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Assessment of progress achieved on the key benchmarks established in paragraph 2 of resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2428 \(2018\)](#), the Security Council imposed an arms embargo on the entire territory of South Sudan. In its resolution [2633 \(2022\)](#), the Council renewed the arms embargo measures until 31 May 2023, while reiterating its readiness to review them, including through modification, suspension or progressive lifting in the light of progress achieved on the key benchmarks outlined in paragraph 2 of resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#). The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution [2633 \(2022\)](#), in which the Security Council requested the Secretary-General, in close consultation with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, to conduct, no later than 15 April 2023, an assessment of progress achieved on the key benchmarks.

2. Pursuant to that request, an assessment team from the Secretariat visited South Sudan from 27 February to 3 March 2023. During the visit, the assessment team undertook consultations with representatives of the Government of South Sudan, including the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Joint Defence Board, the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, the Inspector General of the Police, the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control (Ministry of Interior) and the Chair of the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. The team also consulted with members of South Sudanese civil society (including women's and faith-based organizations); the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission; the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism; UNMISS; members of the United Nations country team, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Mine Action Service; and members of the diplomatic corps based in Juba, including representatives of the Troika, which comprises Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America; as well as representatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The assessment team also visited a training centre of the National Police Service in Rajaf, Central Equatoria, on 3 March 2023.

3. In New York, consultations were held with members of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2206 \(2015\)](#) concerning South Sudan,



the Department of Peace Operations (including the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Remote consultations were held with the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Horn of Africa and the African Union Mission in South Sudan in the lead-up to the visit, as well as with the Special Envoy for South Sudan of IGAD following the visit. In addition, the present report benefited from consultations with the Panel of Experts on South Sudan.

4. In paragraph 6 of resolution [2633 \(2022\)](#), the Council also requested the authorities of South Sudan to report, no later than 15 April 2023, to the Committee on the progress achieved on the key benchmarks, and invited the South Sudan authorities to report on progress achieved on the implementation of the reforms mentioned in paragraph 3 of resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#) (dealing, inter alia, with public finance management reforms and transitional justice mechanisms).

II. Context

5. Since the previous assessment dated 3 May 2022 ([S/2022/370](#)), the permanent ceasefire has largely continued to hold but was severely strained by new subnational and intercommunal violence, particularly in Warrap State between end of June and September 2022, and in Upper Nile and Jonglei States since August 2022, where clashes between the two Kit-Gwang factions (Agwelek forces loyal to General Johnson Olony and forces loyal to General Simon Gatwech Dual) continued. In December 2022, UNMISS, the African Union Mission in South Sudan, IGAD, the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and other members of the international community expressed concern about the escalating violence in Upper Nile State and the northern parts of Jonglei State. In early 2023, violence related to cattle herding erupted in Central Equatoria, as well as between border communities in Eastern Equatoria. Over the past six months, intercommunal violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, has resulted in the displacement of over 40,000 people in northern Jonglei and Upper Nile States. In this continued fragile context, UNMISS continued documenting serious violations and abuses of international human rights and international humanitarian law across South Sudan, including killings (1,600), injuries (988), abductions (501) and conflict-related sexual violence (380) in 2022. Notwithstanding the steps taken to hold perpetrators accountable, impunity is widespread and remains a serious problem.

6. Some further progress has been made since the previous assessment on the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. In December 2022, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, assented to and signed into law key legislation, including the Constitution-making Process Bill (2022); the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 (Amendment) Bill (2022); the National Police Service Act, 2009 (Amendment) Bill (2022); the National Wildlife Service Act, 2011 (Amendment) Bill (2022); the National Prisons Service Act, 2011 (Amendment) Bill (2022); and the National Civil Defence Service Bill (2022). Moreover, the Judicial Reform Committee was established on 28 July 2022 and has continued to work since. Its mandate was extended for 12 months in January 2023. Progress has also been made in the establishment of two of three accountability mechanisms called for by chapter V of the Revitalized Agreement, namely the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing and the Compensation and Reparation Authority.

7. On 4 August 2022, the parties to the Revitalized Agreement signed an agreement on the road map to a peaceful and democratic end to the transitional period of the Revitalized Agreement. The road map extends the transitional period by 24 months

until 22 February 2025. It was endorsed on 1 September 2022 by the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. On 21 November 2022, the reconstituted Transitional National Legislative Assembly adopted an amendment to the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, thereby incorporating the road map into the Transitional Constitution. The elections are now scheduled to take place in December 2024. On 24 January 2023, UNMISS received a formal request from the Government of South Sudan for comprehensive United Nations electoral assistance.

8. During the Ecumenical Peace Pilgrimage to South Sudan led by Pope Francis in February 2023, President Kiir announced the resumption of the peace talks mediated by the Community of Sant'Egidio between the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and the non-signatories to the Revitalized Agreement. The peace talks resumed in Rome on 21 March 2023 but were immediately adjourned until 8 May because the parties were unable to agree on an agenda for the discussions.

9. On 3 March 2023, President Kiir relieved the Minister for Defence and Veterans Affairs, Angelina Teny, and the Minister for Interior, Mahmud Solomon Agok, of their functions. The President further switched the Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, held by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Government (SPLM/A-IG), and the Ministry of Interior from SPLM/A-IG to SPLM/A-IO. On 4 March, First Vice-President and SPLM/A-IO Chair Riek Machar issued a statement condemning the "unilateral removal" of Angelina Teny and the switching of ministries as a violation of the Revitalized Agreement, and called for her reinstatement. On 10 March, President Kiir and First Vice-President Riek Machar met, although no concrete outcome was reached.

10. On 12 and 13 March 2023, respectively, the African Union Mission in South Sudan, IGAD and UNMISS encouraged "the parties to maintain collegial collaboration, continuous consultations and consensus-building", while a high-level delegation from Ethiopia and the Sudan, led by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, arrived in Juba to separately engage the South Sudanese leaders on the crisis. On 26 March, President Kiir appointed Chol Thon Balok, of SPLM/A-IG, as Minister for Defence and Veterans Affairs. In response, on 30 March, First Vice-President Riek Machar sent a letter to General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Chair of the Sudan Transitional Sovereignty Council and current Chair of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government, requesting IGAD to "resolve these grave violations that [were] putting the Revitalized Agreement in jeopardy".

III. Arms embargo

11. There are three categories of exemptions to the arms embargo contained in Security Council resolution 2428 (2018): exemptions subject to the approval of the Committee; exemptions requiring an advance notification to the Committee; and standing exemptions for which no prior approval from or notification to the Committee is required. There are no exemptions under the arms embargo for non-State armed groups in South Sudan, which are prohibited from receiving weapons from any source. Since the imposition of the arms embargo, a total of 11 exemption requests have been submitted to the Committee by Member States, 10 of which have been approved, and a total of 24 notifications have been submitted to the Committee. All 10 exemption requests were applications for the supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel, as well as technical training and assistance, solely in support of the implementation of the terms of the Revitalized Agreement.

12. With the adoption of resolution [2633 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council eased the arms embargo by deciding that the arms embargo measures should not apply to the supply, sale or transfer of non-lethal military equipment, solely in support of the implementation of the terms of the Revitalized Agreement, as notified in advance to the Committee. In December 2022, South Sudan, which is authorized in the Committee guidelines to submit exemption requests and notifications, submitted its first notification to the Committee regarding the provision of military uniforms from Türkiye.

13. The Revitalized Transitional Government and the African Union have continued to call for the lifting of the arms embargo. On 22 September 2022, Vice-President Hussein Abdelbagi Akol Agany called upon “the international community, and the United Nations in particular, to revise the individual and targeted sanctions and the arms embargo imposed on [South Sudan], in order to enable the successful completion of the remaining provisions of the peace agreement outlined in the New Roadmap”. On 30 November, President Kiir called for the lifting of the arms embargo. Those calls were repeated by the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Deng Dau Deng, and the Minister for Information, Michael Makuei Lueth, on 1 April 2023. Meanwhile, on 2 March 2023, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mayiik Ayii Deng, stated that the targeted sanctions and arms embargo had hindered his Government’s efforts to impose the rule of law, protect its citizens from human rights abuses and restore peace, security and stability. In addition, in a communiqué issued on 28 February 2023, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union reiterated its appeal to the international community to lift the arms embargo and other sanctions imposed on South Sudan in order to facilitate the successful implementation of the remaining aspects of the Revitalized Agreement, including the deployment of the necessary unified forces.¹

IV. Progress achieved on the key benchmarks established in paragraph 2 of resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#)

Progress achieved on benchmark (a): completion, by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, of stages 1, 2 and 3 of the Strategic Defence and Security Review process contained in the Revitalized Agreement

14. The Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity has taken further steps with regard to the development and formulation of the various outputs required under the strategic defence and security review. Since the previous assessment of 3 May 2022 ([S/2022/370](#)), the Revitalized Strategic Defence and Security Review Board has convened four additional workshops supported by the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and UNMISS, including to finalize and review the strategic security assessment, the security policy framework and the revised defence policy, all three of which are documents required for stage 1 of the Strategic Defence and Security Review process. The drafting of all three documents is now completed.

15. Representatives of the Revitalized Transitional Government underscored that the draft revised defence policy included the analysis of the operational capabilities that the national army and other security forces would require to meet the military and non-military security challenges identified in the strategic security assessment, as well as the range of strategic models specifying the level of human resources, equipment and training needed to develop the military so that it would be able to respond to defence and security priorities, and the associated financial implications

¹ African Union, communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.1141 (2023).

(both stage 2 outputs, in accordance with the Revitalized Agreement). In accordance with the Revitalized Agreement, the models should be presented to the principals for evaluation and adoption, and the principals would decide which model, or combination of models, best met the needs of the nation.

16. The findings of the principals' review should next be included in a white paper on defence and security and in a security sector transformation road map (both stage 3 outputs). According to representatives of the Revitalized Transitional Government consulted by the assessment team, drafts of the white paper and road map have been completed and will be discussed during a future workshop. Nevertheless, other interlocutors consulted by the assessment team expressed the view that the draft white paper was still at a preliminary stage and would require further review by subject matter experts. In accordance with the Revitalized Agreement, the white paper and road map should be approved by the Council of Ministers and then by the Transitional National Legislative Assembly.

Progress achieved on benchmark (b): formation, by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, of a unified command structure for the necessary unified forces, the training, graduation and redeployment of the necessary unified forces, and allocation by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity of adequate resources for the planning and implementation of the redeployment of the necessary unified forces

17. Steady progress was made in the force unification process. Between 30 August 2022 and 14 January 2023, the Revitalized Transitional Government graduated approximately 53,000 necessary unified forces personnel. Graduations took place in August 2022 (26,184 personnel in Juba, Maridi and Torit, Greater Equatoria region); September 2022 (1,007 personnel in Bor, Jonglei State); and November 2022 (13,491 personnel in Wau, Bahr el-Ghazal, 1,366 personnel in Moum, Unity State, and 9,958 personnel in Malakal, Upper Nile State). The graduation of 3,601 personnel on 14 January 2023, in Bentiu, Unity State, marked the completion of phase I of the training and graduation of the necessary unified forces. According to the Joint Defence Board, the necessary unified forces graduated during phase I included members of the army, the police, the national security service, the wildlife service, the prison service and the civil defence service.

18. The assessment team was only provided with partial data regarding the number of women among the 53,000 graduated personnel. According to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, there were 49 women among the personnel graduated in Moum, Unity State, and 120 women among the personnel graduated in Maridi, Western Equatoria State, while 35 per cent of the 13,491 graduates in Wau, Bar el-Ghazal, were women. Similarly, the assessment team was not provided with details on the number of individuals who were screened and recommended for participation in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in accordance with chapter II of the Revitalized Agreement.

19. All graduated members have yet to be deployed. According to the Joint Defence Board, one company was deployed to Nadapal, Kapoeta East County, Eastern Equatoria State; one battalion to the Abyei Administrative Area; and two companies to Yei County, Central Equatoria State. These deployments, however, were not verified by either the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission or the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. On 3 April 2023, 300 graduated personnel were deployed to Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, as part of the East African Community regional force. These were part of the 750 personnel promised by South Sudan for peacekeeping in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

20. The issue of the arms embargo was again raised by Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity as a barrier to the deployment of the necessary unified forces, as it argued that graduated personnel would need to be armed. Other interlocutors, however, expressed the view that a combination of factors had hindered the deployment of unified forces, including the lack of adequate resources allocated by the Government for the planning and implementation of the redeployment. In the report on its seventh field mission to South Sudan, undertaken from 22 to 25 February 2023, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union noted that the deployment of the necessary unified forces had been “stalled due to lack of necessary resources, ranging from financial, material, including weapons, as well as logistics”. In addition, several interlocutors considered that additional weapons were not required.

21. Some interlocutors also attributed the delay in the deployment of phase I graduated personnel to the delay in the harmonization of mid- and lower-level command ranks. While the higher-level unified command structure was agreed in April 2022 and senior officers were appointed, the mid- and lower-level commanders have yet to be agreed upon. On 10 February 2023, the Revitalized Transitional Government directed that the formation of the middle echelon of the security forces be fast-tracked. The heads of the security mechanisms were also directed to quickly submit deployment plans for phase I of the necessary unified forces for approval by the Presidency, based on the agreed appointment sharing ratio of 60 per cent for SPLM/A-IG, 30 per cent for SPLM/A-IO and 10 per cent for the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA). On 25 March, it was announced that 139 positions of Major General and Brigadier General would be given to the opposition (106 to the SPLM/A-IO and 33 to SSOA), while 211 positions were assigned to SPLM/A-IG. At the time of submission of the present report, neither the deployment plans nor the names of those appointed to the positions have been submitted.

22. Notwithstanding the deployment delay, the Revitalized Transitional Government is already working on phase II of the training, graduation and redeployment of the necessary unified forces. The Joint Defence Board informed the assessment team that the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission and the Joint Transitional Security Committee were currently reassessing the cantonment sites and training centres. Though it is unclear how many additional personnel will be trained and graduated during phase II, the reassembling and transportation of forces from the cantonment sites to the training centres would commence as soon as the necessary funds were allocated by the Government through the National Transitional Committee. However, the delayed deployment of the phase I graduated personnel will affect the beginning of phase II, as most training sites have yet to be vacated by graduated personnel. Several interlocutors also stressed that there had been no significant improvement in the conditions of the cantonment sites and training centres. The situation remains dire, with little to no food or medicine in the majority of locations. Furthermore, flooding had forced some cantonment sites and training centres to be relocated to other areas. During its visit to the police training centre in Rajaf on 3 March 2023, the assessment team observed that the centre had been affected by logistical constraints, including lack of water, electricity and other supplies.

Progress achieved on benchmark (c): progress by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity on the establishment and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and in particular the development and implementation of a plan for the collection and disposal of long- and medium-range heavy weapons and the development of a time-bound plan for the complete and verifiable demilitarization of all civilian areas

23. No progress has been achieved regarding the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of individuals found ineligible to serve in the necessary unified forces. To date, the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission has been unable to implement any programme of work or programmatic activities mainly due to its lack of funding. The Revitalized Transitional Government has yet to make a decision on the strategy, implementation plan and estimated budget that was submitted in 2020 through the National Transitional Committee. Both the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, on 28 February and 30 March 2023, respectively, called upon the Revitalized Transitional Government to quickly mobilize the necessary funding and political support for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, as it is an essential component of the unification of forces.

24. According to several interlocutors consulted by the assessment team, the screening process to determine the eligibility of personnel for graduation and redeployment or demobilization was undertaken in the training centres, rather than in cantonment sites and barracks. As a consequence, the data collected by the Joint Transitional Security Committee were inconsistent and the total number of persons eligible for demobilization and reintegration remains unknown. Moreover, personnel eligible for demobilization and reintegration continue to occupy the training centres. To avoid a similar situation during phase II, representatives of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity informed the assessment team that screening for the eligibility of personnel would be carried out in the cantonment sites and barracks.

25. As noted in the previous assessment report ([S/2022/370](#)), in an effort to address risks stemming from the absence of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, several projects are being supported by the international community in coordination with the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the South Sudan Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control. These include a UNDP project that envisages the construction of a reintegration centre for former combatants in Central Equatoria to prepare them for economic reintegration and assist them in their recovery from trauma.

26. In Lakes State, a community violence reduction initiative is being implemented by UNDP to assist the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control in civilian voluntary disarmament activities. The project is intended to reach 250 households that would voluntarily hand over their weapons in exchange for a support package. The project targets communities and not necessarily former combatants specifically.

27. Following a decision by the Joint Technical Working Group on Community Violence Reduction to focus on former combatants emanating from Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, and parts of Tonj in Warrap State, an assessment was undertaken in June 2022 by the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, with technical support from UNMISS, with the objective of gathering the necessary information for the design of a community violence reduction project. A one-year pilot project was eventually launched on 30 January 2023 in Wau under the leadership of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, with support

from UNDP and UNMISS. It is aimed at bringing together 250 former combatants and 250 community members to foster peaceful coexistence through socioeconomic reintegration, including vocational training and microgrant schemes.

28. Finally, no progress has been made in the development of the plan for the collection and disposal of long- and medium-range heavy weapons nor in the development of a time-bound plan for the complete and verifiable demilitarization of all civilian areas. On the latter, the assessment team was informed by the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism that 12 of the 42 centres recorded as occupied by armed forces across the country in January 2019 were still occupied as of the time of writing of the present report.

Progress achieved on benchmark (d): progress by the South Sudanese defence and security forces on properly managing their existing arms and ammunition stockpiles, including by establishing the necessary planning documents, protocols and training for the recording, storage, distribution and management of the weapons and ammunition

29. Since the previous assessment report, no progress has been achieved in the proper management of existing arms and ammunition stockpiles. The Revitalized Agreement stipulates that, during the pre-transitional period, lists of numbers of forces must be presented to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission. The lists must include the size of forces, weaponry, equipment and ammunition (as of 14 days after the signing of the Revitalized Agreement). The Revitalized Agreement further stipulates that the collection of long- and medium-range heavy weapons must be carried out within 45 days after the signing of the Agreement.

30. A lack of trust prevails among the parties, which has resulted in significantly limited transparency concerning the amount, type and location of weapons and ammunition in the hands of various forces, including uniformed services. Until now, the Joint Military Ceasefire Commission has not registered and stored weapons as envisaged by the Revitalized Agreement. None of the signatory parties has declared their weapons, including long- and medium-range heavy weapons, to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. Most of the troops arrived in training centres without weapons and there is no clarity on what happened to the weapons that were in their possession prior to their entry into the training sites. The assessment team was informed that, with a view to addressing this challenge, troops entering training sites in phase II of the training of the necessary unified forces would be expected to bring their weapons. The assessment team could not confirm whether plans were being developed for the marking and registering of these weapons.

31. Another challenge continues to be the vast number of weapons in the hands of civilians. The uncontrolled access by civilians to small arms and ammunition continues to be of grave concern, as the proliferation of small arms has contributed to the increase in intercommunal violence in various parts of the country. Disarmament campaigns in some communities, such as the one in Tonj North County, Warrap State, between May and July 2022, proved to be controversial and of limited impact, as the communities violently resisted disarmament efforts, resulting in casualties among civilians and uniformed personnel.

32. The assessment team sought but was not provided with any information on new armouries or on the refurbishment of existing armouries. In a letter dated 28 February 2023 addressed to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in South Sudan, the Office of the Inspector General of the South Sudan National Police Service

requested that UNMISS provide the National Police Service with the necessary technical assistance and funding to construct a state-of-the-art facility that would house modern weapons, ammunition and other equipment. The facility would include training facilities for police officers and would be managed by trained professionals to ensure the safety and security of the equipment.

33. From 8 to 17 March 2023, two high-ranking officials from the South Sudan National Police Service and one from the South Sudan People's Defence Forces participated in a workshop on physical security and stockpile management, organized by the Bonn International Centre for Conversion and the Nairobi-based Regional Centre on Small Arms in Nairobi. A similar workshop held from 5 to 9 December 2022 focused on building capacity for the effective management of ammunition throughout national ammunition holdings. One high-ranking official each from the Wildlife Service, the National Police Service, the People's Defence Forces and the immigration department participated in the event.

34. As noted in the previous assessment report, after South Sudan signed the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa in November 2011, the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control received three electronic weapons-marking machines (two in 2011 and one in 2014). However, no marking has taken place since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement. Similarly, the weapons destruction machine unit (weapons crusher) donated to South Sudan on the recommendation of the Regional Centre on Small Arms has not been used since its official handover on 28 February 2022.

35. The Panel of Experts on South Sudan recommended in November 2020 and April 2021 that the Security Council request an independent evaluation of the Revitalized Transitional Government's management of its arms stockpiles. In relation to this matter, in 2022 preliminary discussions commenced between the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

Progress achieved on benchmark (e): implementation of the Joint Action Plan for the Armed Forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, with an emphasis on the training, sensitization, accountability and oversight of the defence and security forces

36. Amid unabated use of sexual violence as a weapon of war perpetrated by parties to the conflict, there has been some progress in the implementation of the Joint Action Plan for the Armed Forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, which consists of six key pillars: (1) mainstreaming of sexual violence considerations in security arrangements under the Revitalized Agreement; (2) external communication and outreach; (3) training, awareness-raising and sensitization; (4) accountability and oversight; (5) protection of victims, witnesses and judicial actors; and (6) monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Significant challenges remain in the areas of accountability and the availability of sufficient financial resources for the implementation of the Joint Action Plan.

37. In the area of training, awareness-raising and sensitization (pillar 3), the Joint Implementation Committee, composed of 11 senior officials of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, SPLM/A-IO and SSOA and mandated by the Joint Defence Board to oversee the implementation of the Joint Action Plan, conducted visits to five training centres in 2022 to conduct sensitization sessions for graduating forces on the prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict. Members of the Joint Implementation Committee conducted further visits to the Gorom and Rajaf training

centres on 23 and 24 August 2022, respectively, to remind graduates that there was zero tolerance of conflict-related sexual violence crimes.

38. From 13 to 15 March 2023, UNMISS conducted a training workshop in Juba for the South Sudan National Police Service members of the Joint Implementation Committee, and their focal points in the states, on the South Sudan National Police Service Action Plan on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The objectives of the workshop included strengthening the capacity of police focal points on the national and international legal framework on humanitarian law, and on human rights norms and principles, especially those prohibiting sexual violence.

39. Moreover, from 3 to 5 April 2023, the Joint Implementation Committee, with technical support from UNMISS, conducted a baseline training workshop for officers from the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, SPLM/A-IO and SSOA from Central Equatoria. The main objectives of the workshop comprised: (a) building and strengthening the capacity of the trainers and instructors on the prohibition of and response to conflict-related sexual violence; (b) emphasizing the accountability of perpetrators and the protection and rehabilitation of survivors; and (c) developing training plans and identifying trainers who will replicate the training in their respective units, thereby contributing to the "zero tolerance against impunity" standard on crimes of sexual violence (conflict-related sexual violence and sexual and gender-based violence) in South Sudan.

40. With regard to other prevention efforts contained in pillar 3, including the development and airing of audio and video messages by senior officials, President Kiir, when addressing the first batch of graduated necessary unified forces in Juba in August 2022, indicated that his wish was to disarm communities in order to end violence, eradicate cattle rustling, improve security and end sexual violence. In addition, in December 2022, when addressing the troops joining the East African Community regional force for peacekeeping in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Kiir instructed them to display high levels of professionalism and not to engage in crimes, including sexual violence.

41. With regard to accountability and oversight (pillar 4), the Military Justice Directorate of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces established a specialized conflict-related sexual violence team in June 2022. The team consists of six judge advocates, including three women. The members of the team will be provided with targeted training to rapidly deploy to hotspots to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence crimes across South Sudan. In addition, justice actors, including judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, investigators and police and prison officials, have participated in training programmes, facilitated and led by UNMISS, to build capacity to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases involving sexual violence.

42. With regard to furthering a degree of accountability, eight individuals were convicted in five cases involving sexual and gender-based violence in a general court martial conducted by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces in Yei, Central Equatoria State (May–June 2022). However, none of the senior officers within the South Sudan People's Defence Forces were convicted. In the area of civilian criminal justice, 17 individuals were convicted in 18 cases involving sexual and gender-based violence by the joint special mobile court for Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Warrap States (January–March 2022, June 2022 and January–February 2023) and a circuit court in Western Bahr el-Ghazal State (May–July and September 2022 and March 2023).

43. Pillar 4 of the Joint Action Plan also addressed institutional frameworks relating to the recruitment of military personnel, including measures to enhance the recruitment and retention of women, which is critical to ensuring gender equality and

the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. On 13 May 2022, women from all security sector institutions formed the national security sector Women's Network, a network responsible for advocating for the rights and needs of women in uniform and for coordinating the work of all other institutional women's networks. The Network is led by a six-member executive board, each member representing one security sector institution (army, police, national security, wildlife service, prison service and civil defence). The Director of the Network was recently admitted to the Strategic Defense and Security Review Board responsible for preparing for security sector reform in South Sudan, a sign that the voices of women in uniform are being heard and gender issues in the security sector services are being considered.

44. In July 2022, UNMISS assisted the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNDP in establishing three more security sector women's networks (in the South Sudan People's Defence Force, the South Sudan National Police Service and the South Sudan National Prison Service) in accordance with the Peacebuilding Fund project on mainstreaming gender in the security sector reform of South Sudan. In September and October 2022, the Mission facilitated the establishment of two additional security sector women's networks – wildlife and civil defence. Each network is governed by a nine-member executive committee, which meets at least once a month.

45. Despite the developments outlined above, much remains to be done. Since the previous assessment report, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity has still not provided funding for the holding of Joint Implementation Committee meetings. The four meetings convened in June, September and December 2022, and in February 2023, were supported by UNMISS. Similarly, the Mission supported the meeting of the Joint Implementation Committee with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict during her visit to South Sudan in October 2022. In February 2023, a monitoring and evaluation meeting was organized with support from the UNMISS Women's Protection Adviser Unit to equip members of the Joint Implementation Committee with basic and key concepts of monitoring and evaluation, as well as to expedite pending activities and define plans for 2023.

V. Conclusion

46. The Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity has made some further progress against benchmarks (a), (b) and (e) set out in resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#), with the continued support of the United Nations, the African Union, IGAD, the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and other regional and international partners. The graduation of the first group of necessary unified forces personnel is a welcome development, as the deployment of the unified forces across the country is an important condition for the successful organization of credible, transparent and democratic elections in December 2024. Therefore, I reiterate my call to the Revitalized Transitional Government to provide the unified forces with the required resources, fast-track the harmonization of ranks, finalize the redeployment of phase I graduated personnel and initiate phase II without delay.

47. However, there has been no progress against benchmarks (c) and (d). I am particularly concerned by the continued lack of funding and political support for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. Reintegrating former combatants into civilian life and preventing them from rejoining armed groups is essential to ensure lasting peace in South Sudan. To avoid a future security crisis, I call upon the Revitalized Transitional Government to demonstrate its ownership of and commitment to the process by allocating the necessary resources to the

implementing mechanisms and institutions. I appeal to both regional and international partners to assist the Revitalized Transitional Government in this effort. I am also concerned about the lack of progress with regard to the collection and disposal of long- and medium-range heavy weapons, as well as the vast numbers of weapons that remain in civilian hands, as the country prepares for elections.

48. The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement remains the only avenue towards lasting peace in South Sudan. Progress made against the five benchmarks defined by the Security Council in resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#) will contribute to the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. The work of the national security sector Women's Network and the enhancement of women military personnel will also be important in this regard. I express my gratitude to the authorities of South Sudan for the support provided to the Secretariat in conducting the assessment and encourage them to report to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2206 \(2015\)](#) concerning South Sudan, in accordance with paragraph 6 of resolution [2633 \(2022\)](#).

49. I remain convinced that the road map agreed in August 2022 presents an opportunity for the parties to recommit to the full and meaningful implementation of the Revitalized Agreement using the new agreed timelines. While some progress has been made, more needs to be done to ensure a successful transition within the extended transition period. I call upon the parties to step up their efforts and commitment to expeditiously implement the outstanding tasks. The continued assistance of the United Nations, the African Union, IGAD, the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and other partners will remain critical, particularly over the course of 2023.
