



Security Council

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Situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2022 and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers major developments in Mali since the previous report ([S/2021/844](#)) dated 1 October 2021.

II. Major developments

2. During the reporting period, the transition authorities pursued efforts to implement their political agenda on the basis of the transitional Government's action plan, notably electoral reforms and the establishment of a single election management body, as well as the holding of a wide-ranging national dialogue on reform (*Assises nationales de la refondation*) to lay the foundation for political and institutional reforms. These initiatives took place against the backdrop of divergent views between the transitional Government and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the timeline for the political transition, including the holding of legislative and presidential elections by February 2022 to mark the end of the transition period, as well as the deteriorating security situation. Limited progress was achieved in implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, while efforts to develop a comprehensive politically-led strategy for central Mali continued.

A. Political transition, reforms and elections

3. During the reporting period, political stakeholders remained divided on the substantive aspects of the transition, notably the transitional Government's reform agenda, electoral reforms and the holding of the national dialogue on reform. The national dialogue is conceived as a consultative process with key stakeholders from all segments of society to launch political and institutional reforms to address the root causes of recurrent crises in Mali. Several political parties, groupings and movements expressed their support for the transition authorities and confirmed their willingness to participate in the national dialogue. Conversely, the political coalition of parties regrouped under the *Cadre d'échange des partis et regroupements de partis politiques*



pour une transition réussie au Mali, comprising allies of the former presidential majority, continued to publicly oppose core elements of the transition authorities' agenda. Following their meeting with the President of the transitional Government on 19 November, the Cadre d'échange announced in a communiqué that, owing to the erosion of trust between the transitional Government and political parties, the grouping would not participate in the national dialogue. Furthermore, the Cadre d'échange reiterated its calls for adherence to the transition time frame and the organization of elections and expressed its willingness to support a successful transition, but indicated that it remained open to dialogue with the transition authorities.

4. In support of the transition authorities and the armed forces, peaceful demonstrations were held throughout October in several cities, including Bamako, Bougouni, Kayes, Mopti, Sévaré and Sikasso. Other national stakeholders, including civil society, also stated their positions: on 6 November, in a press conference, Synergie 22, a platform of 22 civil society organizations involved in election monitoring, expressed concerns over the entrenched political polarization on matters related to electoral reforms; and the imam Mahmoud Dicko, in a mass prayer gathering that he organized on 28 November, expressed concern about the trajectory of the transition as a contributing factor to the continued isolation of Mali and called for the convergence of all the nation's active forces for a successful transition.

5. In accordance with its agenda, the transitional Government continued preparations for holding the national dialogue on reform. On 16 October, the Prime Minister of the transitional Government issued a decree appointing 30 members of the organizing committee of the national dialogue, including 10 women (33.3 per cent). In another decree signed the same day, 18 public figures were appointed to the high-level panel of the national dialogue, including 7 women (38.9 per cent). Both structures are in compliance with the gender parity law and the designated officials are respected across the political spectrum. On 20 October, the Council of Ministers approved the draft terms of reference and timetable of the national dialogue. The high-level panel was formally launched by the President of the transitional Government on 26 October and was tasked with: (a) conducting consultations with political and social stakeholders to ensure wide participation and foster consensus; (b) implementing the calendar of the national dialogue; (c) developing and implementing a communication plan and monitoring its implementation; and (d) drafting the final report on the national dialogue for submission to the President of the transitional Government. On 28 October, the Prime Minister of the transitional Government inaugurated the organizing committee for the national dialogue.

6. In view of the continued political polarization, the transition authorities, notably the Prime Minister and the Minister of State Reform, initiated consultations with key stakeholders to galvanize support for the Government's agenda, notably the national dialogue on reform. The President of the transitional Government also held a series of consultations with political parties and groupings, trade unions and traditional, customary and religious authorities between 12 and 22 November. On 23 November, the President of the National Transition Council received a delegation from the High Islamic Council of Mali.

7. The national dialogue on reform was scheduled to commence at the *cercle* and commune levels on 22 November and at the national level on 21 December. However, on 22 November, the high-level panel issued a communiqué announcing that, owing to ongoing consultations, the dialogue would be postponed until further notice. In a communiqué issued on 3 December, the panel announced a new timeline for the national dialogue, beginning on 11 December at the *cercle* level, on 15 December at the commune level and between 27 and 30 December at the national level.

8. While uncertainty remains regarding the electoral timetable, some steps were taken to organize elections. On 24 November, the Council of Ministers adopted a draft electoral law that provides for: (a) the establishment of a single electoral management body; (b) a revised electoral map for legislative elections; (c) the reform of the voting system, including the introduction of electronic voting and, for parliamentary elections, a system of proportional representation; (d) the capping and control of campaign-related expenses; and (e) the obligation to release individual polling station results and the electronic transmission of vote counts. MINUSMA provided logistical support for the annual revision of the voter register, which began on 1 October and will run until 31 December, including the deployment of materials to the northern regions.

9. Reacting to the adoption of the draft law, the Cadre d'échange, in a communiqué issued on 25 November, called on the transitional authorities to: (a) work towards consensus, inclusivity and neutrality of the Government; (b) respect ECOWAS normative frameworks precluding the modification of electoral laws six months before scheduled elections, except with the consent of a majority of political actors; and (c) comply with the outcome of the workshop organized by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization concluded on 30 June, in which it was recommended that the existing electoral architecture should be retained, with some improvements. On their part, the Mission d'observation électorale au Mali and the Coalition pour l'observation citoyenne des élections au Mali welcomed the new draft electoral law, while suggesting areas of improvement.

10. A series of investigations and legal proceedings against some Malians was initiated. On 26 October, the fourth Vice-President of the National Transition Council was arrested for allegedly posting subversive remarks on social media. Several political parties issued communiqués denouncing the arrest. On 4 November, the Council adopted a resolution calling for his parliamentary immunity to be respected and for the case to be dismissed by the tribunal. However, a presidential decree issued on 9 November removed him as a Council member and nullified his parliamentary immunity. He was released from detention but is currently awaiting trial. On 5 November, the prosecutor for commune VI in Bamako district announced the initiation of judicial investigations against six individuals: five former State security and police officials and the former Secretary-General of the Presidency under the former President of the transitional Government, Bah N'Daw. The charges against them include allegations of criminal conspiracy and plotting against the Government. It is worth recalling that the former Prime Minister, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, and the former Secretary-General of the Presidency, Kalilou Doumbia, remain in detention over accusations of corruption related to the purchase of a presidential plane and military equipment under the regime of the former President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

Engagement with the international community

11. The international community remained actively engaged in support of the transition process. On 17 October, the President of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, in his capacity as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, travelled to Bamako for meetings with the transition authorities. During his interactions, the authorities laid out the challenges facing the country, notably a weak State presence beyond the capital and the security situation, and their priorities to ensure that elections are held in a conducive environment and that the return to constitutional rule is lasting. They announced that the election timetable would be issued at the end of the national dialogue on reform. The Government reiterated the same messages to the Security Council delegation, which visited Mali on 23 and 24 October. On 25 October, the transitional authorities expelled the Special Representative of ECOWAS to Mali from the country citing "actions incompatible with his status".

12. On 7 November, ECOWAS convened an extraordinary session in Accra to discuss the situation in Mali and Guinea. Prior to the summit, the President of the transitional Government formally notified the Chair of ECOWAS that elections could not be held in February 2022 as envisaged and requested additional time to convey a new date. In its final communiqué, the summit deplored the lack of progress in preparations for the elections, including the absence of a detailed timetable. It decided to impose targeted sanctions, with immediate effect, on most members of the transition authorities, their families and the other transition institutions in the form of a travel ban and a freeze on financial assets. ECOWAS called on the United Nations, the African Union and other bilateral and multilateral partners to follow suit. On 15 November, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union agreed to establish a dedicated framework for restrictive measures on Mali. Earlier, on 2 November, the United States of America formally announced the suspension of trading concessions granted to Mali under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, effective 1 January 2022.

13. The outcome of the ECOWAS summit provoked mixed reactions among political stakeholders in Mali. The transitional Government issued a communiqué on 8 November in which it, *inter alia*: (a) stated that it regretted the Authority's decisions, opining that they did not sufficiently consider the aspirations of the Malian people and the transition authorities' efforts; and (b) reaffirmed the transitional Government's willingness to maintain dialogue with ECOWAS. Political parties critical of the transition authorities' approach called for actions to reassure international, regional and bilateral partners. Other political and civil society actors criticized the summit outcome, emphasizing respect for national sovereignty and the prevailing challenges in the country.

14. Meanwhile, at the national level, using his good offices as well as through the local follow-up committee composed of the Special Representatives of ECOWAS, the African Union and MINUSMA, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali maintained regular consultations with transition authorities, political actors and other stakeholders, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps, to promote dialogue and explore ways to build consensus on major political priorities.

B. Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

15. Overall, there were limited advances in the implementation of the Agreement. The increased focus placed on the political transition diverted attention from its implementation. Despite the efforts deployed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the international mediation team, no progress was made regarding the integration of the remaining 1,136 ex-combatants as part of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. Although the transitional Government demonstrated its willingness to proceed, both the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Plateforme are yet to submit lists of their combatants, delaying the process even further. These challenges notwithstanding, following good offices efforts by the international mediation team and the Special Representative, the signatory parties agreed to proceed with the socioeconomic reinsertion of former combatants, with an initial batch of 300 elements per region. Negotiations are still ongoing for the implementation of these reintegration initiatives.

16. In a significant development, at the forty-fifth session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, held in Bamako on 5 October, the Minister of National Reconciliation, Colonel-Major Ismaël Wagué, who is in charge of the implementation of the Agreement, announced the transitional Government's intention to integrate 13,000 ex-combatants into the armed and security forces before the end of 2021 and an additional 13,000 within the next two to three years. However, the optimism that

this announcement created was dampened when, on 7 October, the Permanent Strategic Framework, a coalition created by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and a wing of the Plateforme in April, announced its withdrawal from the inter-Malian consultative framework, a mechanism designed to maintain dialogue between the signatory parties between the sessions of the Committee. The decision was motivated by remarks made by Colonel-Major Wagué at the Committee meeting that the transitional Government was not part of the Permanent Strategic Framework and urging international partners to refrain from supporting the body without prior consultation with the transitional Government.

17. Against this backdrop, on 2 November, the Permanent Strategic Framework embarked on a tour across all northern regions aimed at raising awareness among local populations of the need for peaceful coexistence. In a show of force, the coalition deployed a convoy of some 200 vehicles for the tour. Also on 2 November, the Malian Armed Forces announced the launch of a special recruitment process in the northern and central regions aimed at integrating 2,000 individuals with serviceable weapons into the army, the national guard and the gendarmerie. To date, about 440 young men have been registered in Ansongo, Gao and Ménaka.

18. There was no change regarding the inclusion of women in mechanisms to support and monitor the implementation of the Agreement. The appointment of an additional 15 women is still pending. Furthermore, consultations to establish an independent women's observatory with a view to enhancing the role of women in the peace and political processes are ongoing. On 28 October, to promote the participation of women in political and peace processes, the transitional Government, with support from MINUSMA, launched women's situation rooms with the participation of 200 women from civil society organizations and political parties. This peacebuilding mechanism provides a physical space and framework to work with communities, especially women and young people, in advocating, mediating and intervening in violent and tense situations, notably during elections, and to promote equitable access and the participation of women in political and electoral processes during the transition period. Situation rooms have been established in Bamako and seven regions across Mali. During the reporting period, no progress was made in establishing the independent women's observatory.

19. In a positive development, on 21 October, the Minister of Economy and Finance presided over a signing ceremony for the launch of 16 projects of the Sustainable Development Fund amounting to over \$65 million (38 billion West African CFA francs). The event marked an important step forward in the implementation of title IV of the Agreement on socioeconomic and cultural development. Also on 21 October, the transitional Government of Mali and the heads of regional councils, including regional interim authorities, signed the first memorandum of understanding regarding the disbursement of 70 per cent of the pre-approved funds (\$77 million) for the nine projects led by local authorities in the north under the Northern Development Zone. However, the continued delay in appointing members of the Zone secretariat risks further slowing implementation of the reporting mechanism as well as compliance with public procurement rules, as requested by the Minister of Economy and Finance.

Support from the international community

20. To defuse these tensions, Algeria invited the Minister of National Reconciliation and representatives of the signatory movements to Algiers from 22 to 24 October, after which the Strategic Partnership Framework resumed its participation in the inter-Malian consultative framework. The Special Representative, working with members of the international mediation team, also reached out to the parties to stress the need to focus on the speedy implementation of the Agreement.

21. On 25 November, the international mediation team convened a virtual meeting as part of its support for peace efforts in Mali. In its final communiqué it, among other things, reaffirmed its determination to exercise its arbitration power and encouraged signatory parties to engage in constructive dialogue towards completing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

22. MINUSMA continued to provide technical assistance to the transition authorities for the development of the national security policy, the integration of former combatants into the Malian Defence and Security Forces and the subsequent redeployment of reconstituted units to northern Mali. The support was focused on capacity-building activities, the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the implementation of national strategies and policies related to security and defence matters.

C. Regional developments

23. During the reporting period, the Special Representative continued his consultations with regional stakeholders and neighbouring troop- and police-contributing countries, specifically Algeria, Chad, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal, to discuss their contributions to peace and stability in Mali, including supporting the transition and implementing the Agreement. In the same vein, he conducted a joint visit to Togo with the High Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Mali and the Sahel. He also maintained regular consultations with the African Union, ECOWAS and the Group of Five for the Sahel and its Joint Force on overall support to Mali and specific questions related to it throughout the period under review. One of the key issues raised by regional stakeholders relates to the mandate of MINUSMA, which they deemed to be inadequate given the prevailing security situation. The Special Representative took the opportunity to apprise his interlocutors of the ongoing adaptation plan and to point out that the key challenge facing the Mission is related to shortfalls in capabilities, which need to be bridged urgently to enable the full implementation of the mandate. MINUSMA continued to cooperate with United Nations presences in the subregion, including the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. In this connection, the Special Representative participated in the thirty-sixth high-level meeting of United Nations heads of mission in West Africa and the Sahel on 15 November.

24. As part of the reconfiguration of the military presence of France in the Sahel region, French forces closed their bases in Kidal and Tessalit in northern Mali on 13 November and in Timbuktu on 15 December.

D. Stabilization and restoration of State authority in the centre

25. In the central regions, the reporting period was marked by continued complex security challenges, the marked increase in and complexity of threats and attacks by violent extremist and terrorist groups as well as intercommunal violence and a further deepening of the multidimensional crisis, with serious governance, socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights repercussions. Intercommunity violence continued, in particular in Djenné and Niono *cercles*. The Special Representative continued to engage regularly with the transitional authorities on the stabilization of the central regions and visited the Mopti Region, including the village of Ogossogou, on 5 November.

26. The transition authorities embarked on the elaboration of a consolidated comprehensive politically-led strategy for central Mali, coordinated by the Permanent Secretary of the Cadre politique de gestion de la crise au centre du Mali, with integrated support from the United Nations. After the initial field mission to the centre

from 27 September to 2 October, which consisted of a three-day workshop in Mopti followed by two one-day visits to Bandiagara and Douentza, respectively, the Permanent Secretary conducted consultations with relevant stakeholders from the Ségou and San Regions, which constituted the former Ségou Region, from 2 to 4 November in the town of Ségou. These consultations convened a broad range of regional and local officials, civil society organizations, trade unions, women's, youth and minority groups and other stakeholders. The workshops canvassed input from participants on a range of thematic priorities for a revised strategy to stabilize the centre by addressing existing challenges, including in the fields of security, governance, development and humanitarian assistance. The Mission continues to support the transition authorities in the process.

27. The Mission pursued its support to the structures of the Cadre politique de gestion de la crise au centre du Mali, including its Permanent Secretariat. It also continued to implement community violence reduction projects across the regions. A total of 10 projects were completed and 15 were launched during the reporting period, focusing on vocational training, basic infrastructural rehabilitation, income-generating activities, lighting and security, agriculture, solar-powered water systems and animal husbandry.

Promotion of reconciliation

28. On 8 October, the villages of Ogossogou Peulh and Ogossogou Dogon, where two major attacks took place in 2019 and 2020 killing 192 civilians, and 10 other Peulh and Dogon villages in the communes of Bankass and Dimmbal signed a local reconciliation agreement. The agreement provides for the free movement of people and goods, the resumption of agricultural and pastoral activities, the unhindered exploitation of natural resources as well as access to markets, health facilities and other services. The process was supported by the Équipe régionale d'appui à la réconciliation and MINUSMA, notably through mediation and reconciliation efforts since November 2020, coupled with the deployment of a MINUSMA temporary operating base in Ogossogou. As a result, Ogossogou community leaders resumed mutual visits and communities started to move freely to undertake agricultural and pastoral activities. Cattle raided in an earlier attack on the village of Dimmbal were returned, and dwellings in abandoned Fulani villages are being rebuilt for the return of internally displaced persons. The situation remains fragile, however, with the ultimate success of the ongoing stabilization efforts contingent upon a host of factors, including cross-border intercommunal dynamics.

Restoration of State authority

29. As at 31 October, 73 per cent of mayors, 93 per cent of prefects and 19 per cent of sub-prefects were effectively present in the central regions. These figures show a slight decrease in the presence of mayors (from 78 per cent) and of sub-prefects (from 20 per cent) and an increase in the presence of prefects (from 80 per cent) since May. However, variations across districts are significant. All mayors but one were deployed in Ségou and San Regions in October, formerly constituting the Segou region, while only about 50 per cent were present in the former Mopti Region, consisting of the regions of Bandiagara, Douentza and Mopti. The same tendency is observed for sub-prefects, of whom 28 per cent were present in the former Ségou Region in October, while only 12 per cent were present in the former Mopti Region.

30. Despite the precarious security situation in the area, MINUSMA and the United Nations Development Programme jointly supported the transformation of the justice of the peace system (a one-magistrate tribunal) of Djenné into a court of first instance to ensure the division of responsibilities between the prosecutor and the two judges.

Fight against impunity

31. On 18 October, the Special Representative met with the Minister of Justice in follow-up to Security Council resolution [2589 \(2021\)](#) to discuss accountability for crimes against peacekeepers and urged the transitional Government to undertake further steps to hold those who attack MINUSMA personnel and premises accountable.

III. Major security developments

32. Between 1 October and 15 December, a total of 324 attacks against civilians were reported, a slight decrease compared with the previous reporting period, during which there were 326 attacks. The latest attacks resulted in 80 civilians killed, 95 injured and 90 abducted.

33. While the overall number of incidents against civilians has reportedly decreased, three trends indicate important shifts in the overall security environment. First, the Mission received few reports of confirmed incidents or threats of violence in areas effectively controlled by violent extremist and terrorist groups despite allegations of severe human rights violations, potentially indicating a high level of coercion occurring in those areas. Second, reported security incidents occurred primarily in areas where different groups are vying for control against either the State or community-based armed groups and militias, such as in Bandiagara, San and Ségou Regions, the entirety of the Gourma and key strategic access routes where radical armed elements are seemingly attempting to establish effective control. Third, incident trends indicate a continued shift from the centre to the south of the country, with an increase noted in attacks by unidentified armed individuals or members of violent extremist and terrorist groups in Koutiala, San and Sikasso, as well as increased intercommunal tension affecting in particular the Diabali and Dogofri communes in Niono district, Ségou Region.

34. This spread of incidents from the centre southwards is due in part to the lack of an effective State presence, including the Malian Defence and Security Forces, in most of the rural areas of central Mali and is visible in threats by violent extremist and terrorist groups, the climate of fear, increased school closures and the absence of basic services and humanitarian activities. An increase in the use of embargoes or siege tactics was observed, as well as the strategic destruction of critical infrastructure, most importantly bridges and telecommunication installations, and the use of improvised explosive devices, which seems to be a deliberate tactic of war to further isolate communities.

35. Violence along community lines continued to occur in the central regions, in particular in Djenné and Niono *cercles*. A major clash between dozos and violent extremist groups was reported on 20 October in Marébougou in the Djenné commune, Mopti Region, leading to mass displacement and the deterioration of humanitarian conditions. In an attempt to break the siege laid by the extremists, local dozos, with reinforcements from Bandiagara, Djenné *cercle* and the Ségou and San Regions, clashed with radical armed elements linked to Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin. This resulted in at least 12 dozos killed and 52 wounded, with the population trapped between the warring factions. On 3 December, presumed radical armed elements attacked a truck with several traders on board near the village of Songo, Bandiagara *cercle* and Region. The attack resulted in the death of over 30 civilians, including women and children, and 18 others injured. All of the victims identified are reportedly Dogon from the villages of Kori-Kori, Ficko and Songo.

36. In Gao Region, an uptick in the movement of large violent extremist and terrorist groups was reported, appearing increasingly to close in on the town of Ansongo, while

the area of Ouattagouna is believed to be serving as an advance point for violent extremist and terrorist groups expanding activities in the region. MINUSMA responded to all early warning indications with the timely redeployment of its forces to show its presence in key areas around the town and *cercle* of Ansongo, although the chronic lack of aerial assets and personnel hinders the Mission's ability to increase its deterrent activities and operations.

37. In Timbuktu Region, the destabilizing activities of violent extremist groups attest to the scope and scale of their influence and reach, through intimidation, threats, extortion, kidnapping and the sabotaging of mobile network antennae, including with the use of explosive devices. During the reporting period, threats by these groups increased. In the affected localities, violent extremist groups continue to impose new rules using threats and terror tactics, with consequences for civilians, in particular children and women. In some areas of the Gourma, in the Timbuktu Region, MINUSMA continued to implement its force's deterrence operations to reassure the civilian population against threats by those groups.

A. Asymmetric and other attacks

38. The 53 incidents involving improvised explosive devices recorded since October 2021 represent the highest monthly total in Mali since the Mission's inception. Of the attacks, 42 were carried out against MINUSMA (23 in Kidal, 9 in Gao, 6 in Mopti, 2 in Ménaka and 2 in Timbuktu), resulting in 16 peacekeepers injured and 9 killed. This is an increase compared with the previous reporting period, in which 34 attacks were recorded against MINUSMA and 19 against the Malian Defence and Security Forces, resulting in 48 peacekeepers injured. The most serious attack against MINUSMA using an improvised explosive device occurred on 2 October against a logistics convoy in Kidal, resulting in one peacekeeper killed and three injured. In another serious incident, a MINUSMA civilian contractor was killed on 3 December, when a MINUSMA force logistics convoy was shot at in the Gao Region. On 6 December, one peacekeeper succumbed to the injuries that he sustained during an attack with an improvised explosive device on 22 November. On 8 December, a MINUSMA logistical convoy travelling from Douentza to Sévaré struck an improvised explosive device near the village of Mbéba in the Lowol-Guéou commune of the Bandiagara *cercle* and Region, approximately 70 km north-east of Sévaré, killing seven peacekeepers and injuring three others.

39. A total of 68 asymmetric attacks were carried out against national and international forces, MINUSMA and signatory armed groups, including 45 in the north (22 in Kidal, 11 in Gao, 11 in Timbuktu and 1 in Ménaka). There were 18 attacks in the centre (14 in Mopti and 4 in Ségou), and in the south there were 4 in Koulikoro and 1 in Kayes. This is an increase in central Mali compared with the previous reporting period, in which 27 attacks were recorded against security forces and signatory groups. An international force's logistics convoy was targeted in an incident involving an improvised explosive device, which resulted in two civilians injured on 4 October between Bourem and Tarkint in the Gao Region.

40. The Malian Defence and Security Forces were targeted in 28 attacks (8 in Mopti, 8 in Timbuktu, 4 in Koulikoro, 2 in Kidal, 2 in Ségou, 1 in Kayes and 1 in Gao). There were 40 people killed (34 members of the Malian Armed Forces, 3 police/gendarmerie personnel and 3 civilians) and 52 injured (44 members of the Malian Armed Forces, 6 police/gendarmerie personnel and 2 civilians). The deadliest attack occurred on 6 October and involved an ambush against the Malian Armed Forces approximately 14 km south-west of Bandiagara in the Bandiagara commune, Mopti Region, killing 17 members of the Malian Armed Forces and injuring 11 others. A signatory armed group (Coordination des mouvements et fronts patriotiques de résistance) was

targeted in an attack in Gounzoureye commune, 5 km south of the town of Gao, resulting in 10 people killed, 6 injured and 3 kidnapped.

B. Support for Malian defence and security institutions

41. During the reporting period, 42 training sessions were conducted in Bamako and the regions for 489 members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces (including 176 women). Of these, 18 training sessions were conducted in the centre and the north for 168 members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces (including 8 women). The partnership with the European Union capacity-building mission in the Sahel continues through the holding of joint training sessions and the implementation of evaluation tools. United Nations police have conducted predeployment training for the Malian Defence and Security Forces, in particular for police officers deployed at the new police stations built as part of the efforts to establish State authority.

42. MINUSMA provided logistical support to Malian Armed Forces units across the country. The MINUSMA force also conducted six medical evacuation missions in which 28 Malian Armed Forces personnel were evacuated. In addition, MINUSMA transported Malian Armed Forces personnel from Bamako to Ménaka between 8 and 22 October to support the redeployment of Malian forces.

C. Small arms, light weapons and explosive threat mitigation

43. To support Malian initiatives against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, MINUSMA conducted, jointly with the Permanent Secretariat to Counter the Illicit Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, a campaign in Bamako and the central regions to raise awareness of the risks associated with the illegal detention, trafficking and trading of weapons.

D. Rule of law

44. The Ministry of Justice, with MINUSMA support, established a statistical information system for the justice sector in Mali, a management tool that will contribute to enhancing the functioning of tribunals and prisons in the north and the centre. The Mission continued to provide technical support to reinforce prison security, including by revising the interministerial decree on the integrated prison security plan on 15 and 16 November. In October, it provided support for the establishment, training and equipment of a national prison intervention team to enable the prison service to respond to internal and external security needs.

45. MINUSMA and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime continued to support the Specialized Judicial Unit against Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime and other judicial institutions in the prosecution of those accused of serious crimes. This included providing technical and logistical support for an in situ mission to Aguelhok, Kidal Region, to investigate and undertake prosecutions for the attack on 2 April that caused the death of four peacekeepers. As at 7 December, a total of 34 individuals had been identified as suspects, 4 of whom were being held in relation to the attacks. A total of 44 investigations are under way.

46. The Mission supported the judicial administration in trial cases of human rights violations and terrorism-related charges, including monitoring trial sessions against the applicable international human rights norms and standards. The judiciary completed, for example, a special criminal trial session of 41 terrorism-related trials involving 53 defendants, resulting in 46 found guilty. This brings the number of

terrorism-related suspects tried since the Specialized Judicial Unit became operational in 2017 to 229, leading to 189 convictions and 40 acquittals. On 10 November, the Military Justice Tribunal held its first criminal session of 2021 in Bamako, with three cases tried: one assassination, one murder and one rape.

IV. Human rights situation

47. The human rights situation remained worrisome in the country, including in areas that were previously the least affected by violence. Extremist groups systematically targeted civilians and vital infrastructure in central and northern Mali, while attacks against victims of contemporary forms of slavery persisted in the southern part of the country. There were allegations of serious violations committed by national forces during counterterrorism or military operations, notably in the centre. The situation of women and children in conflict settings remained dire.

48. Against this backdrop, MINUSMA documented 324 human rights incidents (92 violations and 232 abuses). These comprised extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (16), other killings (84), injuring (94), abductions or enforced disappearances (60), torture or ill-treatment (1) and illegal arrests and detentions, in particular prolonged detentions and violations of due process guarantees in terrorism-related cases (69), as well as instances of death threats and intimidation, besieging of civilian populations, property destruction and looting, cattle raiding and forced displacement.

49. Central Mali remained the epicentre of violence, with gross violations and abuses documented in the regions of Bandiagara (65), Douentza (2), Mopti (51) and Ségou (57). Violations and abuses were also documented in the regions of Dioila (1), Gao (26), Koutiala (1), Ménaka (20), Sikasso (4) and Timbuktu (22), as well as in the district of Bamako (75).

50. The perpetrators of the violations or abuses were national forces (22), regional or international forces (1), signatory and compliant armed groups (17), community-based armed groups and militias (21) and extremist armed groups (194). Judicial authorities failed to fully uphold the due process rights of 69 terrorism-related suspects.

51. The United Nations recorded an increase in the number of grave violations against children (252, compared with 228 violations during the previous period). Recruitment and use of children (102) and sexual violence against children (16) remain prevalent, while killing and maiming (22) were also verified. A total of 91 children associated with armed groups were separated and handed over to civilian child protection actors. There were 26 verified attacks on schools. It is of concern that a minimum of 1,664 schools remained non-functional, owing mostly to insecurity, especially in the central regions as well as in Timbuktu, affecting at least 499,200 children and 9,984 teachers. There were also 57 verified incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Of the 252 grave violations, 122 were attributed to unidentified armed elements, while others were attributed to the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (62), the Plateforme (27), dozo traditional hunters (14), Katiba Macina (9), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (7), the Malian Armed Forces (5), Dan Nan Ambassagou (4) and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (2). Grave violations were verified in central Mali (95), with others in Gao (71), Kidal (37), Ménaka (19), Timbuktu (28), Sikasso (1) and Bamako (1).

52. Through the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements, MINUSMA documented 14 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, an increase of 9 compared with the previous period. These included the forced and early marriage of six girls in Karou-Gourma, Gao Region, and cases of sexual assault against four adult male migrants and the attempted rape of three adult female migrants by armed smugglers in

Timbuktu Region – all in late September. One woman was allegedly gang-raped by 12 elements of the Malian Armed Forces at the military camp in the town of Mopti on 22 October. The gender-based violence sub-clusters in Gao and Mopti reported that parents were being coerced by extremist elements to offer their daughters (both adults and children) in exchange for protection. Two fathers in Ansongo were reportedly killed by the perpetrators when they resisted this practice. In Gao *cercle*, extremist elements allegedly abducted girls during wedding ceremonies and raped them.

53. On 28 October, the transitional Government of Mali and the United Nations adopted an action plan to implement the provisions of a joint communiqué addressing conflict-related sexual violence, signed by both parties in March 2019. The implementation of the action plan would ensure the country's compliance with its commitment to prevent, judicially respond to and holistically support survivors of such violence.

54. On 1 November, an investigating judge ordered the arrest of 21 pro-slavery suspects, all men, for their alleged role in violently attacking victims of slavery in the village of Souroubiré, Kayes Region, on 28 and 29 September. The suspects are in detention at the central prison in the town of Kayes. This development follows robust advocacy efforts by the United Nations for concrete accountability measures to address this phenomenon in the affected areas.

55. In accordance with the human rights due diligence policy, MINUSMA conducted 19 risk assessments of requests for support from the United Nations to non-United Nations forces (9 for the Malian Defence and Security Forces and 10 for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel). In this respect, several mitigation measures were recommended to the entities requesting support to enhance their human rights compliance and trigger investigations into eventual violations. More efforts are required to ensure the effective implementation of those mitigation measures. During the reporting period, 19 elements of the Joint Force and 10 members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces received awareness-raising training on the human rights due diligence policy.

V. Humanitarian situation

56. The deterioration of the security situation limits not only humanitarian access to affected populations, but also the capacity of affected communities to reach basic social services, in part owing to persistent security incidents on the main road axes and attacks on bridges and communications infrastructure, which has an impact on humanitarian access.

57. Instability and insecurity have continued to forcibly displace people and increase humanitarian needs: internal displacement almost quadrupled in two years, exceeding 400,000 people as at 7 December, of whom 64 per cent were children and 55 per cent were women and girls. This increase can be explained by the worsening security situation in the Ségou, Mopti and Timbuktu Regions. As of October 2021, more than 154,000 Malian refugees remained in neighbouring countries, notably Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Mali hosts and provides protection and assistance to nearly 45,000 refugees, mainly from Burkina Faso (13,000), the Niger (17,000) and Mauritania (15,000).

58. Conflict and violence and the effects of climate change have led food insecurity and malnutrition to rise to alarming levels. There are 1.3 million people currently in immediate need of food assistance. Food insecurity is very high in the regions of Gao (41.5 per cent), Mopti (40.8 per cent), Kidal (29.6 per cent), Timbuktu (26.5 per cent) and Koulikoro (26.1 per cent).

59. Funding does not match the increasing humanitarian demands. Some \$563 million is requested in the 2021 humanitarian response plan to assist 4.7 million people. As at 7 December 2021, only 38 per cent of the requisite funds had been mobilized. Despite the challenging context, limited funding and access, humanitarian actors have managed to assist 2.5 million people so far in 2021 with support in the areas of food security, water and sanitation measures, health, nutrition, education, shelter and protection.

VI. Economic situation

60. Real gross domestic product, which dropped to -1.2 per cent in 2020 during the pandemic, is projected to recover to between 2.5 to 4.6 per cent in 2021. However, the prevailing political, security, health and humanitarian crises impeded economic development. Extreme poverty was estimated to be 41.9 per cent at the national level in 2020 and inequality has been rising since 2016, adding to the plight of the population. In the 2022 national budget, security spending was increased by 21 per cent to \$357.7 million, exceeding the increases for health (11 per cent) and education (4.4 per cent), despite only 30 per cent of children having access to school and 50 per cent of people having access to health care.

61. During the reporting period, MINUSMA approved 31 quick-impact projects totalling \$1.35 million to provide small-scale infrastructure and basic services for vulnerable populations, capacity-building and training, income generation, agriculture, social cohesion, conflict resolution, rule of law and support to local authorities and the security forces. Some 35 per cent of projects (11) targeted the centre, while 65 per cent (20) were for the north.

62. The trust fund in support of peace and security in Mali launched four new projects during the reporting period, for a total of \$2.5 million. These projects, focused mainly on the Gao Region, support water distribution, the development of irrigated crops, the resilience of local populations and transport assistance for the deployment of 2,000 troops in new units as part of the reconstitution of the security forces.

VII. External communications

63. The Mission enhanced its multimedia and social media outreach through live interactive communications with Malian civil society, community and religious leaders as well as women and young people. Similar outreach efforts were made in countries of the region, most of which contribute troops or police to MINUSMA. The renewed outreach was useful in enhancing understanding of the mandate of the Mission.

64. MINUSMA also showcased its achievements through storytelling, highlighting beneficiaries' experiences, especially in the central and northern regions. This involved highlighting tangible impacts of its presence in the country and countering misinformation.

VIII. Capacities of the Mission

Military

65. As at 13 December, 12,824 military personnel were deployed, corresponding to 96.52 per cent of the authorized strength of 13,286 personnel, including 485 staff officers and 12,339 contingent personnel. Women accounted for 4.31 per cent of military personnel.

Police

66. As at 13 December, United Nations police had a capacity of 1,740 personnel, corresponding to 90.63 per cent of the authorized strength of 1,920 personnel, including 289 individual police officers and 1,451 formed police unit personnel. It is important to note that one formed police unit is still incomplete. Women accounted for 20.29 per cent of individual police officers and 12.70 per cent of formed police unit personnel.

Civilian personnel

67. As at 31 October, 93 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff were deployed, including 43 per cent of international staff, 10 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 47 per cent of national staff. Women accounted for 30 per cent of international posts, 43 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 17 per cent of national staff posts.

Safety and security of United Nations personnel

68. In the light of the continued terrorist attacks, including direct and indirect fire, as well as the frequent use of unidentified unmanned aerial vehicles flying over MINUSMA camps, the United Nations premises underwent maintenance, improvements and the application of innovative technical solutions for security. Security and defence systems were enhanced at MINUSMA camps and in adjacent areas in Aguelhok, Ansongo, Ber, Douentza, Ménaka, Gao, Goundam, Kidal, Mopti, Tessalit and Timbuktu.

69. Protection and prevention measures related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continued to be applied throughout the Mission, including self-isolation upon return from abroad. The Mission continued to streamline preventive and mitigating measures, including enhanced surveillance, contact tracing and tracking, quarantine procedures, a safe and healthy return to work and troop rotation modalities. As at 9 November, MINUSMA had administered 27,371 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Conduct and discipline

70. No allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded during the period under review. MINUSMA continued to implement its strategy to prevent misconduct, in particular sexual exploitation and abuse, by delivering induction and refresher training to all categories of personnel. It also continued to conduct outreach activities, including awareness-raising for local populations, and to provide assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Environmental issues

71. MINUSMA continued to ensure environmental monitoring of camps and contractor facilities. It obtained a score of 71 points out of 100, as awarded by the Department of Operational Support, on its environmental scorecard for the 2020–2021 fiscal period, a linear improvement from previous years. The main improvements were in the water and wastewater and wider impact pillars.

IX. Observations

72. I am deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the security situation in Mali, characterized by increasing attacks targeting civilians and peacekeepers in the centre and north of the country and the expansion of the terrorist threat in the

south. I am saddened by the tragic loss of life of many civilians and nine MINUSMA peacekeepers since my previous report. This calls for urgent measures by the transitional Government to address the existing security challenges, better protect civilians and increase the State presence in areas of concern, as well as longer-term reforms addressing the underlying governance issues and deficits and continued international support.

73. Against this backdrop, the need to ensure the timely conclusion of the ongoing political transition cannot be overemphasized. No effort should be spared to create the requisite conditions to that end and lay the foundations for lasting stability. I urge the transitional Government, all political parties and civil society to work together and reach a consensus on necessary political and institutional reforms and the electoral calendar to pave the way for the transition to a democratically elected Government. The United Nations will work with ECOWAS and the African Union to support Mali in navigating its way towards this end.

74. The Special Representative and members of the local follow-up committee on the political transition will continue to actively engage all relevant stakeholders with a view to finding consensual solutions to emerging challenges.

75. I remain concerned about the slow pace of implementation of the Agreement. With regard to commitments expressed on advancing the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, there is a need for concrete progress on this long overdue benchmark. Completing the deployment of the reconstituted units in northern Mali remains an important priority. Delaying tactics should be set aside in the common interest of peace and development. Differences need to be addressed within established mechanisms. I am, therefore, concerned that discussions within the inter-Malian consultative framework have stalled. I urge signatory parties to resume, without further delay, consultations on the implementation of their respective commitments. I welcome the international mediation team's commitment to play a greater role, including making use of its arbitration powers, with a view to helping the parties to break deadlocks and build mutual trust. The active participation of women in the peace and political processes must also be further strengthened. In that regard, greater efforts are needed to operationalize the women's observatory.

76. I am appalled by the deadly attacks by violent extremist and terrorist groups on civilians as well as national, regional and international forces in Mali and the Sahel region. Brutal attacks targeting security forces and civilians over the past months underline once again the urgent need to step up comprehensive political and security responses to the expanding threat of violent extremism. I am particularly concerned about the situation in central Mali, where the presence of violent extremist and other armed groups has a negative impact on the lives of most communities. These groups spread violence, physical threats and fear and expand control over many territories, while establishing alternative and repressive forms of governance. MINUSMA peacekeepers are doing their utmost to implement their mandate in this most volatile area, at great personal risk. I am deeply concerned by the recent and significant increase in attacks against MINUSMA camps and personnel with increasingly sophisticated methods. Nine peacekeepers have lost their lives owing to such attacks since my previous report, making the ultimate sacrifice in their service for peace. I condemn these heinous acts in the strongest terms and recall that they may constitute a crime against humanity. I urge the Malian authorities to hold the perpetrators accountable.

77. I welcome the transitional Government's efforts to develop a consolidated, comprehensive, politically-led strategy for central Mali and support its effective implementation once it has been finalized. In this respect, commitment at the highest level of the national authorities will be critical. MINUSMA will remain actively engaged in this process. In this connection, I reiterate my call to scale up the capacity

of the Mission's uniformed personnel to enhance its ability to support national authorities in protecting civilians, as recommended in my report on the adaptation and authorized strength of MINUSMA (S/2021/657).

78. Human rights violations and abuses continue unabated in several parts of Mali. I strongly condemn such violations and call for swift investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice. This is particularly important when they involve elements of the defence and security forces. Human rights and international humanitarian law must be upheld. Failure to live up to these international legal obligations erodes confidence in State institutions and indirectly reinforces the destabilizing activities of violent extremist, terrorist and criminal groups. I welcome the commitment expressed by the transitional Government to address impunity for human rights violations and reiterate the continued readiness of the United Nations to support such efforts.

79. I am encouraged by the renewed momentum in elaborating and implementing action plans to tackle the issues of sexual violence in conflict and children affected by armed conflict. The signing by the transitional Government of an action plan to address sexual violence in conflict offers an important opportunity to find lasting solutions to the structural causes of sexual and gender-based violence in Mali.

80. I commend the Special Representative, the civilian and uniformed personnel of MINUSMA and members of the United Nations country team. They are working under trying conditions to support the transitional Government and population of Mali in achieving sustainable peace, security and development. I condemn in the strongest terms terror attacks against United Nations personnel and installations and urge national authorities to speed up investigations into and prosecution of such crimes. I remain grateful to regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as civil society and humanitarian organizations, for their valuable contribution to efforts to stabilize the situation in Mali and alleviate the suffering of the Malian people, who bear the brunt of the violence. I call on donors to continue to provide much-needed resources to address humanitarian needs. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to troop- and police-contributing countries, Security Council members and Member States for supporting MINUSMA in implementing its mandate.

Annex

Map

