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Internal review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council expressed its support for my proposal to conduct an internal review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and requested that such a review provide a detailed analysis of the political and security challenges that had an impact on the Mission's ability to implement its mandate; an assessment of the cooperation with the host authorities and movement restrictions; recommendations on the necessary conditions for MINUSMA to continue to operate and support the improvement of the political and security situation, deliver on its mandated tasks and enhance the robustness of its posture and its operational capacity to protect civilians, in full accordance with the principles of peacekeeping; and options on the Mission's future configuration, force levels and ceiling of uniformed personnel. The present report includes the findings and recommendations of the internal review.

2. The review began in July 2022 as a joint exercise between MINUSMA and United Nations Headquarters, under the lead of the Department of Peace Operations of the Secretariat, in consultation with the United Nations country team. The first phase was dedicated to producing an updated conflict analysis and a stocktaking exercise of the mandate implementation, followed by an examination of the Mission's configuration to ascertain whether it remained adapted to the current context. From 26 October to 3 November 2022, a technical team from the Secretariat, comprising personnel from the Department of Peace Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, joined the Mission's review team for working-level discussions with the Malian transitional authorities, the United Nations country team and other stakeholders. In November and early December, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, my Special Representative for Mali and the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa consulted with Algeria, African and permanent members of the Security Council, and troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union. On 5 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and my Special Representative for Mali participated in a meeting chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali with relevant ministers and met with the



Transitional President. Malian authorities handed over a note articulating their priorities and expectations of the review (see annex).

II. Evolution of the situation

A. Overall developments

3. Since the 2012 crisis, international actors have invested heavily in strengthening the ability of the Malian authorities to protect their territory and people. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [2100 \(2013\)](#), MINUSMA, which took over from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali in July 2013, was deployed as part of a larger international response to the multifaceted crisis facing Mali. This architecture, which expanded over time, included the French Operation Serval, transformed into Operation Barkhane in 2014; the African Union-led Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, launched in March 2013; the European Union training mission and the European Union capacity-building mission in 2014; the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, launched in 2017; and Task Force Takuba, made up of special forces from European countries, launched in 2020. Since then, the architecture has evolved, as described in paragraphs 11–13 below.

4. MINUSMA was established with the primary objective of supporting the implementation of the Preliminary Agreement to the Presidential Election and the Inclusive Peace Talks in Mali of June 2013 and facilitating the signing of a final peace agreement between the Government of Mali and the armed movements operating in the northern part of Mali, an objective achieved in 2015 thanks to the mediation spearheaded by Algeria with the participation of several other stakeholders, including the United Nations. The mutually reinforcing presence of Operation Serval, tasked with carrying out counter-terrorism operations, and of MINUSMA, which had a protection of civilians mandate, initially improved the security situation in the north. However, those gains were eroded, starting in 2016, with a dramatic increase in armed violence by terrorist and criminal networks in northern and central Mali. From the outset, some Malian and regional actors had called for a United Nations force to undertake combat operations against terrorist armed groups, a request not endorsed by the Security Council. Although robust, the mandate of MINUSMA remains fundamentally a peacekeeping mandate. This has placed the Mission in a delicate position: unable to meet the expectations of the Malian population and some regional actors, the peacekeepers have been the subject of persistent criticism even as they have done their utmost to implement the Mission's peacekeeping mandate with the proactive, robust, flexible and agile posture requested by the Council.

5. The spread of insecurity is the result of several factors: protracted instability in Libya since 2011 and international action, as well as insecurity in the wider Sahel; enduring internal governance challenges in Mali in a context marked by long-standing grievances of communities or areas that considered themselves marginalized; transnational terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, taking advantage of local conflicts and intracommunity dynamics, as well as of competition over limited resources between pastoralists and farmers, aggravated by climate change; and the prevalence of organized criminal networks fighting to control illicit trafficking routes and lucrative resources, including artisanal gold mining.

6. Following the 2012 rebellion in northern Mali, Al-Qaida-affiliated groups deepened alliances with local actors. In the centre, the group now known as the Katiba

Macina of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin capitalized on the weaknesses of the State and its inability to deliver basic social services. As it stands, State presence is at a mere 22 per cent in the central and northern regions, with 1,950 schools closed, affecting 587,400 children in the centre and north, and 1.8 million people currently needing food assistance. Moreover, the threat posed by improvised explosive devices has continued to expand across Mali, with related casualties increasing by 71 per cent from 2015 to 2022, reaching a total of 13 deaths in 2022. All of these facts demonstrate that MINUSMA is a peacekeeping operation where there is no peace to keep.

7. Subregional dynamics further compounded the situation. Mali is a key transit point on regional trading routes, including for criminal networks, towards the Gulf of Guinea, Northern Africa and Europe. This reality, combined with cross-border dynamics, has favoured instability spilling into neighbouring countries, such as Burkina Faso, and along the border with the Niger. At the same time, insecurity has increasingly affected southern Mali, in part because trafficking networks for weapons, drugs, fuel and gold, among other things, in the Liptako-Gourma area are being disrupted by counter-terrorism efforts, leading terrorist armed groups and violent extremist groups to secure trafficking routes further south, both within and beyond the borders of Mali.

8. Against that backdrop, in September 2022, the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission set up the Independent High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, led by the former President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou. The Panel is tasked with assessing the situation in the Sahel and making recommendations on ways to foster international engagement and map out responses to the challenges at hand, including those compounded by climate change. Furthermore, several initiatives have been taken recently to enhance the fight against terrorism and organized crime, including by the Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel Region, made up of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, and the Accra Initiative, which brings together Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, the Niger and Togo. ECOWAS Heads of State and Government have also decided to urgently operationalize the region's standby force to fight terrorism.

9. Popular frustration with the inability of the State to contain multiple security crises, accusations of corruption and the underperformance of the Administration of the former President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, combined with the widespread suspicion that his Government had manipulated the outcome of the 2020 legislative elections, triggered mass protests, notably in Bamako, culminating in a coup d'état in August 2020. Seven months after its inauguration, the civilian-led transitional Government was toppled by the military and its leaders replaced by Colonel Assimi Goïta as Transitional President and Choguel Maïga as Prime Minister.

10. After months of impasse and tension, marked by the imposition of regional sanctions and countermeasures by Mali, an agreement was reached in July 2022 between Mali and ECOWAS on the transition timelines, extending the transition until the end of March 2024. That focus on the political transition shifted attention away from the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

B. Shifts in the security architecture

11. The past 18 months have seen a significant restructuring of the international partnerships of Mali, with the transitional authorities stressing that their action is guided by the following principles: respect for Malian sovereignty, respect for the strategic and partnership choices made by Mali, and centrality of the vital interests of the Malian people in decision-making. In that context, Mali enhanced its existing

relationship with the Russian Federation. In contrast, relations deteriorated with France, a long-standing security partner, as well as other countries, in relation to their concerns about the presence and the operational framework of foreign security personnel belonging to the Wagner Group in support of the Malian Armed Forces. While the Government of Mali has stated that only military instructors within the framework of an agreement with the Russian Federation have deployed to Mali, Russian officials have publicly referred to the presence of the Wagner Group in the country.

12. In February 2022, France and the other European States operating within Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba announced their withdrawal from Mali, stating that conditions for their continued presence were no longer met. Those withdrawals were completed in August. The European Union training mission ceased its capacity-building support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces in April 2022, except for human rights training. Mali, for its part, announced its withdrawal from the Group of Five for the Sahel in May 2022, with the Joint Force headquarters relocating from Bamako to N'Djamena.

13. With regard to MINUSMA, starting in 2022, there were significant shifts in previous coordination and cooperation modalities, with the authorities putting in place additional requirements and restrictions, as detailed below.

III. Looking back: main achievements of and challenges for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

A. Peace process

14. Some achievements have been recorded in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali of 2015, including the end of armed belligerence between the parties, with the Technical Security Committee, chaired by MINUSMA, monitoring the ceasefire. Moreover, interim authorities have been established in the north and new regions created. In 2021, several representatives of signatory movements were included in the transitional institutions. Women, who were not part of the peace talks, are now represented in the Agreement monitoring mechanisms.

15. With MINUSMA support, 2,300 combatants have undergone the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, 1,765 of whom have been integrated into four reconstituted units in the north. In Kidal, the arrival of such a unit in 2019 marked the first formal presence of the national defence forces there since 2014. In August 2022, at the long-awaited high-level decision-making meeting, the Government proposal for the integration of 26,000 combatants into State structures was endorsed and an ad hoc commission was established to address issues of rank and chain of command. Several policies and action plans on security sector reform have been developed with the help of the Mission. Progress was also recorded on justice and reconciliation, including with the completion of the work of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. Finally, 16 pilot socioeconomic projects, including 9 for the northern regions, at an estimated cost of 38.5 billion West African CFA francs, have been agreed upon.

16. Nonetheless, the implementation process, planned for a period of between 18 and 24 months, has been slow, owing to the mistrust that prevails among the parties, fragmentation of the movements over time and misgivings about the Agreement in some segments of the Malian population and stakeholders, mostly in southern Mali. A lack of agreement among the parties prevented the completion of

the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process that targeted 3,000 combatants, while global disarmament, demobilization and reintegration failed to materialize because of differences over the chain of command and ranks. The ad hoc commission referred to above has yet to begin its work. Key institutional reforms, including the establishment of a senate, have been delayed. The preliminary draft constitution, submitted in October 2022, contains provisions that address these matters. The return of local administration and basic services is minimal, while the security situation in large parts of the north has seriously deteriorated.

17. The functioning of the monitoring mechanisms – whose secretariat is provided by MINUSMA – has been affected by tensions between the parties. From October 2021 to August 2022, the Agreement Monitoring Committee could not meet because of differences between the Government and the Coordination des mouvements de l’Azawad. It was only after the high-level decision-making meeting and a high-level session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee in September that the Committee resumed its ordinary meetings. New problems have surfaced since, linked to differences over the level of government representation at Committee meetings and other issues. In December 2022, the signatory movements questioned the viability of the Agreement and announced the suspension of their participation in its monitoring mechanisms and implementation process, pending a meeting with the international mediation team in a neutral space. At the time of reporting, efforts by the mediation team were under way to help to overcome those challenges.

B. Political transition

18. In October 2020, following the coup d’état of August 2020, the Security Council requested MINUSMA to support the political transition as a strategic priority (see [S/PRST/2020/10](#)), as it also did in its resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#) renewing the Mission’s mandate. In that context, sustained efforts were made, in collaboration with ECOWAS and the African Union as part of the local follow-up committee on the transition, to facilitate the restoration of constitutional order by February 2022. Those efforts became even more vital after the second coup in May 2021, as the new authorities sought an extension of the agreed timelines, leading to tensions with ECOWAS and the imposition of comprehensive sanctions in January 2022. MINUSMA was involved in the discussions between ECOWAS and Mali that resulted in an agreement to conclude the transition by March 2024 and the lifting of the economic and financial sanctions in July 2022. Alongside ECOWAS and the African Union, MINUSMA is part of the two-tier political and technical mechanism mandated to monitor the timetable for political and institutional reforms.

19. Since June 2022, several steps have been taken to advance the transition process, including the adoption, that month, of the electoral law, which enabled the establishment of the Independent Authority for Election Management; the elaboration of a preliminary draft constitution; the completion of the yearly update of the electoral list; and the initiation of the drafting of legislation on territorial and administrative reorganization and other related matters. The Mission is providing technical and logistical support to these efforts, as it has done for past elections.

C. Stabilization of the centre

20. Since 2016, central Mali, which accounts for 30 per cent of the country’s population, has been gripped by violence linked to competition over natural resources and other factors and compounded by the presence of terrorist and self-defence groups, as well as militias. Conflict-related violence has resulted in the deaths of

thousands of civilians, undermined social cohesion and drastically reduced the region's economic output. Human rights violations and abuses have also increased dramatically in recent years, as have humanitarian needs. Over two thirds of all improvised explosive device incidents in Mali happen in the central regions, which also have the highest number of school closures and host 54 per cent of the total number of internally displaced persons in Mali and many refugees from neighbouring countries.

21. Following the 2017 Plan de sécurisation intégrée des régions du Centre to support the gradual return of State authority, the Government, in 2019, created the Cadre politique de gestion de la crise au centre du Mali, coordinated by a permanent secretariat. In September 2022, it adopted the strategy for the stabilization of the centre and its action plan for the period 2022–2024. The strategy revolves around four axes, namely: (a) peace, security and social cohesion; (b) governance and justice; (c) humanitarian action and economic recovery; and (d) coordination and communication. Since December 2021, the authorities have stepped up military operations in the centre, which, some gains notwithstanding, have yet to sustainably reverse insecurity. Some of these operations have been marred by allegations of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law verified by MINUSMA and involving foreign security personnel, an assertion that the Malian authorities continue to reject.

22. In its resolution [2480 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council requested the Mission to facilitate the implementation by the Malian authorities of a comprehensive, inclusive, politically-focused strategy to stabilize central Mali within existing resources. While MINUSMA has done its utmost under the 2020 adaptation plan, without additional resources at its disposal it has been stretched beyond capacity. Not in a position to fully implement its mandate, it has been the object of increasing criticism from Malian authorities and the population. Nevertheless, MINUSMA has extended logistical and technical support to the design of the strategy for the stabilization of the centre and subsequently developed a plan to accompany its implementation. On the ground, MINUSMA, including in coordination with local authorities, has directly or indirectly facilitated the conclusion of 33 peace accords, which have contributed to the reduction of violence in the concerned areas and facilitated the resumption of agricultural and pastoral production. It has assisted judicial and penitentiary institutions, contributed to fostering trust between the Malian Defence and Security Forces and local populations, for example, through a pilot project in the Douentza region from February to June 2022, and supported regenerative socioeconomic activities. Other activities have included regular patrols by the uniformed component in Sévaré-Mopti and Douentza; the establishment of temporary operating bases in areas at risk (notably Ogossogou since 2020 and Douna-Pen from January to August 2020, both in the Bandiagara region); and the protection of key infrastructure and roads, as in the case of the Sévaré-Bandiagara axis. Regarding the restoration of State authority, the Mission has facilitated the rehabilitation of administrative infrastructure, including for the Malian security forces, and the provision of social services, as well as limited support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces in line with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

23. Despite these efforts, the absence of adequate resources seriously constrains the ability of MINUSMA to fully perform its mandate in the centre. The security situation, including the threats of improvised explosive devices, and, more recently, restrictions and other access constraints have further adversely affected the Mission's effectiveness, including through direct dialogue with local communities.

D. Protection of civilians

24. The protection of civilians has been, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host Government, a cross-cutting, mandated priority of MINUSMA since 2017. Presently, most of the protection of civilians incidents occur in contested areas in central and north-eastern Mali, resulting either from clashes between the State and violent extremist groups or among self-defence groups, or deliberate attacks by violent extremist groups against civilians. In the Gao and Ménaka regions, extremist armed groups expanded their reach, fuelling high levels of violence and the internal displacement of over 30,000 persons in a matter of a few months. As at 15 September 2022, 5.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance and more than 440,000 were internally displaced across the country, an increase of 25 per cent in the past two years. Gender-based sexual violence in Mali has increased by 40 per cent since 2020. Children have also been particularly affected, with over 2,000 children recruited or used by armed groups since 2014.

25. In that context, the Mission developed an early warning and rapid response mechanism as a tool to provide timely alerts on potential risks to civilians and initiate adequate responses by MINUSMA in collaboration with the Malian forces. In support of the latter objective, efforts have been made to protect urban centres from the risk of spillover of intercommunal violence in rural areas, including in weekly markets, and attacks against critical infrastructure. A key feature of these activities has been the establishment of temporary operating bases, which are essential in stabilizing particular areas and facilitating reconciliation. Capacity-building for the criminal justice system, infrastructure support to facilitate the return of State authority and the promotion of better relations between the Malian Defence and Security Forces and local populations have also been part of the Mission's efforts. MINUSMA has provided explosive risk education and awareness-raising to affected communities; set up a rapid response mechanism to assist survivors of explosive hazards; and developed the capacity of civil society organizations in mine action-related activities, while coordinating the humanitarian mine action response to enable improved humanitarian access. More broadly, MINUSMA has helped to maintain relative security in locations where it has a permanent presence.

26. Nevertheless, the situation on the ground remains of utmost concern. Resource and capacity constraints, as well as access restrictions, make it even more challenging for the MINUSMA uniformed component to offer physical protection and for civilian pillars to reach populations in need. Ultimately, only an integrated approach by the Malian authorities to promote social cohesion, respond to the basic needs of local populations, ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the conduct of military operations and fight against impunity will meaningfully and durably improve the lives of civilians.

E. Human rights and protection

27. Since its deployment, MINUSMA has devoted sustained attention to the human rights and protection environment, with a focus on the monitoring and investigation of and public reporting on human rights violations and abuses. In this respect, quarterly notes have been published since 2020, in addition to support extended to other United Nations mechanisms also reporting on human rights in Mali. In 2022 alone, 35 special investigations into serious human rights violations and abuses committed by State and non-State actors have been undertaken. The Mission has also provided capacity-building and other types of support for civil society, relevant State structures and the Malian Defence and Security Forces, including training for defence personnel. Efforts have also focused on conflict-related sexual violence and on the

six grave violations against children in armed conflict. In that context, the Government signed a joint communiqué on conflict-related sexual violence in 2019, while the two main signatory movements to the Agreement committed to action plans on child protection in 2017 and 2021, respectively. In 2022, MINUSMA conducted 195 risk assessments on non-United Nations security forces, including the Malian Defence and Security Forces, prior to the provision of assistance.

28. These efforts have been undertaken in a particularly challenging environment, characterized by renewed attacks against civilians by terrorist groups, both in the centre and the north, particularly in the Ménaka and Gao regions, and by the actions of self-defence groups. Also of concern are violations and abuses committed during military operations conducted by the Malian Armed Forces, including those involving foreign security personnel. From July 2021 to June 2022, MINUSMA documented 1,883 human rights incidents. While the expressed commitment of the Government to uphold human rights and international humanitarian law and related efforts are welcome, impunity and the lack of accountability remain serious challenges. Furthermore, restrictions on freedom of movement have also adversely affected the ability of the Mission to conduct in situ investigations, pointing to the need for greater cooperation from the authorities. Finally, as Mali enters a critical year for the electoral process, respect for fundamental freedoms and rights becomes even more pressing for a fair process and to ensure credible polls. The past year has seen a worrying trend characterized by shrinking civic space, including the role of the media and the political opposition.

F. Stabilization and recovery and other related matters

29. Since its inception, MINUSMA has facilitated the implementation of 863 quick-impact projects, amounting to \$34.6 million, and 282 other projects through the trust fund in support of peace and security in Mali, which is supported by donor contributions totalling \$101 million. These projects play a key role in advancing mandated strategic priorities, notably by bringing peace dividends to the population and enabling the return of State representatives. Leveraging the Mission's presence and access across northern and central Mali, these projects have enabled, among other things, the installation of solar power street lights, the construction and rehabilitation of gendarmerie and police stations as well as security checkpoints, and the construction of security trenches on the outskirts of cities. Funding has also been made available for infrastructure rehabilitation or construction (bridges in the Bandiagara region and airstrips in Kidal, Ménaka and Gao, among other infrastructure), water and sanitation, agriculture, health, and culture and media initiatives.

30. In addition, since its deployment, the Mission has made determined efforts to increase the local share in procurement processes. Accordingly, since 2013, MINUSMA has organized several business seminars for Malian vendors in Bamako. In 2022, business seminars were organized in Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti and, most recently in December 2022, the Mission, with the support of the relevant Headquarters structures, organized a business seminar in Bamako for food-producing companies. Furthermore, in the 2020, 2021 and 2022 financial years, MINUSMA made purchases from Malian vendors of \$46 million, \$53 million and \$48 million, respectively, bearing in mind that strategic goods and services in support of missions' operations are procured by United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Mission will continue its outreach activities to promote further participation by the local market in its solicitation exercises and increase opportunities to source goods and services to the maximum extent possible from Malian vendors. Moreover, in cooperation with the United Nations country team, the Mission will work to increase the competitiveness of local producers within the United Nations Global Marketplace.

G. Operational and other challenges

31. Mali is one of the most difficult operating environments for peacekeeping. A first set of challenges relates to size of the area of operation, the state of the infrastructure and the length of the Mission's supply lines, aggravated by the status of Mali as a landlocked country and the pervasiveness of asymmetric threats. To sustain its bases, especially in the north, MINUSMA supply convoys can take up to four weeks to get to the furthest locations. Poor infrastructure, especially roads, hamper resupply activities and cause a high attrition rate. During their movement, convoys are exposed to ambushes and improvised explosive device attacks by hostile elements. Since July 2013, 548 improvised explosive device attacks have targeted MINUSMA, killing 103 and wounding 638 uniformed personnel.

32. The Mission has done its best to adjust, particularly after it was mandated to support the stabilization of the centre within existing resources in 2019. The 2020 force adaptation plan focused on sourcing critical enablers. Progress has been made in mobilizing some of these capabilities, but, as at December 2022, many were still missing. The Mission is expecting an armed helicopter unit for Gao by April 2023 and a utility helicopter unit in Timbuktu by August 2023, while the armed helicopter unit, currently in Timbuktu, will be redeployed to Mopti. The implementation of the force adaptation plan was also delayed by protracted discussions with the Government over the allocation of land to build critical infrastructure for air assets in Mopti and Timbuktu. As a result, an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance unit pledged in early 2020 has not been deployed to Timbuktu as the Mission is awaiting the Government's authorization to build on a 5-hectare parcel of land.

33. In the meantime, the withdrawal of international forces and the cessation of operations of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel have left a security void that violent extremist groups have exploited, particularly in the Liptako-Gourma triborder area. In response, the Mission has redeployed to Ménaka a company previously based in Ansongo while also using its few armed helicopters for deterrence operations in the Gao and Ménaka areas. Increased insecurity along main supply routes has compelled the Mission to dedicate non-combat convoy company units to the protection of supply convoys along previously unescorted routes (Labézanga-Gao), further increasing pressure on the force and forcing trade-offs with mandated tasks, including the protection of civilians. Currently, only one out of the four combat convoy companies is operating.

34. Over the past year, the transitional authorities have questioned some of the provisions of the 2013 status-of-forces agreement, arguing that they are not in line with national law. Mutual respect for the agreement is essential for the predictable management of any peacekeeping operation. As outlined in my most recent report (S/2023/21), MINUSMA has experienced significant air and ground restrictions concentrated in sector East (Gao region) and sector Centre (Mopti and Bandiagara regions). Malian security authorities cite insecurity, ongoing military operations by the Malian Armed Forces or coordination problems within the Mission for the restrictions on movement. While the proportion of movement restrictions may on the surface appear small in comparison to the scope of the Mission's total operations, their impact is significant because they tend to occur where protection needs are critical, and thus they undermine the Mission's ability to respond pre-emptively or quickly to protection of civilians concerns. Moreover, movement restrictions increase the exposure of MINUSMA personnel to security risks in an already dangerous environment in which 165 peacekeepers have been killed and 687 injured by hostile action since July 2013. In November 2022, new modalities for the authorization of the use of air assets were agreed between the Mission and Malian authorities, and a

working group was created to examine on a regular basis all operational difficulties, including rotations, allocation of land and issuance of customs clearances.

35. Undeclared caveats by some troop- and police-contributing countries have further hampered performance, resulting in limitations on where units are allowed to deploy and what tasks they are willing to undertake. With four troop-contributing countries having ended or planning to end their tour of duty with MINUSMA between 2022 and 2024, the Mission's operations will come under additional pressure, thereby affecting mandate implementation. The announced withdrawals mean a loss of over 2,250 troops, which is roughly 17 per cent of the current force strength. Force generation efforts are under way to replace these units. Some troop- and police-contributing countries have already indicated their interest in deploying to Mali. However, most of the troop-contributing countries concerned will need time and assistance from partners to acquire the equipment required by MINUSMA standard unit requirements.

36. As in other peacekeeping contexts, misinformation and disinformation have also had an impact on the implementation of the MINUSMA mandate and the safety of peacekeepers. These destabilizing activities have centred around key narratives, notably that the Mission "is ineffective in helping Mali to regain stability", "is a tool for foreign agendas" or "is deliberately engaging in harmful activities".

IV. Consultations with stakeholders and the way forward

A. Stakeholders' views

37. In consultations on the way forward, the Government viewed the review as an opportunity to adjust to the current realities. Highlighting the expectations of the Malian people for improved security, it called for a change in the Mission's posture. It requested that MINUSMA plan jointly with the Malian Armed Forces to help to stabilize areas freed from the presence of extremist groups; provide rations and fuel, medical and casualty evacuations, transportation and logistics to the Malian Armed Forces and share intelligence with it; and construct and rehabilitate military infrastructure, especially in the centre. The Government indicated that, without prejudice to the concurrence of Mali with the deployment of an additional 1,000 Chadian troops, it was not convinced of the relevance of a further increase in the authorized ceiling at this stage. The Government also outlined areas for support regarding the transition, including good offices for the achievement of a broad consensus around the required political and institutional reforms and the holding of elections; the implementation of the Agreement, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, justice and reconciliation-related matters, and the redeployment of reconstituted units; and the stabilization of the centre, including the restoration of State authority and basic services, the fight against impunity, the promotion and protection of human rights and local reconciliation. It stressed the need for the Mission to support the national economy by enhancing the local share in procurement processes and increasing the number of local staff, as well as by contributing to infrastructure development.

38. The Government urged MINUSMA to refrain from actions it viewed as being detrimental to national unity and social cohesion, deploring what it perceived as the "politicization and instrumentalization" of human rights. It denied any attempt to obstruct the pursuit of the Mission's mandate. Finally, it proposed that the existing coordination mechanism at the technical level be transformed into a commission that would monitor and coordinate the follow-up to the recommendations of the review.

39. For their part, most of the Member States and other partners consulted highlighted the importance of the continued presence of MINUSMA, stressing that its withdrawal would be very detrimental to Mali and regional security. That point was emphasized by several countries of the subregion and from other parts of the continent, who saw the expansion of terrorist armed groups as an existential threat beyond the Sahel and West Africa. However, pointing to the human and financial cost of the Mission, some Member States also underlined that, unless the restrictions imposed on the Mission were lifted, they might be compelled to reconsider their support to MINUSMA. One Member State expressed the view that while peacekeeping operations could provide some level of assistance to national armies, assessed contributions were not intended for logistical support to an army or the funding of large-scale infrastructure projects. All interlocutors stressed the importance of the commitment of Mali to completing the ongoing political processes and the need for sustained international support in that respect.

40. Several Member States highlighted that improved relations between Mali and the subregion and enhanced regional security cooperation would be instrumental for the success of the transition and the stabilization of the country. Some added that it was equally important for the effectiveness of MINUSMA. As approximately 46 per cent of the Mission's uniformed personnel hail from ECOWAS member States, it would be unfortunate if mandate implementation was, once again, hampered by tensions between the host authorities and troop- and police-contributing countries from the region.

B. Main lines of effort for the Mission

41. Despite significant shifts in the political and security environment in which MINUSMA was first deployed, the overall assessment of the review, including through consultations with the host authorities, determined that the current strategic priorities and related tasks remained relevant, especially through the end of the transition in March 2024.

Support to the restoration of State authority

42. The restoration of State authority, including justice, defence and security institutions, will be critical for the holding of credible elections, the protection of civilians and the implementation of political and institutional reforms articulated during the national dialogue on the reform process of December 2021. In the period ahead and given the extent of the request for support made by the Malian authorities, there will be a need for enhanced coordination and planning between all stakeholders to ensure the optimized use of available resources and implementation in a cross-cutting manner.

43. In the north, the Agreement provides the requisite entry points for the return of State authority, with implementation tailored to the specific realities of the different regions. In the centre, the return of State authority will prioritize political interactions with local stakeholders, including armed and self-defence groups, as a key element for the stabilization of this area and in line with the outcomes of the national dialogues held in 2017 and 2019. The Mission could assist the authorities by providing support to create basic conditions for administrations to operate, with a view to eventually handing over responsibilities to the Malian authorities. Support to the restoration of basic social services will need to be closely coordinated with the United Nations country team, including through enhanced efforts to capitalize on the comparative advantages of the Mission and partners.

44. Support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces will be critical to the restoration of State authority, keeping in mind that the request made by the Malian authorities, as outlined in paragraph 37 above, is in line with the Mission's strategic objectives. MINUSMA has already facilitated the redeployment of reconstituted Malian Defence and Security Forces units to the north. Limited life support has been provided for the Malian Armed Forces camp in Tessalit, following the withdrawal of Barkhane forces in August 2022. Similarly, MINUSMA has supported the redeployment of the Malian Defence and Security Forces to stabilize the centre through 23 trust fund projects worth more than \$6 million since 2013, the launch of almost 50 casualty and medical evacuations since 2021 and the provision of transport and fuel. Also, in the centre, the Mission facilitated rotations for the Malian Defence and Security Forces in Farabougou in late November 2021 and early December 2022. The Malian Defence and Security Forces also benefited from the support given to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel until the withdrawal of Mali from the Group. All support has been provided in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy.

45. Going forward, support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces in the north would be woven into an overall strategy for the restoration of State authority, prioritizing the operationalization of the reconstituted battalions, to foster a phased return of a locally accepted, sustainable and effective presence of State-provided security. Such support would include casualty and medical evacuations, deployment and rotations, fuel and lubricants, rations and the maintenance of infrastructure. Support would also continue for the Malian Defence and Security Forces in the centre with the necessary adjustments in terms of scope to consider the requirements of the situation. In this respect, and to ensure efficacy and the optimized use of existing resources, renewed efforts would be made to ensure the implementation of the November 2017 memorandum of understanding between MINUSMA and the Government of Mali. These renewed efforts are even more necessary as other coordination mechanisms, notably the Instance de coordination au Mali for defence forces and its equivalent for the security forces, are no longer functional.

46. Cooperation with the Malian forces would be set against mutually agreed objectives, with a view to supporting the restoration of State authority. Any support would be subject to the human rights due diligence policy. It should also not compromise the provision of support to United Nations personnel and the implementation of priority tasks, nor should it expose United Nations personnel to unwarranted security risks and threats. Considering the caveats that several donors have recently introduced regarding the use of their contributions, owing to human rights concerns, progress in accountability for human rights violations by Malian authorities and greater cooperation with MINUSMA for the implementation of its mandate in this area would be paramount.

Support to the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

47. As part of the international mediation, under the leadership of Algeria as *chef de file*, the Mission will continue to promote the required level of trust among the parties for them to decisively move the process forward during the remainder of the ongoing transition. Constant political engagement, particularly through the good offices of the Special Representative, will remain key.

48. Attention will be devoted to the operationalization of the ad hoc commission tasked with making recommendations on the chain of command and ranks. Progress on this aspect will pave the way for global disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, with which MINUSMA stands ready to assist in accordance with its mandate. Support for the full operationalization of the reconstituted battalions will

continue. The Mission will also support relevant Malian structures in preparation for global disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as ongoing processes for the socioeconomic reintegration of 900 women, financed by the World Bank, and the review of the status of the 400 former combatants declared unfit.

49. The Mission will encourage the broadest possible consensus on the provisions of the draft constitution relating to the Agreement, as well as supporting the advancement of other institutional reforms, including the law on the role of qadis and other traditional authorities, the territorial police and territorial reorganization. In parallel, support will continue for the already established interim authorities and for State representatives and bodies, with a particular focus on the delivery of basic services to local communities. The Mission will follow up on the recommendations of the International Commission of Inquiry on Mali and the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission.

50. The Mission will strive to foster gender-responsive local peace processes, reconciliation and social cohesion among communities. Interventions by the Mission will consider local contexts. Strengthened coordination with the United Nations country team and partners will remain essential to facilitate the delivery of peace dividends, build public confidence in the peace process and lay the groundwork to restore the social contract between State authorities and local populations. Finally, the international mediation team will continue to play a fundamental role, including by exercising, as necessary, the arbitration powers entrusted to it by the Agreement and the Pact for Peace in Mali of 2018.

Support to the political transition

51. The Mission will support the operationalization of the remaining Independent Authority for Election Management components as well as the completion of the outstanding pieces of legislation. Similarly, the Mission will assist in the mobilization of the required financial resources, including by using the good offices of the Special Representative. These good offices will also be exercised to encourage consensus around the electoral process, in close coordination with the other members of the local follow-up committee. Finally, as it did in the past, the Mission will, within capabilities, contribute to securing the electoral process, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the Malian authorities. Logistical support will also be provided for the holding of elections.

Support to the stabilization of the centre

52. Considering the situation described above, MINUSMA intends to enhance its support for the strategy for the stabilization of the centre and its associated action plan. This support would entail constant advocacy and strengthening of the capacity of the permanent secretariat in Bamako and of its local structures in the central regions.

53. In the field, focus will be on restoring State authority and fostering reconciliation and social cohesion. Priority areas of joint intervention will be identified in coordination with the authorities and the United Nations country team. Enhanced coordination with Malian defence and security forces, as well as rehabilitation of administrative infrastructure, would help to create conditions conducive to the return and functioning of local administration. This enhanced presence of civilian authorities would create a knock-on effect for the reopening and rehabilitation of schools and health facilities. Promoting the rule of law, facilitating the delivery of basic services and building socioeconomic resilience will also remain central. Attention will be paid to supporting the development of a secure environment to enable humanitarian access through a “One United Nations” approach to protect

and assist internally displaced persons, as well as women and children affected by conflict. Programmes aimed at reducing radicalization among young people will continue, in parallel with community rehabilitation programmes for youth at risk and members of self-defence militias. Ultimately, inclusive sustainable development is the only long-term solution to fragility.

54. The Mission will continue to promote State-owned initiatives grounded in grass-roots solutions that leverage local reconciliation and social cohesion efforts. Increased support to the regional reconciliation support teams and communal reconciliation committees would enhance the participation of State actors in conflict resolution. In coordination with the Government, MINUSMA would further engage with self-defence groups and local communities, which would also allow the Mission to reinforce its initiatives to tackle misinformation and disinformation at the grass-roots level.

55. MINUSMA will prioritize the use of available capacity and resources to respond to early warning in areas where it is already conducting regular operations. For this purpose, the Mission will rely on information provided by its early warning networks, the protection of civilians call centre and the rapid response capabilities of the force. The Mission will continue to support the defence and security forces on the basis of the human rights due diligence policy, to advocate for the equal treatment of all communities and to promote the rule of law. Efforts will be made with the United Nations country team and national and international partners to mitigate the risk to civilians before, during and after military operations, in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. Additional initiatives are envisaged to enhance mutual trust between civilians and defence and security forces. Mindful of the importance of the equitable and efficient management of natural resources, the Mission intends to support the revival of statutory local land conflict management and prevention committees to advance the implementation of the “Pastoral Charter”, including in relation to climate change concerns. Finally, the Mission plans to increase support to police and judicial authorities to investigate and try cases of cattle rustling.

Support to the protection of civilians and human rights

56. MINUSMA intends to enhance its protection of civilians early warning and rapid response mechanism, which offers short- and medium-term responses, provides relief to communities at risk and gives valuable insights into the conflict dynamics that will eventually help to design more appropriate responses. The Mission’s politically oriented activities to protect civilians, including support for dialogue and the sustained restoration of State authority, will remain a priority, as will patrols and other modalities for physical protection, while promoting more realistic expectations in terms of how much physical protection can be provided. In undertaking these activities, the Mission will adopt a tailored approach based on local conflict dynamics in the regions. National-level stabilization efforts will seek to support the Malian authorities to prevent the recruitment of young people into extremist armed groups and violations of human rights.

57. However, a successful strategy for the protection of civilians will rest with the Malian authorities, who bear primary responsibility in this respect. To this end, the Mission, in collaboration with other stakeholders, will encourage and support the development and implementation of a comprehensive national protection of civilians strategy, including through negotiated solutions, disarmament and demobilization, community-led stabilization efforts, and support to local conflict resolution. It will also continue to urge that every effort be made to ensure that military operations respect human rights and that alleged violations be fully investigated and their perpetrators held to account. Strengthening dialogue, providing capacity support and

engaging closely to agree on further action and have a common agenda will remain critical.

58. Efforts will continue to strengthen dialogue with national authorities to create an atmosphere that is more conducive to the implementation of the MINUSMA human rights mandate. Collaboration for the building of capacity of relevant State structures and the Malian Defence and Security Forces will remain critical and is envisaged to be enhanced. In undertaking all these activities, MINUSMA will seek to develop partnerships with the relevant regional and subregional entities, particularly those of the African Union.

Countering misinformation and disinformation

59. Countering misinformation and disinformation will greatly help in advancing mandate implementation and enhancing the safety of peacekeepers. In this respect, the Mission will proactively use messaging and information-sharing to foster an improved understanding of its role and impact, as well as to strengthen its institutional credibility with the Malian population through a wide variety of media, including radio, social media and proxy communications. The Mission intends to leverage and create new partnerships with key actors, notably civil society organizations, cultural actors, journalists and counterparts in the Government, to facilitate the timely circulation of accurate information, building on ongoing efforts.

60. In coordination with the Secretariat, MINUSMA plans to develop a strategy on countering misinformation and disinformation based on the understanding that this is not strictly a strategic communications issue, but one that needs to be approached holistically and relies on enhanced partnerships at various levels, including the host authorities, learning from best practices in other peacekeeping missions. While the strategy would seek to foster a more systematic use of technological tools to monitor, analyse, anticipate and address misinformation and disinformation targeting the Mission, it would also consider the context in which the Mission operates, including by identifying ways to engage more effectively at the grass-roots level.

C. Parameters for effective engagement by the Mission

61. Peacekeeping is fundamentally a partnership endeavour. Its success hinges on the level of cooperation and support it receives from the host country, as well as on the extent to which members of the international community rally behind it.

62. The ability of MINUSMA to effectively deliver on its mandate and support the improvement of the political and security situation will hinge on four key parameters: (a) advances in the political transition, in accordance with the electoral timetable issued by the transitional authorities; (b) progress in the implementation of the Agreement; (c) freedom of movement, including for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets critical for the safety and security of peacekeepers; and (d) the ability to implement the entirety of the Security Council mandate, including its human rights provisions. These parameters would form the basis for a stable and predictable relationship between the Mission and Malian authorities, within the framework of the status-of-forces agreement.

63. Good neighbourly relations between the host authorities and the countries of the subregion will be essential to support the implementation of the mandate. Following the agreement between Mali and ECOWAS on the transition timetable and the pardon granted by the Transitional President to the 49 Ivorian soldiers detained in Bamako in 2022, it is hoped that renewed cooperation between Mali and neighbouring countries will help to enable increased cooperation in addressing common security challenges.

64. To effectively implement its mandate, MINUSMA needs the full support of all Member States to fill the existing long-standing capacity gaps, to provide the required uniformed personnel and, for current troop- and police-contributing countries, to remove caveats. From the neighbouring countries, greater facilitation of transit through their respective territories is paramount. Ever closer partnership with the African Union and ECOWAS, as well as with other multilateral and bilateral actors, will remain of critical importance to advance the ongoing political processes.

V. Options for the reconfiguration of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

65. The expansion of the mandate of MINUSMA in 2019 without additional capacity has overstretched the Mission. The current situation is unsustainable. The withdrawal of the international forces, which had contributed to camp and area protection; outstanding critical air assets envisaged in the force adaptation plan; undeclared caveats; and the impending withdrawal of some troop- and police-contributing countries from MINUSMA have exacerbated these challenges. Against this backdrop and considering the worsening asymmetric threats and the significant increase in resources required by MINUSMA to mitigate them, the Mission's role and responsibilities need to be reviewed and its posture and configuration adjusted accordingly. As requested by the Security Council, I would like to propose three options for the Council's consideration.

66. In addition to having the key parameters for the Mission to operate in place, MINUSMA would need to have the required resources to implement its mandate in a security environment that has significantly deteriorated in the north-east of the country. At a minimum, it would need to reconfigure its uniformed component to increase its manoeuvrability. Two of the three options below seek to address this issue. The third one assumes that the key parameters for the Mission to operate are not in place. In addition, options 2 and 3 would have a significant impact on how safely the United Nations country team can deliver its programmes.

A. Option 1: full capacity to implement the Mission's mandate in its entirety across all areas of its deployment¹

Option 1 (a): augmentation by 3,680 uniformed personnel

67. Assuming that all parameters for the Mission to operate are in place and enabling regional conditions exist, this option would allow the Mission to restore mobility, manoeuvrability and responsiveness; improve its overall capacity to protect civilians; and facilitate the provision of the additional support requested by the Government.

68. This option envisages increasing the MINUSMA troop and police ceiling by 3,680 personnel. It would provide for the establishment of a new camp in Bourem, to serve as an anchor along the main supply route connecting Timbuktu to Gao as well as closing the casualty evacuation gap along the Gao-Kidal axis; and the deployment, in each sector, of a dedicated quick reaction force unit of 250 personnel, a force protection company of 150 personnel, a combat engineering company of 107 personnel, an information operations team of 10 personnel, two additional explosive

¹ The increase of the troop and police ceilings proposed in options 1 (a) and 1 (b) is preliminary and will be adjusted on the basis of the findings of a joint military and police capability study that will further define the uniformed personnel requirements for options 1 and 2 in the first quarter of 2023.

ordnance disposal companies of 140 personnel and 15 military staff officers. Additional capacities would be deployed as follows: (a) sector East: a medium utility helicopter unit of 120 personnel and an airfield support unit of 30 personnel in the new camp in Bourem; (b) sector West: a river crossing unit of 107 personnel and a combat convoy unit of 240 personnel; (c) sector North: a combat convoy unit of 240 personnel; and (d) sector Centre: an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance unit of 250 personnel. An additional 80 police personnel would be deployed to strengthen the formed police units in Mopti and Douentza.

69. The deployment of additional specialized capacity would enhance the ability of the Mission to adopt a proactive, robust, flexible and agile posture in all aspects of mandate implementation, as requested by the Security Council. It would free infantry units currently providing security and convoy escort to advance the implementation of the Mission's two strategic priorities. The Mission would be in a position to provide the enhanced support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces requested by the Government, including the stabilization of areas freed from the presence of terrorist and violent extremist groups.

70. There are several challenges associated with this option. First, the timelines for securing pledges from troop- and police-contributing countries and deploying additional uniformed personnel would be long and would depend on various external factors. In addition, there would be a need for a significant investment in infrastructure, renewed negotiations with the Government to secure land and a commensurate increase in human resources for the mission support component. Finally, an increased ceiling may further raise expectations that the Mission would conduct counter-terrorism activities.

Option 1 (b): augmentation by approximately 2,000 uniformed personnel

71. A more modest augmentation of approximately 2,000 personnel would also improve the Mission's overall ability to implement its mandate and enable it to take on some of the additional tasks listed in the note from the Malian authorities contained in the annex to the present report. This option foresees notably the establishment of a new camp in Bourem, and the deployment of dedicated quick reaction force units of 250 personnel each in all sectors and of a combat engineer company of 107 personnel in sectors West, Centre and East. It also provides for the deployment of one additional combat convoy unit to facilitate resupply operations and one additional explosive ordnance disposal company of 140 personnel to enhance protection against improvised explosive devices in all sectors. An additional 80 police personnel would be deployed to strengthen the formed police units in Mopti and Douentza.

72. This option would increase force concentration in parts of the theatre, connect the eastern and western supply corridors and enhance the Mission's medical and casualty evacuation coverage. In addition to the challenge associated with force generation, this option would improve manoeuvrability only to a certain extent. Although this option assumes that key parameters for the Mission to operate are in place, including necessary authorizations for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights, in the absence of an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance unit in sector Centre peacekeepers would not have the protection required to operate in a high improvised explosive device threat environment. With reference to the Government's request contained in the annex, the Mission may be in a position to provide some additional logistical support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces but would not have all the personnel required to take on the stabilization of areas freed from extremist armed groups in addition to delivering on its existing mandated tasks.

B. Option 2: maintaining focus on the strategic priorities with a consolidated footprint²

Option 2 (a): reconfiguration to support existing mandated priorities

73. Should key parameters be met but appropriate resources remain unmet, the Mission would need to reconfigure to optimize the use of the resources at its disposal, through the closure or handover of some of the smaller camps in locations without significant protection of civilians concerns. The objective would be to reduce the volume of resources devoted to self-protection and the logistics burden borne by the existing footprint for the Mission to increase its responsiveness. The uniformed component would be in a better position to support civilian pillars and the implementation of protection activities, as well as other aspects of the mandate. The reconfiguration would be implemented in a phased and coordinated manner with the Malian authorities.

74. The following steps would be taken: (a) the immediate closure and handover of the camp in Ber and redeployment to Timbuktu of the peacekeepers operating from that outpost; (b) the coordinated withdrawal of MINUSMA from Tessalit and Aguelhok within an appropriate time frame, and the handover of those camps to reconstituted battalions of the Malian army, as part of the Mission's exit strategy; (c) a reassessment of the number of individual police officers in northern Mali; (d) an increase in the uniformed presence in Ménaka and Ansongo, including by relocating one formed police unit from Bamako to Ansongo; and (e) the leveraging of the Mission's existing footprint in central Mali as staging points for increased integrated field missions geared towards the protection of civilians at risk, in particular through support for local dialogue and restoration of State authority.

75. The handover or closure of camps could be perceived as MINUSMA abandoning local populations, especially as it would be more difficult to implement projects in those areas. Sustained strategic communication would be required to explain the rationale for the Mission's adjusted footprint. The proposal hinges not only on the signatories of the Agreement making swift progress in the implementation of its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration provisions, but also on the ability of the reconstituted units to operate effectively, without which there is a risk of resurgence of violence in some locations and of the takeover of those locations by extremist groups. Some logistical support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces may be provided, but not at the level expected by the Government, and the Mission would not have the personnel to provide security to areas freed from extremist groups.

Option 2 (b): reconfiguration within existing troop ceiling, focusing primarily on supporting the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

76. This option would entail a reconfiguration within the existing ceiling to focus primarily on support to the implementation of the Agreement, with a significant reduction of the Mission's uniformed and civilian presence in central Mali. The Mission's support for the Government to restore State authority in the centre would be largely coordinated and supported from Bamako. This option would enable an increased concentration of forces in northern Mali. The option involves the following: (a) a reduction of the force's presence in Sévaré and Douentza to the minimum required for logistics and convoy support and the concomitant handover of security responsibilities to the Malian Defence and Security Forces; (b) the redeployment of the two formed police units in Mopti and the formed police unit in Douentza, as well

² The reconfiguration proposed in options 2 (a) and 2 (b) is preliminary and will be adjusted on the basis of the findings of a joint military and police capability study.

as of the individual police officers operating in central Mali, to Timbuktu, Gao and Ansongo; (c) the immediate closure and handover of the temporary operating base in Ogossogou, with troops deployed there and the bulk of those in Douentza and Sévaré redeployed to sector East; and (d) the immediate closure and handover of the camp in Ber and the redeployment of the soldiers operating there to Timbuktu.

77. Given that the Mission has never had the means to fully meet the protection of civilians challenges in the centre, and that this is also an area with a high number of restrictions on mandate implementation, refocusing the Mission's efforts on northern Mali would optimize the use of resources, allowing MINUSMA to better address the rising protection of civilians needs in the Gao and Ménaka regions compared with option 2 (a). However, a significant reduction of the uniformed and civilian presence of the Mission in the centre may result in the expansion of extremist armed groups and a concomitant deterioration of the security situation in the region, which serves as a critical link between northern and southern Mali. The MINUSMA police component would no longer be able to support capacity-building efforts in situ, and diminished access for the Mission would adversely affect the United Nations country team and humanitarian actors, as well as human rights monitoring. The Mission would not be able to support the Malian Defence and Security Forces outside its reconstituted units in the north. Finally, if implemented during the transition, this option would seriously undercut the ability of the Mission to support the electoral process.

C. Option 3: withdrawal of uniformed units and conversion into a special political mission

78. Should the key parameters for the Mission to operate under its current mandate not be met, consideration should be given to its transition to a special political mission. Close coordination with the Malian Defence and Security Forces would help to ensure that the withdrawal of uniformed personnel does not create a security vacuum that extremist groups would use to gain control over an increasingly large portion of Mali. A drastic acceleration in the implementation of the security provisions of the Agreement would thus be even more important.

79. In the absence of a uniformed component, the Mission would not be able to maintain a civilian presence outside Bamako, owing to the asymmetric threat environment. It would thus consolidate its presence in Bamako and would be able to continue to provide support to political dialogue and reconciliation processes; capacity-building for good governance; and human rights monitoring, promotion and protection, and encourage the re-establishment of State authority. A force guard unit would be required to provide security for the remaining civilian personnel in Bamako, the size of which would depend on the configuration and requirements of the Mission's good offices. The special political mission would not be able to provide operational support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

80. Under this option, the human and financial cost of the Mission would be reduced drastically. However, it would likely result in a serious deterioration of the security situation in Mali. Protection of civilians incidents and human rights violations and abuses would increase significantly and access by humanitarian and development partners, including the United Nations country team, would diminish tremendously.

81. Of note, some of the major strategic risks facing Mali lie beyond the scope of the Mission's mandate. The options above all presuppose that the Malian Defence and Security Forces and signatory armed groups would manage to contain the extremist threat in their security and political dimensions. However, a further expansion of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara

cannot be ruled out, notably if the Agreement unravels. Moreover, an effective response to the extremist threat will require enhanced cooperation not only between Mali and its neighbours but also between the countries of the Sahel and those of the Gulf of Guinea.

VI. Observations

82. Ten years after the onset of the crisis in Mali, the situation in the country remains deeply concerning. As described in the review's findings, and despite the efforts made by successive Malian authorities, with tremendous international support, the crisis has continued to grow in complexity. Violence, initially concentrated in the north, has gradually expanded to affect large swathes of the country. It has triggered a complex humanitarian crisis, including the displacement of over 400,000 people and a significant increase in the number of those in need of humanitarian assistance, as well as large-scale violations and abuses of human rights. Thousands of civilians have lost their lives. Terrorism, criminal activity, and intercommunity and intracommunity violence have combined to limit the population's access to already scarce basic services, destroy livelihoods and infrastructure and tear apart the social fabric.

83. The prevailing situation is the result of a confluence of multiple factors. While some of these are linked to overall security developments in the Sahel and the wider region, it is also clear that their impact would have been significantly mitigated had the country not been facing serious and long-standing governance deficiencies. These must be resolutely addressed. The recommendations made by the 2021 national dialogue on the reform process offer very useful lines of action, notably for the restoration of State authority. I welcome the follow-up steps taken by the Malian authorities in this context, notably the adoption of a framework for the rebuilding of the State, and pledge the commitment of the United Nations system to assist the ongoing efforts, including in coordination with the African Union and ECOWAS, which, over the years, have developed instruments on governance to which Mali is a party.

84. The 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is a crucial component of the reform agenda aimed at renewing the social contract and entrenching stability. While advances have been made in taking forward some of its provisions, in the current context in Mali, delays come at a high cost for both the country and its people. It is imperative that the parties recommit to the diligent pursuit of the peace process. Concluding the political transition within the timelines agreed with ECOWAS will be equally important to allow legitimate institutions to take forward the required governance reforms and will facilitate the mobilization of the support that Mali needs at this juncture. I urge the authorities to stay the course and build the broadest possible consensus on the political and institutional reforms. Finally, sustained efforts to implement the strategy for the stabilization of the centre will remain of utmost importance.

85. In the past few months, the Malian authorities have stepped up military operations in parts of the country. These operations are a critical component of the efforts aimed at addressing insecurity, but they can only produce lasting results if conducted in line with human rights and international humanitarian law principles and are part of a larger response that addresses the underlying root causes of violence and instability. The United Nations further stands ready to enhance its assistance to Malian authorities in their efforts to promote and protect human rights and ensure accountability, including by enhancing capacity-building support. In this context, human rights monitoring remains of critical importance. MINUSMA must be able to effectively implement its human rights mandate, and I look forward to the full cooperation of the Malian authorities, particularly in terms of access.

86. When the Security Council decided to deploy a United Nations peacekeeping operation to Mali, the objective was to assist the Malian State to regain its legitimacy and extend its authority throughout its territory to protect its population and ensure that its territory did not become a platform for terrorist activity. While new dynamics have emerged and the security architecture that presided over the deployment of MINUSMA has changed, the overall objective of the United Nations presence in Mali remains as relevant today as it was a decade ago. If anything, it has been made more compelling by the enormous protection needs of countless civilians, the support requirements for the ongoing political processes and the centrality of the country's trajectory to the stabilization of the larger Sahel region. No effort should be spared to avert a renewed cycle of political instability and further deterioration of the security, human rights and humanitarian situation, which cannot be ruled out, especially if the Agreement were to unravel or the elections were to be postponed indefinitely.

87. The review assessed the evolution of the situation since the Security Council first authorized a multidimensional peacekeeping operation in Mali. As requested by the Council in resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#), the review sought to identify the parameters necessary for MINUSMA to continue to operate and advance its strategic priorities. Respect for the parameters highlighted in paragraphs 61 to 64 above is essential in providing the conditions necessary for effective mandate delivery. Each of the three options that are outlined articulate what the Mission could realistically deliver depending on the resources made available to it and assuming that it receives the appropriate level of cooperation and commitment from the Malian authorities. The Malian authorities, while not discounting its contribution to peace and stability in the country, have articulated expectations for more robust security support from MINUSMA. The Council may wish to assess the evolution of the situation on the ground against these parameters in the coming months in deciding on the future of MINUSMA. The current context in Mali underscores that business as usual should not be an option.

88. Force generation efforts will continue to replace the departing units, totalling approximately 2,000 personnel, so that the Mission retains the existing level of capacity to implement its mandate as defined in Security Council resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#). I call upon Member States to support the troop- and police-contributing countries that have expressed their willingness to deploy to Mali and require capacity-building assistance. In parallel, in the first quarter of 2023, the Department of Peace Operations will conduct a joint military and police capability study that will more precisely define uniformed personnel requirements proposed in the present report for options 1 and 2 and contribute to informing mandate renewal discussions in June. Efforts will also continue to be made to mitigate as much as possible the current capacity challenges and maximize the Mission's contribution to the improvement of security, in support of the Malian authorities. I will continue to report on the implementation of the mandate of MINUSMA and the level to which the parameters outlined in the present report are met.

89. The impact of MINUSMA during its decade-long presence in Mali has come at an exceptionally high human cost: 165 peacekeepers have been killed and 687 injured by hostile action since July 2013. There are no words to express our gratitude to those who paid the ultimate price for peace and stability in Mali. I take this opportunity to also express the solidarity of the United Nations with the Malian people and authorities for all the hardships their country has undergone. I thank all partners who, over these years and in difficult circumstances, have continued to support MINUSMA.

Annex

Priorities and expectations of the Government of Mali for the strategic review of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

I. Introduction

The outbreak of the crisis in Mali in 2012, following the action of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Libya, required the international community to pool its efforts to assist the country.

The mobilization of the international community was reflected in the timely deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on 1 July 2013, essentially to support the efforts of the Malian authorities to re-establish the presence and authority of the State throughout Mali and to protect the civilian population.

From this initial security-focused purpose, the mandate of MINUSMA has evolved over the course of its annual renewals to focus on the political process, including, since 2015, support for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali which emerged from the Algiers process.

Almost 10 years after the Mission's deployment, the fact remains that the security situation has deteriorated. The Malian authorities and the Malian people, as well as some African leaders, have been raising questions about the effectiveness of this United Nations peacekeeping mission and are demanding a change in the doctrine of United Nations peace operations in Africa. Much of the criticism of MINUSMA concerns its "peacekeeping" role, in a context in which peace needs to be established rather than kept.

This strategic review of MINUSMA will be flawed if it takes as its premise a stabilization mission based on the current model, without any innovation. The current scope of deployment of MINUSMA is as a stabilization mission, based on the traditional concept of the peacekeeping mission, which does not engage in counter-terrorism.

It is recalled that the Security Council, by its resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#) of 29 June 2022, decided to extend the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2023, welcoming the Secretary-General's proposal to conduct an internal review of MINUSMA, without prejudice to the implementation of its current mandate and future decisions of the Council, and requested that such review be conveyed no later than 13 January 2023.

The texts governing the procedures to be followed in the Security Council's decision-making process, as well as actual practice, provide a framework for the influence of States that are not members of this United Nations body during the adoption of resolutions, including those affecting a host country. The adoption of resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#) on 29 June 2022, renewing the mandate of MINUSMA despite the strong reservations expressed by Mali about certain provisions, illustrates our country's limited room for manoeuvre with respect to the content of resolutions on MINUSMA.

The strategic review therefore provides the Government of Mali with an opportunity to set out directly its national priorities on operational matters, including its expectations with respect to the implementation of the mandate of MINUSMA.

II. Expectations of the Malian Government

The doctrine and rules of engagement of United Nations peace operations do not allow for the deployment of combat forces to fight terrorists. Yet the Mission is operating in a setting marked by asymmetric terrorist attacks against Malian defence and security forces, peacekeepers and civilians, which gives grounds for a change in the posture of MINUSMA for the proper fulfilment of its mandate.

This situation calls for a significant contribution from MINUSMA in the areas of restoration of State authority, security, reconciliation, provision of basic social services, political and institutional reforms, and referendum and electoral processes, to ensure the return to a peaceful and secure constitutional order.

1. Security situation

The Government of Mali requests that MINUSMA do the following:

- Understand that the Malian people expect it to give top priority to the security aspect of its mandate, which is a prerequisite for the implementation of the other components of its mission in Mali, including the improvement of the human rights situation in the country.
- Change its static posture, move out of the camps and engage in offensive actions and patrols, especially as part of its mission to protect civilians or in the event of real, imminent and direct threats to its personnel, facilities or equipment, in support of the Malian Armed Forces. This dynamic, dissuasive posture in support of the Malian Armed Forces will help limit the movements and actions of criminal organizations responsible for human rights violations committed by terrorist groups. In order to evaluate the implementation of this priority task of the Mission's mandate, an annual evaluation of each contingent will be necessary (number of patrols carried out, locations, equipment and materiel). It will also be important for the MINUSMA force to carefully consider the operational difficulties that result from caveats to conditions of engagement imposed by some contingents, which receive de facto operational instructions from their capitals rather than from the MINUSMA force commander, all of which limits the effectiveness of the mission.
- Contribute more to the overall security of the bases used jointly by MINUSMA and the Malian Armed Forces, rather than limiting itself to its own force protection. This will involve, in particular, the construction of passive protection infrastructure, including common areas and electronic surveillance, which would extend the protection to communities adjacent to MINUSMA sites as part of the implementation of the "protection of civilians" provision of the Mission's mandate.
- Convene joint planning meetings with the Malian Armed Forces, including at the operational, needs-based level, so that MINUSMA forces and police units can help to secure the areas liberated by the Malian Armed Forces, protect the civilian population and create the necessary conditions for the return of the administration and basic social services in these localities.
- Support the construction of secure bases for the Malian Armed Forces in order to strengthen the territorial connectivity that is essential for the restoration of security.
- Enhance its support to the Malian Armed Forces in terms of food rations, fuel, transportation/logistics and medical evacuation.
- Share intelligence with the Malian Armed Forces, including the results of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights by aircraft or drones, reports of ground reconnaissance missions and threat analysis.

- Coordinate its actions at the political and operational levels with the competent Malian authorities.
- Emphasize and highlight in its reports to the Security Council the positive actions it is carrying out in cooperation with the Malian authorities, as well as the progress made by the Malian Defence and Security Forces, so as to change the narrative and the perception of certain Member States and United Nations officials.

It would be preferable for MINUSMA not to do the following:

- Focus on issues that undermine the territorial integrity of Mali and jeopardize its national unity and cohesion, for example, by placing the emphasis on ethnic, regional or religious issues, including the politicization and instrumentalization of the human rights issue. Such an approach by MINUSMA does not promote national reconciliation and strengthens the notion that our country is in an ongoing state of crisis. The United Nations must rationalize the mechanisms involved in the protection and promotion of human rights as part of the crisis management in Mali by subsuming their reports in the quarterly report of the Secretary-General (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, quarterly note of MINUSMA on trends in violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Mali, Independent Expert).
- Give the Malian people the impression that they are part of the country's already complex and multiple challenges; the Mission should take as a guideline that it must always adopt a constructive approach in helping to solve problems.
- Behave like a judge dealing with a defendant – Mali. This posture must change if MINUSMA is to regain the trust of the Malian people and their authorities, whose cooperation is essential for the implementation of its mandate.
- Act as a substitute for the State; it should instead consult with the Government of Mali before providing any support for projects or activities related to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

2. Political situation

With regard to the political transition, the Government would like MINUSMA to align its activities with the Government's priorities, which reflect the deep-seated aspirations of the Malian people, as widely expressed during the national dialogue on reform and as set forth in the Government's plan of action, including the following:

- Enhanced security throughout the national territory.
- Political and institutional reform.
- Organization of general elections.
- Promotion of good governance and adoption of a pact on social stability.

This support should address the following key priorities:

- Political and institutional reforms as part of rebuilding the State.
- Good offices to achieve a broad consensus of the political class and civil society around these essential reforms to improve governance in the country.
- Technical, material, logistical and financial organization of referendums and elections.
- Support in regional and international mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the transition timetable.

On the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process, the Government requests support from MINUSMA for the following:

- The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, including the agreed reintegration of 26,000 ex-combatants.
- Security sector reform, which is a vast undertaking involving several aspects: training, infrastructure, strengthening the security network, equipment, community policing, good governance, and management and oversight of services.
- The implementation of specific projects planned for the Northern Development Zone.
- Reform of the justice system (training, review of texts, infrastructure, supplies and equipment).
- The reconciliation process, through the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission and its local branches.
- The redeployment of reconstituted units of the Malian Armed Forces.
- The restoration of State authority in the Northern regions, along with road maintenance and bridge construction on routes regularly used by MINUSMA.

3. Stabilization of central Mali

The Government of Mali adopted a comprehensive strategy for the stabilization of central Mali in August 2022. To implement the strategy, the Malian Government expects support from MINUSMA for the following:

- Protection and assistance for civilians.
- Reduction of intercommunal violence.
- Re-establishment and presence of State authority and basic social services.
- Deployment operations and security of the Malian Armed Forces.
- Combating impunity, protecting human rights and achieving community reconciliation.

The second strategic priority for MINUSMA is to facilitate the implementation by Malian actors of a comprehensive political strategy to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence and re-establish State presence, State authority and basic social services in central Mali.

Therefore, MINUSMA is expected to do the following:

- Ensure that all its actions are part of the stabilization strategy and related plan of action for the period 2022–2024, with good coordination.
- Support the actions set out in the plan of action for the stabilization strategy for central Mali as they pertain to the return of State representatives and related supporting measures.
- Support the development of military infrastructure of the Defence and Security Forces in accordance with the plan of action for the stabilization strategy for central Mali (pillar 1).

4. Support to help stabilize the Liptako-Gourma area

Mali is no longer a member of the Group of Five for the Sahel, whose forces were deployed in the Liptako-Gourma area. The MINUSMA mandate legally covers only the territory of Mali. Therefore, MINUSMA must continue to provide logistical

support, fuel, food rations, medical evacuations and intelligence to the Malian Armed Forces in their operations in the Liptako-Gourma area, including by participating in the operational plan for counter-terrorism.

Mali remains open, however, to bilateral cooperation and other potential groupings with the neighbouring countries concerned. Mali is therefore not opposed to United Nations support for other countries in the region.

5. Partnership

In order to manage its functional relations with MINUSMA, the Government has established forums for political and technical consultations. The results yielded by these mechanisms demonstrate their usefulness in improving communication between the Government and MINUSMA.

The Government of Mali requests that these consultation forums be used to discuss and resolve any issues that may arise, prior to any public communication, in order to strengthen trust, cooperation and partnership between the Government and MINUSMA.

It is important that the United Nations Secretariat and the members of the Security Council understand that, contrary to statements made in the media and cited in the Secretary-General's reports, Mali is in no way hindering the implementation of the mandate of MINUSMA. The measures taken by the Government following the serious incident in which 49 soldiers came illegally from Côte d'Ivoire have ensured that there is an effective mechanism in place for planning troop rotations. In addition, the supervision of MINUSMA flights, which now require prior authorization by the competent aviation authorities, is part of the management of Malian airspace. MINUSMA is expected to meet its commitments by complying with agreed-upon rules and procedures. It is the responsibility of MINUSMA to ensure that these procedures are followed by all troop- and police-contributing countries.

The Government emphasizes that the relevant Malian services are working to ensure compliance with the status of forces agreement in all matters concerning functional relations with MINUSMA personnel, and all MINUSMA employees are in turn expected to comply with this agreement as well as with national laws in force.

International mediation has an important role to play in facilitating and supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. However, the international mediators must understand that its implementation is primarily the responsibility of the Malian parties. It is therefore essential for the international mediators to understand that their role is one of support, advice and facilitation, and that they do a disservice to that role in giving the impression that they are substituting or imposing their will on the Malian parties or putting the country under trusteeship. Despite their vulnerable situation, Malians remain very devoted to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of their country. All partners of Mali must respect this premise in their cooperation with the Malian Government, which is the representative and guardian of the will of the Malian people.

In keeping with its multidimensional nature, MINUSMA has a role in promoting the national economy to address the challenge of economic development. To that end, it is important that the United Nations Mission promote the purchase of local products and the use of local expertise and national service providers, in accordance with the relevant provisions reiterated each year by the General Assembly in the resolution on the MINUSMA budget. A better match must be constantly maintained between the objectives to be achieved by the Mission as a whole and the means deployed to achieve them.

The Government of Mali also attaches particular importance to the employment of local staff by the Mission and questions the ongoing vacancies in many local posts, despite the fact that they are part of the MINUSMA staffing table.

With respect to the uniformed strength of MINUSMA, and without prejudice to the agreement to deploy an additional 1,000 Chadian troops, the Government is not convinced of the need for a further increase in the authorized ceiling at this stage.

The Malian Government also expects that the functional partnership with MINUSMA will result in the construction of sustainable works and infrastructure. Among other things, the Mission's premises should be built with sustainable materials instead of short-lived prefabricated buildings and containers; this should also involve building or rehabilitating road infrastructure, particularly on routes frequently used by MINUSMA convoys.

Similarly, the Mission is expected to support the maintenance and rehabilitation of the airport infrastructure it uses, particularly the runways of regional airports and airfields, which are regularly damaged because they are not built for the heavy aircraft used by MINUSMA. With respect to airport security procedures, MINUSMA personnel are asked to comply with the directives and orders of security personnel, and to bring any requests to the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Malian Government also expects the Mission's sites to be equipped for the supply of renewable energy. These various works, planned for the benefit of MINUSMA, will become a constructive legacy after the Mission's departure that will help to strengthen the ties between the Mission and the host country.

MINUSMA must take supportive measures to bolster the State's efforts to combat impunity by re-establishing the criminal justice system in the areas affected by conflict.

In this connection, it is also important for the Mission to focus part of its efforts on the fight against armed terrorist groups, through strong support for judicial investigation and prosecution services, to enable them to prosecute perpetrators of serious human rights violations and conflict-related sexual violence, among other offences.

In addition, the Mission must further support our country in its efforts to return the administration to regions it was forced to leave, making it difficult for the population to access basic social services. It must contribute to the promotion of social dialogue, peace and reconciliation.

Lastly, the Malian Government would like to see a change made to the high-level consultation framework between the Government and MINUSMA, which was initially set up to manage troop rotations and functional relations, so that it includes the follow-up of items agreed upon with the United Nations. This new forum could be called the "committee for coordination and follow-up of the joint recommendations of the strategic review and functional relations between the Government of Mali and MINUSMA".

In conclusion, the Government of Mali expects that this review will not be just another review, but that its recommendations, if endorsed by the Security Council, will – within the limits of the Mission's mandate, of course – make MINUSMA better suited to its environment and better able to respond to the expectations of its primary "client", the host country, for the benefit of the Malian people.

Koulouba

4 December 2022