



# Security Council

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## Implementation of paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2423 (2018)

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution 2423 (2018), in which the Council requested me to report, six months after the presidential inauguration, on progress achieved in the implementation of the measures referenced in paragraph 4 of the resolution and of the benchmarks developed in the framework of the Pact for Peace.

#### II. Overall assessment of progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

2. In preparation for the report, my Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mahamat Saleh Annadif, continued to work closely with all the parties to review progress made and accelerate the implementation of key measures under the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. My Assistant Secretary-General for Africa of the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and of Peace Operations, Bintou Keita, and my Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Oscar Fernández-Taranco, visited Mali from 7 to 12 December 2018 to take stock of the implementation of the Agreement. In Bamako, they met the President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the Prime Minister, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, members of the Cabinet, signatory armed groups, political stakeholders, representatives of civil society and international partners, including the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, MINUSMA and the United Nations country team. They also visited Mopti and Gao. My Special Representative re-engaged key stakeholders, beginning in February, to further review the progress made.

3. Interlocutors were aware of the deep frustration of the Security Council over persistent delays in the full implementation of the Agreement. In signing the Pact for Peace on 15 October 2018, the Government of Mali had reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the Agreement following the signing, by the signatory parties on 22 March 2018, of the road map for the implementation of priority measures under the Agreement. The signatory armed groups stated their full adherence to the Pact through an annex signed on the same day, while also agreeing



to launch the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process.

4. In the meetings with my Special Representative and my Assistant Secretaries-General, both President Keita and Prime Minister Maïga reaffirmed their commitment to accelerating the full implementation of the Agreement. Representatives of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups recognized the efforts of the Prime Minister to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and welcomed the creation of a dedicated ministry tasked with coordinating the implementation of the peace process and more regular consultations. There was less clarity on the sequencing and the timetable of practical steps.

5. Positive developments were noted in the implementation of the Agreement since the presidential election held in July and August 2018. Overall, there was renewed focus by the parties on the peace process and more trust among the signatories. International pressure, including through the prospect of sanctions, was viewed as an important factor in accelerating the process. Some partners, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the independent observer appealed for a more realistic approach to deadlines for some of the politically sensitive reform processes in order to allow time for inclusive consultations among key stakeholders and the achievement of meaningful and sustainable results.

6. Interlocutors commended the efforts of Prime Minister Maïga to reach out to stakeholders from across the political spectrum to build the consensus necessary to pass the key institutional and political reforms envisioned in the Agreement. In their meeting with my Assistant Secretaries-General, representatives of the political opposition emphasized their lack of inclusion in the political and reform processes. Representatives of civil society, especially women, underscored the need for more effective communication regarding the Agreement and inclusiveness in the implementation process to ensure that peace is owned by all segments of society.

7. The national referendum to amend the Constitution was identified as an indispensable milestone in underpinning key institutional and administrative reforms. The Government established a committee of experts on constitutional reform on 14 January and appointed its 11 members, including 2 women. The committee is mandated to develop the draft law revising the Constitution, building on relevant proposals developed in the past. The decision was met with criticism among the political opposition. They said that they had not been consulted and called for political dialogue to ensure a consensual reform process. On 20 January 2019, the Government announced that a national consultation framework on constitutional reform had been created on 17 January, which includes signatory groups, political parties and civil society. It held its first meeting on 31 January. My Special Representative continued to actively work with stakeholders across the political spectrum to resolve their differences through dialogue and in a spirit of national unity.

8. The launch on 6 November 2018 of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu was an important step in beginning the much broader process of security sector reform. The accelerated process will allow eligible Operational Coordination Mechanism personnel, who have registered and handed in weapons, to be integrated into the national army. A successful disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process, however, requires substantive progress in the implementation of other key measures under the Agreement and on security sector reform. In the meeting with my Assistant Secretaries-General in Bamako, representatives of signatory groups

reiterated that progress on the political track was a prerequisite for their combatants to put aside their arms once and for all.

9. Under the Agreement, signatories have committed themselves to conducting an in-depth reform through the establishment of a national council for security sector reform tasked with developing a national vision of the security and defence sector. A comprehensive national strategy for security sector reform was adopted on 6 July 2018, which envisages the development of a concept and a plan for the reconstitution of the defence and security forces through the integration of eligible combatants of the signatory groups, the deployment plan of the defence and security forces to the northern regions, the establishment of the territorial police and the creation of counterterrorist units within the framework of the reconstituted defence and security forces.

10. Notwithstanding significant international efforts, the security situation has continued to deteriorate, with an increase in the number of terrorist attacks targeting national and international forces, MINUSMA and civilians since 2016 (183 attacks in 2016, 226 in 2017 and 237 in 2018). The threat continues to spread from northern Mali to the centre, increasingly diverting attention from and complicating the implementation of the Agreement. The security situation is growing in complexity in central Mali, where intercommunal violence is exacerbated by the expansion of extremist armed groups, with a significant rise in explosive incidents affecting security forces and civilians, while the number of displaced persons is increasing. MINUSMA is engaging the Government to define the political parameters framing the approach in the centre and is stepping up its support to the authorities in responding to the rapidly evolving situation and protecting civilians, in coordination with the country team.

11. The visit of my Assistant Secretaries-General to Gao and Mopti confirmed that the lack of tangible progress on the ground and the absence of peace dividends for the Malian people remain an important challenge, although progress was registered in the deployment of interim administrations in northern Mali. Insecurity, unemployment, the lack of participation of women and young people in the peace process and the absence of development and education were the main concerns raised by representatives of civil society. They felt that the proposed action under the peace process did not sufficiently capture development issues.

12. The reconciliation, justice and humanitarian pillars of the Agreement appear to have received less attention over the years with regard to implementation. The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission mandated to investigate all gross human rights violations committed in Mali between 1960 and 2013 is in the process of collecting and archiving information. Its six regional antennas have received more than 11,000 statements from victims over the past two years. Investigations, public hearings and the development of a comprehensive strategy on reparations are planned to be completed in 2019. The debate in the National Assembly on the draft *Loi d'entente nationale* has been repeatedly postponed as a result of divergent views on its content and in the light of the criticism by human rights organizations.

13. MINUSMA, in its current configuration, continues to play a critical role in support of the implementation of the Agreement. All interlocutors recognized the effective way in which MINUSMA discharges its political mandate through the good offices of my Special Representative. They recognized the active role played by MINUSMA in amplifying the political process, while carrying out a number of essential security-related tasks in close coordination with other security presences on the ground, including the Malian defence and security forces, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, French forces and the European Union missions in Mali. In the absence of effective State authority and a limited presence of the country team,

MINUSMA is often expected to provide services that should be delivered by the Government or other partners. MINUSMA has increased its capacity to repel complex attacks, and the Mission's contribution remains essential in preventing terrorist groups from taking control of areas in northern Mali where the presence of the State remains limited in some areas or non-existent in others.

14. The contribution of the international forces and regional actors has been equally important in responding to the crisis in Mali and in establishing lasting peace and stability. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel remains an instrumental part of the response to counter the threat of violent extremism and transnational organized crime in the region. Once fully operational, it will help the Group of Five for the Sahel countries to increase control over their common border areas in a first phase and throughout their relevant territories in a second phase. Operations of the Joint Force resumed on 14 January in the centre of Mali after a six-month hiatus following the deadly attack against its headquarters in Sévaré in June 2018. Further operations are planned in other sectors of the country. The absence of predictable and sustainable funding for international support to the Joint Force has contributed to delays in the resumption of operations and full operationalization in general.

#### **United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework**

15. In keeping with paragraph 29 of Security Council resolution [2423 \(2018\)](#), MINUSMA and the United Nations country team developed the United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework, which sets out the Organization's overall vision and joint priorities. The Framework is a product of months of intensive efforts by MINUSMA and the country team to strengthen coordination and promote integration. Following workshops held in December 2018 and January 2019, the Senior Leadership Forum, chaired by my Special Representative, approved the Integrated Strategic Framework at the country level on 12 February, and it was subsequently endorsed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Mali at Headquarters on 21 February.

16. The United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework has a three-year time frame and identifies joint priorities based on the priority tasks contained in Security Council resolution [2423 \(2018\)](#) to strengthen support for the implementation of the Agreement and for stabilization efforts in the centre of Mali. It is therefore structured according to five thematic areas throughout the mandates of the Mission and the country team, in support of national efforts to restore State authority in the north and centre, strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in affected regions, rebuild the capacity of rule of law, security and justice institutions, strengthen social cohesion, conflict prevention and national reconciliation, and support elections and constitutional reform.

17. The United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework outlines an internal division of labour based on comparative advantages. In supporting national efforts to restore State authority in the north and centre of Mali, for example, MINUSMA and the country team committed themselves to delineating their efforts towards the full operationalization of the interim administrations. MINUSMA will focus on using its good offices to ensure the timely appointment and deployment of authorities at all levels and provide technical assistance, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) will concentrate on the capacity development of relevant institutions. With regard to support for elections and constitutional reform, it is envisaged that MINUSMA will use its good offices in northern Mali to promote a conducive environment for the holding of peaceful elections, while providing logistical, technical and security support. UNDP will focus on building the capacities of relevant institutions and raising the awareness of voters through civil society organizations, while UN-Women will champion efforts to promote women's

participation in the electoral processes through the provision of training for women and political parties.

18. The United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework also provides the basis for the Mission and the country team to deploy the various funding and programming instruments effectively and in complementarity to one another, reducing the risk of competition or duplication. A specific joint annual planning exercise will establish the sequencing of initiatives and the specific availability of funding and related needs for the year. Consultations are ongoing to develop a transition plan, with a view to handing over relevant tasks to partners, including the country team, on the basis of their mandates and comparative advantages. Preparations are under way among MINUSMA, agencies, funds and programmes to conduct a mapping of capabilities and gaps, which will be informed by the common country analysis currently being developed as part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2020–2024.

### **III. Implementation of measures referenced in paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2423 (2018)**

#### **A. Holding of the presidential election in a peaceful environment, with the support of the signatory groups**

19. The presidential election was held on 29 July 2018, with a run-off on 12 August, in a generally peaceful environment, notwithstanding some security incidents in the north and centre of Mali. President Keita was re-elected with 67.16 per cent of the vote and opposition leader Soumaïla Cissé came in second, with 32.84 per cent. After the results had been announced on 17 August, Mr. Cissé contested the election's results and filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court, which was rejected. President Keita was subsequently sworn in on 4 September and formed his Government on 9 September.

20. The political climate in the weeks leading up to the polls and after the first round was tense, amid allegations of fraud against the Government by several opposition candidates and concerns as to whether security conditions in the north and centre of the country were conducive to holding elections. The good offices of my Special Representative, in close collaboration with other international partners, including the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel, ECOWAS, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, were instrumental in alleviating concerns and preventing escalation. MINUSMA supported the electoral process through logistical, financial and technical assistance to the electoral management bodies, including the transportation of 110 tons of electoral material and the provision of training and support to outreach and awareness-raising activities. The Mission also provided training for the Malian authorities in the prevention of elections-related violence.

21. The Malian defence and security forces were deployed to provide security for the electoral process and secured polling stations, except in some areas in the centre and the north of the country, with support of the international forces and MINUSMA. The signatory armed groups, including the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups, as well as the splinter movements, such as Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad and Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad, constructively contributed to the holding of the elections in the areas where they were present, including by securing the polling stations in accordance with the agreed security arrangements with the Government. This was facilitated by

the nomination of interim authorities at the district level and the deployment of personnel from the electoral body, including prefects and sub-prefects.

22. The holding of the presidential election, within the constitutional time frame, was considered by electoral observers to be an important step towards stabilizing the country. National and international observers from the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie concluded that the elections had been held under satisfactory conditions, notwithstanding irregularities observed, including with regard to the distribution of voter cards, an incomplete voters' list and unequal access to the media for some candidates. Observers also noted that some polling stations and workers had been targeted by extremist armed groups in parts of the north. In addition, a substantial number of people in the central regions were unable to vote owing to a deteriorating security environment caused by violence across communal lines.

23. Observers encouraged the Government to undertake reforms to increase the transparency and credibility of elections, while improving participation in the electoral process. Main recommendations, in line with the letter dated 18 January 2019 from Prime Minister Maïga to the President of the Committee for Constitutional Reform, included making the electoral roll more inclusive through a special extended census, accompanied by a comprehensive registration campaign for young people, and establishing a body to manage elections by consensus and a review of article 142 (3) of the electoral law to increase the time between the first and the second round of the election.

## **B. Progress in the decentralization process**

24. While important steps were taken to put in place the legislative framework for the decentralization process, its implementation hinges on the revision of the Constitution, the elections of the members of the decentralized authorities, the transfer of authority and the required resources envisaged in the Agreement.

25. The *Code des collectivités territoriales* and the *Loi portant conditions de la libre administration des collectivités territoriales*, both promulgated on 2 October 2017, set the foundation for the administrative reform and decentralization processes. They provide for an election of the members of communes, *cercles* and regional bodies by universal suffrage and the transfer of 30 per cent of State revenue to decentralized authorities. In line with the Constitution, the *Code* refers to the elected regional bodies as regional councils. Signatory groups, however, insist that, in keeping with the Agreement, these entities should be called regional assemblies and that their decisions cannot be overruled by appointed State representatives. As stipulated in the road map signed on 22 March 2018, these issues will need to be resolved and reflected in the revised Constitution, as necessary, before regional, local and communal elections can be held. The parties are yet to resume discussions on the *Code* in accordance with the priority measures identified in the road map.

26. A draft decree, providing for the partial transfer of decentralized State services to local authorities with human and financial resources, was approved by the Council of Ministers on 20 February and submitted to the President for promulgation. The promulgation and implementation of this decree is a prerequisite to enable Mali to achieve the transfer of 30 per cent of State revenue to local authorities, as required under article 14 of the Agreement. The present level of transfers stands at approximately 19 per cent. Some 15 of 42 areas of State competences, including education, health, water and sanitation, agriculture and social development, have been devolved to local authorities by decree. Areas of competence, for which decrees

delegating authority remain outstanding, include local taxation, territorial police, mining, the empowerment and employment of young people and energy.

27. The establishment of a territorial police force was discussed during the high-level meeting on the operationalization of the priority actions in the areas of defence and security referenced in paragraph 36 below. The parties agreed to place them under the authority of elected local officials (mayors) in conformity with the *Code des collectivités territoriales*. They also decided that there would be a minimum of 30 personnel per commune who would discharge municipal policing duties (law enforcement, traffic policing and assistance to tax authorities), while also being at the disposal of the *cercles* and regions. A decree establishing the powers and composition of the police force is being drafted jointly between the parties. The deadline for the development of the legislative framework for the territorial police was set for 2020.

28. As outlined in my previous report (S/2018/1174), the Government initiated consultations on a draft law on administrative and territorial restructuring in November 2018. The restructuring process is aimed at rationalizing local government by ensuring improved State presence and efficiency of service delivery, as well as enhancement of the benefits of local taxation through the creation of new municipalities. In keeping with article 6 of the Agreement, the Government's proposal also envisages an increase in the number of electoral districts and seats in the National Assembly to enhance the representation of northern populations in national institutions. Concerns persist in some areas, in particular in Gao, where strong civil society mobilization prevented the holding of the consultations, that the *découpage* would disadvantage specific communities and that the proposed reform would not be sustainable financially.

### **C. Operationalization of the interim administrations in the north of Mali**

29. Appointed through a presidential decree on 14 October 2016, all the regional interim administrations are now functional and strive to provide basic services to the population, for example, by initiating the construction of 1 clinic in Ménaka and 9 primary schools and 24 boreholes in Taoudenni region. Notwithstanding progress in the establishment of the interim administration and the increase in funding over the past year, the effectiveness of the interim authorities continues to be hampered by technical and logistical challenges and the lack of infrastructure. Some civil society organizations raised concern about the lack of accountability and public meetings to discuss local authority accounts, even though this was envisaged in the *Code des collectivités territoriales*.

30. Following intense negotiations between the signatory parties facilitated by MINUSMA through the good offices of my Special Representative, on 26 July 2018, the Government named 288 members, including 14 women, to the interim administrations and *collèges transitoires* in 21 of the 24 districts of the northern regions. Appointments are pending for three districts in Taoudenni. Divergent views between non-signatory compliant armed groups, in particular between the Coordination des mouvements de l'entente and the Congrès pour la justice dans l'Azawad, appear to be holding up the appointment of interim administrations in the three remaining districts of Taoudenni, namely, Al-Ourche, Bou Djébéha and Fom el 'Alba. Nominated members would benefit from capacity-building initiatives, in particular in the area of financial resources management.

31. Interim authorities played a key role in support of the organization and conduct of the presidential election, through contributing to voter education, the distribution of voter identification cards and the provision of support to local authorities in

conducting elections-related operations, such as the deployment and collection of voting materials. They also worked closely with regional reconciliation teams to prevent election-related violence by raising the awareness of the population in Gao, Ménaka and Timbuktu on the electoral process.

32. Funding allocated by the Government to the interim authorities (regional and district levels) stood at \$19.5 million as at 26 February 2019. They were allocated to cover the operations costs (\$2.15 million), capital investment (\$10 million) and implementation of key projects under the respective interim administrations' priority action plans (\$7.5 million), adopted in Gao, Ménaka, Taoudenni and Timbuktu in September 2017, and in Kidal in October 2017. Those priority action plans facilitated access to State funds in support of projects to strengthen the delivery of basic services, social cohesion and economic recovery. In addition to the \$19.5 million allocated by the Government to fund the priority action plans, another \$9 million has been committed to funding future projects at the district level.

33. The Government, with the support of the United Nations, has been intensifying its efforts to address challenges hampering the effective functioning of the interim authorities. In December 2018, the Government committed \$2.9 million to further the operationalization of the interim authorities, including for the training and deployment of personnel (27 staff in Timbuktu, 12 in Gao, 12 in Ménaka, 11 in Kidal and 10 in Taoudenni). MINUSMA and the country team provided capacity-building support to the interim administrations.

#### **D. Progress in the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, as well as in an inclusive and consensual security sector reform**

##### **Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration**

34. Notwithstanding the lack of agreement on the integration quota, on 6 November, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the Commission on Integration, with support from MINUSMA, launched the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process. Between 6 and 30 November, 1,423 ex-combatants from the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups, along with ex-combatants from non-signatory but compliant armed movements, were disarmed, demobilized and registered, including undergoing screening for security and human rights violations. The operations took place in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. The last phase is expected to target the remaining 417 ex-combatants (235 in Gao and 182 in Timbuktu) who did not participate in the first phase. Moving forward, the former combatants will be transferred to three facilities in the south of country (Koutiala, Séguéla and Markala), where they will undergo three months of military training between March and June 2019 under the auspices of the Malian Ministry of Defence, with the support of MINUSMA and the European Union. Upon completion of their training, they will return to Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal to begin their first deployment as members of the Malian armed forces and as part of the three Operational Coordination Mechanism units tasked with providing security for the eight cantonment sites of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme. In the meantime, MINUSMA continues to deliver community violence reduction projects in the areas surrounding the cantonment sites to prepare the communities for the return of former combatants who will participate in the Programme.

35. Between February and October 2018, approximately 36,000 combatants were pre-registered by the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. Of this number, it is estimated that some 17,000 could meet the

eligibility criteria for weapon possession to participate in the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process or the National Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration Programme. A total of 1,840 elements are to be integrated into the Malian armed forces through the Operational Coordination Mechanism units as a result of the accelerated process, while the Government has indicated that approximately another 2,000 could obtain civil service positions, including in the forest protection services and customs. The remaining 13,000 eligible for the Programme would be reintegrated into civilian life. The World Bank has earmarked \$15 million to support the Programme for the first 4,000 ex-combatants who have chosen this latter option.

### **Security sector reform**

36. From 12 to 14 December 2018, the signatory parties held a high-level meeting in Bamako on the operationalization of the priority actions in the areas of defence and security outlined in the road map of 22 March 2018. The meeting led to the signature of an updated action plan and timeline for the reconstitution and redeployment of the defence and security forces, the establishment of special counter-terrorism and transnational crime units under the command of the Chief of Defence Staff, the establishment and deployment of a territorial police force and local consultative committees on security and the finalization of action plans of the national security sector reform strategy.

37. An understanding was reached on the provisional integration of specific high-ranking civilian and military personnel from the signatory groups into a new structure, the High Authority for Peace and Stability, under the auspices of the Head of State. The Authority's role will be to follow up on the implementation of the Agreement. The parties also agreed on modalities for the reintegration of former members of the defence and security forces at the same rank as upon departure. A decree was subsequently adopted on 6 February 2019 on the criteria of age, training and professional qualification required for the integration of ex-combatants of movements into the armed forces, the national police, civil protection, customs, water and forest services, corrections and prison administration, and other bodies of the public service. The attribution of ranks for senior military personnel will be jointly decided on a case-by-case basis. The Government invited former members of the defence and security forces to register from 26 to 30 January 2019 in the closest military region. As a result, 494 former military personnel were registered in various regions, and by 26 February, 453 of them had been transferred to three training centres: Bamako (20 officers), Markala in Ségou region (155 non-commissioned officers) and Séguéla in Kayes region (278 soldiers).

38. The issue of the integration quota for the army remains unresolved. The Government maintains that this number will be 4,900, while the signatory armed groups are pressing for 10,000. It appears, however, that the parties are willing to continue with the integration of signatory armed groups into the operational coordination mechanism, with the understanding that those integrated into the army will obtain full status as soldiers in the defence forces, although the question of rank harmonization for 100 field commanders of the signatory armed groups has also not been resolved. The parties have agreed to continue discussions on the issue, with facilitation by MINUSMA and the President of the Agreement Monitoring Committee.

39. With the support of the European Union missions, EUCAP Sahel Mali and the European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces, the Malian defence and security forces continued to enhance their capacities, while increasing their deployment to northern and central Mali.

### **Operational Coordination Mechanism**

40. Efforts to screen and register the 1,423 mixed unit Operational Coordination Mechanism personnel contributed to enhancing confidence among signatory parties and splinter armed groups. A total of 403 combatants were initially found unsuitable for integration following medical examination but will be given the opportunity to undergo a second medical test in Gao for a final decision on their suitability. This process will be done simultaneously with the disarmament and demobilization of the remaining 417 ex-combatants.

41. Until the start of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and integration process in November, the operationalization process of mixed units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism had continued in Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, with patrols conducted in Gao and Timbuktu. As indicated in my previous reports, efforts to fully operationalize the mixed units of the Operational Coordination Mechanism faced several challenges, including disagreements among the signatory armed groups on the modalities. In Kidal and Timbuktu, the first companies of the mixed units had reached only half of their expected numbers. At the same time, the mixed units in Gao lacked heavy weapons and were not able, as a result, to provide security to the electoral process as planned.

### **E. Socioeconomic development of the north of Mali**

42. Economic growth in Mali stood at 5 per cent in 2018 (5.3 per cent in 2017). That growth was attributable mainly to a dynamic agriculture sector (cotton) and services (financial activities and trade). The Government made efforts to reduce the budget deficit to 2.5 per cent in 2018, compared with 2.9 per cent in 2017, and the economy continued to perform well in 2018, consolidating growth with low inflation. Since the International Conference for the Economic Recovery and Development of Mali, held in Paris in 2015, at which donors pledged \$4.24 billion, \$3.1 billion had been disbursed until 2017. The disbursement rate was estimated to be 90 per cent in 2018. Of those funds, 40 per cent was earmarked for the north to supplement the budget of the Government to implement the development measures contained in the Agreement.

43. Limited progress was made towards improving the socioeconomic conditions of the population in the north. The structure of the economic growth is not inclusive, although growth remained stable in 2018. The poverty rate was estimated to be 53.6 per cent in rural areas, compared with 32.9 per cent in urban areas. The economic growth contributed to a minimal decrease in the poverty rate and was not high enough to trigger a significant reduction in the number of poor people in Mali. The poverty rate remained acute in northern regions, specifically in Gao (50.5 per cent) and in the centre, with an estimated rate of 51.1 per cent in Ségou and 59.5 per cent in Mopti. Owing to security concerns, the presence of the State and development agencies remains limited in the north.

44. Poverty and a lack of livelihood opportunities for young men and women persist. The last semester of 2018 and the first one of 2019 were marked by a spate of unrest led by civil servants. Social pressure stemming from the disconnect between economic growth and stagnant living conditions have triggered protests, sparked by a public backlash against the low level of salaries and non-payment of arrears. In addition, the already fragile social situation further deteriorated and was exacerbated by population displacements. In 2018, there were some 61,400 internally displaced persons in Mali and 138,700 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger. The main regions of displacement in Mali are Timbuktu, Mopti and Ménaka.

45. Responsibility for the creation of a development zone in the northern regions falls under the authority of the Ministry of Planning. On 11 January 2019, members of the relevant subcommittee of the Agreement Monitoring Committee expressed their concerns regarding the delays in the creation of the zone which, according to the road map of 22 March 2018, was supposed to have been created by November 2018 at the latest. The subcommittee requested that the draft decree establishing the zone be shared no later than the end of March 2019. On 30 January 2018, Parliament created a sustainable development fund to provide a guarantee for the specific strategy for the development of the northern regions. On 16 July 2018, the Government launched a new strategic framework for economic recovery and sustainable development, based on the Sustainable Development Goals and the prospective vision for Mali 2040.

## **F. Ensuring equal and meaningful participation of women, including through greater representation of women in the mechanisms established under the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali**

46. President Keita has made an effort to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. A total of 11 of 32 ministers in his Government are women, including Kamissa Camara, the country's first women Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Ministers of Transparency and of Energy. For the first time, the Government met the goal of 30 per cent women representation, in accordance with the 2015 law instituting measures to promote gender equality in access to nominative and elective functions.

47. Overall, however, women's participation remains limited in the peace process and in political and public life more broadly. A total of 9.5 per cent of elected representatives in the National Assembly are women and, of the 288 members appointed to the interim authorities in the five northern regions, only 14 are women. At the regional level, of 69 members, there is only 1 woman. Women are also underrepresented in the mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the Agreement, with only 1 among the 34 members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee.

48. Historically, women in Mali had not participated in political negotiations, nor were their interests and experiences adequately represented or considered. Stereotypes and beliefs associated with gender prevail and prevent women from running for public office or making their voices heard. Achieving greater representation of women would require the support of national and local stakeholders, including religious and traditional leaders, who have opposed reforms to combat discrimination or revise the family code in the past.

49. In the run-up to the presidential election, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family, supported by MINUSMA and UN-Women, organized women-led discussions throughout Mali on the advancement of women's rights as candidates and voters. According to the final report of the European Union electoral observer mission in Mali, however, the quota and gender programmes have had limited impact to date. Only 1 woman, Djeneba N'Diaye, ran for president (of 24 candidates). She obtained the lowest number of votes.

50. An ad hoc working group was created during the twenty-ninth meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, in November 2018, with the objective of developing concrete options to enhance the participation of women in the peace process. The group met on 6, 14 and 21 December 2018 and recommended the inclusion of women in the follow-up mechanism of the Agreement through the direct

participation of women in the Committee and other follow-up mechanisms and the establishment of an independent women's observatory to monitor the implementation of the Agreement.

## **G. Pact for Peace**

51. Following the signature of the Pact for Peace on 15 October 2018 by the Government and the United Nations, the signatory armed groups stated their full adherence to the Pact and their dedication to the full implementation of the Agreement through an annex to the Pact signed the same day. Within the framework of the Pact, the Government commits itself to taking stock of the status of the implementation of the road map of 22 March 2018, which had identified priority measures for the acceleration of the peace process. Of the 21 action points identified in the road map, 9 had been completed by 28 February 2019, including the launch of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Timbuktu and Kidal, the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and consultations on administrative restructuring and constitutional reform. An additional 8 action points are currently being implemented. Going forward, added focus will be required to agree on the sequencing for the implementation of the remaining action points and realistic timelines.

## **IV. Observations**

52. Notwithstanding the multiple challenges facing Mali, many of which have yet to be addressed, I appreciate the progress registered by the Government and the signatory armed groups since the inauguration of President Keita on 4 September 2018. More was achieved within the past six months than ever before since the signing of the Agreement in 2015. The presidential election was held on time and in an overall peaceful environment, with the support of the signatory armed groups. I am encouraged by the renewed commitment to the peace process by all signatories and the apparent increased trust among them since the presidential inauguration and the signing of the Pact for Peace. This positive dynamic yielded a number of concrete results: district-level interim administrations were established in the Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu regions, more than 1,400 former combatants have put aside their arms and discussions on enhancing participation of women in the peace process have commenced as part of the Agreement Monitoring Committee. Important political and institutional reforms are envisaged under the Agreement. Given the scope and complexity of these reforms, there is a need for prioritization. I call upon the Government, signatory groups and other key stakeholders to agree on the sequencing of the execution of the measures listed in the Agreement and, in doing so, to prioritize the pivotal steps that condition the implementation of others.

53. The constitutional reform stands out as one of these priority measures. Not only is it a prerequisite for the key institutional and political reforms and the holding of local and senatorial elections, but also it will demonstrate the commitment of the Malian people to the reforms and their irreversible nature. I welcome the creation of a committee of experts, which will play an important role in this process. Initial reactions, however, are a reminder that this reform remains a highly delicate political process, as controversies over past initiatives have shown. I commend President Keita and Prime Minister Maïga for initiating extensive consultations with stakeholders across the spectrum. I call upon all political leaders to engage constructively in the process and resolve their differences through dialogue. Only by working together can the groundwork for a Malian nation State be laid and a more peaceful and stable future for all its people secured.

54. Successful reforms require national ownership and the buy-in from a broader segment of the Malian society, including women and young people. While mindful of the need to avoid any further delays, I consider it equally important for the parties to be allowed sufficient time to collectively address and resolve contentious issues to ensure a truly inclusive political reform process. I welcome the creation of the Cadre de concertation national, a dedicated consultation mechanism for the Government, political parties and civil society to discuss key reform proposals on constitutional referendum, territorial and administrative reforms, *découpage* and amendments to the electoral law and related timelines. This is a vital step towards ensuring more inclusive support for the political process throughout Malian society and enhanced ownership. Furthermore, I encourage all parties to consider the recommendations of the ad hoc working group on the participation of women in the peace process. Experience has shown that meaningful participation is linked directly to more sustainable peace.

55. The start of the accelerated process of disarmament, demobilization and integration is an important step in the much broader process of reconstituting and reforming the Malian defence and security forces envisaged under the Agreement. For the first time since the beginning of the peace process, combatants disarmed, demobilized and registered for integration into the army. This is a critical step, which indicates the readiness of the signatory armed groups to put aside their arms, cease hostilities and reject the recourse to violence. I call upon all parties to build on the momentum and resolve the issue of the integration quota for the army without further delay, so as to proceed with the training and integration of those who had handed in their weapons. This will also enable the authorities to enter the next phase, the launch of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programme, for which more than 36,000 combatants have already expressed their interest in joining.

56. Ensuring the longer-term success of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the former combatants requires progress in reforming the security sector. Steps were taken to lay the groundwork for this important reform with the adoption of the national security sector strategy and its action plan. There is an urgent need for a national vision for the reformed and reconstituted security and defence forces that enjoy broad support beyond the signatories of the Agreement. I call upon the Government to finalize this vision, in close collaboration with the signatory armed groups and other key stakeholders, and to establish a plan for the recruitment and integration of former combatants and a clear timeline for the effective redeployment of reconstituted Malian defence and security forces to northern Mali.

57. The progress over the past six months notwithstanding, the road to sustainable peace and stability in Mali remains long and filled with challenges. Precious time was lost owing to repeated delays in the implementation of the Agreement, compounded by the complex security challenges that the country continues to face. I recognize that the implementation of the Agreement is not taking place in a post-conflict context, as initially hoped for upon its signature, but in a context of continued crises, terrorism and extremist violence. The Agreement nevertheless remains the only valid framework for the peace process, and its implementation must be leveraged and accompanied by broader political efforts by Malian, regional and international actors. I therefore call upon the signatories to stay the course and fulfil their obligations – to their own people and to the family of nations. The people of Mali are yet to receive the peace dividends and improvement in living conditions that they deserve.

58. I am profoundly saddened by the death of 18 peacekeepers and the injuries inflicted to 77 others as a result of attacks against the United Nations in the past six months. I take this opportunity to express once again my condolences to the families and to the Governments of the deceased peacekeepers and wish a full and speedy recovery to those injured. I condemn in the strongest possible terms attacks against

United Nations personnel and convoys and reiterate my calls upon the Malian authorities, as well as the signatory armed groups to the peace agreement, to spare no effort in identifying the perpetrators of those attacks so that they can be brought to justice as swiftly as possible. Attacks targeting United Nations peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law. I call upon all signatory armed groups to take concrete steps to enhance their cooperation and coordination with the Government of Mali and cut off all ties with terrorist organizations.

59. The contribution of the Mission in its current configuration remains critical to the stabilization of Mali. Notwithstanding these tragic losses, the Mission has increased its ability to repel complex attacks by terrorist groups, illustrating its robustness, resilience and the critical role that it continues to play in support of the Government to create space for the political process to unfold and prevent parts of northern Mali with limited or no State presence falling under the control of terrorist groups. Many of the heinous attacks against our peacekeepers were repelled by our uniformed men and women with bravery and professionalism and without inflicting civilian casualties. MINUSMA has made great strides in strengthening the protection of its personnel, camps and convoys, including through enhanced measures to prevent attacks with improvised explosive devices and other indirect weapons, while taking measures to improve its capacity to anticipate such attacks. I encourage all countries contributing troops to MINUSMA to continue with their efforts to upgrade the equipment of their contingents deployed in Mali. In the spirit of shared responsibility, I also reiterate my call upon bilateral donors to step up their support to troop- and police-contributing countries in these efforts.

60. The protection of the territory and its people is first and foremost the responsibility of the Government. Encouraging progress was achieved in building the capacities of the Malian defence and security forces over the past years with the steadfast support of the European Union. This will enable further progress in the redeployment of the national defence and security forces to northern Mali, which remains a critical priority. I strongly condemn the persistent attacks against Malian defence and security forces in northern and central Mali and the many losses that they incurred. I commend the forces for their bravery and dedication in defending the unity and territorial integrity of Mali and the safety of its citizens. I remain concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in central Mali, where the increasing presence of extremist groups has exacerbated longstanding intercommunal tensions and conflicts. I applaud the efforts of the Government to address this worrying situation in central Mali by implementing its integrated security plan. At the same time, I would like to reiterate that a stand-alone security response will not be sufficient to address the crises in Mali, the root causes of which are inherently political and developmental.

61. Addressing the challenges facing Mali will require considering the complex cross-border dynamics and drivers of conflict occurring within the broader regional context. I reiterate my call upon national, regional and international actors to redouble their efforts to tackle the multiple threats facing Mali and the Sahel region, which cover all aspects relating to peace, development and security, under the framework of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and its support plan. There will be no lasting peace in Mali and the region without sustainable development and no progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, without peace and stability. More needs to be done to implement measures under section IV, on socioeconomic and cultural development, of the Agreement. I am encouraged by the resumption of the operations of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel in central Mali. I call upon the Group of Five for the Sahel member States to make arrangements to sustain such operations and international partners to provide the Joint Force with the support that it requires.

62. In conclusion, I would like to thank my Special Representative, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for his excellent leadership and the personnel of MINUSMA and the country team in Mali, who continue to exemplify the highest aspirations of the Organization by working with dedication and at great personal risk for a more peaceful and stable Mali. I would also like to express my appreciation to all troop- and police-contributing countries for their continued commitment. Lastly, I am grateful to the African Union, ECOWAS, humanitarian organizations and donors, as well as non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions and steadfast commitment to Mali.

Map

