



Security Council

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Letter dated 12 October 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia, I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator pursuant to paragraph 34 of Security Council resolution 2498 (2019) on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia and any impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia.

I would appreciate it if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Philippe Kridelka

Chair

Security Council Committee pursuant to
resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia



Letter dated 15 September 2020 from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) and concerning Somalia

In accordance with paragraph 34 of Security Council resolution 2498 (2019), I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia and any impediments to the delivery thereof.

The humanitarian community working in Somalia wishes to advise that, as in the previous 14 reports, it maintains the definition of “implementing partner” pursuant to paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 1916 (2010), which is as follows:

“Implementing partner” – a non-governmental organization (NGO) or a community-based organization that has undergone due diligence by a United Nations agency or another NGO to establish its bona fides and that reports when requested to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia on mitigation measures. Implementing partners have one or both of the following characteristics:

- (a) The organization is part of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia (or the Somalia Humanitarian Fund) process;
- (b) The organization is represented in a cluster’s 3W matrix (*Who* does *What* and *Where*).

I remain available should you have any questions about the content of the report or need further clarification on the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

(Signed) Mark **Lowcock**
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Report of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#), the resolution succeeding resolutions [1916 \(2010\)](#), [1972 \(2011\)](#), [2060 \(2012\)](#), [2111 \(2013\)](#), [2182 \(2014\)](#), [2244 \(2015\)](#), [2317 \(2016\)](#), [2385 \(2017\)](#) and [2444 \(2018\)](#), in which the Council established the reporting requirement. It is the fifteenth submission pursuant to the above-mentioned resolutions. The Council, in paragraph 34 of its resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#), requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator to report to the Council by 15 October 2020 on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia and on any impediments thereto.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020. It is focused primarily on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected persons in areas under the control or influence of Al-Shabaab, which was included on the sanctions list pursuant to paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution [1844 \(2008\)](#), by the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [751 \(1992\)](#) and [1907 \(2009\)](#) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, on 12 April 2010. As in the previous 14 reports ([S/2010/372](#), [S/2010/580](#), [S/2011/125](#), [S/2011/694](#), [S/2012/546](#), [S/2012/856](#), [S/2013/415](#), [S/2014/177](#), [S/2014/655](#), [S/2015/731](#), [S/2016/827](#), [S/2017/860](#), [S/2018/896](#) and [S/2019/799](#)), in the present report, constraints to humanitarian access and operational implications are outlined. In addition, mitigation measures established to address the risks of the politicization, misuse and misappropriation of humanitarian assistance are summarized. The report is based on information synthesized in consultation with relevant humanitarian organizations active in Somalia and information from the Risk Management Unit in the Integrated Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia.

Humanitarian situation

3. The crisis in Somalia is one of the most complex, fragile and protracted in the world. Recurrent climate shocks, armed conflict and insecurity, combined with political and socioeconomic factors, continue to drive humanitarian needs in the country. During the reporting period, the country's precarious situation was further exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, significant flooding and the worst desert locust upsurge in decades. Combined with ongoing and protracted displacement, those developments left millions of persons in Somalia in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

4. The first case of COVID-19 in Somalia was confirmed on 16 March, and there were 3,310 cases and 97 deaths as at 31 August. While the prevalence of the disease is lower than in neighbouring countries, Somalia has extremely limited testing facilities, and where testing is available, stigma often prevents people from obtaining access to it. The pandemic has a non-linear pattern in Somalia, with different peaks at different times. The peaks correspond to the number of samples tested and do not necessarily represent a true increase in the number of cases. While cases of COVID-19 have been on a downward trend for several weeks, given testing limitations, it is too early to predict how the pandemic will evolve in the coming months. Somalis who lack adequate social protection are more susceptible to contracting the disease and suffering its worst consequences. That susceptibility is particularly true for internally displaced persons and the urban poor, given their squalid, congested living conditions and lack of access to basic health and sanitary services.

5. The COVID-19 pandemic comes as Somalia is experiencing unprecedented rainfall and flooding in many parts of the country. Flooding in 2020 has affected nearly 1.6 million persons, including 35 killed and 716,000 displaced. In April and May alone, flooding inundated more than 54,000 hectares of farmland, equivalent to more than 20 per cent of the average planted area in 1995 to 2019. From October to December 2019, *deyr* rains led to flooding, affecting more than 547,000 persons, 370,000 of them displaced. Seventeen persons were killed in October 2019 owing to the flooding. Farmland, infrastructure and roads were destroyed, and livelihoods were disrupted in some of the worst-hit areas, including Beledweyne in Hirshabelle State, Baardheere in Gedo region and Bardaale, South-West State. Flooding has also contributed to increased cases of acute watery diarrhoea.

6. The desert locust upsurge that began in late 2019 continued into 2020. Swarms of desert locusts were reported in “Somaliland”, Puntland and Galmudug, posing a major threat to crops and pasture. Compounding the impact of floods, the desert locust upsurge further deepened overall food insecurity within the country. Crop and pasture production is estimated to be 10 to 15 per cent lower than the long-term average owing to the impact of desert locusts in riverine areas and northern Bay, Bakool, agropastoral livelihood zones, where crisis-level food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 3) is expected to persist. Immature swarms have in recent weeks been seen feeding on pasture and crops in parts of Puntland. The presence of desert locusts in Puntland is now the main challenge affecting many communities because an estimated 60 to 70 per cent of livelihoods rely on nomadic pastoralism. Overall, around 685,000 persons have been affected by desert locusts.

7. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network outlook report of August 2020, humanitarian food assistance needs were high across Somalia, where the “stressed” (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 2) and “crisis” levels of food insecurity remained widespread. An estimated 3.5 million persons in rural livelihood zones, urban areas and settlements for internally displaced persons needed food assistance. Huge food and nutrition gaps remained, largely among poor agropastoral, marginalized and displaced communities, where many vulnerable persons had been pushed into the most severe phases of food and nutrition insecurity.

8. The Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) conducted a national micronutrient survey in 2019, the first since 2009. Notwithstanding improvements made over the past decade, nearly 1 in 5 children show signs of chronic malnutrition, and 1 in 10 are acutely malnourished. The prevalence of median global acute malnutrition has remained serious (10 to 14.9 per cent) in the past three consecutive seasons (13.1 per cent in the 2019–2020 *deyr* season, 13.8 per cent in the 2019 *gu* season and 12.6 per cent in the 2018–2019 *deyr* season). High levels of acute malnutrition continue to persist, driven by several factors, including high morbidity, immunization and vitamin A supplementation below the Sphere standards, poor childcare practices, inadequate access to clean and safe drinking water and acute food insecurity. South-West State is of greatest concern, ranking very low in all assessed nutritional indicators, including being among the States with the highest rates of anaemia and iron and vitamin A deficiency. In addition, recurrent droughts in South-West State have damaged the agricultural sector, while high levels of conflict have prompted more than 30,000 persons to move from rural areas to peri-urban and urban centres.

9. A total of 2.6 million internally displaced persons in Somalia continue to face serious risks of marginalization, forced eviction and exclusion. Between September 2019 and August 2020, nearly 1.4 million persons were displaced, more than three times the 459,000 persons displaced in the previous reporting period. The continuing trend of forced evictions, fed by increasing population density and property prices, as well as a lack of secure tenure, has resulted in the fact that, even where access to

services is established, it is often fragile and inconsistent. In addition to depriving internally displaced persons of essential services, forced evictions from established settlements negate significant investments made by humanitarian partners to facilitate access to basic services, including water points and other sources of water; sanitation and hygiene facilities; maternal and children's health centres; and education facilities. Evictions are often carried out with little or no notice and at times with the complicity of uniformed armed security personnel enlisted by landowners. During the reporting period, an estimated 195,992 persons were evicted. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, more than 128,000 of those evicted were in Banaadir region, where Mogadishu is located. Supported by the National Commission for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, humanitarian partners issued a call for a moratorium on evictions in the context of COVID-19. More than 67,000 evictions were prevented. However, measures to prevent or mitigate the risk of forced eviction remain considerably low, compared with needs.

10. Reports of cases of acute watery diarrhoea and cholera, which continue to be endemic throughout Somalia, persist. From January to 6 September 2020, a total of 5,691 cholera cases, including 30 deaths, were reported in 29 flood-affected districts. In all of the reported cases of cholera, the individual did not receive the oral cholera vaccination.

11. Ongoing armed conflict and insecurity continue to drive displacement, compounding the humanitarian situation and elevating protection concerns. More than 16 per cent of those displaced cited conflict and insecurity as the main reasons for their displacement. In March, large-scale clashes occurred between the Somali National Army and Jubbaland forces in Beled Xaawo town, Gedo region, that reportedly resulted in the deaths of five civilians and the displacement of nearly 50,000 persons. To counter Al-Shabaab and attempt to bring added security to Mogadishu, where 276 terrorist incidents were recorded in 2019, most of which were publicly claimed by Al-Shabaab, the Somali National Army, with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and other international security partners, launched Operation Badbaado in Shabelle Hoose. The initial phase of the operation, from April to August 2019, was aimed at recovering the settlements of Sabiid, Anole, Bariire and Awdheegle and resulted in the displacement of some 46,000 persons. When the operation resumed in March 2020, it was aimed at the town of Jannaale and reportedly resulted in the temporary displacement of an additional 23,000 persons.

12. The combination of floods, COVID-19 and the desert locust infestation, along with protracted conflict, is increasing protection challenges because families lose their socioeconomic safety net and the capacity to cope with such shocks. Displaced women and children face greater protection challenges, including family separation, exposure to gender-based violence, disruptions to education and the forced recruitment of children.

13. Child recruitment remains a major concern and a cause for displacement. During the reporting period, 1,269 children, including 61 girls, were reportedly used or recruited by armed groups, according to the country task force on monitoring and reporting mechanism, with Al-Shabaab accounting for 987 (77 per cent) of the cases and with clan militias and security forces accounting for the remainder. Humanitarian partners continue to support children who were subjected to forced recruitment by armed groups. UNICEF and its partners provided reintegration services to 750 children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, as well as to other vulnerable children, including 623 boys and 127 girls.

Humanitarian response

14. Humanitarian partners continued to deliver critical support to vulnerable populations throughout the country. During the reporting period, a monthly average of 1.6 million beneficiaries were provided with food assistance and safety net support, with up to 2.3 million persons out of the 3 million targeted assisted in May 2020. In the same period, close to 648,000 persons were provided with access to sustainable, safe water, health services were provided to close to 1.7 million persons, 246,000 persons benefited from shelter interventions and 413,000 persons received non-food items. Nutrition partners treated 218,364 new cases of severe malnutrition and provided treatment for moderately acute malnutrition to 386,820 children under 5 years of age and 118,525 pregnant and lactating women.

15. The humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues to deepen and spread, while the aid operation remains woefully underfunded. As at 11 September, the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia, through which \$1.01 billion had been sought to deliver aid and protection to 3 million people out of 5.2 million persons in need, was 56 per cent funded (\$568 million), the lowest level of funding received by that time of year since 2016. Several clusters, including camp coordination and camp management and protection, water, sanitation and hygiene and health, have received less than 35 per cent of the funding required, even after the humanitarian country team undertook an extensive reprioritization exercise in May. Activities that could no longer be implemented or were significantly underfunded were removed from the plan, along with the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 2 (“stressed”) caseload. The change resulted in an approximately 19 per cent reduction in the \$1.245 billion required in April, which reflected the original plan with added COVID-19 humanitarian requirements.

16. The level of funding has affected partners’ ability to respond. Most clusters continue to report that partners are unable to provide enough assistance and services in areas affected by displacement, where beneficiaries are among the most vulnerable and needs are high. For example, the lack of funding has resulted in a scenario in which only 8 per cent of sites for internally displaced persons in Banaadir are currently being covered by camp coordination and camp management partners.

17. COVID-19 created new challenges, prompting agencies to develop strategies to mitigate the impact of the virus on refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations. Together with the Federal Government, the United Nations and partners launched a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan on 23 April to respond to the humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. Through the plan, \$527 million was sought: \$256 million for the humanitarian component and \$271 million for the socioeconomic one. As at 11 September, \$56.6 million (25 per cent) had been received to support humanitarian interventions related to the pandemic.

18. In addition, the United Nations and its partners continue to support the Federal Government of Somalia to deliver urgent assistance to persons who have been displaced or otherwise affected by floods. Working closely with the Federal Government and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, aid agencies launched two flood response plans: one in response to the *deyr* rains (October to December) and the other to address the *gu* rains (April to June). A cumulative total of \$116 million was requested to boost the response and provide critical life-saving assistance to 1.6 million flood-affected persons in Somalia. Flood-related requirements for 2020 have been incorporated into the revised Humanitarian Response Plan.

19. Aid agencies are ready to scale up operations, drawing on lessons recently learned to ensure that response efforts prevent a major humanitarian catastrophe that could jeopardize gains made in recent years. Mechanisms, including significant cash programming, expanded partnerships with already vetted local implementing partners and improved engagement with authorities and affected populations, are in place for a rapid scale-up and a sustained response.

20. In the last quarter of 2019, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, together with partners, developed an anticipatory action framework for Somalia to mitigate an extreme drought event. The threshold to trigger funding and action was set at a projection of 20 per cent of the Somali population facing crisis-level food insecurity, which was reached in May 2020 as a result of the cumulative impacts of desert locusts, flooding and COVID-19. Although the framework was developed for drought, on 19 June, the Emergency Relief Coordinator agreed to an exceptional pilot activation in the light of the unprecedented situation, with a \$15 million allocation from the Central Emergency Relief Fund.

Humanitarian access constraints and operational implications

21. The myriad challenges associated with delivering humanitarian assistance in Somalia have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Movement restrictions and other government directives, disruptions to imports and national supply chains and challenges to access owing to flooding have affected the availability of basic commodities and contributed to increased prices.

22. Insecurity continues to hamper the ability of humanitarian workers to reach persons in need and sustain operations for the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance and protection services. In addition, it impedes people's ability to obtain access to basic services and assistance. Outside major urban centres, the accessibility of some districts, in particular in southern and central regions, remains limited owing in large part to insecurity along main supply routes. On 21 June, convoys carrying supplies of food and non-food commodities to Gedo region could not be delivered owing to armed clashes between an Ethiopian convoy and Al-Shabaab militants. The presence of non-State armed groups across parts of Jubbaland, South-West State, Hirshabelle and Galmudug, as well as a high number of incidents of violence and conflict in Shabelle Hoose and Lower Juba, limits the ability of humanitarian partners to assess needs and deliver assistance in rural areas and likewise restricts the ability of civilians to safely seek assistance. In the disputed areas of Sool and Sanaag, local militias continue to engage in armed clashes, hindering humanitarian movement and operations.

23. The multiplicity of local armed actors with varying command structures and geographical presence, rapidly changing national and regional forces and the presence of various bilateral support missions and AMISOM troops, together with regional interventions, result in an operating environment in which territorial control by loosely allied groups shifts regularly and chains of command and control are not always clear. Establishing and maintaining relationships with those who have influence over humanitarian access to persons in need is both challenging and uncertain.

24. An estimated 1.3 million persons are living within territory controlled by Al-Shabaab and remain largely out of reach. The most vulnerable populations are the least likely to reach the relative safety of neighbouring districts or regions where humanitarian actors are responding. Retaliatory violence, reports of harassment and extortion at checkpoints, restrictions on the movement of goods and people, forced taxation and child recruitment are among the severe challenges and difficulties faced

by affected persons in gaining access to safety and assistance in a secure, timely and unimpeded manner.

25. Obtaining access to areas under the control of the Federal Government of Somalia and allied non-State armed groups remains largely possible. Gaining access to areas recaptured by the Government and its allies is hampered by ongoing insecurity, including the presence of improvised explosive devices along key supply routes, a lack of State authority beyond major population centres and bureaucratic impediments, including interference by authorities in the selection of beneficiaries and the distribution of assistance. Humanitarian workers operating in those areas face risks associated with unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. Displaced persons returning to areas recaptured from Al-Shabaab face a lack of basic infrastructure and services, resulting in continued vulnerability. In many areas, serious protection concerns remain, including about unexploded ordnance, ongoing and renewed fighting and retaliatory violence by non-State armed groups, such as interference with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground and the forced recruitment of adults and children. In some areas, such as Shabelle Dhexe and Galmudug and parts of Kismaayo, assistance continues to be limited, including for marginalized communities, even where access is possible.

26. Access to populations under Al-Shabaab control remains extremely limited owing to concerns about the safety of humanitarian workers, opposition from other parties to the conflict and the reported unwillingness of Al-Shabaab officials to accept principled humanitarian operations in areas under their control. Retribution and considerable restrictions are imposed by Al-Shabaab on those refusing to comply with illegal taxation requirements, including the forced recruitment of children. Those seeking to leave Al-Shabaab-controlled territories and those who have fled to government-controlled areas are often subjected to retaliatory attacks. Information on the humanitarian situation in those areas, as well as in areas controlled by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), is difficult to verify.

27. Alongside areas controlled by Al-Shabaab or ISIL, there are areas that are contested and where civilian movement is nearly impossible as a result of regular and active hostilities or military operations. In such areas, which are often rural, civilian populations remain despite active hostilities or heightened insecurity owing to a lack of resources and a fear of being discriminated against or even prosecuted for trying to reach safer areas because of clan or other presumed affiliations. Subjected to violence and volatile security conditions, such populations are often more vulnerable and in greater need of assistance. Humanitarian workers' access in such areas is hampered by ongoing hostilities, movement and security restrictions and poor infrastructure. Identifying safe access routes and obtaining assurances to enter remain important measures to mitigate the risk of major hindrances to humanitarian access, such as the restriction of movement, the denial of access or interference with the delivery of aid. Although local partners have been more successful in securing access in conflict-affected areas on the basis of their lower security profiles, much more needs to be done to ensure the safe, timely, unimpeded and predictable passage of humanitarian assistance, goods and personnel to affected zones.

28. Violence against aid workers, including abduction and arrest, harassment and forcible seizure of assets and restrictions on road movement by parties to conflicts, continue to obstruct the ability of humanitarian workers to reach persons in need. The heavy influence of gatekeepers, landowners and land brokers, and their role in addressing the impact and risk of forced eviction, continues to be a limiting factor for beneficiaries to gain access to services. Restrictions on the movement of national staff on the basis of presumed clan or other affiliations, and the targeting of particular groups, including through intimidation and harassment, continue to affect the implementation of programmes in conflict-affected areas. Risk transfer to national

staff, as well as to national NGOs and civil society, who are most frequently front-line implementers, must also be considered. All stakeholders should renew their attention to the safety and security of national and local actors by implementing tailored risk mitigation measures and appropriate training. The continuing trend of increased air strikes, most notably in Juba Dhexe, Shabelle Hoose and Galguduud, with related damage to civilian property and infrastructure, remains a concern.

29. The safety of humanitarian operations remains a key concern. At least 249 humanitarian personnel were directly affected by security incidents, the majority in southern and central Somalia. In those incidents, 14 humanitarian workers were killed, 28 were injured, 25 were abducted, 17 were arbitrarily arrested and temporarily detained and 2 were expelled by authorities for alleged infractions. The most significant incident was the kidnapping and subsequent execution of seven NGO health workers and one other health worker in Hirshabelle on 27 May. Investigations are ongoing, the perpetrators have yet to be identified and no one has claimed responsibility. Other incidents included attacks directed against personnel, as well as indirect harm caused by general insecurity or as an incidental effect of an attack. Security incidents ranged from the more severe, such as assassination, kidnapping for ransom, abduction, expulsion, looting, the deliberate destruction of assets or facilities, arrest and detention, to the less severe, such as temporary detention, harassment and verbal and written threats. Al-Shabaab carried out eight mortar attacks against the United Nations compound within the Aden Adde International Airport complex in Mogadishu (two in late 2019 and six in 2020). One United Nations contractor was among the injured. The humanitarian community continues to call upon all parties to allow and facilitate humanitarian action, including by ensuring the security of staff, supplies and facilities.

30. Abductions of humanitarian workers remain a concerning trend. With the exception of the kidnapping and murder of the seven health-care workers in Hirshabelle, all of the other kidnappings were verified as having been carried out by Al-Shabaab, which considers kidnapping to be a source of income. The majority of the humanitarian workers who had been abducted were released within 1 to 10 days of their abduction following successful community-led negotiations, although in two cases, they were held for up to two months. The impact of the abductions is felt not only by the organizations affected but also by the persons in need of assistance and protection, who are often left without assistance when the affected organizations are forced to scale down or suspend operations. Al-Shabaab is currently holding one humanitarian worker, an international staff member abducted in Mogadishu in 2018. On a positive note, on 9 May, Al-Shabaab released a female international NGO worker kidnapped by the group in Kenya in November 2018.

31. Al-Shabaab continues to implement hostile policies against most humanitarian organizations, directing local populations to not accept assistance from some humanitarian organizations, further punishing communities that do not oblige and directly targeting the organizations' personnel or assets, or directing local populations to do so.

32. Notwithstanding milestone commitments made by the Federal Government of Somalia and some regional states, including Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Puntland and South-West State, humanitarian organizations and the general civilian population continue to experience severe logistical challenges in an estimated 42 districts in southern and central Somalia and in Bari, Puntland. Extortion and other forms of violations are common occurrences at the numerous illegal checkpoints manned by both State and non-State-affiliated armed actors. An estimated 134 such security checkpoints, many of which are fee-bearing, hinder safe, timely and unimpeded access. Incidents continue to be reported at the authorized checkpoints along all major access roads in southern and central Somalia, with the following access roads most

affected: Mogadishu-Afgooye-Baidoa, Mogadishu-Balcad-Jawhar and Cadaado-Gaalkacyo. On 23 June, Puntland and Galmudug authorities successfully reopened the strategic main supply route connecting the two parts of Galkayo (the Puntland-controlled north and the Galmudug-controlled south). The reopening of the route is expected to enhance socioeconomic development, security and humanitarian access in Gaalkacyo. Operations to remove unauthorized checkpoints along other main access roads continue; however, armed actors adjust by creating non-static checkpoints. Aid organizations continue to urge the authorities to build on the milestone commitments and efforts initiated in 2017 to prioritize the securing of the major supply routes.

33. Siege-like warfare engaged in by Al-Shabaab in some government-held towns in Hirshabelle, South-West State and Jubbaland State continues to hinder the transport of humanitarian and commercial supplies. Humanitarian organizations continue to resort to obtaining access to such towns by using significantly more expensive air transport. The areas include Buulobarde Hiraan, Hirshabelle State, Diinsoor in Bay, Waajid and Xuddur in Bakool, South-West State, and Garbahaarrey in Gedo, Jubbaland State. Humanitarian organizations have been able to gain access to Buulobarde by air only since 2014 owing to Al-Shabaab's aggressive cutting off of movement to and from the town by road.

34. Two incidents involving aircraft delivering humanitarian aid occurred during the reporting period. On 4 May, an NGO-chartered cargo plane carrying mosquito nets for internally displaced persons in the town of Bardaale, Bay region, was shot down while landing in that town, killing all six persons on board. As a result, authorities closed the Bardaale airport temporarily. Although it has since opened, a very limited number of flights have resumed. While supplies can be flown into Baidoa, access by road to Bardaale using commercial contractors is intermittent owing to the presence of Al-Shabaab, restricting the flow of humanitarian aid. In late May, a World Food Programme charter aircraft carrying humanitarian supplies to Qansaxdheere was hit by ground fire from unknown perpetrators, with no reported casualties or significant damage. As a result, flights to Qansaxdheere have been suspended temporarily, and there has been no replenishment of food since the attack for nutrition beneficiaries in Qansaxdheere.

35. Al-Shabaab continues to put pressure on the Jawhar-Mogadishu and Mogadishu-Afgooye-Marka access roads by staging improvised explosive device attacks and coercing vehicles using such routes into paying "taxes". Trucks using the main supply routes in Hiraan continue to be subjected to Al-Shabaab attacks, a long-standing situation resulting from the group's enforcement of its economic blockade of government-controlled towns. Road access along the Mogadishu-Afgooye-Baidoa route continues to be severely constrained owing to the mounting demands of, and extortion by, "State-affiliated armed groups" (that is, groups affiliated with the national Government), clan militia, criminal groups and Al-Shabaab. According to local communities, Al-Shabaab has continued to increase its fees along some stretches of the Mogadishu-Baidoa and Mogadishu-Jawhar routes. In addition, reports of intensified tax structures imposed on the commercial sector, including commodities imported through the Mogadishu seaport and market centres, have increased.

36. Furthermore, throughout southern and central Somalia, civilians continue to face more rigorous taxation by Al-Shabaab, forcing many into displacement and causing the loss of productive assets, thus rendering those civilians more vulnerable to food insecurity. In Marka, in Shabelle Hoose, taxation continues to be imposed on donkey carts supplying or collecting commodities. In many areas, traders are now forced to pay double taxation, both to Al-Shabaab and to the Government, which renders small businesses non-lucrative and has led to an increase in prices for consumers. Farming communities reportedly continue to be obliged by Al-Shabaab to pay "taxes" to tend to their fields after good rains, with both money and livestock

being provided as zakat or a “voluntary jihad” contribution. It should be noted that some internally displaced persons were forced to abandon farming activities because of the “taxation” imposed by Al-Shabaab, those who cannot afford to pay being either forced or coerced into surrendering their children for recruitment.

37. Al-Shabaab continues to maintain control of key areas and to take control of towns after the withdrawal of the Somali national armed forces and other government-affiliated forces, resulting in the disruption of humanitarian operations and, in some cases, the complete suspension of programmes. Between 2019 and 2020, the seizure of control of towns and villages, at times temporarily, by Al-Shabaab was reported in areas in Hirshabelle, South-West State, Jubbaland and Puntland. The reactions of the population towards the recovering of the towns are often mixed. In some areas, Al-Shabaab carries out retaliatory attacks on civilians whom it deems to be government supporters or collaborators, while in other towns it only talks or preaches to local populations without harming anyone. In March, a military operation including AMISOM forces and led by the Somali national armed forces was conducted in Shabelle Hoose to remove Al-Shabaab and stabilize the area around Jannaale, resulting in the temporary displacement of 23,000 persons. Al-Shabaab continues to attack some of the newly recovered area in an attempt to regain control. In some cases, civilians have reported abuses and human rights violations by the Somali national armed forces in the newly recovered areas.

38. Conflict between “Somaliland” and Puntland over control of parts of Sool and Sanaag regions continues, with hostilities around Tukaraq in Sool region. Both sides maintain troops deployed against the other along the front line. Tensions remain high to date, while efforts to resolve the stand-off continue. All mediation efforts by external actors, including the United Nations, have failed, and both parties have remained firm in their positions, setting prerequisite conditions for entering into negotiations that are unacceptable to the opposing side. Politicians on both sides have been fuelling the conflict with inflammatory statements. The heightened tensions and the level of preparedness demonstrated by both parties have elevated the risk of a full-fledged escalation of armed hostilities and continue to restrict safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to the area. The “Somaliland”-United Nations area security management team has suspended United Nations missions to areas within both districts, including to Laascaanood in Sool between March and August, for extended periods owing to prevailing insecurity and with missions to Badhan and Dhardhaar in Sanaag still under restriction.

39. Clan conflicts remain a major concern, in particular in Hiraan, Galmudug, Shabelle Hoose, Shabelle Dhexe and Sool regions, where clan violence costs lives and livelihoods and displaces families. Humanitarian programmes in the affected locations are often suspended until the conflict is resolved. On occasion, local humanitarian staff belonging to warring clans have been victimized or caught up in the conflict. Clan-related conflicts are mainly recorded in areas where pastoralist communities reside owing to competition for scarce resources such as water and pasture, or in areas where farmers clash with nomads or over farmland. Galmudug and Hiraan remain the areas most affected by prolonged clan conflicts, and Galmudug region is particularly notable for clan skirmishes owing to the harsh environment and competition for resources. While clan elders and the authorities continue to prioritize negotiations to address ongoing clan conflicts, the payment of blood compensation remains the key determinant of conflict resolution. Even after reconciliation efforts have been successful, conflicts have the potential to reignite quickly over small or perceived provocations. For that reason, humanitarian organizations operating in the areas must be kept abreast of all incidents that can lead to clan conflicts, including those that may have occurred in past months or years, to avoid falling prey to the revenge cycle.

40. Parties to the conflict have damaged telecommunications service by ordering service providers to terminate service or by attacking, destroying or damaging telecommunications installations. Disruptions to the service have affected some humanitarian programmes, including the provision of cash assistance and remote monitoring through call centres.

41. Parties to the conflict have continued to carry out air strikes in some areas in Jubbaland State, South-West State and Puntland. The targets have mainly been assets and personnel of Al-Shabaab and ISIL located outside residential areas or within isolated areas under their control. Although the air strikes have had no direct impact on humanitarian operations to date, the risk to operations located in the affected regions remains, in particular for vehicles moving supplies and personnel, which might be targeted in error. As a secondary impact, aerial attacks have reportedly made Al-Shabaab more suspicious of humanitarian organizations, on the basis that they could be collecting information to be used for air strikes.

42. Following the Federal Government of Somalia directive of September 2018 requiring NGOs operating in Somalia to have a country presence, and the subsequent relocation of many international staff from Kenya to Somalia, international NGOs have continued to reiterate their request to the Federal Government of Somalia and regional states to expedite the establishment of a centralized and enabling framework, an initiative that has been under way for the past four years. The bill on NGOs, through which the regulation of the operations, registration and oversight of NGOs is sought through the registrar general and registrars, remains in draft form. In the absence of a centralized regulatory framework, aid organizations have continued to face demands such as arbitrary or duplicative taxation, the involvement of authorities in contracting suppliers and service providers, and interference in staff recruitment, including screening, interviewing, selection and vetting. The demands have continued to lead to disruptions, delays and intrusions into humanitarian facilities; arrests; the detention and expulsion of humanitarian workers; and the occasional temporary suspension of humanitarian programmes. In addition, the influx of international NGO staff relocated to Somalia has resulted in increasing challenges owing to the lack of explicit laws on registration and income taxation between the national and subnational levels. While a draft law has progressed to the parliamentary level, the international community is concerned that it has done so without adequate consultation with the NGO community, which could undermine the ability of NGOs to operate when the law is eventually passed.

43. In a bid to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Federal Government of Somalia and the governments of the federal member states issued 66 directives in writing or verbally, imposing social distancing restrictions, closing borders and banning international and domestic passenger flights, which resulted in the closing of 11 of 12 airports in Somalia. While staff rotations and recruitments were put on hold, humanitarian cargo was exempted. Social distancing and directives to work from home have resulted in the greatest restrictions, adding a layer of complexity that contributed to the reduction, suspension or cancellation of humanitarian projects and programmes.

44. To address those issues, the humanitarian country team endorsed a revised COVID-19 response focused access strategy in April. The strategy provides guidance for the effective coordination of humanitarian access issues and access-related activities in the context of COVID-19-related restrictions; for strengthening a common analysis of information, challenges and opportunities related to access; and for the preservation of humanitarian access and principles as a shared responsibility among humanitarian actors, Member States and all parties to the conflict. The humanitarian community, including the dedicated task force on access, is using the strategy and accompanying action plan to guide its priorities and coordinated

approaches to many of the impediments to access. By the end of June, most of the restrictions had been eased, either officially or de facto in terms of movements, except for domestic and international passenger flights, which resumed in August.

Risk mitigation measures

45. The United Nations and its agencies, funds and programmes have continued to strengthen and enhance risk management and control measures to ensure full accountability for their activities and funds channelled towards the humanitarian response in the challenging operational environment in Somalia. This becomes even more essential and challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most programmes and activities required remote management with limited monitoring capability. Additional risks related to COVID-19 include rapid community transmission, in particular in overcrowded sites for internally displaced persons; socioeconomic impacts; and a very weak health system that is unable to meet the immediate needs emerging in 2020.

46. In that context, United Nations organizations supporting humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts in Somalia have intensified their collaboration to overcome challenges. This has been achieved through regular (monthly) forum discussions facilitated by the Risk Management Unit, information-sharing, both formally on contractors, such as contract-related information, capacity assessment and risk assessment reports, performance reports etc. and informally on misappropriation and mismanagement of assets, audits and investigations etc. Continuous engagement with the Unit has resulted in increased demand on verifications and information gathering, thereby contributing to the decision-making process on specific matters related to partners or individuals, besides the risk assessment reports undertaken by the Unit on behalf of United Nations organizations.

47. Other due diligence activities implemented jointly include combined monitoring visits organized between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Risk Management Unit, joint audits and capacity assessments – of UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Programme – and close collaboration between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF on common partners and information-sharing.

48. As at 30 June, the Contractor Information Management System database contained information related to contracts valued at more than \$6.5 billion, more than 4,000 partners (contractors and implementing partners) and more than 1,300 assessments. New features have been introduced with new resources, contributing to enhanced research information. This includes United Nations-banned contractors and extracted information from the 2019 annual report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia. Efforts continue to broaden partnerships with regulatory bodies in both Kenya and Somalia, such as Transparency International and research institutions, among others.

49. The Risk Management Unit developed a collaborative risk management strategy for Somalia stakeholders, which was validated by a multiparty working group on risk in August. A roll-out of the strategy has been scheduled for the coming months, and the Unit and its partners – the Government of Somalia, NGOs, the United Nations and donors – will work together to support its implementation.

50. The Risk Management Unit has continued to support other operations in establishing risk-related practices, learning from the experience in Somalia. Examples include support provided to develop the risk management framework for a stabilization project and strategy in countries surrounding Lake Chad (Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria) and exchanges of best practices on fraud and corruption with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Impact of paragraphs 22 and 34 of resolution 2498 (2019)

51. In paragraph 22 of resolution 2498 (2019), the Security Council decided that, until 15 November 2020, the measures imposed on Member States in paragraph 3 of resolution 1844 (2008) should not apply to the payment of funds, other financial assets or economic resources necessary to ensure the timely delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance in Somalia by the United Nations, its specialized agencies or programmes, humanitarian organizations having observer status with the General Assembly that provide humanitarian assistance and their implementing partners, including bilaterally or multilaterally funded NGOs participating in the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia. While organizations surveyed for the present report did not explicitly comment on the impact of paragraphs 22 and 34 of resolution 2498 (2019) on their ability to implement programmes, the humanitarian exemption has a significant impact on the ability of partners to deliver life-saving aid and protection.

52. Non-renewal of the humanitarian exemption would result in donor reluctance to fund humanitarian operations, and even incremental increases in donor risk aversion would have a significant adverse impact on the ability to deliver assistance. In turn, the inability to deliver aid would deprive civilians of the essentials to survive, while compounding the risk that the humanitarian situation will deteriorate. The suspension of aid would result in the greater likelihood of additional displacement, including potential refugee flows into neighbouring countries, as well as internal displacement towards urban, government-controlled areas that are already underresourced and have inadequate basic services. Furthermore, if Al-Shabaab were to impede civilians from leaving areas under its control, their needs would go unmet, and those soliciting aid, such as elders and leaders, might be subject to human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law, such as extrajudicial executions and child recruitment.

53. Importantly, the humanitarian exemption provides the basis for donors, contractors and finance and banking systems to enable the financing of humanitarian assistance in areas in which Al-Shabaab operates. The humanitarian exemption and the establishment of corresponding national implementation measures facilitate the financing of humanitarian programmes in Somalia.

Conclusions

54. Somalia is at a critical juncture. The combination of COVID-19, flooding and the desert locust upsurge, along with protracted conflict and a global economic downturn, may contribute to an unravelling of the hard-won progress achieved in the past decade, at high human and financial costs. This comes after Somalia reached the decision point under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in March 2020, following necessary economic reforms, thereby restoring its access to regular concessional financing and bringing it one step closer to debt relief. This is a first step in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries process, through which the Executive Boards of the Fund and the World Bank formally decide on a country's eligibility for debt relief.

55. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network outlook report of August 2020, the below-average 2020 *gu* cereal harvest, the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the forecast of below-average *deyr* rainfall from October to December drive a worsening food security outlook through at least early 2021. Furthermore, a long-term decline in rainfall performance and preliminary climatological research suggest an elevated likelihood of below-average rainfall in the season that runs from March to May 2021. Two consecutive poor seasons would likely result in rapidly worsening acute food insecurity in 2021. The situation is likely to be even worse in

conflict-affected areas, where persons are displaced from their land or face involuntary and illegal taxation by Al-Shabaab, reducing incentives for agricultural production. In the context of potential instability, with elections in 2021 and plans for a handover of security responsibilities to the Somali National Security Forces post-2021, millions of vulnerable Somalis cannot afford an interruption of, or a reduction in, humanitarian assistance.

56. Humanitarian organizations in Somalia continue to strike a balance between addressing their security concerns and ensuring the effective and principled delivery of assistance. Humanitarian workers will continue to work to expand and sustain access to those in greatest need, despite security challenges. However, respect for international humanitarian law and the onus on parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate access to those in need remain critical for the delivery of aid. In addition to providing greater access to beneficiaries, humanitarian efforts require flexible and timely funding to assist millions of Somalis effectively and ensure that the security needs of national and local implementing partners are factored into proposals and budgets properly.

57. In the light of the foregoing, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator invites the Security Council to renew the humanitarian exemption provided for in paragraph 22 of its resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#).
