



# Security Council

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## Situation in Mali

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2423 \(2018\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2019 and requested me to report every three months on its implementation, focusing on progress in taking forward the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali ([S/2015/364](#) and [S/2015/364/Add.1](#)) and the efforts of MINUSMA to support it. The present report contains updates on major developments in Mali since my previous progress report ([S/2018/1174](#)) and my report of 4 March 2019 ([S/2019/207](#)) on the implementation of the measures referenced in paragraph 4 of resolution [2423 \(2018\)](#).

#### II. Major political developments

2. As noted in my previous report ([S/2019/207](#)), in recent months, the Government of Mali and signatory armed groups have displayed a renewed commitment to implementing the Agreement signed in 2015. The resumption of the constitutional review process marked the most important development during the period under review amid criticisms by the political opposition and disapproval by prominent religious leaders of the Government.

##### A. Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

3. The Agreement Monitoring Committee held three sessions during the period under review. At its thirtieth session, on 17 December 2018, the Committee acknowledged progress in the implementation of the Agreement, including with respect to the operationalization of the interim authorities and the implementation of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process. The Government reported that approximately \$2.9 million had been allocated to the operationalization of the interim authorities. The Government announced the resumption of the constitutional review process, while initiating consultations with human rights organizations and civil society on the *projet de loi d'entente nationale*. The Committee also endorsed recommendations by the Malian parties to renew the



mandate of the Carter Center as independent observer for the peace process and established a working group, led by MINUSMA and the European Union, to identify options to increase the participation of women in the peace process.

4. The thirty-first session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee was held on 14 January, following the listing by the sanctions committee of one of its members, Mohamed Ousmane Ag Mohamedoun, leader of the Coalition pour le peuple de l'Azawad. The Committee reiterated its commitment to the full implementation of the sanctions regime. Regarding the operationalization of interim authorities at the district level, the parties reported that an additional \$1.6 million had been disbursed to 21 of the 24 councils established, for administration and logistics.

5. During the thirty-second session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, on 18 February, the Government announced that both legislative elections and the constitutional referendum were scheduled to be held on 9 June, followed by the second round of legislative elections, on 30 June. The Committee condemned the regulations and measures announced on 31 January by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in Kidal, including a ban on alcohol and the reinforcement of the power of Islamic judges, which were regarded as a violation of the Agreement. In response, the Coordination issued a press release in which it argued that its actions had been misunderstood and reaffirmed its commitment to the Agreement.

6. During the same meeting, the independent observer presented its third report on the implementation of the Agreement, in which progress in 2018 was highlighted, including a complete cessation of hostilities that enabled the holding of a peaceful presidential election, the identification of 33,000 combatants eligible for the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the launch of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process and the creation of a dedicated ministry to coordinate the implementation of the Agreement. It was noted in the report, however, that the progress achieved had not yet translated into an improvement in the living conditions of the populations in northern Mali. It was also stressed that the constitutional review process was the cornerstone of the Agreement, given that the implementation of key provisions would depend on it.

7. Throughout the period under review, my Special Representative continued to use his good offices and worked closely with the parties and other key stakeholders to ensure that they remained committed to the process and continued efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement.

### **Other political developments**

8. Discussions on the review of the Constitution dominated political debates. The Government established a committee of experts on constitutional reform on 14 January and a national consultation framework – a forum comprising representatives of the Government, political parties, civil society and signatory movements – on 17 January, following a request made by the President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, on 20 December 2018 to launch the constitutional review process in a consensual and inclusive manner.

9. On 4 February, President Keita met members of the committee of experts, in the presence of the Prime Minister, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, and reiterated the need for an inclusive and consultative process. Two days later, at a press conference in Bamako, the committee announced plans to hold consultations with all stakeholders and populations throughout the country before submitting its proposals to the Prime Minister on 1 April. The committee has since met the President of the Constitutional Court and the President of the Supreme Court, members of parliament, the Haut conseil des collectivités and representatives of political parties, among other stakeholders. On 5 March, in Bamako, the committee launched a series of citizen

forums on the constitutional reform, followed by similar events in regions. The events were attended by representatives of civil society, youth and women groups, political parties and traditional and religious authorities.

10. Members of the national consultation framework have held several meetings since its creation in January. Most of the major political parties, including the opposition party Union pour la république et la démocratie, led by Soumaïla Cissé, attended the first meeting, on 30 January, but boycotted the subsequent meetings. Parties belonging to the ruling party coalition continued to attend the meetings. In a statement issued on 1 February, the Union called for the holding of a high-level political dialogue with the participation of a wide array of stakeholders on numerous institutional, political and electoral issues. Other opposition parties close to the Union questioned the legitimacy of the framework, claiming that it was insufficiently inclusive.

11. In response to criticism, on 28 February, the Prime Minister signed another decree to include all 197 political parties in the national consultation framework. In addition, it is stipulated in the decree that the framework will be consulted on questions related to the draft laws on the creation of administrative districts and territorial collectivities, revisions to the electoral law, draft laws on the number of members of parliament, the calendar for elections and the constitutional referendum and all questions regarding elections and the referendum.

12. The leader of the presidential majority, Bokary Tréta, held a series of meetings with political party and platform leaders, including from the opposition, notably the Front pour la sauvegarde de la démocratie, a coalition of opposition parties also led by Mr. Cissé, on 12 February, and with the Coalition des forces patriotiques, on 19 February, as well as representatives of civil society groups, to garner support for the constitutional review process.

13. On 14 February, President Keita and Mr. Cissé had a telephone conversation, followed by a series of meetings at the presidential palace on 26 February and in early March, putting an end to months of a strained relationship. Both men agreed to tackle the most pressing challenges facing Mali. President Keita has since continued to hold meetings with other opposition leaders, including Tiébilé Dramé, a close ally of Mr. Cissé and the president of the Parti pour la renaissance nationale, on 6 March, and Cheick Modibo Diarra, president of the Rassemblement pour le développement du Mali, on 11 March.

14. My Special Representative intensified his engagement with the Government and leaders across the political spectrum to ensure the constructive participation of all actors in the political process and to help the parties to address differences through dialogue. MINUSMA provided technical support to the work of the committee of experts.

15. On 10 February, Mahmoud Dicko, the President of Mali's High Islamic Council, and Bouye Haidara, leader of a Muslim community based in Nioro in Western Mali, organized a rally in Bamako. An estimated 60,000 people, including some representatives of the political opposition, participated. In their address, the religious leaders called for the resignation of the Prime Minister.

### **Institutional measures**

16. Since my previous progress report, there has been a decrease in the percentage of civil administrators present at their duty stations in northern and central Mali, from 34 to 29 per cent, due mainly to security concerns. The Governors of Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Ménaka were present in their localities, while the Governor of Taoudenni continued to operate from Timbuktu. Five district-level interim

administrations were installed in the regions of Kidal and Taoudenni, bringing the total number to 21.

17. A modest increase, by 2.1 per cent, in the number of appointed judicial and prison officials deployed in northern and central Mali was recorded, although insecurity continued to cause absenteeism and the relocation of some staff.

18. On 20 February, the magistrates' unions denounced the Government's inability to improve security conditions in parts of the country and called upon magistrates throughout Mali who feel unsafe to relocate to Bamako or to more secured jurisdictions. This followed the confirmation on 19 February by the Ministry of Justice of the death of the President of the Niono Court (Ségou region), who was abducted by unidentified armed men on 16 November 2017.

19. On 21 February, with MINUSMA logistical and technical support, a mobile court was held in Bourem, Gao region, marking a significant step in the effective return of the justice sector in the region. Since 2012, actors in the formal justice system have been absent in Bourem, rendering justice from Gao.

### **Defence and security measures**

20. As outlined in my previous report (S/2019/207), 1,423 ex-combatants of signatory armed groups, along with ex-combatants from non-signatory but compliant armed movements, were registered for integration into the national army within the framework of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. As a next step, they will undergo a three-month training in Koutiala, Séguéla and Markala in southern Mali by the Malian defence and security forces, with the support of MINUSMA and the European Union. Following completion of the training, these former combatants will form part of the Malian army tasked with providing security to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration operations and camps. Some 417 combatants of the Operational Coordination Mechanism are also scheduled to participate in an additional phase of the accelerated, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

21. On 23 December 2018, during a visit to Mopti region, the Prime Minister announced the launch of disarmament initiatives for the Centre. On 5 February, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission announced that, as part of these programmes, it had pre-registered 5,000 combatants, including members of self-defence groups, militias and repentant jihadists. As a first step, the Commission indicated that it intended to support the reinsertion of 300 combatants into civilian life and the integration of 300 combatants into the Malian defence and security forces.

22. From 26 to 30 January, the Government invited members of the defence and security forces who had deserted in 2012 to register at military facilities throughout the country. In total, 494 former military personnel were registered. By 26 February, 453 military personnel had been transferred to three training centres, in Bamako, Markala and Séguéla.

23. On 8 March, President Keita signed a decree announcing a military operation to stop terrorist activities in parts of central and northern Mali. On the same day, the Minister of Defence signed a decree establishing a battalion of special units. In protest, on 15 March, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad announced that it was suspending its participation in the national consultation framework and the consultation framework of the signatory parties, a discussion forum of signatories to the Agreement. The Coordination argued that the Government's actions were contrary to the spirit and letter of the Agreement.

## **B. Extension of State authority and support for Malian defence and security institutions**

24. Since 15 December, the number of Malian defence and security forces deployed to the Mopti region has increased from 1,178 to 1,316. The Mission provided training to 103 personnel of the Malian defence and security forces, including 14 women, on post-blast crime scene management, human trafficking, illegal migration and transnational organized crime, strengthening their skills in countering terrorism and serious organized crimes.

25. Coordinated patrols between MINUSMA and the national security forces continued in northern Mali, although some did not materialize owing to the insufficient deployment of Malian defence and security forces and the lack of fuel.

26. In keeping with the memorandum of understanding between MINUSMA and the Government, the Mission continued to provide medical evacuation support to members of the Malian armed forces.

27. On 18 December, 10 terrorism-related trials were completed. Eleven accused persons were found guilty of terrorism-related crimes. Ten were given sentences ranging from three years to life imprisonment, and one was acquitted. This brings to 20 the number of terrorism-related cases tried since the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime became operational in 2017. To date, 34 individuals have been tried, resulting in 30 convictions and 4 acquittals.

28. MINUSMA renewed its partnership agreement with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to support the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime. Within this framework, the Mission and UNODC mentored 6 investigating magistrates and 42 investigators, and trained magistrates, clerks and investigators on case management and terrorism investigations.

29. On 1 March, the Mission supported the adoption of an integrated security plan and the organization of a simulation exercise in Koulikoro prison, which hosts high-risk prisoners, including terrorist suspects. This was the first session in a series of exercises to be replicated in Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu regions.

## **C. Regional developments**

30. As highlighted in my previous report (S/2019/207), the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel has resumed its operations in Mali. Since 15 January, it has led three operations in its Sectors West, Centre and East, while continuing preparations for the establishment of its temporary headquarters in Bamako. On 21 January, following the meeting of its Defence and Security Committee, the Group of Five established a technical commission to draft a status-of-forces agreement among its member States.

31. On 5 February, the Group of Five for the Sahel held its fifth ordinary session of the Heads of State conference, in Ouagadougou, following which Burkina Faso assumed the presidency. In a communiqué, the Group reiterated its commitment to further mobilizing its own resources, while calling upon the international community to respect the commitments made during the donor conference for the Sahel, held in Brussels on 23 February 2018, and at the conference to support the Group of Five's priority investment programme, held in Nouakchott on 6 October 2018. Lastly, the Group of Five called upon the Security Council to consider placing the Joint Force under Chapter VII operation and for closer cooperation with the United Nations.

### III. Major security developments

32. The security situation in northern Mali remained complex, while it continued to deteriorate in the Centre, and in Koulikoro region in the West. Attacks by terrorist groups continued to target Malian defence and security forces, MINUSMA and international forces. Many of these attacks, including the attack on 20 January against a MINUSMA base in Aguelhok, during which 11 peacekeepers were killed and 26 were wounded, were claimed by the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims.

#### A. Asymmetric and other attacks

33. While northern Mali recorded the most significant asymmetric attacks by terrorist groups, 37 of a total of 61 took place in the Centre and four in Koulikoro, in the West, including the complex attack on 24 February against the camp of the Malian armed forces, which houses the capacity-building programme of the European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian armed forces.

34. In the North, MINUSMA continued to be among the primary targets of such attacks. On 21 December 2018, five rockets were launched at the MINUSMA camp in Ménaka. Four landed inside the camp, resulting in minor injuries to 12 formed police unit officers. One United Nations helicopter was damaged.

35. On 20 January, heavily armed elements aboard a dozen vehicles attacked the Mission's base in Aguelhok, Kidal region. Assailants sabotaged the telecommunications networks, exploded a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, opened fire and launched mortar bombs. Three of the bombs struck the camp. The peacekeepers' response was robust: they repelled the attack, pursued the assailants and protected civilians in the area. A total of 10 peacekeepers were killed and 26 wounded, 14 of them seriously. One of them later succumbed to his injuries. Three assailants were killed and one suspect was captured. On the same day, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that it was carried out in retaliation for the visit of the Prime Minister of Israel to Chad on the same day and the resumption of diplomatic relations between Israel and Chad.

36. On 4 February, the MINUSMA camp in Ménaka came under indirect fire from unidentified assailants. Two rockets exploded inside the camp, causing no damage. This was the third attack carried out against the camp since September 2018.

37. The highest number of asymmetric attacks was recorded in the Centre of Mali. Twenty-eight attacks took place in the Mopti region and four in the Ségou region. Four attacks were reported in the Koulikoro region, in western Mali. Most of the attacks in the Centre targeted the Malian defence and security forces, including 22 in Mopti and 4 in Ségou.

38. Three attacks were recorded in the West, in Koulikoro, including one, on 24 February, against a camp of the Malian armed forces that hosts the European Union military mission programme. Two vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices exploded outside the camp after the attackers had been prevented from breaching its perimeter. On 26 February, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims claimed responsibility for the attack.

39. Overall, Malian defence and security forces remained the primary victims of asymmetric attacks (36). A total of 49 of their soldiers were killed and 49 were injured, compared with 28 killed and 47 injured in the previous period. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims claimed 18 asymmetric attacks during the reporting period, including 11 against Malian defence and security forces, 4 against

MINUSMA, 1 against the European Union military mission and 2 against signatory and non-signatory armed groups.

40. In response, Malian armed forces launched several operations in the Centre to disarm militias and enhance security. On 5 January, Malian armed forces and international forces conducted a joint operation in Douentza district, Mopti region, resulting in approximately 20 presumed terrorists killed and 5 others arrested. On 10 January, Malian armed forces conducted a counter-terrorist operation in Mopti district, killing 20 presumed terrorists.

41. On 21 February, the French operation Barkhane reported the death of the terrorist commander, Yahia Abu Hammam, during an operation conducted in the Timbuktu region. Yahia Abu Hammam, also known as Djamel Okacha, was one of the founding members of the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims.

42. On 22 February, three peacekeepers were killed and one other injured after being stopped at a checkpoint near Sibi, some 50 km south of Bamako, as they travelled in a hired vehicle, bringing to 17 the number of peacekeepers killed during the reporting period. A total 46 peacekeepers were injured during the same period, a significant increase over the 2 peacekeepers killed and 42 injured in the previous reporting period. No MINUSMA contractors were killed or injured, compared with three contractors killed and nine injured during the last reporting period.

43. The planting of improvised explosive devices, in particular along the main communication axes, continued to constitute a major security threat. In the Centre, the frequency of improvised explosive device incidents more than tripled, from 29 in 2017 to 97 in 2018, while the North continued to be affected by such incidents (101 in 2017 and 116 in 2018).

44. Although the Malian defence and security forces and MINUSMA continue to be the main target of asymmetric attacks, in 2018, civilians were the most affected, registering 234 victims (39 per cent) of a total of nearly 600, almost three times as many as in the whole of 2017.

## **B. Protection of civilians**

45. Civilians continued to be victims of targeted and indirect violence, in particular in the Centre. In this part of the country, activities of violent extremist groups and the increase in intercommunal violence constituted the two main threats to civilians. Intercommunal violence occurred primarily between the Dogon and Fulani communities in Koro and Bankass districts and between the Fulani and Bambara communities in Djenne district. There were 267 incidents, resulting in the deaths of 225 civilians and injuries to 149 others, as well as 130 reported abductions of civilians, compared with the previous period, which registered 109 incidents, 108 civilian fatalities, including 1 child, and 43 injuries, including 5 children and 1 woman.

46. One of the deadliest incidents occurred on 1 January in Koulogon-Peul village, in the Bankass district of Mopti region, where 37 Fulani civilians, including 1 woman and 4 children, were killed. National judicial authorities investigated the incident and have begun the prosecution of the identified suspects, with MINUSMA support. This is the first time that judicial authorities have thoroughly investigated an intercommunal conflict of this magnitude in a remote area, demonstrating the commitment of the Malian judicial system to bringing to justice those responsible for crimes related to an intercommunal conflict.

47. In the North, an increase in incidents affecting civilians was recorded in Ménaka region. A total of 49 civilians were killed and 4 injured in eight incidents, compared with 41 killed and 19 injured during the previous reporting period.
48. In Ménaka and Gao regions, in particular Ansongo district, presumed members of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara attacked villages and markets and clashed with signatory and dissident armed groups, including the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés and the Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad. On 19 December, radical armed elements killed six Dawsahak civilians at the market of Abougoulou, Menaka district. A confrontation ensued from that attack between Mouvement and Groupe combatants in the village of Tigezifi. On 15 January, an ambush against Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad-Dawsahak in Inékar West and Taghatert resulted in 26 civilian deaths. On the same day, radical armed elements stormed Amaloulaou village, Ansongo district, before engaging in clashes with Groupe fighters based in the village. One Dawsahak child died during the attack. On 1 February, a Dawsahak camp in Ti-n-azir, Ansongo district, was attacked by radical armed elements. Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad combatants fought back the assailants. Eight civilians were killed during the attack.
49. In response to the deteriorating security situation in the Centre, and as requested by the Security Council, from 1 February to 15 March, a MINUSMA team comprising civilian, military and police components launched a campaign to protect civilians, interacted with communities throughout the region and facilitated meetings of traditional judicial authorities to begin the reconciliation process between the Dogon and Fulani communities.
50. In the second half of December 2018, the first 32 municipal reconciliation committees were established in the northern and central regions. These bodies are part of the national reconciliation structure of the Ministry of Social Cohesion, Peace and National Reconciliation and will fall under the purview of the regional reconciliation teams, in support of local conflict management efforts.
51. In the North, MINUSMA supported the implementation of a series of community dialogues in the regions of Kidal, Timbuktu, Taoudenni, Gao and Ménaka to address ongoing conflicts. The local dialogues were aimed at strengthening the capacities of the communities concerned in conflict analysis and conflict resolution. A total of 26 of 60 dialogues have been conducted to date, benefiting 814 participants, including 148 women.
52. MINUSMA continued its reconciliation efforts in northern Mali, including through support for the rehabilitation of the country's cultural heritage. In this regard, the Mission supported the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the installation, in February 2019, of the Monument of Al-Farouk in the Square of Independence of Timbuktu. Bringing back the statue of Timbuktu's patron and protector, which was destroyed in 2012, has a strong symbolic value for communities, strengthening resilience and contributing to national reconciliation and consolidating a culture of peace.
53. As part of MINUSMA activities to protect civilians from explosive hazards, a total of 9,579 community members, including 4,561 women, participated in education and awareness-raising sessions on the risks of explosives in Mopti, Ségou, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal regions. In January, the Mission coordinated with the Mine Action Service to launch a radio campaign to prevent risks associated with explosive devices in Gao and Timbuktu regions.



### **C. Mine action, weapons and small arms**

54. In an effort to enhance the national capacity to mitigate explosive threats, MINUSMA trained 27 Malian military engineers in explosive search and detection activities and 58 Malian police personnel on explosive risk awareness ahead of their deployment to secure national borders. In addition, 11 personnel from the Malian defence and security forces were trained as instructors on improvised explosive device threat awareness. Malian instructors previously trained by MINUSMA delivered the first decentralized training in weapons and ammunition management to 18 Malian defence and security personnel, with limited mentoring support, in Sévaré, Mopti region.

## **IV. Human rights situation**

55. MINUSMA continued to document instances of serious human rights violations and abuses, most of which were recorded in the Centre and along the border with Burkina Faso and the Niger. Overall, there were 79 cases of serious human rights violations and abuses involving at least 422 victims, including at least 24 women and 11 children, compared with the 90 cases and 163 victims reported during the previous period. A total of 54 cases occurred in Mopti region, 10 in Timbuktu region, 4 each in Gao, Segou and Ménaka regions, and 1 each in Kidal, Kayes and Koulikoro regions.

56. Community self-defence groups were responsible for the highest number of cases (35) of human rights abuses, including 17 abuses of the right to life and 7 cases of forced displacement, 6 cases of abduction, 3 abuses of the right to physical integrity, 1 abuse of the right to food and 1 abuse of the right to property. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and other terrorist groups were responsible for 31 cases, including 12 abuses of the right to life, 11 cases of abduction, 5 abuses of the right to education, 2 abuses of the right to physical integrity and 1 case of forced displacement. Signatory armed groups were responsible for six abuses, including two abuses of the right to life, two abuses of the right to physical integrity, one abduction and one abuse of the right to property.

57. The Malian defence and security forces were responsible for seven human rights violations, including one case of extrajudicial execution, four cases of torture or ill-treatment and one case of unlawful arrest and detention.

58. MINUSMA continued to support the efforts of the Government in the efforts to combat impunity. On 15 January, the Mission presented the conclusions of its human rights fact-finding mission in Koulogon-Habé commune to the Minister of Justice, who reported on the arrest of 14 suspects and the opening of a criminal investigation before the Tribunal de grande instance in Mopti. MINUSMA and the Ministry agreed upon a criminal investigation support framework for this incident. The Mission also provided technical support to the criminal chain entities in Mopti on issues specific to intercommunal conflicts to address the increasing number of criminal proceedings in the Mopti region, notably in remote areas with limited access to judicial authorities. Criminal investigations are yet to be opened in the Ménaka region, where violent extremist groups and non-signatory armed groups have killed at least 80 civilians since 12 December 2018.

59. The Mission also investigated cases of contemporary forms of slavery and associated human rights abuses in Kayes region. Following MINUSMA advocacy, the Malian authorities issued a communiqué on 15 January condemning the practice, and judicial authorities opened criminal investigations.

60. On 20 December, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission opened its regional antenna in Kidal. As at 22 February, it had received 119 testimonies. The Commission's national investigations team became operational on 19 March and will process the 11,396 testimonies received by 7 February.

61. The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali conducted his third visit to the country between 3 and 9 February, including to Bamako and Mopti region. Commissioners of the International Commission of Inquiry conducted a second visit to Mali between 25 February and 12 March. They travelled to Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu regions.

62. MINUSMA provided training on human rights for 676 members (62 women) of the Malian defence and security forces, 654 members (239 women) of civil society organizations, 46 members, including 2 women, of the Malian justice system, and 14 staff members of the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission. From 11 to 16 February, the Mission, together with the International Institute of Human Rights-René Cassin Foundation and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, organized the sixth edition of its annual training session on international criminal law, international human rights law and refugee law. The session benefited nearly 102 persons from various countries and various academic and professional backgrounds, including 35 participants (7 women) from Mali. More than 684 participants, including some 300 Malians, have already benefited of the training since 2014.

63. The national task force on monitoring and reporting verified 25 grave violations against children. Nine were killed and four maimed in Mopti, Timbuktu and Kidal regions, and eight were separated from armed groups in Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu regions and are now following reintegration programmes in Bamako and Gao. There was one case of denial of humanitarian access and three of attacks against schools and hospitals.

64. Between 15 and 18 January, in partnership with the Malian Human Rights Association, the Mission trained 15 judges on national and international protection mechanisms in relation to gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence.

65. From 25 February to 1 March, my Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict visited Mali, where she met President Keita, the Minister of Women, Children and Family Welfare, the Minister of Justice and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. She also engaged with survivors of sexual violence to deepen her understanding of their plight, and with community and religious leaders. During the visit, she shared with authorities the preliminary findings of her assessment of the judicial response to conflict-related sexual violence committed in 2012–2013. The visit culminated in the signing of a joint communiqué on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence in Mali.

## **V. Humanitarian situation**

66. The humanitarian situation remained alarming during the reporting period. As of February, 2.4 million people needed food assistance and 7.2 million people, mostly in the North and Centre, remained highly vulnerable to shocks, in particular conflict and climate-induced factors such as land degradation and extreme rainfall patterns. Pastoral and agropastoral communities, whose livelihoods have deteriorated following years of drought, remain especially vulnerable to food insecurity.

67. As of February, 123,000 people were displaced inside Mali, compared with 40,000 at the same period in 2018. Intercommunal conflict and rising insecurity in the North, in particular in the Centre, increased the numbers significantly, leading to

a loss of traditional livelihoods, heightened vulnerability and strained resources of host communities.

68. Prevailing insecurity continues to hamper the deployment of personnel delivering essential social services such as health care and education services. In addition, the destruction of health infrastructure in conflict-affected areas has restricted the population's access to health, including vaccinations and maternal health care. There are currently only 3.14 health workers per 10,000 people in the northern and central regions, well below the World Health Organization (WHO) standards of 23 health workers per 10,000 people and even below the national average of 10 health workers per 10,000 people.

69. A total of 827 schools remained closed in Mali, including 513 in Mopti, 77 in Timbuktu, 74 in Gao, 77 in Ménaka, 36 in Kidal, 30 in Ségou and 20 in Koulikoro, leaving approximately 244,000 children out of school and with no access to education, compared with 716 closed schools, affecting 213,800 children, in the previous reporting period. School closures were linked mainly to insecurity and direct threats by extremist armed groups imposing religious practices, triggering the withdrawal of teachers and negatively affecting children's access to education.

## **VI. Economic development**

70. On 27 December 2018, as part of its efforts to implement the Agreement, the Government operationalized its sustainable development fund, with a \$72 million endowment provided for in the 2018 national budget.

71. MINUSMA approved 38 quick-impact projects for basic public services, livelihoods and employment generation, and small infrastructure construction, in support of efforts to strengthen national institutions and communities. The Mission also approved three projects proposed by UNESCO intended to strengthen social cohesion and peacebuilding.

72. Through its trust fund in support of peace and security in Mali, MINUSMA allocated \$750,000 to three community security projects in Timbuktu, Gao and Ménaka. Another \$670,000 was allocated to three projects in Mopti, two of which are aimed at improving access to information and one, entitled "Health as a vector for peace" and implemented by WHO, which is linked to the broader goals of strengthening social cohesion and reconciliation. Implemented in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a total of \$295,989, two projects aimed at improving water access in support of the returning refugee population in Goundam and Niafunké districts in Timbuktu region were handed over to the authorities. The Mission also approved two projects from its programmatic funding to strengthen decentralized and interim authorities in the North and Centre on 31 December 2018.

73. The Peacebuilding Fund launched two cross-border projects (Mali-Burkina Faso and Mali-the Niger) to promote the political participation of and employment for young people. The two projects promote conflict prevention and management in local communities and the participation of young people in decision-making mechanisms and support trust-building measures between local communities, the defence and security forces and actors of the penal chain by integrating human rights into their operations.

## VII. United Nations strategic frameworks and integration plans

74. As I noted in my previous report (S/2019/207), under the guidance of my Special Representative and in collaboration with the United Nations country team in Mali, the United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework has been finalized and endorsed. It sets out the United Nations overall vision and joint priorities in Mali, while supporting strengthened coordination and promoting integration among all United Nations actors. Following its finalization and endorsement, these actors are now taking steps to align their strategies and activities to the Framework.

## VIII. Assessment of the performance of Mission troops

75. As requested in resolution 2423 (2018), MINUSMA continued to monitor the performance of its personnel. Since November 2017, the leadership of the MINUSMA force has submitted 33 assessments of units against a set of criteria, including support for mandate implementation, training and discipline and the sustainability of logistical support. On average, assessed units were found to perform satisfactorily.

76. During the reporting period, three units assessed were found to perform below satisfactory levels. The primary area requiring improvement is related to the lack of required equipment and spare parts for equipment, including armoured personal carriers and mine-protected vehicles. Nevertheless, since February, some contingents have acquired the needed equipment, including armoured personnel carriers, which has improved their operational capacity. MINUSMA and the Secretariat continue to engage with troop-contributing countries and other partners to overcome persistent shortfalls.

## IX. Capacities of the Mission

### Military

77. As at 11 March, 13,167 military personnel, including 38 military observers, 441 staff officers and 12,688 contingent personnel, were deployed of an authorized 13,289 personnel, including 40 military observers, 486 staff officers and 12,763 contingent personnel. Women accounted for 3.2 per cent of military personnel.

78. MINUSMA is taking steps to implement the recommendations of the military capabilities study conducted from 22 October to 2 November 2018, including the establishment of a new military sector in Mopti, in line with the request of the Security Council for the Mission to help to address the security situation in the Centre of Mali.

79. While the MINUSMA force is approaching full operational capabilities, the Mission continues to lack military aviation assets, namely, round-the-clock casualty evacuation, utility and tactical helicopters. In the Centre, MINUSMA has deployed a commercial round-the-clock casualty evacuation helicopter to Mopti as a substitute. In addition, as stated above, the Mission also lacks contingent-owned armoured personnel carriers, including mine-protected vehicles, which limits the operational reach of some Mission patrols, thereby slowing the pace of mandate implementation.

### Police

80. As at 11 March, 1,744 police personnel were deployed, including 312 individual police officers, of whom 14.5 per cent were women, and 1,432 formed police unit personnel, of whom 9.97 per cent were women, of an authorized 1,920 police

personnel comprising 345 individual police officers and 1,575 formed police unit personnel. The MINUSMA police force continues to require specialized expertise, through the deployment of individual police officers, in the areas of strategic planning, project management, forensics, investigations, community-oriented policing, security sector reform, counter-terrorism and serious organized crime. In line with the system-wide strategy on gender parity and the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028, there is a need for greater female representation in the MINUSMA police component.

#### **Civilian personnel**

81. As at 1 February, 86 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff had been deployed, including 90 per cent of international staff, 79 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 84 per cent of national staff. Women held 26 per cent of the international posts, 34 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 19 per cent of national staff posts.

#### **Camp construction and securing supply routes**

82. Two combat convoy companies were deployed in Mopti and Gao, in addition to the two companies already deployed, to provide enhanced escort capability of logistical convoys for all the Mission's main supply routes.

83. MINUSMA continued to maintain all its installations and camps. Construction in all regions progressed. All civilians and 95 per cent of troops are accommodated in prefabricated buildings. Camps in Mopti are being expanded to accommodate additional personnel. Frequent attacks against the Mission required regular renovations to damaged premises, services and amenities.

#### **Environment**

84. MINUSMA continued its efforts to minimize its environmental impact by improving wastewater treatment. During the reporting period, the Mission installed a total of 10 wastewater treatment plants in Bamako, Mopti, Ménaka and Gao. These plants have the capacity to recycle 300,000 litres of wastewater per day, which significantly reduces the Mission's consumption of potable water.

## **X. Safety and security of United Nations personnel**

85. Efforts continued to improve the safety and security of MINUSMA personnel, including through enhancements to the protection of the Mission's camps. Uniformed personnel continued to receive training on improvised explosive device threat mitigation. Over the past year, the ability of MINUSMA troops to detect improvised explosive devices has continued to improve, with more than 50 per cent of items found and cleared in 2018, nearly double of the 23.5 per cent from 2017.

86. The review of the standard operating procedures for medical and casualty evacuation was completed during the reporting period, incorporating best practices and lessons learned, while decentralizing the approval procedures for evacuations during pre-planned military operations.

87. In its efforts to deter potential attacks by prosecuting perpetrators, the Mission provided logistical, technical and liaison support to the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime towards the investigation of the attack against the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok on 20 January. The Mission initiated the development of standard operating procedures to enhance the collection of relevant evidence and their transmission to the Specialized Judicial Unit.

88. A total of 122 MINUSMA personnel have died as a result of malicious acts since the establishment of the Mission in 2013.

## **XI. Conduct and discipline**

89. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded during the reporting period. The Mission continued to implement the three-pronged strategy to assist victims and prevent exploitation and abuse, including enforcement measures, training and outreach activities to inform personnel and the local population about the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Efforts continue to broaden the awareness of local population regarding sexual exploitation and abuse through community-based networks and engagement with national actors.

## **XII. Observations**

90. The efforts made by President Keita and his Cabinet to prioritize the constitutional review process attest to the renewed commitment of and added focus by the Malian parties to the implementation of the Agreement since the presidential elections of 2018. The constitutional review is an indispensable step towards passing critical political and institutional reforms envisaged in the Agreement. These reforms will lay the groundwork for a unified nation and a more peaceful and stable Mali. In this regard, I welcome the resumption of dialogue between President Keita and Mr. Cissé. Only joint efforts will overcome the acute challenges currently facing Mali.

91. The committee of experts and the national consultation framework established by the Government earlier in 2019 will play an essential role in formulating concrete and meaningful reform proposals, in line with the Agreement and taking into account the views of the people and communities of Mali. I reiterate my call upon all Malian political and civil society leaders to actively participate in and contribute constructively to these important deliberations. I encourage the Government to continue to build on lessons from previous unsuccessful constitutional reform attempts, while ensuring an inclusive and transparent constitutional review process. My Special Representative will continue to work with all sides to ensure that differences are addressed through dialogue.

92. I remain concerned about the security situation in Mali and the complex threat environment in which MINUSMA continues to operate. These challenges notwithstanding, I am convinced that MINUSMA continues to play a critical role in support of the Government and the parties to implement their commitments under the Agreement, while providing essential support to national authorities in addressing daunting challenges and preventing extremist armed groups from taking control of areas in northern Mali, where there is little or no State authority. I am proud of the MINUSMA peacekeepers who continue to implement the Mission's mandate under extremely difficult circumstances and at great sacrifice and personal risk. I condemn in the strongest terms continued attacks targeting innocent civilians, United Nations peacekeepers, Malian defence and security forces and international partners.

93. I am deeply saddened by the death of 18 peacekeepers from Chad, Guinea and Sri Lanka who lost their lives in 2019 as a result of malicious acts. I express my heartfelt condolences to the families of the bereaved, their Governments and the people of their countries. Acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable. I call upon the international community to redouble its efforts to assist the Government of Mali, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the French army in efforts to combat terrorism. I also call upon all parties to reject and combat acts of terrorism,

regardless of their motivation. In line with its commitments, the Secretariat continues to do its utmost, under the framework of my Action for Peacekeeping initiative, to improve the safety and security of personnel and the protection of peacekeepers in this challenging operating environment, and to support the Malian judicial authorities in the investigation and prosecution of those crimes. I reiterate my call upon troop-contributing and police-contributing countries to adhere to their obligations and to ensure that their contingents who deploy to Mali are adequately equipped and protected. I also reiterate my call upon the signatory armed groups in northern Mali to step up efforts to prevent attacks against civilians, the Malian defence and security forces, MINUSMA peacekeepers and its partners.

94. I am particularly concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in central Mali and the alarming increase in the number of civilians killed. The increasing presence of and attacks by extremist armed groups and the increase in community violence and self-defence groups affiliated with different communities provide for an explosive situation, with civilians bearing the brunt of violence. The violence has reached unprecedented levels, overtaking in large part the capacity of century-old dispute resolution mechanisms. I call upon the Government to intensify efforts to address the situation in the Centre with the support of the international community, including through implementing its integrated security plan for the Centre.

95. Longer-term solutions to stem the violence in the Centre, however, are political in nature and must be accompanied by initiatives furthering justice and reconciliation. I therefore call upon the Government to step up efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of violence. I commend the efforts of the Government aimed at launching peaceful disarmament initiatives in central Mali. At the same time, it will be important to ensure that such geographically targeted initiatives be clearly distinguished from the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the parameters of which were determined under the Agreement. Communicating this distinction would help to manage expectations and avoid confusion among the population. I encourage the Government to consider approaches to reduce community violence, including programming to prevent the recruitment into violent extremist groups and on weapons and ammunition management, which MINUSMA stands ready to support.

96. The human rights and humanitarian situations remain worrisome. I welcome the determination of the Government to bring the perpetrators of the massacre in Koulogon-Peul on 1 January, where 37 civilians were killed, to justice, resulting in 14 arrests. A similar response must follow the many cases of human rights abuses documented in the Centre, in Ménaka region, and in the Gourma area. In these locations, self-defence and groups and violent extremist armed groups have committed several serious human rights abuses. It will be equally important to step up efforts to address the humanitarian situation. At least 123,000 people remain displaced in Mali. This is three times more than in 2018, while more than 1 million people have limited or no access to basic services, owing to security constraints, among other factors.

97. Lastly, I wish to commend my Special Representative, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his outstanding leadership and express my appreciation to the civilian and uniformed personnel of the United Nations system in Mali for their tireless efforts and sacrifices in one of the most challenging environments. My gratitude also goes to Algeria, as a lead mediator, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and other regional organizations, multilateral and bilateral partners, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, non-governmental organizations and all other partners for their steadfast commitment to and invaluable support for peace in Mali.

Map

