Sudan, ongoing intercommunal violence in Abyei and the lack of progress on the establishment of the Abyei Police Service, United Nations police support to the community protection committees and joint protection committee is critical. In this context, the full deployment of 148 individual police officers, as authorized by the Security Council, is a pressing requirement. I also call upon the parties to support the deployment of the three formed police units and civilian deputy head of mission as authorized by the Security Council and encourage them to consider the re-operationalization of the Athony airstrip for use by UNISFA.

87. I thank the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNISFA, Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr, and my Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, for their tireless efforts towards peace and security in Abyei. I also take this opportunity to thank all UNISFA personnel and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Abyei for their commitment to improving the lives of the people of Abyei under very difficult conditions.

Map

