



Security Council

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Letter dated 1 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#) on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), by which the Council requested me to provide the Council with information focusing on: (a) progress on Mission operations, security challenges and coordination between security actors, including discussions in the Instance de coordination au Mali; (b) overall performance, including implementation of the adaptation plan, roll-out of the integrated peacekeeping performance and accountability framework and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, improvement and performance of the casualty evacuation system, rotations of uniformed personnel and how reported cases of underperformance are addressed; and (c) an update on the integration of all Mission components, including implementation of the integrated strategic framework and the related transition plan, in line with my road map dated 25 March 2021 ([S/2021/300](#), annex).

Progress in Mission operations

As outlined in my report ([S/2022/446](#)), the security situation in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area has deteriorated significantly, which has considerably affected the Ménaka and Gao Regions. In the tri-border area, the announced withdrawal of French and European forces from Mali has eased the pressure on violent extremist groups, which have since further exacerbated intercommunity tensions and expanded their presence and control. In the context of intensifying operations by the Malian Armed Forces in central Mali, civilians remained exposed to violent attacks and increasing human rights violations and abuses, while violent extremist groups have relocated to northern parts of the country, including to Ansongo (Gao Region), Tessit (Gao Region), Inekar (Ménaka Region) and Timbuktu.

Security challenges and increasing restrictions by the Malian authorities notwithstanding, the Mission pursued its efforts to protect civilians, focusing on those communities deemed most exposed to violence in central Mali as well as in the Gao and Ménaka Regions. Integrated operations and targeted deployments facilitated community engagement and local reconciliation initiatives. The Mission's presence has been essential to protect population centres and provide space for localized peace and reconciliation processes to unfold between communities in those areas. However, with the terrorist threat further expanding and without a sustained presence of security forces and State administration in those areas, such gains risk being short-lived and easily reversible.



In central Mali, as part of Operation Badger in the Diafarabé commune in Mopti Region, MINUSMA conducted deterrent air-mobile operations on 14 February, in coordination with local leaders. The operation allowed MINUSMA to engage with the local population and the mayor of Diafarabé for the first time in several months. Such integrated missions, which involve the participation of uniformed contingents and civilian personnel, contribute to enhancing community engagement, deepening the Mission's understanding of local conflict dynamics and identifying opportunities to enhance social cohesion. However, recent restrictions on air movements by the Malian authorities in the centre regions limited activities under Operation Badger, including planned missions to Madougou, Douna-Pen and other locations in Koro and Djenné *cercles*.

In Douentza, Mopti Region, peacekeepers conducted daily patrols and carried out an integrated mission in support of water projects and the promotion of a safe and secure environment as part of Operation Beaver. From 7 to 14 March, MINUSMA prepared to conduct a multidisciplinary effort dubbed Operation Dangare-Wotoro aimed at investigating human rights violations near Diabali, Ségou Region, following allegations that 35 civilians had been killed by the Malian Armed Forces in the area. Access to the site was, however, denied by Malian authorities, which resulted in the investigation being carried out remotely.

Under Operation Buffalo, which is aimed at protecting civilians in the Koro, Bankass and Bandiagara *cercles*, the Mission continues to maintain an operating base in Ogossogou, although access to the region was recently affected by the operations conducted by the Malian Armed Forces in the centre. MINUSMA continues to secure and enable the repairs of two bridges between Mopti and Bandiagara, which were damaged by extremist groups in August 2021 and are critical for the movement of the population and of security forces in the Bandiagara Region.

In northern Mali, following an intensification of violent activities by violent extremist groups in the tri-border region, MINUSMA intensified the presence of its mobile taskforce units and conducted patrols on both sides of the Niger River in the Tessit area. The Mission also conducted operations in Tessit from 17 to 24 February and from 21 to 30 March following allegations of human rights violations by violent extremist groups, and later assisted in safely moving internally displaced persons. In addition, MINUSMA doubled its day and night patrols in Ménaka and deployed units on a rotational basis to Talataye from 31 March onwards, following heightened threats to civilians in the area from violent extremist groups.

Operation Farrier continued with the objective of monitoring the movement of signatory armed groups and weapons in compliance with the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The number of movement notifications by signatory armed groups increased to some extent in the reporting period, demonstrating a willingness by signatories to adhere to the cessation of hostilities agreement. However, instances of non-compliance related to movement notifications remained high and continued to outnumber the reported rates of compliance. All violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement are reported and monitored by the Technical Commission on Security, which is chaired by the Mission. Although instances of non-compliance by signatory armed groups with the requirement to notify their movements continued to occur, there has not been a resumption of violent clashes or hostilities between the signatory armed groups themselves, or with the Malian authorities in northern Mali.

As humanitarian needs increased, notably in Ménaka, Gao, Sikasso and Kayes, where conflict-driven displacement was highest, the Mission provided security assistance through 21 humanitarian escorts. In Ménaka, the Mission provided support to secure the air strip, which played a critical role for humanitarian partners in accessing the area and distributing humanitarian aid.

Coordination of security presences

Close coordination continued with other security presences through the Instance de coordination militaire au Mali, which serves as the main forum for the coordination of activities among security actors in Mali. In March, partners agreed to establish a tripartite mechanism between MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane and the Malian Armed Forces to strengthen coordination and communication on the logistics of the withdrawal of Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba forces.

The increased operational tempo of the Malian Defence and Security Forces affected the coordination with the Malian Armed Forces. The reporting period also saw an increased number of restrictions for MINUSMA. Following the temporary suspension from 14 to 20 January of MINUSMA flights as a result of the introduction of new approval arrangements by the Centre de coordination des opérations aériennes du Mali, the prohibited air zone over central Mali remains in effect. Some MINUSMA operations have been denied or have had to be postponed as a result of uncertain or unavailable air coverage by unmanned aerial vehicles or reconnaissance flights. Since January 2022, denials of MINUSMA flight requests in central Mali have extended to requests related to human rights investigations in Dangere-Wotoro and Moura, one mission to Dangaténi in support of local reconciliation, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights, including flights indispensable to securing MINUSMA convoys. Although planned regular flights were largely unaffected, host authority restrictions have disproportionately affected the ability of the Mission to conduct operations in central Mali. In addition, in some cases, ground patrols have been denied access to specific locations. The restrictions are in place in areas where there have been increased allegations of human rights violations and abuses and where foreign security personnel, as well as Malian military personnel, are allegedly present.

MINUSMA concluded a preliminary investigation into a fire incident in which a MINUSMA long-range reconnaissance group patrol was targeted. The incident occurred in the area of Tessit, Gao Region, on 22 March, when a helicopter of the Malian Armed Forces fired six rockets at the long-range reconnaissance group, one of which landed a mere 50 metres from one of the group's vehicles. The investigation established that MINUSMA had coordinated the patrol with the Malian Armed Forces and indicated that the information shared by the Mission with its Malian counterparts may not have reached all those concerned. A board of inquiry is being convened to identify concrete measures to prevent any similar event in the future.

Mission performance

Despite significant challenges, the Mission continues to make strides towards improving overall performance through enhanced coordination, adaptation and agility. Extensive political and military engagements in Kidal, Tessalit and Aguelhok have resulted in a notable decrease in security incidents, including a reduction in attacks on MINUSMA camps and roadside attacks, and more freedom of movement for the population. MINUSMA security interventions have been implemented in concert with community engagement and quick-impact projects in the communities in Kidal, Aguelhok and Tessalit.

The Mission also swiftly responded to reports of human rights violations and displacement of populations. MINUSMA launched integrated operations in central Mali and in the Gao area to conduct human rights investigations and to facilitate humanitarian access in remote areas, notably in Moura, in central Mali. To that end, a special forces company, two military utility helicopters and two attack helicopters were relocated from Timbuktu to Mopti and were on standby for one week. MINUSMA remains ready to deploy the investigative team within 48 hours, should the Malian authorities grant approval. In addition, the Mission continued its support

for wider human rights monitoring and reporting, notably through 15 human rights investigations in Diabali, Assa Were, Nara, Douentza, Ménaka, Talataye, Tessit and elsewhere, as well as by facilitating 73 joint monitoring missions with partners, including the National Human Rights Commission.

Further progress was made in relation to the Action for Peacekeeping Plus agenda, particularly with regard to strategic and operational integration, and advancements in line with the integrated peacekeeping performance and accountability framework. The Mission continued to build on a revised process under the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, including through the facilitation of a mission-wide performance assessment in February 2022 and the quarterly collection of data against the Mission's key objectives. Quarterly senior management meetings are held to review the effectiveness of Mission plan priorities and results on the ground, and, to that end, adjust the Mission's interventions to ensure optimal mandate implementation.

Extensive mitigating measures were put in place to limit the impact on Mission operations of the sanctions imposed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Mission adopted a series of contingency measures to ensure that the impact on the Malian banking sector would not adversely affect the Mission's ability to operate. Between 10 January and 1 March, a total of 77 cargo containers were immobilized in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Niger and Senegal. The shipments included spare parts for technical units, ammunition, spare parts for vehicles and aircraft, and cargo for contractors. Following discussions with the Malian authorities, cargo in Mali was released. Neighbouring ECOWAS countries also increasingly released cargo from various locations.

Since February, the rotations of 2,480 uniformed personnel from seven troop- and police-contributing countries of ECOWAS have been delayed due to the lack of authorizations by the Malian authorities. This concerns formed police units in Bamako, Ménaka, Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu as well as the engineering company in Timbuktu, along with an infantry battalion in Mopti and the force protection unit in Timbuktu. Delays in troop rotations affect troop morale and Mission operations.

The highest annual number of attacks involving improvised explosive devices had been recorded since the Mission's inception in 2021 (245). In 2022, to date, the explosive threat has remained high, with 76 such attacks registered and 153 casualties related to such attacks. In support of the safety and security of peacekeepers, the MINUSMA comprehensive threat mitigation framework for improvised explosive devices, supported through its governance structure with regard to measures to counter improvised explosive devices, continued to enhance both the Mission's strategic capacities and the technical and tactical capacities of uniformed units to mitigate the threat from improvised explosive devices. Furthermore, MINUSMA actively took steps to address the most immediate equipment gaps mitigation of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices by providing electronic countermeasures to enable the safe deployment and operations of contingents most at risk in the centre. In addition, with troop-contributing countries demonstrating increasing national ownership of their training capacity in the area of mitigation of the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, the Mine Action Service commenced training and mentoring support to instructors of incoming rotations prior to their deployment. Those efforts have resulted in a high percentage of explosive devices being detected and neutralized, thus preventing numerous peacekeeper casualties and the destruction of assets.

To address the deteriorating security environment, additional measures were put in place to enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers more broadly. Although the current reporting period saw a decrease in attacks on MINUSMA camps,

peacekeepers continue to be targeted on main supply routes. Efforts to improve camp protection continued, including the use of agile base defence systems, through the construction and refurbishing of bunkers in Douentza and Ansongo and individual overhead protection against indirect fire in Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Ménaka and Tessalit.

The Mission also invested in protection technology to enhance surveillance, detection and early warning at its bases, as well as the protection of civilians. The Mission adapted its early warning deployment systems to counter evolving threats in Mopti, Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. In addition, to complement static protection and surveillance measures at its Kidal camp, MINUSMA commissioned the deployment of its own unmanned aerial system. In line with my vision for a United Nations 2.0 and the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of United Nations Peacekeeping, MINUSMA also took steps to consolidate the various incident databases to improve its analytical capacity and advance in the implementation of the peacekeeping intelligence policy, including through the relaunching of the mission peacekeeping-intelligence coordination mechanism.

The Mission continues to take steps towards improving the safety and well-being of women peacekeepers as part of a larger effort to make its engagement with local populations more effective. Under the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, the Mission advanced a number of construction projects in camps identified as having high proportions of women. The projects included prefabricated accommodations, water and sanitation facilities, and perimeter wall and security gate installations in Kidal. In coordination with the Secretariat, MINUSMA also initiated plans to expand accommodations and sanitary infrastructure in seven camps for formed police units.

Impact of the withdrawal of international forces

The withdrawal of Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba forces entails a significant shift in the country's overall security architecture and posture, which will affect the Mission's operations. In the light of the latest clashes between violent extremist groups and of a general deterioration in security in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area, sector East will be particularly affected. The security gap will have consequences for the protection of civilians.

As outlined in my report (S/2022/446), the Secretariat is engaging with troop-contributing countries to address logistical gaps, including with regard to medical capabilities previously provided through Operation Barkhane in Gao. French forces based in neighbouring countries may be able to support Mission operations after their withdrawal from Mali through the provision of overflight route reconnaissance and of deterrence flights. However, such support would require the approval of the Malian authorities. MINUSMA is developing scenarios that have the potential to arise from the departure of Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba forces and is planning for contingencies to mitigate risks, including risks relating to the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Some short-term measures could be considered for the Mission to enhance its posture in the north for mandate implementation and the protection of its personnel and assets. In addition to such measures, the United Nations proposed to conduct an internal review of the situation in close consultation with the Malian authorities with a view to making recommendations on ways to adjust to the new dispensation.

Adaptation plan

Since January, one of the three planned commercial intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance units has been fully operational in Timbuktu. In addition, some

progress has been made in the force generation process for the quick reaction force to be deployed to Mopti by July 2022. The deployment of a second commercial fixed-wing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance unit and of an armed helicopter unit to Mopti, and the redeployment of a military utility helicopter unit from Timbuktu to Mopti are under way and should be completed before the end of the year. One unmanned aerial system unit is ready to deploy to Timbuktu, pending land-use approval from Malian authorities and construction.

The lack of critical capabilities envisaged in the adaptation plan, most notably armed aviation units, continues to hamper the Mission's performance. To date, no pledges have been received for either an armed or a civilian helicopter unit comprised of three specially equipped helicopters for Kidal, or for an attack helicopter unit planned for Gao. The full implementation of the adaptation plan is paramount to ensure both continued mandate implementation and the safety and security of peacekeepers. The imminent withdrawal of Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba forces adds to the urgency for these requirements to be met. I therefore reiterate my call to all Member States to actively contribute to the generation of these outstanding capabilities, most importantly air assets.

Evaluations of the Mission's force and police components

Since December 2021, 11 completed military unit evaluations have been submitted to United Nations Headquarters. They include four infantry units, three military aviation units, one military hospital, two explosive ordnance disposal units and one military transportation unit. All units were evaluated as satisfactory. Two units were rated as well above Mission average and force leadership noted the leadership quality of the commanding officer of one explosive ordnance disposal unit and the efficiency of the work of one aviation unit. Other outstanding findings for some of the 11 assessed units included good situational awareness (two units), good ammunition storage (two units) and the proper use of engagement teams. Identified shortfalls included a lack of rules of engagement cards, a lack of more active engagement in carrying out tasks in the case of one unit and insufficient hygiene and isolation capacity at a military hospital unit. Other identified shortfalls included an insufficient number of women peacekeepers, insufficient adherence to scheduled major equipment maintenance plans and an insufficient number of mine-protected vehicles. Ongoing efforts include the strengthening of military unit evaluations through the use of the new in-mission evaluation online tool. MINUSMA conducted several additional evaluations that are still being reviewed by the force leadership. In addition, MINUSMA piloted evaluations of units using the tasks, standards and indicators methodology developed by the Office of Military Affairs.

MINUSMA police completed eight performance assessment and evaluation reports, with one unit being identified as having sustainment shortfalls. Examples of outstanding performance and identified good practices included unit leadership and comprehension of the mission mandate for two units, and proficiency in police techniques and tactics for one unit. The evaluations revealed generally satisfactory performance. Areas for improvement identified for some of the units included the deployment of new armoured personnel carriers, the replacement of expired ammunition, enhancement of camp defence, training on the buddy first aid kit system and strengthened mission-specific predeployment training. As part of the efforts to further enhance the performance of well-performing units, all units received recommendations within the framework of a performance improvement plan. In addition, all 11 formed police units were evaluated on a monthly basis for a total of 60 operational inspections.

Performance challenges

As a result of rising insecurity in Mali, the geographical scope of long-range and night patrols by MINUSMA police had to be reduced owing largely to threats posed by improvised explosive devices and the lack of mine-protected vehicles. To address this, the Mission updated the statement of unit requirements for formed police units to include mine-protected vehicles and casualty evacuation training, both of which are critical to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. In addition, critical equipment to protect personnel against improvised explosive devices, such as vehicle-mounted jammers, is still missing for some troop- and police-contributing countries.

As outlined in my previous letter (S/2022/8), the full operationalization of the Mission mobile task force, a core piece of the adaptation plan, continues to be hampered by concerns expressed by some troop-contributing countries, including with regard to casualty evacuations, which may be further affected by the withdrawal of Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba forces. Consequently, the areas of deployment for the contingents comprising the task force continues to be significantly limited.

During the reporting period, the Mission continued to improve its casualty evacuation system to enhance efficiency, improve coordination and raise capacities, including through the ongoing revision of the MINUSMA standard operating procedure for casualty evacuation. The Mission also strengthened its use of the eCASEVAC tool, which has allowed it to track the performance of each phase of the casualty evacuation process. Casualty evacuation continues to constitute an important aspect of the Mission's support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces. Since January 2021, MINUSMA has undertaken the evacuation of at least 226 individuals on behalf of the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

Implementation of the integrated strategic framework and transition plan

The Mission continues to advance cross-component coordination as well as coordination with the United Nations country team, including to ensure collective coherence for mandate implementation in the context of Mali's complex challenges.

MINUSMA and the United Nations country team continue to provide integrated support for the current political transition process and the return to the constitutional order. Under the Mission's road map for mandate implementation (S/2021/300, annex), the first phase continues to be focused on key objectives to be achieved during the political transition, which is to culminate in national elections. Once the political transition is concluded, longer-term transition planning under the second phase will be undertaken in coordination with the Government of Mali and the United Nations country team.

In the meantime, integrated work with the United Nations country team continues within the framework of the integrated transition support plan developed in late 2020. In particular, MINUSMA and the country team continue to implement a set of projects in support of the political transition in the areas of electoral preparations and reforms, with a focus on increasing participation by women, as well as in support of the fight against impunity. In that regard, the United Nations Integrated Electoral Team, which is composed of the United Nations Development Programme, MINUSMA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), continues to provide important support for electoral preparations and reforms. To increase the participation and engagement of women in the electoral and political process, the Mission worked with UN-Women to establish a women's situation room, and facilitated capacity-building sessions for over 2,000

potential women candidates. Under the MINUSMA joint project with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to fight against impunity, support was provided for the development of a road map to address violence and recruitment by armed groups in prisons, for anti-corruption initiatives in the justice system and for legislative, technical and capacity-building assistance aimed at the protection of victims and witnesses.

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**
