



Security Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2020

Resolution 2553 (2020)

Adopted by the Security Council on 3 December 2020

The Security Council,

Reaffirming its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security,

Recalling its resolutions [2151 \(2014\)](#) on security sector reform and [2282 \(2016\)](#) on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, and the statements by its President of 21 February 2007 ([S/PRST/2007/3](#)), 12 May 2008 ([S/PRST/2008/14](#)) and 12 October 2011 ([S/PRST/2011/19](#)),

Recalling its resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#) which recalled General Assembly resolution [A/RES/70/1](#), entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

Recognizing that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing,

Stressing that reforming the security sector in post-conflict environments is critical to the consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, rule of law and good governance, extending legitimate State authority, and preventing countries from relapsing into conflict, and *further stressing* that, in this regard, a professional, effective, and accountable security sector and accessible and impartial law-enforcement and justice sectors are equally necessary to laying the foundations for peace and sustainable development,

Reiterating the need for a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace as well as gender mainstreaming measures including through security sector reform in the broader framework of the rule of law,

Recalling the sovereign right and the primary responsibility of the country concerned to determine the national approach and priorities of security sector reform and recognizing that it should be a nationally owned process that is rooted in the particular needs and conditions of, and at the request and in close consultation with the country in question and encouraging the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in security sector reform and the development of expertise in the field of security sector reform at the national and local level,



Recognizing that the political leadership and political will of national authorities are critical for the progress of security sector reform, and *reaffirming* the lead role of national authorities in developing an inclusive national vision for security sector reform, which takes into account the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and *stressing* that coordinating the implementation of the vision, dedicating national resources towards national security institutions, and monitoring the impact of the security sector reform process are an integral part of national ownership and leadership of security sector reform,

Reaffirming its commitment to address the impact of armed conflict on women, youth and children, and *recalling* its resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019) on women, peace and security, resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000), 1674 (2006), 1738 (2006) and 1894 (2009) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as resolutions as well as resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security, and resolutions 1261 (1999), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012) and 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict,

Recognizes the role of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in supporting national authorities, where and as mandated, to develop inclusive, national strategies, programs and priorities for security sector reform and support the coordination of international assistance to security sector reform as appropriate that is aligned with national priorities and takes into account international support in order to effectively assist countries to build and sustain peace, *stressing* the importance of peacekeeping missions and special political missions to be provided with adequate, predictable and sustainable funding and/or resources to implement mandates and United Nations support related to security sector reform,

Recalling reports of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the General Assembly, which have provided guidance to the United Nations Secretariat on the subject of security sector reform and the development of a United Nations approach to security sector reform,

Expressing concern at the range of challenges that weak and dysfunctional security institutions face including impairing the ability of the State to build and sustain peace, extend public security, rule of law and access to justice within its boundaries, and *noting* that good governance and oversight of the security sector is important in ensuring that security institutions provide security and protect the population, and *further noting* that failure to address governance, operational and accountability deficits can undermine the positive gains of peacekeeping and necessitates the return of peacekeeping and special political missions in previous areas of operation and *recognizing* that, effective and inclusive security sector reform processes have been an important element of the political processes, national reconciliation, transitional justice, stabilization and reconstruction of some post-conflict countries,

Reaffirming that a representative, responsive, efficient, effective, professional, and accountable security sector without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law is the cornerstone of peace and sustainable development and is important for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace,

Recognizing that security sector reform is an important element of United Nations peacebuilding efforts and *noting* the important work of the Peacebuilding Commission as a dedicated intergovernmental advisory body that brings a strategic approach and coherence to international peacebuilding efforts including United Nations support to security sector reform,

Recalling that the bulk of Security Council-mandated United Nations assistance in the area of security sector reform takes place in, and is directed to, countries in Africa and that a number of African countries are becoming important providers of such assistance, and in this regard *recognizing* the important contributions of, and capacities put in place by the African Union and the sub-regional organisations to support and guide national security sector reform efforts,

Noting the support provided by bilateral actors, regional organisations, multilateral financial institutions as well as, expert organizations including academia and research organizations to security sector reform efforts and other initiatives in the area of security sector reform, and *recognizing* the importance of establishing strategic partnerships and coordinated funding to enhance the impact of international support that is aligned with, and takes into account national security sector reform priorities,

Stressing the importance of national ownership and the role that coordination plays, as appropriate, between the different actors involved in supporting security sector reforms through bilateral and multilateral contributions and emphasizing the role United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions can play in enhancing this coordination with a national vision and priorities, and taking into account the need to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and accountability of support provided for security sector reform in line with national priorities,

Recognizing the centrality of security sector reform as a key element of peacekeeping and special political mission mandates, *stressing* the role of peacekeeping operations and special political missions in support of political solutions, and *emphasizing* the importance of the United Nations, including through its peacekeeping operations and special political missions, supporting national Governments, upon their request where appropriate, to strengthen security sector governance and develop security institutions that are inclusive, representative, accessible and responsive to the needs of their population, and the important role of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting security sector reform,

Recalling the important role that the United Nations has played in supporting national efforts to enhance security sector governance and build sustainable security institutions, and commending the efforts of the United Nations, in particular the Department of Peace Operations, including the Security Sector Reform Unit and the United Nations Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force, in further strengthening a comprehensive United Nations approach to security sector reform, through the development of system-wide and specialized guidance and civilian capacities, coordination mechanisms, and development of strategic partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union,

Underlining the importance of the close coordination of the range of United Nations Security Sector Reform activities, both at headquarters and in the field, in particular between Security Council-mandated missions and the United Nations Country Team, and *noting* the role of the Global Focal Point for Rule of Law in the context of security sector reform in enhancing the United Nations integrated responses and joint approaches at the country level, and encouraging relevant United Nations entities mandated for security sector reform activities to work through the existing coordination mechanisms, as appropriate,

Acknowledging that security sector reform in some contexts will include defence, police, justice and corrections, disaster management and border, customs and immigration services, as well as, customary and traditional security providers as determined by each Member State, and *stressing* the importance to adequately consider initiatives that address strategic security sector governance, management

and oversight aspects in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the security sector based on the particular needs and conditions of the country in question,

Reiterating the importance of the rule of law as one of the key elements of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and *reiterating* the statement by its President of 21 February 2014 (S/PRST/2014/5), and *recalling* that security sector reform must take place within a broad framework of the rule of law, and *noting* in this regard the contribution that effective, professional and accountable police services, that provide security to the population, can make in building trust between State authorities and the public and restoring the rule of law in post-conflict countries,

Recognizing that security sector reform constitutes a key element of the political processes of States recovering from conflict and of the strengthening of the rule of law institutions, and that the establishment of representative, effective and accountable security sector governance ensuring the security and justice needs of the entire population and development of sustainable capacities of national security institutions able to fulfil their responsibilities to protect all civilians is central to the transition, where and as mandated of security responsibilities to the host state, and to the gradual withdrawal and exit of peacekeeping operations and special political missions,

Recognizing the interlinkages between security sector reform and other important factors of stabilization and reconstruction, such as, but not limited to, national reconciliation, transitional justice, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration as well as long-term rehabilitation of former combatants and all those affected including in particular women, youth and children, national small arms and light weapons management, arms embargo implementation, reduction of armed violence, organized crime and anti-corruption measures, protection of civilians, including in particular women, youth and children, as well as gender equality and human rights issues,

1. *Reaffirms* the importance of security sector reform in peacebuilding, and sustaining peace, including conflict prevention and in the stabilization and reconstruction of States in the aftermath of conflict and *resolves* to continue to include and prioritise, as appropriate, security sector reform aspects as an integral part of the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions;

2. *Reiterates* the centrality of national ownership for security sector reform processes, and further reiterates the responsibility of the country concerned in the determination of security sector reform assistance, where appropriate, and *recognizes* the importance of considering the perspectives of the host countries in the formulation of relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions;

3. *Encourages* Member States undertaking reform, to take the lead in defining an inclusive national vision and strategy on security sector reform, informed by the needs and aspirations of the entire population, and *acknowledges* the important role of the United Nations, including its Peacebuilding Commission, and Member States, regional and subregional organizations in assisting States in this regard;

4. *Recognizes* that security sector reform needs to be in support of, and informed by, broader national political processes, inclusive of all segments of the society, including the participation of civil society, that lay the foundations for stability and peace, social and economic development, through the promotion of the rule of law, justice, national dialogue, and reconciliation efforts, and *resolves* to prioritize security sector governance and reform activities that directly support such efforts;

5. *Reaffirms* that the promotion of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the security sector makes an important contribution to building inclusive, accountable and legitimate institutions that more effectively protect populations and promote lasting peace and sustainable development, and *expresses concern* that women continue to face significant barriers to their equal participation in security sector institutions where they are often under-represented; and in this regard, *encourages* Member States to develop context-specific security sector reform strategies and programmes that, inter alia, mainstream a gender perspective remove legal, institutional and regulatory barriers to women's equal participation in the security sector and increase their representation at all levels within the security sector;

6. *Recognizing* that youth should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing towards conflict prevention, peacebuilding and recovery, including the promotion of the rule of law, justice and reconciliation, and that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place;

7. *Stresses* that security sector reform is critical to addressing impunity and promoting accountability for violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, where applicable, and contributes to upholding the rule of law and access to justice;

8. *Encourages* Member States, when undertaking security sector reforms, to mainstream child protection, such as the inclusion of child protection in military training and standard operating procedures, as well as in military guidance as appropriate, the establishment of child protection units in national security forces, of effective age assessment mechanisms to prevent underage recruitment, of vetting mechanisms to ensure that those responsible for violations and abuses against children are not included in the ranks of national security forces and of measures to protect schools and hospitals from attack and to prevent the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law;

9. *Stresses* the importance of security sector reform, which better integrates policing, justice and corrections, defence, border management and security, maritime security, civil protection, and other relevant functions, including through the development of professional, accessible, and accountable policing capabilities that strengthen community resilience, as well as the institutions responsible for their oversight and management, and urges the effective integration as regards sector-wide and component levels of United Nations support both at headquarters and in the field, as appropriate;

10. *Recognizes* the need for governance and reform which better integrates all security functions, by ensuring a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between relevant security institutions, and in this regard recognizes the important role that national defence actors play in protecting the sovereignty and integrity of States and their populations;

11. *Encouraging* the United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions to continue to play a role in supporting efforts that enhance the trust and confidence between national security actors and institutions, and the population;

12. *Stresses* the importance of the relevant bodies of the United Nations undertaking mission planning processes for security sector reform, where mandated, that gives full consideration to support national security sector reform efforts, taking into account the specific needs of the host country and its population including through partnerships with other relevant international and regional actors providing security sector reform assistance to the national government;

13. *Underlines* the importance of strengthening support for sector-wide initiatives that aim to enhance the governance and overall performance of the security sector and address the foundations upon which security institutions in each component area are built, and ensuring that strategic partnerships and coordination mechanisms prioritize support and funding for security sector governance initiatives; and *notes* that security sector governance and institutions can be enhanced through support to and inclusive national security dialogues; national security sector reviews and mappings; national security policy and strategy; national security legislation; national security sector plans; security sector public expenditure reviews; and national security oversight, management and coordination;

14. *Underlines* that the management of a transition from a peacekeeping operation or special political mission in relation to its security sector reform activities should be based upon a timely analysis, in consultation with the host country, and in close coordination with the United Nations Country Team of any assistance beyond the duration of the mandate to enable peacebuilding and development actors to undertake the necessary strategic planning and fundraising, working in close partnership with national authorities, and local communities and organizations, including women and youth, as appropriate and to transfer skills and expertise to host-country officials and experts as quickly as possible in order to ensure a successful and durable transition;

15. *Notes* that the United Nations is particularly well positioned to support Member States with coordinating security sector governance and reforms aligned with, and taking into account an inclusive national vision and priorities as necessary in specific situations, that it has broad experience as well as comparative advantages in this area working in close collaboration with relevant international and regional actors, and *urges* all relevant actors to align their support with national priorities in a transparent and coordinated manner to ensure their desired effectiveness and enhance the impact of international support to national security sector reform efforts;

16. *Encourages* Member States to continue to be engaged and to facilitate strategic discussions on strengthening the United Nations approach and role in this critical area, including through the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission;

17. *Notes* the important role that United Nations police can play in supporting, and coordinating international support for, reform of national police institutions and building police capacity in a comprehensive way that emphasizes a community-oriented approach and inter alia builds strong governance, oversight and accountability mechanisms within the framework of a functional judicial and corrections system;

18. *Recognizes* the need for the United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions with relevant mandates and the Inter-Agency Security Sector Reform Task Force to further strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of United Nations security sector reform initiatives with the aim of ensuring the effectiveness, coordination and coherence of the support provided by the United Nations and other regional, bilateral and multilateral partners to national Governments;

19. *Encourages* Member States to provide voluntary support to security sector reform and governance efforts, and to ensure adequate resources for security sector governance efforts including at a sector-wide level, and where possible and as agreed upon through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, in accordance with the priorities set forth by national authorities;

20. *Resolves* to continue to promote the role of the United Nations Secretariat in supporting security sector reform, and *requests* the Secretary-General to consider undertaking the following in the context of relevant country-specific mandates:

(a) Strengthen the comprehensive, integrated, and coherent approach of the United Nations in security sector reform;

(b) Develop additional guidance including on mainstreaming of a gender perspective for relevant United Nations officials, including for Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Envoys, and assist all relevant United Nations representatives to understand how to deliver mandated security sector reform tasks;

(c) Encourage the Secretary-General's Special Representatives and Special Envoys and United Nations Resident Coordinators to fully take into account the strategic value of security sector reform in their work, including through their good offices, and to give due consideration to the role of United Nations special political missions, where and as mandated, in advancing operational and structural prevention initiatives through security sector reform activities and efforts;

(d) Encourage the Secretary-General's Special Representatives in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions to fully integrate security sector governance and reform, where and as mandated, into their good offices and consider the role of security sector reform in mission efforts to advance peace processes, extend state authority and strengthen a protective environment for civilians;

(e) Highlight in the Secretary-General's regular reports to the Security Council on specific United Nations operations mandated by the Security Council, updates on progress of security sector reform including by developing country-specific benchmarks to assess the effectiveness of the assistance provided by the United Nations, where mandated and commitments of host countries to security sector reform and identify potential obstacles to reform, and taking into account the comprehensive approach, integrated and coherent efforts of the United Nations in security sector reform, where mandated, in order to improve Security Council oversight of security sector reform activities;

(f) Highlight in his regular reports to the Security Council on specific United Nations operations, mandated by the Security Council, efforts to support the coordination of international support to security sector reform, to include updates on support provided by all relevant actors engaged in supporting security sector reform, to enhance Security Council oversight of security sector reform activities;

(g) Encourages, in the context of all phases of UN-supported peace processes including during draw-down and exit of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, the timely and coordinated support to the transition of security sector reform-related activities, and relevant peacebuilding partners, to ensure adequate support to national authorities, by the United Nations Country Team and other multilateral and bilateral partners;

(h) Continue to build on integrated technical guidance notes and related training modules, as well as other tools as appropriate, to promote coherent and coordinated United Nations support to security sector reform, and develop modalities for joint delivery of assistance to national reform efforts and by encouraging the allocation of resources for security sector reform efforts of United Nations Country Teams and the peacebuilding components of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions;

(i) Continue to incorporate security sector governance and reform into strategic partnerships such as with the African Union and through existing partnership mechanisms as relevant to strengthen the United Nations comprehensive approach to security sector reform and foster strategic coherence of efforts, including by formalizing partnerships, defining a distribution of responsibilities and integrating security sector reform objectives in mission planning and transitions;

(j) Strengthen the capacity of senior leadership of United Nations Country Teams to absorb relevant peacebuilding functions, including any activities related to security sector reform following the drawdown and exit of Security Council-mandated missions;

(k) Ensure that assistance related to security sector reform takes into account the operation of Security Council-mandated arms embargoes, where applicable, including the availability of exemptions to such embargoes specifically intended to support security sector reform;

21. *Underlines* the importance of partnerships and cooperation with regional and subregional arrangements and organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, and in supporting security sector reform, as well as fostering greater regional engagement;

22. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to continue to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, consistent with the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (2017) and the AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018) in order to strengthen the implementation of its continent-wide policy framework for security sector reform, informed by and in support of the African Peace and Security Architecture, and *further encourages* all partners to continue to assist the African Union in building its capacities in this regard and *recognizing* the efforts of all international partners in supporting Member States, as appropriate, to implement their commitments stemming from regional policies;

23. *Reiterates* the importance of sharing experiences, best practises and lessons learned, knowledge and expertise on security sector reform among Members States, and regional and subregional organizations, expert institutions including academia and research organizations, and relevant stakeholders including women and youth organisations, and in this regard *encourages* a deepening of South-South exchange and cooperation;

24. *Underscores* the importance of women's equal and effective participation in all stages of the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, with the aim of increasing the participation and representation of women in all security sector institutions, and *recognizes* the need to address specific needs of women and girls formally associated with armed forces or groups as well as wives and widows of former combatants, and in strengthening civilian protection measures in security services, including the provision of adequate training for security personnel, the inclusion of more women in the security sector, and effective vetting processes in order to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence from the security sector and ensure accountability;

25. *Requests* the Secretary-General to prepare a report to the Security Council on his efforts to strengthen the United Nations' comprehensive approach to security sector reform in September 2021 in order to inform the Security Council's deliberation on this matter;

26. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.