



Security Council

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Situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2531 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2021 and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers major developments in Mali since the previous report ([S/2020/1281](#)) of 28 December 2020. As requested in the statement by the President of the Security Council of 15 October ([S/PRST/2020/10](#)), it also includes updates on the Mission's support for the political transition in the country.

II. Major developments

2. The reporting period was marked by the completion of the process to establish the institutions of the transition following the coup on 18 August 2020. On 10 February, an extraordinary session of the National Transition Council, the parliament of the Transition, was convened at the initiative of the Prime Minister, Moctar Ouane. On 22 February, the National Transition Council adopted the action plan and roadmap of the transitional Government that the Prime Minister had submitted on 19 February. In addition, steps were taken to refocus the attention of Malian political actors on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. On 11 February, signatory parties and their international partners met in Kidal, in northern Mali, for the fifth high-level session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, the first to take place outside Bamako, the country's capital, since the signing of the Agreement.

Political developments

Political transition

3. After the institutions of the transition had been established during the fourth quarter of 2020, the transitional Government took steps to identify priorities and to address pressing social and political challenges.

4. On 5 January, the transitional Government reached an agreement with the Union nationale des travailleurs du Mali, a major trade union, and the Conseil national du



patronat du Mali, an association of business leaders, to end weeks of strikes, including strikes among public servants, over salary raises and benefits.

5. On 18 January, the President of the Transition, Bah N'Daou, signed a decree dissolving the Comité national pour le salut du peuple, the military junta that staged the coup against the former President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, on 18 August 2020.

6. On 10 February, the Prime Minister initiated a formal dialogue with leaders of political parties to discuss the transitional Government's agenda of political and institutional reforms, noting that political leaders had a central role to play in the reforms. He did so amid persisting tensions between the transitional authorities and some political actors who had expressed concern over what they described as a lack of transparency and inclusivity in the transition process. At a press conference on 4 February, the Mouvement du 5 juin-Rassemblement des Forces patriotiques (M5-RFP), the coalition of opposition parties and civil society groups that led the protests prior to the coup, called on the population to remain mobilized. Other political leaders, including Housseini Amion Guindo of the party Convergence pour le développement du Mali, Moussa Mara of the centrist Yelema opposition party, and Aliou Boubacar Diallo of Alliance démocratique pour la paix, called for a more inclusive transition process.

7. The National Transition Council convened on 10 February at the initiative of the Prime Minister. On 19 February, the Prime Minister presented the action plan of his transitional Government to the Council. The action plan contains six priority areas, namely security, institutional and political reforms, good governance, education, social stability and elections. On 22 February, the members of the Council approved the plan by 100 votes to 4, with 3 abstentions. Most political actors took note of the action plan and expressed reservations regarding the capacity of the transitional Government to implement it. Concerns were raised across the political spectrum, including concerns about the ability of the transitional Government to conduct transparent elections and lead the full implementation of the Agreement.

Preparations for the holding of elections

8. Malian authorities continued to take steps towards the holding of a constitutional referendum, and local and general elections. In an address to the nation on 31 December, the President of the Transition announced a tentative electoral timeline in which were envisaged a constitutional referendum in the second semester of 2021, elections at the regional, municipal and *cercle* levels in the fourth quarter of 2021, and presidential and legislative elections in the first quarter of 2022. Malian authorities are yet to issue a final timeline to confirm those dates.

9. On 25 January, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization held a three-day workshop in Bamako on the legal framework for the elections. Two hundred representatives of political parties, civil society organizations and signatories of the Agreement reviewed the legal and institutional framework for the upcoming polls and outlined a series of proposals. Those included the issuance of a unified electoral code to replace the current electoral law, the creation of a single independent body in charge of elections to replace the current electoral architecture, which involves three institutions, and the establishment of a senate.

10. On 1 February, the transitional Government terminated the mandate of the bureau of the Independent National Electoral Commission, an ad hoc body with monitoring responsibilities during elections and which, under Malian electoral law, is to be dissolved within three months following each electoral cycle.

11. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in coordination with other representatives of the international community in Mali, continued to call for a

peaceful and inclusive transition process and to support initiatives aimed at holding free, fair and credible elections. He encouraged the authorities, political leaders and civil society actors to focus on achievable outcomes and reforms that should be prioritized during the transition period.

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

12. The commitment of Malian parties to the continued implementation of the Agreement appeared to regain momentum during the reporting period.

13. On 11 February, the Agreement Monitoring Committee met for the first time since the signing of the Agreement in 2015, holding its fifth meeting at the ministerial level. The meeting was convened in Kidal, northern Mali, the stronghold of one of its signatory parties, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad. It was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria. Colonel-Major Ismaël Wague, the Malian Minister of National Reconciliation, represented the transitional Government of Mali. He gave participants an update on the implementation of the Agreement and on the adoption in December 2020 by Malian parties of a new roadmap that outlines steps to be taken in the coming months.

14. Participants welcomed the new momentum among the signatory parties and urged them to advance the peace process during the transition period. They emphasized the importance of operationalizing the reconstituted army battalion already deployed in Kidal, among other issues. The signatory movements affirmed their readiness to transform the Commission de sécurité mixte de l'Azawad à Kidal into a unit of the future territorial police, once the relevant bill is approved by the National Transition Council.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and redeployment of the reconstituted, reformed and inclusive Malian Defence and Security Forces

15. During the reporting period, efforts continued to complete the integration of 1,687 additional combatants into the Malian Defence and Security Forces and reach the benchmark of integrating 3,000 combatants. On 2 and 3 February, MINUSMA supported the transitional Government in transporting 394 combatants from Gao and Timbuktu to Bamako for training. The combatants were part of a group of 451 former combatants of the signatory movements who were registered in 2020 as part of the "catch-up" phase of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration effort. On arrival in Bamako, the combatants were transported to military camps in Ségou and Koulikoro Regions for a 45-day military training before being integrated into the Malian Defence and Security Forces and redeployed to the regions.

Constitutional and institutional reforms

16. As indicated in paragraph 8, the announced dates for the upcoming elections are yet to be confirmed.

17. In addition, the transitional Government took steps to operationalize the administrative regions of Douentza, Bandiagara and San in central Mali, created in 2012. The new governors were installed in their positions on 7 January in Douentza, 11 January in Bandiagara and 4 February in San. Also, the transitional Government appointed interim municipal authorities in Ménaka and Taoudenni Regions.

18. Some progress was made regarding the transfer of 30 per cent of State revenues to local authorities. On 8 January, the Ministry of Economy and Finance issued the

budget for 2021 which provides that 457.671 billion CFA francs will be transferred to subnational levels. The amount represents 26.04 per cent of overall budgetary revenue.

Northern Development Zone

19. On 31 December 2020, the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization issued a decree appointing the President, the Vice-President and the 24 members of the interregional advisory council, the governing body of the Northern Development Zone. However, the process of raising funds to support the body continued to undergo delays. Limited progress was made in selecting projects to be financed by the sustainable development fund.

Women's participation

20. At the fifth high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, held on 11 February in Kidal, participants agreed to increase the number of women among its representatives from 9 to 12 and to include women in its four subcommittees. Women members of the Committee reiterated that there was an urgent need to address the issue of education as a prerequisite for lasting peace. Since their participation in the forty-first meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee in November 2020, women have seen their role in the peace process increase. The Mission, UN-Women and other partners continue to support the right of women to equal participation, particularly through a mentorship programme for women members of the Committee.

21. During the reporting period, women's observatories have been established in Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Ménaka and Timbuktu, in line with the recommendations of a high-level workshop held in January 2020, with the support of the humanitarian organization Aide de l'Église norvégienne and the Groupe de recherche, d'étude, de formation femme-action, a non-governmental organization.

IV. Stabilization and the restoration of State authority in the centre

22. An upsurge in violence by terrorist groups in central Mali was recorded during the reporting period, particularly in the newly established Douentza Region, formerly a *cercle* within Mopti Region. Attacks against defence forces continued and 28 MINUSMA peacekeepers were injured in a major attack against their temporary operating base in Kéréna, Douentza Region. One peacekeeper later died from the injuries sustained during the attack. Across the centre, self-defence armed groups continued to be active, while mediation efforts supported by the Mission brought a measure of stability to various areas, particularly in Bankass and Koro *Cercles*.

23. In Ségou Region, Niono *Cercle* was the area in which the highest level of hostilities and deterioration of the protective environment were witnessed owing to the continued clashes between radical combatants and traditional hunters belonging to the Dogon community (*dozos*) in Dogofry, Diabaly and Sokolo *Communes*, and the continued siege of the village of Farabougou.

24. Attacks by the Dogon self-defence group Dan Na Ambassagou against Dogon communities that do not support its "war effort" continued during the reporting period. A total of 14 violent Dogon intra-community incidents were reported since December 2020, a decrease from 50 such incidents during the previous reporting period.

25. In Koro *Cercle*, Mopti Region, MINUSMA continued to support reconciliation initiatives. Previously, the Mission had supported peace accords in Dioungani and Madougou *Communes*. Building on those, local authorities initiated efforts that

resulted in three intercommunal peace agreements between the Fulani and Dogon communities in Koro *Cercle*. The agreements were signed on 12, 22 and 24 January, respectively. The accords were focused on supporting the return of internally displaced persons and led to the reopening of schools and the provision of social services.

26. In Djenné *Cercle*, Mopti Region, where the security situation remained comparatively stable, MINUSMA completed the training of civil society groups and traditional mediators to enhance their role in the resolution of community conflicts. The Mission is preparing additional projects for demarcating transhumance routes that will include water points and forage areas. The aim is to prevent conflicts about access to natural resources, reduce crime and violence, and facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to Kouakourou town.

27. Mission police continued their activities with the European Union capacity-building mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) on that mission's new project to support the Gendarmerie of Mali in Mopti Region, among other things. In addition, several projects and trainings aimed at increasing the capacity and security for the Malian security forces in the centre of Mali were finalized. For example, in Mopti, training events were held on combating terrorism. Training events on construction and equipment were held at the Gendarmerie stations in Mougnan, Mopti Region and Hombori, Douentza Region. Mission police established a partnership with the Security Sector Reform Commission and the United Nations Development Programme aimed at operationalizing 14 security advisory committees in 10 administrative regions, 11 of which to be located in the centre of Mali as a step towards improved stability in that part of the country.

28. The Mission intensified its military operations in central Mali to protect civilians in areas repeatedly affected by violence. The Mission continued Operation Buffalo and Operation Mongoose launched months ago to help to protect the local population, support the Mission's civilian component, facilitate the State's presence, enhance State authority and reduce violence while setting conditions for long-term stability.

Progress made in the achievement of priority measures

Re-establishment of State presence and State authority

29. As at 28 February, 22 out of 131 civil administrators (17 per cent) were physically deployed to their duty stations in northern regions, including in Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Taoudenni and Timbuktu. Their number included governors, prefects and sub-prefects. Overall, 8 out of 24 prefects (34 per cent) and 10 out of 102 sub-prefects (10 per cent) were present at their duty stations, a decrease compared with the previous reporting period. The decrease could be attributed to the countrywide strike called by unions of civil administrators for the period from October 2020 to January 2021. In Ménaka and Taoudenni Regions, several positions remain vacant, including all sub-prefect positions in those two regions, since they were established in 2016. Taoudenni Region continues to have no administrator physically present, owing mainly to a lack of infrastructure.

30. While the presence of State authorities remained limited outside the regional and cercle centres, in the former Mopti Region (which is now divided into three regions: Mopti, Bandiagara and Douentza), only 4 out of 8 prefects (50 per cent) and only 10 out of 55 sub-prefects (18 per cent) were physically present at their duty station, as at 28 February. At the same time, 57 mayors out of 108 (53 per cent) were present in their *communes*.

31. In support of the deployment of the new administration in the three new regions of Bandiagara, Douentza and San, MINUSMA initiated capacity-building programmes, with two training sessions of 240 officials in Bandiagara, Douentza, Mopti, San and Ségou Regions.

32. The Mission's continued efforts to support the return of judicial authorities in the centre have been jeopardized by growing insecurity, including direct threats to magistrates by radical elements, which made it impossible to carry out missions to accompany temporary justice deployments planned in Bandiagara and Youwarou.

Fight against impunity

33. During the reporting period, Malian authorities took some encouraging steps to fight impunity for violations and abuses of international human rights law that occurred in central Mali in 2020. Prosecution orders were issued against alleged perpetrators of serious human rights violations committed in Massabougou, Ségou Region, in June 2020.

V. Regional developments

34. On 23 January, the fifty-eighth ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was held as a videoconference. Among the topics was the situation in Mali. The Authority took note of the report of the ECOWAS mediator and special envoy to Mali, former President of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan, who had visited the country on 11 and 12 January. The Heads of State and Government acknowledged the progress made in establishing the transition institutions and highlighted the need for a more consultative and inclusive approach involving all stakeholders. The follow-up and support committee for the transition in Mali, established by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and co-chaired by the African Union and ECOWAS, held its second meeting on 8 March in Lomé. Participants called for a focus on inclusive dialogue, expressed support for the implementation of the Government's plan of action and urged all national stakeholders to contribute to the success of the transition.

35. The Mission continued to provide logistical support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Since January 2021, the Mission provided the Joint Force with 704,300 litres of fuel and 10,920 litres of lubricant.

VI. Major security developments

36. During the reporting period, the security situation in Douentza Region, central Mali, deteriorated markedly owing to, among other things, the activity of terrorist armed groups. The number of incidents rose sharply in January. Incidents included acts of terrorism, banditry and criminality, radicalism and intercommunity conflicts. Northern Mali continued to be affected by insecurity and terrorism. Attacks were targeted mainly at the civilian population and national and international armed forces. Of particular concern was the large-scale attack against MINUSMA that took place on 10 February in Kéréna, Douentza Region, which was perpetrated with the help of an improvised explosive device in a suicide vehicle and indirect fire. Twenty-eight peacekeepers were wounded in the attack, one of whom later died.

37. Multiple incidents were reported in central Mali, mainly against local communities. The insecurity in central Mali stemmed from ongoing intercommunal conflicts and activity by radical armed groups, two dynamics that are often

intertwined. In Ségou Region, crops were stolen or destroyed in several incidents, possibly in an effort to create food insecurity and force local populations either to leave the area or accept the demands of the extremists. The availability of rockets and mortar rounds in central Mali and their increased use, infrequent until now, added to the already existing insecurity.

38. In northern Mali, MINUSMA and international forces were targeted in particular and suffered losses, especially in the Tessalit area of Kidal Region. On 15 January, one peacekeeper died and another was wounded when a MINUSMA vehicle hit an explosive device 12 km north-west of the Mission's camp. On 13 January, a MINUSMA Force security escort was attacked with an improvised explosive device and small arms fire 20 km north of Bambara Maoundé, Timbuktu Region. Peacekeepers returned fire and repelled the assailants; who fled the area. Four peacekeepers died as a result of the attack and five others were wounded. In Gao Region, Ansongo *Cercle* was particularly affected by insecurity and violence. Across the region, the terrorist groups Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara continued to vie for dominance, especially in the southern part of Gao Region.

39. Armed movements signatories to the Agreement took steps to settle a simmering dispute and mounting tensions among their combatants in parts of Kidal Region. On 4 and 5 January, leaders of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and of the Plateforme coalition of armed groups met in Anefis, Kidal Region, and issued a joint declaration in which they outlined their commitment to restore social cohesion in the area, ensure the protection of persons and property, and facilitate the freedom of movement of persons. On 10 January, the two movements established a joint checkpoint on the main road connecting Anefis and Tessalit.

A. Asymmetric and other attacks

40. During the reporting period, 92 asymmetric attacks were carried out against national and international forces, MINUSMA and signatory armed groups, with northern Mali recording 35 of those (38 per cent). Altogether 15 of those attacks occurred in Timbuktu Region (16 per cent of the total), 11 in Gao Region (12 per cent), 7 in Kidal Region and 2 in Ménaka Region (2 per cent). The highest number was recorded in central Mali, with 57 attacks (62 per cent of the total), including 53 in Mopti Region (58 per cent) and 4 in Ségou Region (4 per cent), an increase for that part of the country compared with the previous reporting period, during which 20 attacks were recorded against security forces and signatory groups.

41. There were 39 attacks against MINUSMA during the reporting period, resulting in 7 deaths, including 6 military peacekeepers and 1 United Nations contractor, and 48 injured, an increase from 20 during the previous period, when 1 peacekeeper died and 11 were injured. Mopti Region continued to record the highest number of attacks (20), followed by Kidal Region (7), Timbuktu Region (5) and Gao Region (2).

42. On 30 January, two individual contractors working for MINUSMA in the Ber camp, approximately 53 km east of Timbuktu city were attacked by two unidentified armed individuals on a motorcycle in Ber town. One of the contractors was killed on the spot; the other was detained but later released. On 10 February, presumed members of radical armed groups attacked the Mission's temporary operating base in the Kéréna area, 25 km east of Douentza town, in Douentza Region.

43. The Malian Defence and Security Forces were targeted in 47 attacks, with 100 killed, including 26 members of the Malian Armed Forces, 3 members of the national guard, 3 members of the police or Gendarmerie, 66 members of radical armed groups and 2 members of self-defence groups. At least 102 were injured, including

77 members of the Malian Armed Forces, 5 members of the Garde nationale, 8 members of the police and Gendarmerie, and 12 civilians.

44. The two deadliest attacks took place on 24 January. They were directed against the camps of the Malian Armed Forces in Boulikessi and Mondoro, approximately 114 km and 140 km east of Douentza town, Mondoro *Commune*, Douentza *Cercle*. Six members of the Malian Armed Forces were killed, four in Boulikessi and two in Mondoro. In addition, 6 members of the Malian Armed Forces were injured in Mondoro and 12 more in Boulikessi, including 7 severely. The injured were evacuated by MINUSMA. According to a Malian Armed Forces communiqué, at least 30 presumed members of radical armed groups were killed during the attacks. In separate developments, security sources reported the deaths of 15 presumed members of radical armed groups in Boulikessi. The assailants reportedly stole two pick-up trucks and a 12.7 mm heavy machine gun. Up to 40 motorcycles were abandoned at the scene. Another attack occurred on 3 February. It was directed against a camp of the Malian Armed Forces near Boni, approximately 83 km east of Douentza town, Haire *Commune*, Douentza *Cercle*. Ten soldiers were killed and seven others injured; 20 members of radical armed groups were killed.

B. Support for Malian defence and security institutions

45. The Mission continued to provide technical, logistical and financial support to the Malian Armed Forces in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. The Mission further provided 4,000 litres of fuel to the reconstituted army battalions units in sectors North, East and West to effectively assume security responsibilities.

46. The Mission force continued to contribute to the redeployment of the Malian Defence and Security Forces by providing certain basic training to regular units of the Malian Armed Forces and to the reconstituted army battalion. A part of the training for the battalion was conducted outside military camps. Over 300 personnel graduated from training courses held throughout the country.

47. Mission police continued to support the Malian security forces through training on community-oriented policing, crime scene management and post-blast investigations, forensics, and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. As a result of restrictions imposed to curb the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, United Nations police launched online training courses for the benefit of Malian security forces in the regions on topics including the use of intelligence in the fight against terrorism. Further support was provided through construction projects and other initiatives aimed at strengthening the presence of Malian security forces in the regions with equipment and the establishment of secure facilities.

C. Small arms, light weapons and explosive threat mitigation

48. As part of efforts to enhance national capacity in the management of explosive hazards, MINUSMA provided training to the Malian Defence and Security Forces on explosive ordnance disposal and on explosive threat mitigation for staff officers. The training was aimed at providing participants with the skills required to plan and execute operations in an asymmetric threat environment.

VII. Protection of civilians

49. The reporting period was marked by an increase in the number of attacks against civilians. In Niono *Cercle*, Ségou Region, the village of Farabougou remained under siege and civilians continued to suffer from food shortages, despite negotiations aimed at creating a humanitarian corridor.

50. As at 22 February, throughout Mali, a total of 238 incidents were reported in which 145 civilians were killed, 155 injured and 80 abducted, a relative decrease compared with the violence of the previous reporting period with 232 incidents in which 182 civilians were killed, 157 injured and 163 abducted. Mopti Region continued to be the most affected, with 73 incidents in which 83 civilians were killed, 68 injured and 53 abducted.

51. In Gao Region, MINUSMA continued to observe, on a daily basis, multiple robberies along the main road, money extortion and terrorist activity. Since 20 December 2020, the deployment of formed police units to Ansongo town and a related change in posture facilitated increased patrolling along parts of the main road, which helped to put a stop to some of the banditry occurring there. Internally displaced persons continued to arrive in Ansongo and Gao towns, mostly after fleeing areas around Djebok and other zones in Ansongo *Cercle*, due to threats by terrorist armed groups.

52. In Ménaka Region, a reduction in the number of attacks against civilians was recorded despite the growing tensions noted since the killing of a leader of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin in the region by international forces in November. In addition, in Anderamboukane *cercle*, several population movements resulting from the increased presence of armed terrorist groups, the regular clashes between Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, and the operations of international forces at the border with the Niger, have increased the number of refugees and internally displaced persons already present in Ménaka town. In Timbuktu Region, there was an increase in the activity of unidentified armed terrorist groups that continue to intimidate and threaten civilians and local authorities.

53. Civilians continued to be hit by explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. During the reporting period, 10 civilians were killed and 13 injured in Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu Regions.

VIII. Human rights situation

54. The human rights situation remained precarious as a result of conflict in parts of the country mainly involving community-based armed groups, militias, extremist groups and government forces. Similarly, grave violations against children during armed conflict and cases of conflict-related sexual violence were documented in parts of the country.

55. In that context, MINUSMA documented 409 cases involving either human rights violations (89 cases) or human rights abuses (320 cases), 74 fewer than during the previous reporting period. The violations and abuses included extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (9 cases), other killings (65 cases), wounding (125 cases), torture and ill-treatment (17 cases), abductions (110 cases), illegal arrests and detentions, including cases of prolonged detention and violations of due process guarantees (83 cases), and numerous instances of death threats and intimidation, property destruction and looting, forced displacement, and attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel.

56. The alleged perpetrators were national forces (31 cases), State security agents (7 cases), judicial authorities (51 cases), signatory and compliant armed groups (36 cases), community-based armed groups and militias (88 cases), violent extremist groups (176 cases) and unidentified armed actors (20 cases). Most violations and abuses were documented in the centre, including the regions of Bandiagara (94 cases), Douentza (51 cases), Mopti (11 cases) and Ségou (54 cases). Further violations and abuses were documented in the regions of Gao (48 cases), Kayes (10 cases), Kidal (27 cases), Ménaka (19 cases), Sikasso (1 case) and Timbuktu (36 cases), as well as in Bamako (58 cases).

57. On 31 December 2020, seven prominent supporters of the Government that was ousted in August 2020 were charged with several offenses in Bamako, including plotting against the new Government, criminal conspiracy and offending the Head of State. They had been arrested and detained days earlier by the State security service outside any legal framework and without the knowledge of the judicial authorities. On 2 March 2021, the Bamako Court of Appeal ruled to stay proceedings against the defendants. However, the public prosecutor announced that he was considering an appeal before the Supreme Court.

58. The Mission continued to receive reports of human rights violations allegedly committed during certain counter-terrorism operations, notably in the centre. In that regard, it is finalizing a human rights investigation into the airstrike carried out in Bounti, Douentza Region on 3 January.

59. In central Mali, community-based armed groups and militias, in some cases supported by extremist groups, continued to pose a significant threat to the enjoyment of human rights and the survival of the local population, as indicated in paragraph 37.

60. Violent extremism remains a serious concern in parts of the north and the centre, but its expanding scope in the south, with attacks on civilians and on forces tasked with protecting them, is a worrying development. In the night of 19 to 20 January, combatants of the Katiba Macina attacked a community health centre in Boura, Sikasso Region, killing the centre's chief doctor based on the suspicion that he had been collaborating with national forces deployed in the area.

61. The Malian authorities took encouraging steps in the fight against impunity, in line with the commitment of the President of the Transition, expressed publicly, that human rights violations would not be tolerated. During the reporting period, the Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs signed at least 10 prosecution orders under the Code of Military Justice. The orders concerned the alleged perpetrators of serious human rights violations in Dioura in February 2018, Boulikessi in May 2018 and Nantaka in June 2018, all in Mopti Region, and Massabougou, Ségou Region, in June 2020, among other cases. These cases are under investigation before the military courts of Bamako and Mopti.

62. The United Nations recorded an increase in the number of grave violations against children in Mali. During the reporting period, 236 violations committed against 183 children were verified, compared with 225 violations committed against 156 children during the previous period. The violations were verified and occurred in the regions of Mopti (59), Gao (57), Kidal (47), Timbuktu (28), Ségou (21), Ménaka (20), Koulikoro (2), as well as in Bamako (2). A total of 40 children (30 boys and 10 girls) were killed and maimed. Of those, 20 were killed and 20 maimed. Also, 122 children (91 boys and 31 girls) aged between 10 and 17 years were verified as recruited and used. Eighty-nine of those children have been separated from armed groups, while 33 remain active in their ranks, with the United Nations advocating for their release. As at December 2020, more than 1,230 schools were closed owing to insecurity, which affected more than 378,300 children, predominantly in Mopti Region.

63. The Mission documented two cases of conflict-related sexual violence, a decrease by eight compared with the previous period. The cases, perpetrated by unidentified armed men, included the forced marriage of one girl in Tonka, Timbuktu Region, on 12 January.

64. As part of the human rights due diligence policy, MINUSMA conducted 18 risk assessments before logistical and operational assistance was provided to non-United Nations forces, including to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

65. The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission has thus far registered 20,057 depositions.

IX. Rule of law

66. The Mission continued its efforts to support the return of State judicial entities in the north and centre and improve their effectiveness. On 19 February, with the support of MINUSMA, the Ministry of Justice conducted an inspection mission to Timbuktu to evaluate the working conditions and capacity of the justice institutions and personnel there and made recommendations.

67. The Mission continued to provide technical and material assistance to the reinforcement of prison security, including through the setting up of a rapid intervention team for all Malian prisons, including those holding suspects or convicts on terrorism-related charges. Furthermore, MINUSMA supported the drafting of a decree establishing a penitentiary intelligence service and detection of signs of radicalization in prisons as part of the national policy on preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism. The Mission continued to advocate for a reduction of the prison population as a risk mitigation measure to protect the health of detainees from the COVID-19 pandemic. As at February 2021, there were no reported cases or fatalities in Malian prisons.

68. The Mission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime complemented their technical assistance to the Specialized Judicial Unit against Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime by providing support for the completion of security works at the Unit's new premises in Bamako.

X. Humanitarian situation

69. The pandemic, the persistent and growing insecurity in the Centre spreading southwards, and the effects of climate change and poverty have continued to increase humanitarian needs. These factors have weakened the protection of civilians, limited the access civilians have to basic social services, increased the prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition, and caused massive population movements.

70. The number of people displaced increased from 207,751 in December 2019 to 332,957 in December 2020. Seventy-one per cent of those displacements were triggered by inter-community conflicts; 28 per cent were due to non-international armed conflicts. In Gao, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu Regions, conflicts, military operations and "taxation" by armed groups greatly contributed to the increased displacement of people.

71. From January to December 2020, 4,036 protection incidents were recorded, compared with 1,882 in 2019, including violations of the right to life, liberty and security, physical and psychological integrity, and property.

72. Altogether 726,000 people urgently need preventive care in the form of food assistance or cash transfers, and more than 1.1 million people require nutrition

assistance. Owing to conflicts and the socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19, 1.2 million people need livelihood support, as they are faced with the loss of or significant reduction in their household income. In addition, 4.4 million people around the country face health and epidemiological emergencies including outbreaks of malaria, measles, poliomyelitis and meningitis.

73. As at December 2020, despite access constraints and operational constraints, humanitarian partners assisted more than 2 million people in various sectors under the humanitarian response plan and other activities following the community acceptance approach.

XI. Economic development

74. In 2020, the pandemic and political and security instability affected trade, investment, employment, public revenue and foreign remittances, causing a 2.5 per cent decline in the gross domestic product and an estimated loss of \$1.832 billion in wealth. Poverty grew by 2.7 per cent, with 800,000 additional people falling into poverty. The International Monetary Fund estimates that the country's economy will recover gradually with 4 per cent growth in 2021.

75. During the reporting period, MINUSMA approved 33 quick-impact projects, two of which were supported by United Nations agencies, funds or programmes, to provide basic services to vulnerable populations, foster social cohesion, boost the use of renewable energy and create income-generating activities in Kidal, Gao, Ménaka, Mopti and Timbuktu Regions, totalling some \$1.54 million.

76. Seven new projects in support of the Mission's mandated activities were approved under the trust fund in support of peace and security in Mali for a total of \$4.4 million. The projects covered, among other things, a countrywide communication campaign for MINUSMA, the installation of solar streetlights and connecting local radio stations in Bourem, Gao Region, to the electricity grid, and improving the living conditions of the population in Taoudenni Region by improving their access to drinking water. Donors contributed another \$7.77 million to the trust fund: Norway contributed \$4.5 million and Denmark \$3.27 million.

XII. External communications

77. The Mission increased its external communication reach by engaging in new partnerships with 10 community radio stations to expand their broadcasting capability and extend to remote areas their community outreach campaigns, which focus on the protection of civilians and mandate implementation, and highlight the role of the Malian authorities. An interactive multimedia programme was used to sensitize communities, manage expectations and counter rumours. The Mission's radio programmes, conducted in the Dogon and Peulh languages, promoted reconciliation and the reduction of community violence in the centre of Mali, taking a local perspective.

XIII. Capacities of the Mission

Military

78. As at 12 March, 13,045 military personnel had been deployed, corresponding to 98.2 per cent of the authorized strength of 13,289 personnel, including 520 staff officers and 12,525 contingent personnel. Women accounted for 3.6 per cent of military personnel.

Police

79. As at 13 March, 1,746 United Nations police personnel had been deployed, corresponding to 90 per cent of the authorized strength of 1,920 personnel, including 285 individual police officers and 1,449 formed police unit personnel. Women accounted for 26.1 per cent of individual officers and 13 per cent of formed police unit personnel.

Civilian personnel

80. As at 13 March, 92 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff had been deployed, including 93 per cent of international staff, 87 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 91 per cent of national staff. Women held 29 per cent of international posts, 37 per cent of United Nations Volunteers positions and 18 per cent of national staff posts.

Implementation of the Mission adaptation plan

81. The Mission continued to implement its adaptation plan while adjusting its timeline and, adapting to restrictions imposed on account of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coup of August 2020. The Mission completed most of the movements and consolidation of contingents that had been launched earlier in 2020, including the relocation of a mechanized infantry company and base defence unit from Timbuktu to Mopti. Construction in Mopti is progressing, with the new camp expected to be ready for the deployment of additional units later in 2021.

Efforts to optimize performance

82. During the reporting period, in keeping with commitments under the Action for Peacekeeping framework, MINUSMA evaluated five formed police units. The evaluation criteria included mandate comprehension, command and control, protection of civilians, operational readiness and capability, administration, sustainment, logistics and compliance with the memorandum of understanding, training, conduct and discipline, and health and welfare. The evaluations also addressed COVID-19 prevention protocols and measures.

83. All the units evaluated were rated satisfactory; they showed a high level of professionalism in a hostile environment. Several units received positive feedback about their command and control arrangements, and their activities to protect civilians. Shortfalls were identified; several units, received recommendations to reinforce the camp defences. In addition, each unit received specific recommendations and a performance improvement plan whose implementation would be monitored. For one unit, one of the specific recommendations was to increase police-specific training on public order management.

Safety and security of United Nations personnel

84. The Mission continued its efforts to reinforce the security of its camps across Mali in accordance with Action for Peacekeeping obligations. The Mission carried on with the maintenance of the passive security measures along the perimeters of its camps. The Mission reinforced the access and exit gates of all regional headquarters camps, with the police component successfully conducting two defence exercises, one in Gao and one in Ménaka. In Ansongo, all camps are now equipped with public address systems, which has significantly improved the reaction of staff in emergencies and has contributed to their safety.

85. In March, MINUSMA made progress with the installation of overhead protection on its accommodations, the construction of bunkers and the construction of sidewall protection for offices and accommodations. Security enhancement

projects, including boom gates, observation posts, ditches and berms, and fencing are in progress.

86. The Mission continued to provide self-contained isolation facilities and transit facilities for treating COVID-19 patients, to apply social distancing measures and to install hand-washing points across the Mission. The Mission completed and operationalized three COVID-19 testing centres, one each in Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu, and gave relating training. The Mission remained vigilant and streamlined preventive and mitigating measures related to COVID-19, including enhanced surveillance, contact tracing and tracking, quarantine procedures and safe and healthy return-to-work and troop rotation arrangements.

87. Given the rising number of asymmetric attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers, Malian Defence and Security Forces and the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Mission continued to improve its medical evacuation procedures. Between 15 December 2020 and 5 February 2021, MINUSMA conducted casualty evacuations within the sectors, 59 medical evacuations to Bamako and Dakar, and seven evacuations of severe COVID-19 cases to the United Nations COVID-19 treatment facility in Accra.

88. Since the inception of the Mission in 2013, a total of 140 MINUSMA personnel have died as a result of malicious acts, including 6 during the reporting period. There have yet to be any convictions for the killings of MINUSMA peacekeepers. As of 3 March, four individuals were being held in relation to attacks against MINUSMA. A total of 42 investigative measures are underway and MINUSMA has provided support to the Malian authorities in their efforts to investigate and prosecute 13 cases.

Conduct and discipline

89. One allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse was recorded during the period under review. The Mission continued to implement its strategy to prevent misconduct, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse, by delivering online induction and refresher training to all categories of personnel and conducting risk assessments to issue recommendations for mitigating measures in its areas of operations. The Mission continued to conduct outreach activities including awareness-raising among the population and giving assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Environmental issues

90. The Mission continued its efforts to minimize the impact of the wastewater it manages. In that regard, it is constructing sludge management facilities in Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu, and upgrading government wastewater treatment facilities in Bamako and Timbuktu.

XIV. Observations

91. The fact that the Agreement Monitoring Committee met in Kidal in norther Mali on 11 February was a considerable achievement. For the first time since the signing of the Agreement, in 2015, representatives of the signatory parties met in the presence of the international mediation. This was also the first time in nine years that the national flag of Mali flew over the Governorate of Kidal, made possible by the commitment of the transitional Government and signatory armed groups. I commend the constructive approach and readiness to compromise that they demonstrated during the meeting and in the lead-up to it. I urge them to build on the momentum generated by this meeting to advance, with the continued support of international partners, in addressing outstanding issues of contention in the implementation of the Agreement

by identifying sustainable solutions. I would like to highlight the need to accelerate the process of redeployment and effective use of the reconstituted units of the army in the north and the establishment of the territorial police. In parallel, tangible progress is needed in the areas of development and the deployment of social and administrative services to the northern regions.

92. I note continued calls for a reopening of the Agreement, including in the context of the transitional Government's action plan. I strongly encourage the signatory parties to approach this sensitive issue within the agreed framework and in a spirit of mutual trust and responsibility. In that regard, it is essential that all efforts to pursue the implementation of the Agreement continue and that gains made over the past years are preserved, with a possible review of certain provisions of the Agreement conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in its article 65. I call on the signatories to resolve any differences through dialogue, while identifying and agreeing on confidence-building measures that would help to ensure that the peace process moves forward. The continued engagement of regional and international actors remains crucial to ensuring that signatories live up to their commitments.

93. I take note of the efforts made by the authorities to establish and kick-start the functioning of the transition bodies, notably the National Transition Council and elections management structures. This is encouraging. However, the situation remains fragile and almost seven months into the transition, it is of the utmost importance that the reform agenda is implemented without any further delay. A pragmatic and consensual approach is needed to allow the implementation of the most important constitutional, institutional and electoral reforms to gather pace and meet the ambitious 18-month schedule for the transition. Achieving tangible progress on reforms will be vital to ensuring that the forthcoming elections are credible and that the post-electoral period offers a solid basis for strengthening democratic practices, the rule of law and nation-building. To that end, I urge the authorities and all stakeholders concerned to set aside partisan motives and work in a transparent and inclusive manner towards enacting overdue reforms and creating an environment conducive to peaceful and credible elections. The continued support of international partners will be needed in that regard.

94. Equally important will be the continuing dialogue between the authorities and labour unions to reach consensus on critical socioeconomic matters. I note the relative progress made in addressing social tensions and call on the stakeholders concerned to consolidate the gains made. I would like to stress the importance of a concerted effort by national authorities, political parties and civil society, notably women and youth organizations.

95. I am very concerned by the worsening security situation in the north and the centre. In the north, while a military campaign has been effective against some armed terrorist groups, the terrorist threat to security and stability in Mali and the Sahel region remains significant. I commend national, regional and international forces for their increased military efforts against armed terrorist groups and I call on all stakeholders concerned to ensure the swift implementation of the recommendations of the summits held in Pau, France, in 2020 and in N'Djamena in 2021 with a view to giving a comprehensive response to the issue of violent extremism in the Sahel region. In the centre, the growing trend of asymmetric attacks by armed terrorist groups against MINUSMA and civilian populations is of the utmost concern. Over the past months, MINUSMA troops have come under repeated attacks and suffered significant casualties, while several population centres live under permanent threat from armed groups. Asymmetric attacks against MINUSMA resulted in the death of six peacekeepers and one contractor in the first months of 2021. The perpetrators of such heinous attacks have to be brought to justice. With regard to intercommunal violence, while I welcome local peace agreements aimed at de-escalating tensions, I

remain concerned about ongoing destabilizing activities of militias operating along ethnic lines. I call on the transitional Government to devise a comprehensive approach to address the situation in the centre, which would include sustainable solutions to ensure that militias and armed groups lay down their arms and join the dialogue process. In addition, I urge the authorities to clearly define responsibilities for State structures in charge of addressing the crisis in the centre, show leadership by implementing a government-led strategy and step up efforts to redeploy State administrative, security and social services in the centre.

96. The human rights and humanitarian situations remain dire, with serious violations of fundamental rights and freedoms as well as the continuing plight of vulnerable populations. I urge the transitional Government and all international forces operating in Mali to continue to make efforts to uphold the principles and rules of human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. I wish to commend the encouraging steps taken in the fight against impunity for serious crimes, including the increased efforts made by rule of law institutions. I reiterate that there can be no sustainable peace and stability without genuine progress in fighting impunity for serious crimes and violations of human rights. Bringing alleged perpetrators to justice strengthens rule of law and reconciliation, and contributes to increasing the trust of the population in State institutions. The United Nations will continue to provide support to national authorities to investigate and prosecute serious violations and to promote human rights. On the humanitarian front, I call on donors to keep providing the much-needed financial resources for assistance to vulnerable groups.

97. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his vital contributions to the quest for peace and stability in Mali during the past five years. The Mission is one of our most complex and challenging peace operations. I particularly commend his outstanding leadership and diplomatic acumen, which were critical to achieving the progress made in the implementation of the Agreement. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to all United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel for their dedication in carrying out their tasks. I appreciate the strong commitment of troop- and police-contributing countries to peacekeeping in Mali, a context marred by serious security and safety threats to United Nations personnel and installations. I further thank donors, partners, humanitarian actors and civil society organizations for their valuable support in the multifaceted crisis facing Mali. I wish to express my deep appreciation to regional and international organizations for their support to the ongoing political transition and encourage them to remain fully engaged as key partners in the transition as key milestones approach.

Annex I

**United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization
Mission in Mali: military and police strength as at
12 March 2021**

Country	Military			Police								
	Experts on Mission, staff officers and units			Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Armenia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Australia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Austria	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bangladesh	1 291	28	1 321	1	–	1	217	63	280	218	63	281
Belgium	51	3	54	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Benin	240	22	262	19	–	19	132	8	140	151	8	159
Bhutan	5	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Burkina Faso	1 065	27	1 092	14	14	28	129	11	140	143	25	168
Burundi	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cambodia	268	23	291	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cameroon	1	1	2	13	1	14	–	–	–	13	1	14
Canada	4	1	5	9	2	11	–	–	–	9	2	11
Chad	1 430	43	1 473	3	2	5	–	–	–	3	2	5
China	403	13	416	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Côte d'Ivoire	776	31	807	11	10	21	–	–	–	11	10	21
Czechia	3	1	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Denmark	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Egypt	1 077	2	1 079	2	–	2	146	14	160	148	14	162
El Salvador	164	11	175	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Estonia	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ethiopia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Finland	3	1	4	5	1	6	–	–	–	5	1	6
France	23	–	23	12	3	15	–	–	–	12	3	15
Gambia	4	–	4	4	2	6	–	–	–	4	2	6
Germany	399	30	429	3	2	5	–	–	–	3	2	5
Ghana	136	20	156	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Guatemala	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Guinea	624	42	666	7	2	9	–	–	–	7	2	9
Indonesia	9	–	9	1	1	2	–	–	–	1	1	2
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ireland	14	–	14	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Italy	1	–	1	4	–	4	–	–	–	4	–	4
Jordan	327	1	328	12	–	12	–	–	–	12	–	12

Country	Military			Police								
	Experts on Mission, staff officers and units			Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Kenya	7	3	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Latvia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Liberia	161	2	163	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lithuania	43	1	44	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Luxembourg	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mauritania	9	–	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mexico	4	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Nepal	133	25	158	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	1	1
Netherlands	5	–	5	4	1	5	–	–	–	4	1	5
Niger	875	–	875	30	10	40	–	–	–	30	10	40
Nigeria	70	6	76	2	4	6	104	36	140	106	40	146
Norway	140	–	140	4	1	5	–	–	–	4	1	5
Pakistan	153	–	153	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Portugal	3	–	3	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Romania	4	1	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Senegal	982	25	1 007	12	9	21	281	34	315	293	43	336
Sierra Leone	16	3	19	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Spain	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sri Lanka	243	–	243	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sweden	165	23	188	3	1	4	–	–	–	3	1	4
Switzerland	5	1	6	5	2	7	–	–	–	5	2	7
Togo	879	52	931	21	4	25	244	36	280	265	40	305
Tunisia	81	6	87	7	2	9	–	–	–	7	2	9
Turkey	–	–	–	3	1	4	–	–	–	3	1	4
Ukraine	10	1	11	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
United Kingdom	238	19	257	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
United States of America	7	1	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Zambia	2	1	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	12 574	471	13 045	215	76	291	1 253	202	1 455	1 468	278	1 746

