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Situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2480 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2020 and requested me to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers developments in Mali since my previous report ([S/2019/782](#)), dated 1 October 2019, and includes an assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of the priority measures set out in paragraph 4 of resolution [2480 \(2019\)](#), as well as of the situation in northern and central Mali and of the Mission's configuration with regard to the implementation of its primary and secondary strategic priorities.

II. Major developments

A. Inclusive national dialogue

2. The inclusive national dialogue was opened following the publication of its terms of reference on 3 October. Dialogue sessions were held in October at the local, district and regional levels and with the diaspora. Representatives of political parties and civil society, including women and youth groups, participated in the discussions. The final session of the national dialogue was opened on 14 December in Bamako. In his address to the nation of 30 November, the President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, announced that the implementation of the conclusions of the dialogue would be ensured by an independent monitoring and evaluation mechanism, the format and composition of which participants should propose.

3. My Special Representative worked with other mediators to encourage all key stakeholders to join the national dialogue process. Front pour la sauvegarde de la démocratie, a coalition led by opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé, and the civil society movement Anw Ko Mali Dron did not participate in the dialogue, maintaining that their demands had not been met. The Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad had suspended its participation after the President noted, in his address to the nation of 22 September, the possibility of reviewing certain provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. However, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad participated in the final session of the dialogue.



B. Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

4. The Agreement Monitoring Committee has not convened since the Government's cancellation of the meeting scheduled to be held in Kidal in September. The Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad had publicly criticized the decision and made its continued participation in the Committee conditional on the holding of a meeting to clarify the reasons behind the cancellation. In coordination with the international mediation team, my Special Representative maintained close contact with all of the parties to help them address their differences in order to resume the dialogue under the framework of the Committee and restart the implementation of the Peace Agreement. In their communiqué of 3 December, the signatory movements announced their willingness to resume Committee meetings.

5. The Technical Commission on Security met regularly, notwithstanding challenges at the political level. Participants discussed ceasefire violations by the signatory movements of the Peace Agreement on 25 September, rules governing the circulation of convoys and heavy weapons on 29 October and the plan for the redeployment of the reconstituted units to northern Mali, in particular Kidal, on 7 and 28 November.

6. The Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad, a member of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, held its second congress from 26 to 28 October, in Kidal. It called upon all actors sharing its objectives to rally behind one umbrella to form a common platform to represent northern Mali. The Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad, the other key member of the coalition, held its congress from 30 November to 3 December, during which it criticized the Government for the delays in the implementation of the Agreement and, unlike the Haut conseil, reaffirmed its political and military orientation. The MINUSMA Head of Office in Kidal delivered remarks at the latter congress, which were interpreted by the Government as a challenge to Mali's sovereignty. On 10 December, the Government issued a communiqué declaring him persona non grata. MINUSMA expressed its regret over the interpretation of the remarks in a context of uncertainty and reaffirmed United Nations respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali.

7. The rift within the Platform coalition of armed groups between opposing factions persisted. In addition to the division within the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad-Plateforme, the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés split into factions, with one supporting General El-Hadji Ag Gamou and Fahad Ag Almahmoud, and another supporting Haballa Ag Hamzata. My Special Representative remained in close contact with both factions and other relevant stakeholders to mitigate the impact of the rift on the peace process.

C. Stabilization and restoration of State authority in the centre

8. The Government intensified its efforts to implement a comprehensive politically led strategy to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence and re-establish State authority, State presence and basic social services. On the basis of the revision of the Plan de sécurisation intégrée des régions du Centre, the Permanent Secretariat of the Cadre politique de gestion de la crise au centre du Mali developed an action plan to operationalize the strategy. MINUSMA continued to provide technical, logistical and financial support to the Cadre. The Mission also facilitated meetings with leaders of the Fulani and Dogon communities, as well as establishing a consultation framework in Bamako bringing together influential leaders from both communities.

9. On 11 October in Mopti, the Prime Minister of Mali, Boubou Cisse, launched a community rehabilitation programme to encourage the voluntary disarmament and dismantling of self-defence and militia groups. The programme is aimed at reaching 3,387 vulnerable young people associated with self-defence militias in the centre. Since its launch, a total of 352 combatants, out of an estimated total of 3,387, have joined the process, which is also aimed at preventing recruitment into violent extremist groups. On 26 November, Mr. Cisse launched the reinsertion phase of the programme.

D. Security developments

10. During the reporting period, there were 269 incidents, in which 200 civilians were killed, 96 civilians were injured and 90 civilians were abducted, representing a decrease from the previous reporting period. More than 85 per cent of deadly attacks against civilians took place in Mopti Region. Notwithstanding the overall reduction, the threat of violence against civilians did not diminish in Bankass District, Mopti Region. Between 14 and 16 November, a series of attacks against Fulani villages in Ouankoro commune resulted in the killing of at least 37 persons.

11. The period under review was also marked by a series of deadly attacks against the Malian Armed Forces. A total of 193 soldiers were killed and 126 injured, a 116 per cent increase in the number of soldiers killed compared with the previous reporting period. The deadliest attacks occurred in Boulikessi and Mondoro, Mopti Region, on 30 September; in Indelimane, Ménaka Region, on 1 November; and in Tabankort, Ménaka Region, on 18 November. MINUSMA provided support for medical evacuations for the national defence and security forces, as well as fuel and equipment to reinforce some camps.

12. On 6 November, the national armed forces announced their retreat from some of their bases, including Indelimane and Anderamboukane, Ménaka Region, and Labézanga, Gao Region.

13. Demonstrations were held in Bamako in November to express support for the national armed forces and decry inadequate standards of equipment and protection, with some protesters questioning the presence of the international forces in Mali. In Gao, the wives of soldiers erected blockades in front of the national armed forces camp, on 19 November, to protest the deaths of their husbands. In his address to the nation of 30 November, the President called upon the Malian people to support foreign troops who were helping to contain terrorist groups that were threatening the existence of the country.

14. MINUSMA and international forces continued to be targeted by asymmetric attacks. There were 68 attacks against MINUSMA – in the regions of Mopti (46), Kidal (9), Ménaka (5), Timbuktu (4) and Gao (4) – resulting in the deaths of two peacekeepers and eight contractors and in injury to five peacekeepers, one civilian and two contractors. In the previous reporting period, there had been 20 attacks against MINUSMA, resulting in the death of one contractor and in injury to 25 peacekeepers. One French forces soldier died as a result of an improvised explosive device being used in an attack, on 2 November, and 13 soldiers died in an accident involving two helicopters during an operation against terrorist groups in Ménaka Region, on 25 November.

15. On 6 October, a MINUSMA force convoy hit an improvised explosive device near Aguelhok, Kidal Region, killing one peacekeeper and injuring three others. On the same day, unidentified armed elements opened fire on the MINUSMA temporary operating base in Bandiagara town, Mopti Region, seriously wounding one peacekeeper, who later died.

16. In the centre, amid increasing frustration felt by the local population regarding the deteriorating security situation, radical elements and self-defence groups are believed to have mobilized groups, in particular youth groups, against the presence of international forces, including MINUSMA. Consequently, throughout the reporting period, there were instances of the Mission's patrols being blocked by protesters. On 12 October, a demonstration held in protest against the deteriorating security situation escalated in front of the Mission's camp in Sévaré, resulting in significant material damage.

17. From 27 to 29 November, MINUSMA conducted an operation in support of the national armed forces at the camp in Diabali, which had been handed over on 17 October. It was the first in a series of operations conducted to support the redeployment of the national armed forces and provide rapid reinforcement of their posts so as to deter terrorist group activities and enhance the defence of the camp.

18. MINUSMA, jointly with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, continued to support the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime and its Specialized Investigation Brigade through the provision of training and technical and logistical support for the Brigade's investigations, including into the attack on the national armed forces in Boulikessi.

19. During the reporting period, 16 terrorism-related trials were completed, resulting in 19 defendants being found guilty, with sentences ranging from two years to life imprisonment, and 6 acquittals. This brings to 60 the number of terrorism-related suspects tried since 2017, leading to 51 convictions and 9 acquittals.

III. Assessment of the implementation of the priority measures referenced in paragraph 4 of resolution 2480 (2019)

A. Constitutional reform following an inclusive consultation with the full involvement of the Malian parties, the political opposition and civil society

20. Uncertainty prevails regarding the outcome of the inclusive national dialogue process and its impact on the constitutional and other reform processes. At the request of opposition and civil society groups, the scope of the dialogue was expanded. The opposition and civil society organizations maintained that efforts to stabilize the security situation should be prioritized. At the request of some stakeholders, the Government agreed to include the Agreement as a topic for discussion in the dialogue. However, signatory movements, and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in particular, argued that revisiting the Agreement would require the consent of all of the signatories.

21. Differences among key stakeholders on the focus of the discussions may make it difficult for concrete consensus-based recommendations to emerge with regard to political and institutional reforms, including on the sequencing of the reforms. While some stakeholders insist that the constitutional reform remains indispensable prior to any progress regarding other reform processes, others maintain that the only institutional reform set forth by the Agreement that requires a revision of the Constitution is the creation of a Senate. Given that the mandate of the members of Parliament is set to expire in May 2020, it is important to accelerate the launch of reform processes that require parliamentary approval. However, some stakeholders maintain that issues relating to institutional reform should be approved by both the lower chamber and the Senate, which has yet to be created, so as to ensure that the views of the local populations throughout the country are adequately reflected. It is

not clear whether the findings and recommendations emanating from the dialogue will be binding and guide upcoming reform processes.

22. Divergent views and expectations in the context of the inclusive national dialogue, if unaddressed, can compound the risk of political disruption, given the capacity of certain stakeholders to mobilize for popular protests, with the reform of the Constitution as a rallying issue. This adds to the persistent climate of social discontent, as illustrated by recent strikes, against the backdrop of a drastically deteriorating socioeconomic and security situation. Increasing criticism of the Government is fuelled by deadly attacks on the national armed forces. MINUSMA continues to work with all key stakeholders to overcome the impasse.

B. Transfer of deconcentrated State services to local authorities, and adoption of legislation establishing territorial police

23. The Government of Mali continued to take steps towards the full and effective transfer of deconcentrated State services and competencies to local authorities, as well as the complete transfer of 30 per cent of State revenue to the territorial units. To date, of 42 competencies to be transferred, the relevant line ministries have partially transferred 16 competencies to local authorities and have made preparations to transfer completely 10 competencies by the end of 2019, specifically: agriculture, health, education, urbanism, fisheries, livestock, mines and energy, youth affairs and sport, culture, and water and sanitation. Draft decrees setting out specific steps for the transfer of competencies are being finalized.

24. In its draft budget law for 2020, the Government made provisions for the transfer of 23.1 per cent of State revenues to local authorities, an increase from 21.3 per cent in 2019. Consultations on the territorial police force, including its role and contribution to community policing, funding and oversight mechanisms continue among the signatory parties.

25. Since my previous report, the percentage of civil administrators present at their duty stations in northern Mali remained at 23 per cent, with 80 per cent of governors, 38 per cent of prefects and 17 per cent of sub-prefects deployed. There was a marked increase in insecurity, with a growing number of attacks directed at mayors and their administrative staff, which included two mayors killed in Timbuktu Region and the vandalization of four municipal headquarters in Timbuktu and Mopti Regions. Insecurity continued to result in absenteeism and the relocation of some staff.

26. As at 30 November, the rate of deployment of civil administrators to their duty stations in Mopti Region had decreased to 30 per cent, with the governor, 75 per cent of prefects and 22 per cent of sub-prefects deployed, compared with 41 per cent deployment, including 75 per cent of prefects and 35 per cent of sub-prefects, in June 2019.

27. MINUSMA continued to support the deployment of local representatives of the State to the regions and proposed creative solutions to enhance the partial return of the State. The solutions included reinforcing security at tribunals and in prisons, and providing support for judicial authorities to return temporarily to their duty stations in order to hold hearings.

28. Ensuring that communes, *cercles* and regions can function will require the effective transfer of authority, responsibility and resources from the central Government. Local authorities will need to be empowered to generate their own revenues and continue capacity-building efforts. Civil servants are often reluctant to deploy to duty stations in northern and central Mali. It is recommended that the Government, with the support of the international community, develop a reward-

based system, such as financial incentives or career development plans, coupled with a local recruitment system, thereby placing the responsibility to hire, manage and retain staff in the hands of local authorities.

C. Redeployment of reconstituted and reformed Malian Defence and Security Forces to northern Mali

29. A total of 1,330 former personnel of the Operational Coordination Mechanism from Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, designated by the signatory armed movements, have been disarmed, demobilized and integrated into the national armed forces and the national guard as part of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process. The Mission's support was instrumental in creating the conditions that allowed the integration to proceed. It worked with all parties to overcome their differences and join the process. The Mission also provided logistical support for the registration and safe storage of weapons and for the transportation of the former combatants to Bamako, where they joined the training sites in Koulikoro and Ségou Regions for basic military training.

30. In keeping with the Agreement, the newly integrated national defence and security personnel will be redeployed to northern Mali as part of the reconstituted and reformed units comprising elements from the national armed forces, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, Plateforme and some non-signatory armed groups. A draft plan for the redeployment of the reconstituted units, developed by the Chief of Defence Staff with MINUSMA support, is now under discussion by the signatories to the Agreement. In the plan, the deployment of 24 reconstituted companies to northern Mali in two phases is envisaged. It is expected that the implementation will start with the redeployment of three battalions to Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, respectively, and one company to Ménaka. The plan would allow MINUSMA to hand over protection tasks that the Mission is currently performing in support of the cantonment sites, which will be used for the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

31. Once the redeployment plan has been agreed upon and adopted, the 1,330 trained and integrated elements can be assigned to the specific units, the command structure determined and the assigning of ranks for the commanders finalized on a case-by-case basis, as envisaged in the two decrees on rank harmonization.

32. A "catch-up" phase is under way to disarm and demobilize the remaining 510 Operational Coordination Mechanism personnel for integration into the army, which will bring the number of integrated elements to 1,840.

33. A total of 668 deserters rejoined their units, as envisaged under the Agreement. A special unit to combat terrorism, comprising 69 personnel from the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, was deployed to Gao.

34. The Mission's support for the redeployment process will continue to be instrumental, given the lack of trust and morale among and within the signatories. The Government's focus on central Mali and recent attacks against the national defence and security forces has affected its resolve to prioritize the redeployment process. The signatory movements, on the other hand, continue to make the disbanding of their armed movements conditional on tangible progress in political reform processes, in particular with regard to decentralization, and continue to advocate maintaining the structure of their respective units.

35. The first step in the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is the biometric registration of 74,000 former combatants in Gao, Mopti, Timbuktu, Ménaka and Kidal who had been pre-screened for disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration. An agreement has been reached that, as a result of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, a total of 10,000 former combatants would be integrated into the national defence and security forces and the public administration, while 16,000 combatants would benefit from the socioeconomic reinsertion package of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

D. Participation of women

36. The Mission worked closely with relevant government entities to prepare for a high-level workshop to increase the participation of women in the decision-making bodies of the peace process, including the interim administrations at the communal level, as well as the broader political system. The workshop, scheduled for January 2020, will also serve as a forum for formally agreeing on the status and structure of a women's observatory established with MINUSMA support to monitor the implementation of the peace process.

37. Women continue to be underrepresented in the mechanisms responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Agreement. This reflects a cultural context in which the representation of women traditionally has been minimal in public and political life. Four years after the adoption of a law, in 2015, requiring at least 30 per cent representation of women in public office, and more than four years since the signature of the Agreement, women make up 3 per cent of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, 6 per cent of the National Council for Security Sector Reform, 20 per cent of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission and 4 per cent of the subcommittees of the Agreement Monitoring Committee. The representation of women remains minimal (1 and 5 per cent, respectively) in the interim administrations at the regional and district levels.

38. Going forward, it will be critical to ensure the increasing and more effective participation of women in political and economic decision-making processes. The encroachment of violent extremism on many Malian communities presents a serious setback, as many extremist groups violate the rights of women and seek to remove women from the public sphere altogether.

39. Women's civil society organizations actively participated in the preparations for and the holding of the inclusive national dialogue. A network of female parliamentarians championed an initiative aimed at convincing those who had decided to boycott the dialogue to join it. MINUSMA also supported the establishment of a permanent secretariat for journalists trained in reporting on political processes and the responsibility of the media in a democracy, 50 per cent of whom are women.

E. Development of the Northern Development Zone

40. The Northern Development Zone was created through the adoption of the legislation in July establishing it and the operationalization of the sustainable development fund. The Government and the signatory groups have since begun preparations for the launch of a pilot project in the north, with a focus on Kidal Region. In its budget proposal for 2020, the Government allocated \$44 million for the fund. The signatories began to work on a manual defining the rules and guidelines for the management of the fund.

41. The full operationalization of the Northern Development Zone hinges on a number of factors that may not be resolved in the immediate term. Projects in the Zone will need to be developed on the basis of an economic development strategy for

the north that defines priorities and timelines. The Government, in consultation with the signatory groups, would need to take the lead in developing the strategy while ensuring that it is part of a more holistic approach to foster growth and development in all of Mali.

42. A number of outstanding institutional and operational issues risk complicating the operationalization of the Northern Development Zone. The implementation of projects in the Zone will be overseen by an interregional advisory council. In the absence of regional elections, the signatories need to agree on the modalities to identify and appoint interim representatives to this Council. In addition, the interaction between local authorities, who will eventually be responsible for implementation of their own local development strategies, and the Council, will also need to be clarified. Furthermore, it will be important to ensure that funding streams are transparent while distinguishing between projects funded by local tax revenue and funds transferred by the central Government on the one hand and donor contributions and the dedicated budget line for the sustainable development fund on the other.

IV. Assessment of the situation in northern and central Mali, and reconfiguration of the Mission

43. The security situation remains of great concern in both northern and central Mali, having become more volatile and complex. Terrorist groups expanded their influence, with different groups acting as the main security providers in several areas of the country, using diverse approaches and yielding different levels of acceptance from local communities. On the one hand, terrorist elements, such as Katibat Macina, are present in western districts of Ségou and Mopti, with little contestation on the part of local communities. In such isolated areas, while the security situation may appear more stable, with fewer reported violent incidents or less crime, the population suffers from exactions and severe human rights abuses. On the other hand, the approach of other terrorist groups, such as Islamic State in Greater Sahara, in southern Gao and Ménaka Regions, is based on fear, taxation and deadly attacks, with local populations rejecting their presence.

A. Situation in northern Mali

44. The security situation in the north has deteriorated and become increasingly more complex, with increased terrorist activity in Ménaka Region and Ansongo *cercle*, Gao Region, and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad asserting its control and providing security in the wider areas of Timbuktu and Kidal, against a backdrop of limited State presence and the fracturing of Plateforme.

45. Intracommunal clashes, such as the ones observed between Arab communities in Timbuktu and Tuareg communities and Fulani groups in Ménaka, coupled with the expansion of extremist groups, are expected to be the main source of violence in the coming months. The control of major trafficking routes remains the main incentive to take up arms. Drivers of economic conflict remain difficult to address because the motives of the groups are concealed by idealistic, political or religious rhetoric.

46. In Gao Region, a consistent infiltration of terrorist armed groups has been perceived, to a point where some interlocutors compared the situation to that in 2012. The presence of terrorist groups along the Ansongo-Gao axis is creating distress among the population. Of all the incidents relating to the protection of civilians reported in Gao Region, 70 per cent took place in Ansongo *cercle*.

47. In the region of Timbuktu, the general security situation remains stable, in part as a result of cooperation between the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the national defence and security forces. However, while security has improved in areas controlled by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad, in more remote areas of the Niger Delta, such as Bambara-Maoundé, terrorist groups are operating and continuing their forced recruitments. In the area south of the Niger River, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara has expanded its influence across Gourma-Rharous *cercle* and as far as the Burkina Faso border to the south.

48. The Mission's presence in the north remains essential to protect key population centres, create the space for the peace process to unfold and prepare the ground for and facilitate the return of State authority, including the reconstituted national defence and security forces. However, the Mission's added focus on central Mali, in parallel with the existing focus on the north, has required adaptation. Over the past six months, the Mission has continuously deployed at least three infantry companies, together with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets and a quick reaction force from its base in Gao to Mopti Region to deter violence against civilians. The need for such deployments makes it challenging for MINUSMA to respond to the increasing security challenges in Gao and Ménaka Regions. In conjunction with the limited number of air assets, the deployments have also negatively affected mandate implementation and the capability of civilian components to engage with their counterparts and carry out their tasks. Some duties, such as escorts for civilian personnel that are traditionally carried out by the military, have been taken on by formed police units, but such practices should only constitute a temporary stopgap measure.

B. Situation in central Mali

49. The situation in the centre remains highly complex and of grave concern. Violence across community lines continues to claim many lives and is exploited by extremist groups, with Bandiagara, Bankass and Koro *cercles* most affected. While there has been an upsurge in violence against Dogon communities in recent months, with subsequent reprisals against Fulani communities, the levels of violence cannot be compared with the large-scale massacres witnessed in early 2019, owing in part to the negotiation of a series of local ceasefire agreements, supported by MINUSMA.

50. Terrorist groups have proliferated and asserted their presence in several areas in the centre. Paradoxically, the areas affected reported lower levels of violence and intercommunity clashes, as the infiltrated communities are mostly homogenous. Severe human rights abuses committed by such groups go largely unreported. The threat of improvised explosive devices remains high in the centre and in particular on the Kona-Gao axis, and the presence of the groups restricts the freedom of movement for the national defence and security forces and international forces, who remain the main targets for improvised explosive device attacks, with the civilian population also suffering significant casualties.

51. In the absence of State authority, and in response to the proliferation of terrorist groups, self-defence militias remain active, refusing to disband or disarm because they consider themselves to be the only ones providing security for their communities. Increasingly, the groups have challenged and mobilized the local population against the presence of international forces, including MINUSMA, whom they perceive as competitors. Dogon and Fulani militias are increasing their strength and consolidating their efforts, which may result in further confrontations. Members of the largest self-defence group, Dan Nan Ambassagou, which remains a major provider of employment opportunities for disenfranchised young people, have been hesitant to participate in the Government's initiative to reduce community violence.

52. Guided by a political strategy, the Government is continuing its efforts towards defining a coherent and proactive approach to address the situation in the centre. The creation of multiple dedicated structures, mechanisms and interlocutors has led to confusion among the various bodies, and in this respect, MINUSMA has taken on an important coordinating role.

53. Combating impunity remains a key building block of efforts to stabilize the centre. The Mission provided extensive support to the investigations of the national authorities into the large-scale massacres that occurred in 2019. At the same time, hate speech is proliferating on social media and in the local media, fuelling a climate of incitement to violence and the stigmatization of communities.

C. Response of the Mission

54. MINUSMA increased its presence and activity in central Mali in support of the Government to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence and re-establish a State presence, State authority and basic services. The Mission supported authorities by holding 57 community forums to reduce intercommunity tensions in Mopti and Ségou Regions. MINUSMA also supported eight intercommunity dialogues to address conflicts in several communes in Koro and Bankass districts, resulting in two non-written accords and the signing of three local peace agreements.

55. In order to enhance the ability of local authorities to address land-related disputes and conflict, the Mission launched a programme to strengthen the capacity of 108 land commissions in Mopti Region and supported the validation of a draft law to reinforce traditional justice mechanisms in order to address minor disputes before they escalate. MINUSMA enhanced its efforts to support authorities in combating impunity, with a focus on central Mali, including through the provision of support for capacity-building in specialized areas, such as investigations of serious and organized crime, criminal intelligence and crime scene management, through specialized police teams and the forensic laboratory.

56. The Mission increased the focus of its Operation Oryx in areas in which civilians were most under threat, concentrating its efforts in Bandiagara and Bankass and extending to Koro. At least three companies have been deployed continuously, together with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets and rapid-response air support, to prevent and deter violence against civilians. The deployment of temporary operating bases allowed the force to increase the MINUSMA presence. The force has also been able to conduct longer and less predictable patrols and increase its engagement with communities in central Mali.

57. MINUSMA continued its operations to mitigate the threat of improvised explosive devices in Mopti Region, discovering and neutralizing five devices since May 2019.

D. Assessment of the Mission's configuration

58. Pursuant to resolution [2480 \(2019\)](#), MINUSMA developed a Mission concept to guide the prioritization of tasks in the light of the addition of a second strategic priority, taking into account the Council's request for adaptation, increased flexibility and efficiency. As outlined in paragraphs 54 to 57 above, the Mission increased its activities in central Mali significantly in support of the authorities and the local populations under threat.

59. In the light of the increasing security challenges in northern and central Mali, and the limited presence of the national defence and security forces, the Mission's

added focus on central Mali has put additional pressure on the Mission (see para. 48 above). In order to address the challenge, MINUSMA developed an adaptation plan to rebalance its capacity and increase its capability by filling existing critical shortages and increasing its mobility and flexibility to deploy MINUSMA contingents between sectors in order to respond rapidly to the dynamic security situation.

E. Force adaptation plan

60. The envisaged adaptation plan for the force, building on efforts undertaken to realign the force's posture and footprint within the evolving environment, would provide the proactive posture required to create a safe and secure environment for Mission components to fulfil their mandated tasks. The adaptation plan sets the foundation for the enhanced protection of civilians, the prevention of the return of armed elements and the creation of a sustainable security environment.

61. The adaptation plan for the force is focused on increasing the Mission's protected mobility, agility and flexibility. The plan, which remains within the authorized troop strength, requires the adjustment of the Force's posture and composition. This will be achieved through the transformation and relocation of certain units and the generation of additional capabilities and resources, including additional helicopter units, an additional level 2 hospital in Mopti and additional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. Several highly mobile and deployable ground units of the Mission's mobile task force capability will be deployed throughout all sectors, allowing the force to rapidly concentrate its efforts towards achieving its objectives. MINUSMA will require additional land and infrastructure in certain areas, including Mopti, Gao and Kidal, in order to adjust its posture effectively. The plan also envisages the repurposing of 40 military observers tasked with monitoring the ceasefire. Owing to prevailing security conditions, they cannot fully discharge their duties. It is therefore recommended that those posts be transformed into staff officer positions.

F. Police adaptation plan

62. The United Nations police will focus on enhancing its support for the redeployment of the national security forces, with a focus on the centre, through community-oriented policing programmes, co-location and coordinated activities with the national defence and security forces and enhancing support to judiciary authorities to more effectively combat impunity, in coordination with other components. In the north and the centre, formed police unit patrols and escorts remain critical enablers for civilian components to implement their mandate.

63. Efforts towards increasing the presence of the United Nations police in central Mali continue, with an additional formed police unit to be deployed in early 2020. The reassignment of individual police officers is also envisaged on the basis of a Mission-wide reassignment plan, taking into account the deployment of national counterparts and the creation of regional training centres. MINUSMA will provide training of the trainers and direct supervision of the trainings by mobile training teams.

64. It is envisaged that one formed police unit from Bamako would redeploy to Timbuktu, so as to reinforce and extend outreach in the area and to support the redeployment of national security forces. In Gao, the formed police unit will continue to conduct medium-range activities to support the national security forces in Ansongo while exploring temporary deployment patterns to increase such activities.

G. Adaptation of civilian components

65. A total of 15 civilian personnel have been redeployed to enhance the Mission's presence in central Mali. The Mission will conduct an internal civilian staffing review to align the deployment of its civilian personnel to the reprioritization of mandated tasks.

66. The development and implementation of the integrated strategic framework has facilitated integration. Joint projects were implemented in Timbuktu, Gao, Mopti and Ménaka Regions, and the projects have contributed to the Government's provision of basic social services, the generation of livelihoods and the return of 2,089 refugees to Timbuktu through the reconstruction of schools, the provision of food, the construction of a well and the provision of transportation.

V. Human rights situation

67. The human rights situation remains of grave concern. During the period under review, MINUSMA verified 72 cases of human rights violations and abuses, including 68 abuses perpetrated by armed groups and 4 violations perpetrated by national forces. The cases included summary executions, arbitrary killings, abductions, arbitrary arrest and detention, and conflict-related sexual violence. Children also continue to be affected by the conflict, with 142 grave violations perpetrated against 105 children, including 39 children who were recruited and used by armed movements and 48 children who were killed and injured.

68. The activities of non-signatory armed groups continued to pose grave threats to civilians and the security providers tasked with their protection. Of the 68 human rights abuses documented, 18 cases were attributed to the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and 31 to community-based militias. A total of 43 cases of abuse occurred in Mopti, 14 in Timbuktu, 5 in Gao, 2 in Ménaka, 2 in Kidal, and 1 each in Ségou and Sikasso Regions. Combined, the cases of abuse resulted in 78 civilians killed, 38 injured and 36 abducted. In northern Mali, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims continued to attack schools and mosques and burned civilian infrastructures, which may constitute a violation of international humanitarian law.

69. Three human rights abuses were attributed to signatory armed groups. On 1 October, two civilian men were abducted and ill-treated by members of the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad, before being released on the same day. On 7 October, during their patrols in Goundam, Timbuktu Region, members of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad apprehended and ill-treated four civilian men suspected of having committed criminal acts. All four men were released the same day.

70. National defence and security personnel were implicated in 4 cases of human rights violations, which led to the death of 12 persons (10 men and 2 boys) and to injuries to at least 21 persons (20 men and 1 girl). The number of cases represents a decrease compared with the six cases recorded during the previous reporting period. On 19 September, in Ségou Region, the national police used excessive force in controlling a violent demonstration. One male civilian was killed, and 82 persons, including two women and three children, were arbitrarily arrested, many of whom suffered ill-treatment; the three children were later released.

71. Human rights concerns persisted in the context of counter-terrorism operations. On 30 September, MINUSMA received allegations of violations in the context of counter-terrorism operations by the national armed forces in Mopti Region, with support from forces of Burkina Faso. Owing to security concerns, MINUSMA has not

yet been able to conduct an investigation in the area. On 15 November, elements of the national armed forces reportedly summarily executed nine civilian men on suspicion of their involvement in terrorism in Mondoro, Mopti Region.

72. MINUSMA continued to support the work of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, which has received 15,612 testimonies. Its mandate was extended until December 2021, and its scope expanded to include violations committed between 1960 and 2019. The first public hearing was held on 8 December 2019.

73. In order to promote respect for international human rights and humanitarian law, MINUSMA continued to facilitate human rights capacity-building and awareness-raising activities in Bamako, Mopti and Gao for the national defence and security forces, the National Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations.

74. The mandate of the International Commission of Inquiry was extended until June 2020.

VI. Humanitarian situation

75. The humanitarian situation was marked by a rising number of internally displaced persons in central and northern Mali and persistent food insecurity and malnutrition. The humanitarian response plan remains underfunded, with \$138 million (42 per cent) of the required \$324 million having been received.

76. The population of displaced persons, the majority of whom are women and girls, more than tripled in a year, reaching 199,385 persons in early November. Mopti Region hosts the largest displaced population (69,679), followed by Gao (55,702), Ségou (24,291) and Timbuktu (22,641) Regions.

77. In total, 3.2 million people suffer from food insecurity, including more than 648,330 persons who are severely food insecure and require immediate food assistance, owing largely to increasing internal displacement and limited access to agricultural land. The number of persons suffering from severe food insecurity is four times higher than in the same period in 2018. As of October, 1,051 schools were closed, including 660 in Mopti Region alone.

78. Humanitarian access in northern and central Mali has become increasingly challenging owing to criminality, violent extremist group activity and military operations. The number of security incidents affecting humanitarians, mostly related to banditry, remained high.

VII. Economic situation

79. Persistent insecurity, coupled with a decline in agricultural production, has affected economic growth, which decreased from 5 per cent at the end of 2018 to an estimated 4.7 per cent in 2019. On 5 December, the National Assembly adopted the general budget for 2020 in the amount of \$3.4 billion, with a deficit of \$712 million, compared with a deficit of \$560 million in the adjusted budget for 2019.

80. During the reporting period, 25 quick-impact projects and 19 projects related to the trust fund in support of peace and security in Mali, totalling \$1.1 million and \$7.4 million, respectively, were approved to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the stabilization of the centre. The Peacebuilding Fund approved \$15 million in support of community reconciliation and social cohesion in central Mali. Following approval by the World Bank of \$22.7 million in resources to improve access to modern services and promote the deployment of renewable energy in rural

areas, a project was appraised, on 18 October, to deliver a more financially sustainable electricity sector, more targeted and efficient agricultural subsidies and support pro-poor decentralized service provision.

81. Donors provided new contributions worth \$5.41 million to the trust fund and pledged an additional \$4.1 million. On 10 December, MINUSMA published the results of a field survey on the perception of its quick-impact projects during the period 2014–2017, which showed that beneficiary populations perceived the projects positively.

VIII. Capacities of the Mission

Military

82. As at 11 December, 11,953 military personnel had been deployed, 89.94 per cent of the authorized strength of 13,289 personnel, including 40 military observers, 486 staff officers and 11,427 contingent personnel. Women accounted for 3.58 per cent of military personnel.

Police

83. As at 11 December, 1,741 police personnel, or 90.67 per cent of the authorized strength, had been deployed, including 307 individual police officers, 25.40 per cent of whom were women, and 1,434 formed police unit personnel, 10.87 per cent of whom were women.

Civilian

84. As at 11 December, 87 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff had been deployed, including 89 per cent of international staff, 80 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 86 per cent of national staff. Women held 24 per cent of international posts (a decrease of 3 per cent from the previous reporting period), 28 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 15 per cent of national staff posts.

85. Difficulties with regard to finding contractors able to deliver contingent-owned equipment to northern Mali, notably for incoming troop-contributing countries, led MINUSMA and the Secretariat to initiate a review of the Mission's support plan, with a specific focus on movement control aspects.

IX. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

86. MINUSMA continued its efforts to reinforce the security of its camps, with the completion of electronic surveillance systems in Gao and Mopti and efforts ongoing in Kidal. Additional internal communication systems were installed in all camps in the Mission area. The Mission is reviewing arrangements to enhance the security of civilian personnel throughout the country.

87. Since the inception of the Mission in 2013, 128 MINUSMA peacekeepers have been killed as a result of malicious acts, and another 91 peacekeepers have died as a result of other causes. To date, 29 alleged perpetrators have been identified and 14 individuals detained in relation to those crimes.

X. Conduct and discipline

88. One allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse was recorded during the reporting period. The Mission continued to implement its strategy to prevent misconduct, in particular sexual exploitation and abuse, by training personnel, conducting risk assessments and recommending mitigating measures in the Mission's areas of operations. MINUSMA also continued its outreach activities among the local population and its provision of assistance to victims.

XI. Environmental issues

89. MINUSMA continued its efforts towards minimizing its environmental impact, including through the submission of its revised waste management plan in October and energy infrastructure management plan in November. The Mission developed standard operating procedures for water supply and sanitation and for environmental emergencies. MINUSMA continued to conduct inspections, trainings and briefings to raise staff members' awareness of the Mission's environmental mandate.

XII. Observations

90. I am concerned about the continued delays in the implementation of the Agreement, in the context of the inclusive national dialogue and growing insecurity across the country, notably the lack of redeployment of the reconstituted national defence and security forces to northern Mali. Discussions in the context of the inclusive national dialogue were held in more than 600 municipalities, 49 districts, the capital and with the diaspora, which provided an important forum for Malian men and women to express their concerns and discuss solutions. I was particularly encouraged by the fact that female representatives made their views heard in most of the sessions. Malian women have paid a high price during a crisis that has affected their country since 2012. They must enjoy meaningful participation in Mali's political life and take part in decisions that will affect their future. I call upon the leaders of the opposition and civil society who decided not to take part in the process to put the interests of the country first and assume the role of a responsible opposition. I also appeal to all Malian leaders to display the necessary leadership and find common ground and pragmatic solutions to resume the implementation of the peace process and advance key reforms, including the revision of the Constitution, which is an indispensable step for progress in other areas.

91. The implementation of the Peace Agreement remains the only viable path to address the complex crisis in Mali and lay the foundations for lasting solutions for peace and stability. National ownership of the Agreement is essential for its implementation, and I respect the wish of Malians to discuss the content of the Agreement. It is important, however, to recognize that, at this critical juncture, there is no alternative to the Agreement. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that all segments of the population understand this. It is of utmost importance that the signatory parties address their differences through dialogue and resume regular meetings of the Agreement Monitoring Committee. My Special Representative will continue to work with all sides to overcome the impasse.

92. The further deterioration of the security situation in Mali and the wider Sahel region is alarming. Terrorist groups are gaining ground, while attacks against the national and international security forces continue unabated. I condemn in the strongest terms the heinous attacks against the national armed forces, who suffered heavy casualties. I pay tribute to all national and international forces who continue to

serve under the most difficult and dangerous circumstances, and I remember those who have paid the ultimate price in the quest for a better future for all Malians. National and international security forces play a critical role in Mali and their contribution remains essential, although a military solution alone will not be sufficient to solve the problems that Mali is facing. Addressing the complex crisis requires a multidimensional response and strong and unified Malian leadership. I urge all Malian actors to rise above their differences, work together and find solutions to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement. This remains the most pragmatic way to address the underlying causes of instability and increased terrorist activity.

93. The integration of 1,330 former combatants of the signatory movements into the national armed forces is an encouraging achievement. For the first time since the signing of the Agreement, in 2015, former combatants have set aside their weapons to serve their country as members of the national army. As envisaged in the Agreement, they will form part of the reconstituted and reformed units to be redeployed to northern Mali. Their redeployment will not only be important to reinforce the national armed forces, it will also be the first tangible step towards restoring State authority in northern Mali and pave the way for a more significant deployment of State administration and justice. Such developments will be fundamental to settle the conflict and fight terrorism. It is now essential to make their redeployment to northern Mali, in particular Kidal, a reality. I call upon the Government and the signatory movements to resolve any outstanding issues urgently and to ensure that the plan can be endorsed by all parties.

94. I remain concerned about the situation in central Mali, where terrorist activity continues to fuel violence among communities, taking a heavy toll on the local population. I welcome the Government's efforts to adopt a comprehensive strategy to address this dire situation. I am encouraged in particular by the Government's dialogue initiatives, which have yielded results and contributed to the relative reduction in violence among communities in central Mali. The proliferation of government mechanisms and overlapping competencies, however, has led to some confusion, which needs to be clarified. I condemn repeated incidents of militia elements restricting the movement of, and directing hostile acts towards, MINUSMA forces. The incidents undermine the Mission's efforts to protect civilians. I would also like to caution that conducting disarmament initiatives outside a clear political framework risks raising unrealistic expectations among those who have taken up arms for various reasons. Efforts to combat impunity will remain essential to stem the violence in the centre, and more needs to be done by the authorities to demonstrate their commitment in this regard. I urge national justice authorities to pursue progress in investigations, including of the horrendous massacres in Koulogon Peul, Ogossogou and Sobane Da, and to bring the perpetrators to justice. I would also like to highlight the need to bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes perpetrated against peacekeepers. Some 128 peacekeepers have been killed as a result of malicious acts, and not a single perpetrator has been held accountable.

95. Stabilizing the situation in Mali and combating terrorism will require addressing the grievances of the disenfranchised and the poor. Advancing the reforms envisaged under the Agreement, investing in economic development and providing opportunities will be critical in this regard. The Northern Development Zone has the potential to become an important vehicle for income-generating and employment activities in northern Mali, where much of the local population is destitute and has not yet seen any peace dividends. The redeployment of the State administration will only make a difference if it goes hand in hand with the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources from the central Government. Full decentralization in the longer term will be important to stabilize Mali, given the vastness of its terrain and the diversity of its population.

96. The humanitarian situation continues to worsen. Countrywide, 3.9 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, most of them in the north and the centre, the majority of whom are women and children. The deteriorating security situation also affects the safety of humanitarian workers and hampers their access to people in need. More than 1,000 schools are now closed in Mali owing to insecurity, thereby preventing hundreds of thousands of children from obtaining an education. The closure of schools is worrisome because education remains one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and future.

97. The presence of MINUSMA remains crucial in Mali, and its mandate remains relevant, given the complexity of the challenges and the corresponding need for comprehensive solutions. The Mission continues to play a fundamental political and security role, and its support is instrumental in providing the space in which the peace process can unfold. The Mission's support was essential in facilitating the progress made towards meeting the priority measures outlined in resolution [2480 \(2019\)](#). MINUSMA operates under robust rules of engagement, with the authority to use all means necessary to address threats to the implementation of its mandate, notwithstanding the fact that it is not a counter-terrorism mandate. I remain convinced that organizational partners are better placed to conduct major combat and counter-terrorism operations and provide specialist support beyond the scope of the mandate of the Mission and the capability of the United Nations system. Effective partnerships are needed to ensure collective success.

98. The Mission made great strides towards reinforcing its presence and activities in the centre on the basis of a reprioritization of mandated tasks, taking into account its primary and secondary strategic priorities. Given the highly complex threat environment, the increase in terrorist activity and the limited national capacities, MINUSMA doing more requires additional resources. The Mission's plan for adaptation outlines a viable proposal for a more agile, mobile and flexible force, with tailored units and enhanced capabilities, most important among them additional air mobility. The plan will not entail an increase in the Mission's authorized strength, but will require additional resources. I call upon Member States to support the proposal when considering contributions and the Mission's budget, in keeping with their commitments under the Action for Peacekeeping framework.

99. I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative for Mali, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his outstanding leadership and dedication. I also extend my sincere gratitude to all United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel, troop- and police-contributing countries, members of the international mediation team, donor countries, regional and multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and all other partners for their invaluable support for peace in Mali.

Annex I

**United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization
Mission in Mali: military and police strength as at
11 December 2019**

Country	Military			Police								
	Experts on Mission, staff officers and units			Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Armenia	1		1									
Austria	2		2									
Bangladesh	1 279	17	1 296	1		1	237	43	280	238	43	281
Belgium	33	6	39									
Benin	242	18	260	15	2	17	134	5	139	149	7	156
Bhutan	5		5									
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1	2									
Burkina Faso	1 051	35	1 086	15	9	24	130	10	140	145	19	164
Burundi	1		1									
Cambodia	266	25	291									
Cameroon	2	1	3	10	4	14				10	4	14
Canada	3	2	5	10	7	17				10	7	17
Chad	1 392	26	1 418	14	1	15				14	1	15
China	411	15	426									
Côte d'Ivoire	207	6	213	14	14	28				14	14	28
Czechia	4	1	5									
Denmark	60	4	64									
Egypt	1 068	2	1 070				130	10	140	130	10	140
El Salvador	192	18	210									
Estonia	4		4									
Ethiopia	1		1									
Finland	4		4	1	1	2				1	1	2
France	24		24	12	1	13				12	1	13
Gambia	2	1	3									
Germany	348	20	368	7	5	12				7	5	12
Ghana	133	20	153									
Guatemala	2		2									
Guinea	839	30	869	6	6	12				6	6	12
Indonesia	10		10	4	1	5				4	1	5
Ireland	12		12									
Italy	1	1	2									
Jordan	65		65	11		11				11		11
Kenya	13	1	14									
Latvia	1		1									
Liberia	101	16	117									

Country	Military			Police								
	Experts on Mission, staff officers and units			Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Lithuania	34	2	36									
Madagascar				2		2				2		2
Mauritania	7		7									
Mexico	2	1	3									
Nepal	155	3	158									
Netherlands	5	1	6	6	1	7				6	1	7
Niger	853	12	865	27	10	37				27	10	37
Nigeria	63	17	80	1	1	2	102	38	140	103	39	142
Norway	11	4	15	3	2	5				3	2	5
Pakistan	19		19									
Portugal	2		2	2	1	3				2	1	3
Romania	120	6	126									
Senegal	1 005	39	1 044	16	6	22	285	30	315	301	36	337
Sierra Leone	18	4	22									
Spain	1		1	2	0	2				2	0	2
Sri Lanka	265		265									
Sweden	175	35	210	4	1	5				4	1	5
Switzerland	6		6	2	1	3				2	1	3
Togo	894	44	938	9	1	10	260	20	280	269	21	290
Tunisia	77	6	83	35	2	37				35	2	37
Turkey				1		1				1		1
Ukraine	8	1	9									
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2		2									
United States of America	9	1	10									
Total	11 511	442	11 953	229	78	307	1 278	156	1 434	1 507	234	1 741

