



Security Council

Distr.: General
21 August 2023

Original: English

Letter dated 18 August 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#) on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), by which the Council requested me to engage with the transitional Government of Mali to articulate a plan for the transfer of the Mission's tasks, bearing in mind the possible contribution of the United Nations country team, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and other stakeholders, including in support for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and present it to the Council by 15 August 2023, following the termination of the mandate of MINUSMA under the same resolution and the cessation of its operations starting on 1 July 2023.

The exit of MINUSMA is being treated as a United Nations system-wide priority. To that end, the Secretariat has adopted an integrated approach to the planning and execution of the Mission's drawdown and closure, including establishing integrated mechanisms between the Secretariat and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes at Headquarters and in Mali. Furthermore, coordination mechanisms have been established between the transitional Government of Mali, MINUSMA and the United Nations country team to facilitate the Mission's orderly and safe withdrawal and to articulate a plan for the transfer of its tasks, where possible. Regular consultations between the Mission and the transitional Government have been held at the political and technical levels, including dedicated meetings between the MINUSMA force and the Malian Defence and Security Forces. The Mission has also been regularly exchanging information with local authorities and civil society at the regional level.

A multilayered, integrated withdrawal plan has been developed, based on the following objectives: (a) ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel; (b) meeting the 31 December 2023 deadline for the drawdown of the Mission and the withdrawal of its personnel; (c) safeguarding the Mission's legacy; and (d) preserving an environment conducive to long-term United Nations engagement in Mali and in the broader region. As the timeline, scope and complexity of the Mission's withdrawal are unprecedented, a significant number of security, political and operational risks will need to be monitored and mitigated to the extent possible.

Consultations with the transitional Government on the transfer of tasks are ongoing. Owing to the compressed timeline in which the Mission must close, and the termination of its substantive mandate on 30 June 2023, which did not allow for a transition period, some tasks performed by MINUSMA will not be handed over. Gaps



will occur, in particular with regard to the financial, technical and logistical support provided by the Mission to advance the priority areas and tasks regarding the Agreement, the political transition, the strategy for the stabilization of the central regions, the restoration and extension of State authority, capacity-building for protecting civilians, including on explosive threat mitigation, and the protection and promotion of human rights. For those tasks and activities that are being transferred to the United Nations country team, UNOWAS or other stakeholders, new sources of additional funding must be identified. Further consultations to that end are yet to be held with donors.

Drawdown and withdrawal plan

The drawdown and withdrawal of MINUSMA have already commenced, on the basis of a plan being implemented in two major phases, leading to the consolidation of uniformed personnel and equipment in key camps, to be followed by their repatriation, and concluding by 31 December 2023. Through the plan, the phased withdrawal and repatriation of uniformed and civilian personnel is envisaged, sequenced in accordance with the gradual closure of the 11 camps and one temporary operating base maintained by the Mission in the country. The phases are set out below.

First phase (15 July to 31 August). The first phase entails the closure and return of the farthest of the smaller bases (Ber, Goundam, Ménaka and Ogossogou) to the transitional Government. Uniformed personnel and assets are to be subsequently redeployed to Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti, for repatriation to their home countries, leading to an initial reduction of the Mission's footprint. On 3 August, the temporary operating base in Ogossogou was handed over to the transitional Government, and progress is on track for the closure and handover of the other smaller bases within the planned time frame. On 12 August, the required procedures were conducted with the designated Malian civilian authority on the formal return of the Ber camp to the transitional Government. The Mission expedited that withdrawal by two days, owing to the deteriorating security situation in the area, which included risks to the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

Second phase (1 September to 31 December). The second phase comprises three distinct sequences of closing and returning the bases to the Malian State, as follows:

(a) **1 September to 30 November.** Closure of the Tessalit and Aguelhok bases, in sector North, and the camp in Douentza, in sector Centre, with uniformed personnel from the satellite bases redeployed to Mopti, Gao and Bamako and the units concerned subsequently repatriated to their respective home countries;

(b) **1 to 15 December.** Closure of the camps in Mopti and Kidal and repatriation of the troops concerned, with equipment moved to Gao and Bamako;

(c) **15 to 31 December.** Closure of the Ansongo camp, withdrawal and reduction of forces from Gao and reduction of the footprint in Bamako, with rear parties remaining to guard contingent-owned equipment. By 31 December, it is anticipated that most of the Mission's uniformed personnel strength would have been reduced, with only a guard unit remaining for the liquidation phase, pursuant to resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#).

As at 14 August, 695 military personnel and 24 police personnel had been repatriated. These include military contingents and individual police officers who had served in various locations in central and northern Mali, as well as in Bamako.

The successful closure of the camps and their return to the transitional Government is of paramount importance. This is especially the case for camps in areas of northern Mali currently under the control of the movements signatory to the

Agreement. With the impending withdrawal of MINUSMA, tensions have emerged between the Government and one signatory movement, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad. If not resolved, these tensions could not only complicate the Mission's withdrawal, but also further undermine the ceasefire agreement, with serious implications for the entire peace process. In that regard, the Mission presented to the transitional Government a draft agreement governing the camp return process, which is under consultation. Furthermore, significant efforts are ongoing at the regional and local levels to coordinate with all parties to mitigate camp closure and withdrawal-related risks.

A plan has now been developed to ensure the orderly and safe repatriation of civilian personnel and multinational staff officers, in line with the residual mandated tasks specified in resolution 2690 (2023). Only staff involved in residual drawdown and liquidation activities will remain in the Mission area beyond 30 September, with only staff necessary for liquidation activities remaining after 31 December.

Strategic communication

Throughout the withdrawal process, MINUSMA has maintained effective strategic communication, including to enhance its protection, in line with paragraph 6 (iv) of resolution 2690 (2023). The Mission's strategic communications withdrawal plan is grounded in proactive outreach to local authorities and communities, to the extent possible, and to civil society, as well as in efforts to manage protection-related expectations, counter misinformation and disinformation and communicate information on the withdrawal of the Mission and the legacy of its work in Mali. The Mission will continue its radio broadcasting through Radio Mikado FM, maintaining production and broadcast capacity throughout the drawdown and withdrawal period, while gradually decommissioning Radio Mikado broadcast equipment in the regions before fully ceasing its radio operations by 31 December 2023, at the latest.

Liquidation

In accordance with resolution 2690 (2023), the liquidation period will begin on 1 January 2024. MINUSMA will retain a guard unit from within the Mission's reduced footprint, concentrated in the three hubs of Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu, to protect personnel, facilities and assets concerned during the liquidation period. Maintaining those three hubs will be necessary for the shipping of contingent-owned and United Nations-owned equipment not repatriated by 31 December. The Mission will progressively return the three camps to the transitional Government of Mali during the liquidation period, upon the completion of in situ liquidation activities. The guard unit will be composed of a formed police unit. During the liquidation period, all efforts will be made to repatriate contingent- and United Nations-owned equipment and to finalize the environmental clean up and removal of hazardous material, to the extent possible. The liquidation period will also be focused on the sale, removal, disposal or gifting of Mission assets under the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and on the completion and closure of all administrative and financial activities.

All non-location-specific tasks will be performed from outside Mali to the greatest extent possible. Based on experience from previous field entity closures, the in-country liquidation period for a peacekeeping operation of the scale, size and complexity of MINUSMA is expected to last 18 months from its start date of 1 January 2024.

Risks and challenges for the implementation of the withdrawal plan

The country's vast terrain, the hostile operating environment in certain regions and its climates render the Mission's withdrawal within a six-month time frame extremely challenging. The logistics operation is further constrained by the presence of terrorist armed groups, the volume of contingent- and United Nations-owned equipment to be repatriated and the limited capacity to move troops and equipment in an insecure environment with challenging infrastructure and road conditions, as well as by recent developments in the Niger, a key transit country both for the supply of the Mission during its drawdown and withdrawal and for the exit of its personnel and equipment. The operations will require swift and pragmatic decision-making, full cooperation by the transitional Government and seamless coordination among United Nations entities and with neighbouring countries and partners, including troop- and police-contributing countries.

To ensure a safe and orderly withdrawal, MINUSMA will still be required, at the same time, to import materials and equipment. Furthermore, the Mission's freedom of movement on the ground, through escort convoys and air overflight support, will remain essential throughout the drawdown, withdrawal and liquidation process. On 27 June 2023, meanwhile, the transitional Government of Mali issued a directive to customs authorities to limit the importation of goods by MINUSMA and its contractors. In addition, some restrictions related to internal flights persist. Both issues continue to be discussed with the transitional Government through various channels. The Malian authorities have expressed their commitment to supporting the Mission's withdrawal, including by securing MINUSMA convoys and approving flights.

The withdrawal of MINUSMA will create significant gaps regarding the ceasefire monitoring mechanisms and human rights monitoring and reporting. It could also create potential opportunities for violent extremist groups to expand their activities, with risks of spillover into neighbouring countries. Overall, the serious challenges affecting the implementation of the Agreement risk being compounded unless the parties agree on urgent confidence-building measures and steps to bring the peace process back on track. In addition, stability following the withdrawal of the Mission's physical presence in Ber, Tessalit, Aguelhok and Kidal will require agreement between the parties to the Agreement on arrangements to be established to fill gaps and preserve the gains achieved.

A worsening security environment would affect both the protection of civilians and the ability of the Mission to withdraw its personnel and assets safely. On 13 August, a convoy carrying peacekeepers and equipment from Ber to Timbuktu as part of the withdrawal process was attacked twice by an armed group outside of Ber, resulting in injuries to four peacekeepers, after the Mission had expedited its withdrawal from the base owing to a deteriorating security situation. Continuous dialogue with the parties to the Agreement, including in the context of the international mediation team, will be prioritized to facilitate the safe and orderly withdrawal of the Mission, in particular as regards the return of MINUSMA camps in northern Mali to the transitional Government. Any serious breach of the ceasefire could have far-reaching consequences in Mali and beyond and make it much harder to resume the peace process.

Additional risks include heightened misinformation and disinformation, increased attacks on United Nations personnel, convoys and bases, demonstrations for or against the Mission's withdrawal and logistics and supply chain issues. To support the safety and security of United Nations personnel, MINUSMA has taken steps to ensure proactive strategic communications, emergency communication procedures, the availability of adequate casualty and medical evacuation assets and

capabilities, force protection and the development of a comprehensive security plan for the safety of all United Nations personnel throughout the withdrawal and closure process, in coordination with the transitional Government.

Throughout the drawdown, withdrawal and liquidation process, MINUSMA will implement the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. This is key to ensuring appropriate risk management and mitigation and for the gifting and sale of United Nations-owned equipment, in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules.

Revised budget for the 2023/24 period

On 30 June 2023, the General Assembly, through its resolution [77/312](#), authorized me to enter into commitments in the amount of \$590 million for the period from 1 July to 31 December 2023. Given that the amount approved will not fully cover the drawdown, withdrawal and liquidation activities required to ensure the orderly and safe withdrawal of the Mission in line with the provisions of Security Council resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#), I will submit a revised budget for the 2023/24 period for the twelve-month period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, for consideration by the Assembly.

Transfer of tasks

As requested in paragraph 3 of resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#), MINUSMA has been engaging with the transitional Government regarding the transfer of the Mission's tasks, bearing in mind the possible contribution of the United Nations country team, UNOWAS and other stakeholders, including in support of the Agreement. In that regard, the Mission organized a three-day workshop, held from 2 to 4 August 2023, to discuss the transfer of tasks with representatives of the transitional Government, the United Nations country team, UNOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the European Union capacity-building mission in Mali.

During the three-day workshop, the Malian authorities stated their intent to assume responsibility for the political transition and elections, support for the peace process, the restoration and extension of State authority, support for the stabilization of the central regions, the protection of civilians and human rights, the stabilization and facilitation of humanitarian assistance; and the safety and security of United Nations operations after the completion of the withdrawal. However, they were concerned about the gap in financial resources arising from the cessation of the Mission's mandate. Members of the United Nations country team expressed their readiness to work with the Government in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020–2024 and highlighted the need to mobilize additional resources.

During those discussions, the transitional Government underscored that it would continue to collaborate closely with the Mission for a safe and orderly withdrawal and for the transfer of tasks, while also emphasizing the country's continued commitment to cooperating with the United Nations system after the Mission's exit. As a follow-up, it was agreed that similar round tables would be organized in the regions, as would thematic interactions between United Nations entities and concerned line ministries.

In line with resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#), in which the Security Council highlighted the possible contribution of UNOWAS, including in support of the Agreement, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS travelled to Bamako from 2 to 4 August as part of his familiarization visits in the subregion following his recent appointment. The visit also

provided an opportunity to establish contact with the Malian authorities on progress made on the transition process in the context of the Mission's withdrawal and to hold consultations with MINUSMA and the United Nations country team. The Special Representative met with the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Minister for National Reconciliation, Peace and Social Cohesion.

Malian officials expressed their commitment to cooperating further with the United Nations following the Mission's withdrawal, while stressing that internal discussions were under way to determine the framework and modalities for the transfer of tasks. They vowed to deliver a successful political transition and a return to constitutional order, within the timelines agreed with ECOWAS, and reaffirmed their commitment to assuming their responsibilities in the withdrawal process, including with respect to ensuring the security of United Nations personnel. They stressed constructive cooperation with MINUSMA in ensuring a smooth drawdown and withdrawal process.

Implementation of the Agreement

Discussions will continue with the parties on the modalities of future United Nations support for the Agreement, in the light of the cessation of the Mission's mandate. These interactions will feed into the consultations that the Secretariat and UNOWAS have been undertaking with members of the international mediation team, especially under the leadership of Algeria as *chef de file*, the African Union and ECOWAS, to examine how, following the Mission's withdrawal, the international community can continue to render the necessary support for the peace process, with particular attention given to the monitoring and supervision of security arrangements and to the secretariat of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, of which the United Nations is a member. Considering that Mali is one of the countries covered by the good offices mandate of UNOWAS, the Office would be well placed to also take on the good offices role played by MINUSMA in the context of that membership. If agreed, UNOWAS would need strengthened capacity and resources to perform these additional functions.

Meanwhile, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, with technical assistance from the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peace Operations, could continue to provide support for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform process, in conjunction with whichever monitoring mechanism the parties may settle on, based on the request of the transitional Government. However, some of the capacity-building activities previously undertaken by MINUSMA cannot be handed over, nor can the logistical support provided to the reconstituted battalions in the north.

During discussions on the transfer of tasks, representatives of the transitional Government acknowledged that the Mission's withdrawal will have an impact on the peace process and highlighted the importance of continued international support to mitigating present and future challenges. They also acknowledged the importance of the current security arrangements to sustaining the ceasefire.

On 1 August, the Cadre stratégique permanent pour la paix, la sécurité et le développement, an umbrella group composed of several signatory movements, sent a letter to the President of the Security Council, in which the group stressed the precarious status of the Agreement and requested the establishment of a dedicated United Nations office to provide support for the Agreement and for the continuation of the role of the United Nations in the peace process. In the letter, the group also emphasized that any modification to the arrangements ascribed to MINUSMA must be undertaken in full consultation with all parties and reflect tripartite consensus.

Political transition

Since the onset of the political transition in 2020, MINUSMA has assisted the Malian authorities in supporting the advancement and implementation of political and institutional reforms and in facilitating the return to constitutional order through the organization of credible, transparent and inclusive elections. The Mission's tasks included good offices, high-level advocacy, technical support and logistical and financial assistance. UNOWAS could take on the good offices and high-level advocacy roles to support the political transition, in line with its work in other countries of the region. UNOWAS would require additional resources to carry out those unforeseen functions.

The Malian authorities have stated that they remain committed to restoring constitutional order, as agreed with ECOWAS, by March 2024. During discussions on the transfer of tasks, they announced that further support needed to be identified for the upcoming rounds of elections and for political and institutional reforms.

Electoral support

Continued efforts to support the inclusion and meaningful participation of all political stakeholders are paramount for the successful completion of the political transition. Under the overall guidance of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in its capacity as the United Nations system-wide focal point for elections, the United Nations will continue its technical and operational support for the electoral process, including through the reform and electoral support project managed jointly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), albeit at a reduced logistical and security capacity given the departure of the Mission. MINUSMA will transfer the established roster of trained national electoral assistants, as well as its associated assets to UNDP, to ensure the continuity of capacity in supporting the electoral process. UNDP will require additional resources to take up these tasks, including through the existing basket fund to support the project, which currently has a \$17 million funding gap for its \$56 million budget. Joint resource mobilization efforts will need to be undertaken in that regard by the Malian authorities and United Nations agencies.

The electoral support provided by the United Nations, including that provided by UNDP and UN-Women, will continue to be demand-driven, on the basis of requests received from the transitional Government. For the political aspects of the transition, and in consultation with the Government, the Mission's political role could be transferred to UNOWAS in Dakar, as some of the related activities fall outside the mandates of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. As it does in other countries under the purview of its mandate, UNOWAS, through its good offices, mediation, coordination, facilitation and advocacy roles, would be well positioned to play this role.

Facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive, inclusive and politically focused strategy in central Mali

Concerning the Mission's second priority under Security Council resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#), to facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive, inclusive and politically focused strategy in central Mali, the withdrawal of MINUSMA will result in a gap in support for the Cadre politique de gestion de la crise du Centre (political framework for managing the crisis in the central regions). Significant efforts and resources will be required to support the full operationalization and implementation of the strategy for the stabilization of the central regions and its action plan, while ensuring that ongoing military operations are linked to long-term peacebuilding goals.

The operationalization of the national interministerial coordination committee and of all five regional committees will remain important. In support of the transitional Government, MINUSMA is consulting with a range of international partners on the way forward in the light of the cessation of its mandate. While other actors will take certain initiatives forward, some will face tremendous resource challenges to support their continuity.

Restoration and extension of State authority

The restoration and extension of State authority will remain critical to the continued implementation of the Agreement, the stabilization of the central regions, the protection of civilians and the holding of credible elections for a return to constitutional order. One of the main challenges in the northern and central regions will continue to be inadequate State presence, owing to insecurity and to the lack of infrastructure and human resources. In recent years, Malian authorities have made efforts to restore and extend State authority and the rule of law throughout the country. However, with the Mission's withdrawal and the subsequent discontinuation of its logistical and technical support, including regular transportation, there is a risk that these efforts might be negatively affected, especially in the north. Pre-existing United Nations system coordination structures, including the working group on the restoration of State authority, will facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise, training material and residual tasks to the transitional Government. Those efforts will continue to be coordinated by UNDP within the framework of its Programme d'appui à la stabilisation du Mali à travers le renforcement de l'état de droit 2021–2024 (programme to strengthen the rule of law to support the stabilization of Mali).

During the August workshop, transitional Government representatives emphasized the need to continue to mobilize resources for the implementation of the strategy for the stabilization of the central regions and the ongoing administrative and territorial reform. They also pointed out the necessity for logistical support for the deployment of State representatives and highlighted that they were searching for alternatives to fill the transport support gap resulting from the Mission's withdrawal. They noted that State representatives would contribute to the coordinated and orderly withdrawal of the Mission, in particular around camp closures.

Protection of civilians

The protection of civilians will continue to be a challenge in the light of the security situation. Mitigating the security impact of the Mission's withdrawal will depend on the extent to which the national defence and security forces are able to manage the security situation in areas where armed groups are present and active. In this regard, the transitional Government has expressed its commitment to the protection of civilians. In particular, transitional Government representatives noted that they will continue to pursue initiatives for strengthening civilian protection forces, establishing community policing, increasing Malian security force patrols and escorts for civilian buses on crucial road axes, as well as for strengthening security cooperation with other partners. Close cooperation and information-sharing with the Government, the United Nations country team and humanitarian protection actors, including through existing integrated coordination mechanisms, will be essential to continue effective humanitarian protection monitoring and related protection of civilians tasks. Strengthening community-led approaches and building protection capacities among local actors will also be crucial.

The support that MINUSMA was providing to the national defence and security forces in terms of capacity-building and training on protection of civilians and human rights could be offered, to some extent, by other international partners of Mali.

At the local level, mediation, reconciliation and stabilization activities led by regional authorities, the regional reconciliation support teams and local decentralized authorities will continue to be important and require the technical and financial support of the United Nations country team and the international community. The United Nations presence in Mali will continue to support solutions that are anchored in local reconciliation, conflict resolution and stabilization efforts. It will also continue to emphasize the legal obligation to conduct military operations in full compliance with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Mine action

Despite the efforts of the transitional Government and its regional and international partners, including MINUSMA through the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations, capacities for mitigating the explosive threat and protecting civilians from explosive hazards remains limited. The continued presence of the Service will be crucial to the protection of civilians, to supporting the United Nations country team and humanitarian actors with collection, analysis and timely information-sharing on the explosive threat and to enhancing the capacity of national actors for mine action coordination. The importance of that continued presence was emphasized by transitional Government representatives during the August workshop. This would require financial resources and appropriate arrangements. Formal consultations with the transitional Government are ongoing.

Human rights

Cooperation by Malian authorities with United Nations human rights treaty bodies and Human Rights Council special procedures mandate holders, in particular the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, whose current mandate runs until April 2024, will remain important. Domestic efforts to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Mali will be supplemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in line with its procedures and mechanisms. OHCHR will continue its engagement with the transitional Government to support its efforts to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all, in accordance with the country's international obligations. This includes mitigating risks associated with persons who have cooperated with MINUSMA or other United Nations entities, such as victims and witnesses of human rights violations and abuses, human rights defenders and civil society organizations.

The Mission's departure occurs in a context characterized by ongoing armed conflict and a worrisome human rights situation. The withdrawal of MINUSMA is likely to create a significant gap in the protection and promotion of human rights in Mali. The implementation of certain tasks related to institution-building and capacity-building, including for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of human rights, may be supported, to some extent, by certain United Nations agencies and from the National Commission for Human Rights, within existing resources. Some MINUSMA tasks, however, cannot be easily transferred to any actors in Mali, either because these tasks are part of the very specific global mandate of OHCHR or because no other United Nations entity in Mali has the appropriate mandate and technical expertise to take over such tasks, in particular those related to monitoring and reporting.

During the August workshop, transitional Government representatives underscored progress made by Mali in monitoring and investigating human rights incidents, including through the work of the National Commission for Human Rights. They also indicated that the Government's National Human Rights Directorate would

take over the monitoring and evaluation of the human rights situation and the drafting of periodic reports, pursuant to the country's international human rights obligations.

Conflict-related sexual violence

With regard to child protection and to the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence, discussions are ongoing between the Mission and the United Nations country team to transfer tasks to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, notably UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as to UNDP for capacity-building projects related to criminal accountability. With regard to the protection of women, this could include, depending on available capacities, the coordination of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and the continuation of work on the 2019 joint communiqué and the related action plan. Support for follow-up on relevant child protection measures is also under discussion with the United Nations country team and will require appropriate resources. With regard to child protection, that includes the continued implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in Mali and engagement with parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children, including the implementation of existing action plans with signatory armed groups and efforts by the transitional Government to develop a national prevention plan.

Humanitarian assistance

Since 2013, MINUSMA has contributed to the creation of a secure environment for the safe civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance and the voluntary, safe and dignified return, local integration or resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, in close coordination with humanitarian actors and the transitional Government. Humanitarian assistance in Mali is provided by United Nations agencies and national and international NGOs working in collaboration with the transitional Government. In 2023, an estimated 5.7 million people are targeted to receive assistance.

The United Nations and humanitarian country team will continue to engage with the transitional Government to secure key infrastructure previously protected by MINUSMA, with a focus on landing strips and main supply routes. In addition, dialogue related to the protection of civilians is ongoing, including with regard to the protection of internally displaced persons at sites across Mali. Humanitarian agencies are also examining options to scale up community-based protection activities in order to mitigate potential protection-related impacts of the withdrawal of MINUSMA. However, the scope of humanitarian protection activities is more limited than the broader MINUSMA protection of civilians mandate, and humanitarian protection activities remain drastically underfunded.

United Nations presence in Mali after the withdrawal of the Mission

With the withdrawal of MINUSMA and the consequent shift from mission to non-mission settings, the context in which the United Nations is operating in Mali will change significantly. As a result, the posture, capacities and resources of United Nations entities will need to be adapted.

United Nations country team

Under the leadership of the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the United Nations country team will continue its cooperation with the transitional Government to advance the jointly agreed objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020–2024. The

humanitarian country team, consisting of United Nations agencies and international and national NGOs, will continue to support populations in need, in accordance with the priorities outlined in the humanitarian response plan.

United Nations agencies, funds and programmes will continue to implement various mandates, including with regard to supporting the authorities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as a stabilization tool across Mali, most notably through the three strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework. Where feasible and within available means, the United Nations country team will seek to take on some of the residual programmatic activities that the Mission had been undertaking in support of national priorities. In line with paragraph 8 of resolution 2690 (2023), MINUSMA is exploring options to establish financial arrangements that will enable United Nations entities to oversee those residual programmatic cooperation activities after its withdrawal.

The launch of the process to develop a Cooperation Framework for the period 2025–2029, which has been under way since March 2023, is an opportunity for the Government and the United Nations to explore new cooperation modalities, taking into account the new context arising from the Mission's withdrawal, as well as regional dynamics, to devise a longer-term strategy in support of the country's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Further discussions will also be focused on establishing a multi-partner trust fund to address long-term stabilization and development needs in Mali, potentially complementing investments made by the Peacebuilding Fund in Mali and enhancing partnerships with regional and international financial institutions. Meanwhile, the United Nations country team will ensure that support provided by United Nations entities to non-United Nations security forces complies with the human rights due diligence policy, bearing in mind the applicability of the policy to all United Nations offices, agencies, funds and programmes.

The United Nations as a whole will seek to strengthen and leverage partnerships with the transitional Government, multilateral organizations, regional actors and donors to support Mali on the path to development and durable peace.

Humanitarian country team

Rising humanitarian needs will require additional financial and human resources for the humanitarian country team. As at 15 August 2023, the humanitarian response plan was only funded at \$159.4 million, or 21 per cent of the total \$751.5 million required. To ensure the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance, the humanitarian country team will also reconfigure its presence and adapt its access strategies. Engagement with the transitional Government will be reinforced at the national and regional levels. Accordingly, the humanitarian country team is in the process of identifying alternative mitigation measures through community acceptance and access negotiations. The new context will therefore require a transformation in approach, presence and resources by the humanitarian agencies to adapt and to continue to provide timely assistance to the population. The footprint of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will be reconfigured to better respond to humanitarian needs, including through a more decentralized humanitarian response for which additional funding and resources will be required, especially in the northern regions. Those will be critical for enabling services such as security and logistics to maintain life-saving programmes and to avoid, or at least minimize, interruptions.

The presence of United Nations and humanitarian actors in some areas, such as Ménaka, will be severely affected. To address those challenges, the United Nations country team is looking at increasing its capacities for emergency communication, reconfiguring its security management system and exploring commercial solutions

for medical and casualty evacuations, to be combined with increased and dedicated support for security from the transitional Government. There will also be an impact associated with the reduction in logistical support, which MINUSMA had previously provided. Although that will be mitigated to some extent through the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service and commercial air carriers, additional resources will be required to address gaps in the supply chain.

United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

The withdrawal of MINUSMA will also affect the way UNOWAS operates in Mali. UNOWAS is responsible for preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation efforts in West Africa and the Sahel in all the countries under its purview, including Mali. UNOWAS also works to prevent conflict-, election- and transition-related tensions, sustain peace and consolidate peacebuilding efforts and political stability, on the basis of the rule of law and in partnership with regional and subregional entities and other actors, as relevant.

The resource requirements for UNOWAS submitted to the General Assembly for 1 January to 31 December 2024 had been based on the assumption that MINUSMA would undertake all activities related to the country-specific good offices role in line with its mandate, including support for the political transition, the elections and the implementation of the Agreement, while UNOWAS would focus on the regional aspects of its good offices role. UNOWAS would therefore need additional capacity and resources to fulfil, in Mali, the functions it performs in all other countries under its purview related to good offices and mediation support in line with its existing mandate as approved by the Security Council in January 2023 (see [S/2023/70](#) and [S/2023/71](#)). It would also need additional resources to take on additional tasks, if and as agreed with the transitional Government, including possibly with regard to the Agreement.

Security

Until now, the United Nations in Mali largely relied on the capabilities of MINUSMA for its security management system in Bamako and in central and northern Mali, which included safety and security services for United Nations entities and their partners in areas where the Mission was present. The security framework for United Nations operations in Mali included MINUSMA support for casualty and medical evacuations, secure accommodation in field offices, field mission escorts, security awareness and outreach to staff. With the withdrawal of the Mission, transitional measures for United Nations security management will need to be undertaken, most notably with regard to strengthening the security support provided by the transitional Government, including through the provision of dedicated protection units, exploring commercial solutions for casualty evacuation and enhancing the capacity of the Department of Safety and Security and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Mali.

The safety and security of United Nations personnel will remain a key priority. All efforts should be made to ensure that the United Nations country team and its programme partners that remain in Mali after the departure of MINUSMA can continue to operate and deliver, with sufficient resources and within acceptable levels of risk. During consultations, transitional Government representatives underscored their commitment to ensuring the safety and security of the United Nations country team and partners to continue to deliver development and humanitarian assistance, including after the Mission's exit.

Conclusion and observations

The time frame for the Mission's exit makes its withdrawal a highly challenging task that requires unity of effort across the United Nations system and the full support of the transitional Government of Mali. In that context, the Mission's freedom of movement by air and road, access to imports and exports and regular coordination with stakeholders will be key to navigating the unprecedented complexity and compressed timeline of its withdrawal. I look forward to the full and continued support of the Malian authorities within the framework of the status-of-forces agreement, including for customs requirements.

The transfer of tasks will require close collaboration among the transitional Government, the Mission, the United Nations country team and UNOWAS in the coming months, building on existing mechanisms. Additional financial and human resources capacities will be required to support the enhancement of the United Nations country team and the Resident Coordinator Office and to support UNOWAS, in order to continue mandated activities as much as possible, while also meeting new United Nations operational requirements, supported by additional functions. Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that, as MINUSMA withdraws, the operating conditions for the United Nations system in Mali will change significantly. Although we will ensure that all is done to safeguard a smooth transfer of tasks, it is inevitable that the capacities of the United Nations to deliver humanitarian aid and support the protection of civilians or human rights will be severely affected.

The Secretariat and the Mission will continue to rely on the political support and guidance of the Security Council, which will remain critical. Furthermore, the full support of Member States and troop- and police-contributing countries throughout the withdrawal process will remain fundamental, including to ensure that the Mission has adequate resources to facilitate its exit.

As planning for the transfer of tasks moves forward, it is vitally important to emphasize that the transfer of tasks will be primarily to the transitional Government of Mali, which expressed its readiness to take on those tasks. However, as emphasized by Malian representatives during the above-mentioned round table, the ability of the transitional Government to take on those tasks will depend upon the mobilization of resources. Likewise, the support of the United Nations system for the continuity of some of those tasks, in coordination with the transitional Government, must also be accompanied by adequate funding and resources. I call upon Member States and donors to offer maximum flexibility, if requested, regarding the use or transfer of residual MINUSMA funds and the provision of resources to other United Nations entities. I also call upon donors to consider additional voluntary contributions to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, as well as to NGOs, to ensure the effective delivery of development and humanitarian programmes for the benefit of the people of Mali, after the Mission's exit.

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

(Signed) António **Guterres**