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Situation in South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2514 \(2020\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 15 March 2021 and requested me to report on the implementation of the Mission's mandate every 90 days. It covers political and security developments between 16 February 2020 and 31 May 2020, the humanitarian and human rights situation and progress made in the implementation of the Mission's mandate.

II. Political and economic developments

Key political updates

2. Further to the 7 November 2019 tripartite meeting, held in Entebbe, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, dissolved the Transitional Government of National Unity on 21 February and appointed Riek Machar as First Vice-President and Taban Deng Gai, James Wani Igga and Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior as Vice-Presidents. The new presidency of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity was sworn in on 22 February, marking the end of the pre-transitional period. On 23 February, the President selected Hussein Abdelbagi as the fourth Vice-President from a list submitted by the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), after the coalition failed to reach a consensus.

3. On 12 March, following prolonged discussions among the parties on the allocation of 35 ministerial portfolios pursuant to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, the President appointed the Cabinet. The former Government retained 20 ministries; the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) received 9; SSOA received 3; the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) "Former Detainees" (SPLM-FD) received 2; and the Other Political Parties (OPP) coalition received 1. The Revitalized Transitional Government fell short of the 35 per cent quota for women envisioned in the Revitalized Agreement, with only nine women (25 per cent).



Impact of the coronavirus disease

4. As at 31 May, 1,317 cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) had been registered in South Sudan, including 14 confirmed cases within the UNMISS protection of civilians sites (11 in Juba and 3 in Bentiu). Despite the limited testing capacity, underreporting and subclinical disease, the assumption is that the country is experiencing community transmission.

5. On 20 March, the President established a high-level task force to combat COVID-19, with Mr. Machar heading operations. On 15 May, the President dissolved the high-level task force and appointed a new 13-member task force led by Mr. Abdelbagi.

6. On 20 May, Mr. Machar, the Minister of Defence, Angelina Teny, and the Minister of Information and Communication, Michael Makuei Lueth, confirmed that they had tested positive for COVID-19, along with a number of Cabinet ministers.

7. The pandemic affected peace and security dynamics in South Sudan, including critical elements of peace implementation. Following the confirmation of the first case within the United Nations, anti-United Nations sentiment, hate speech and harassment emerged, and the Organization was accused of spreading the virus. Government-imposed restrictions negatively affected peacekeeping and humanitarian activities.

Implementation of the Revitalized Agreement

8. On 27 March, the President established a new security mechanism, the National Transitional Committee, to coordinate and implement the transitional security arrangements. The mechanism took over the outstanding tasks of the defunct National Pre-Transitional Committee.

9. At the end of the reporting period, approximately 35,000 personnel remained at cantonment sites, waiting to transition to training centres or for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Joint Transitional Security Committee issued a directive on 25 March requesting training centres to suspend activities to comply with the guidance of the high-level task force. According to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, conditions in cantonment and training sites remained dire, with a lack of basic resources, which led to large numbers of troops leaving the sites.

10. On 6 May, the Joint Defence Board held its twelfth meeting to discuss implementation of the transitional security arrangements, at which the parties agreed to graduate the trainees to the necessary unified forces within one month.

11. The parties continued to disagree on the sharing ratio for gubernatorial positions, leaving those key positions vacant. On 7 May, the Office of the President issued a statement that the parties had agreed to divide up the States. The former Transitional Government of National Unity was allocated six States, the SPLM/A-IO three and the SSOA one. The same day, Mr. Machar, in a letter to the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, rejected the decision, claiming that it had not been reached by consensus. The leader of the National Democratic Movement (NDM), Lam Akol, and a section of OPP also objected to the decision. To overcome the impasse, on 9 May, the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission referred the matter to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Heads of States and Governments.

Peace process developments

12. Increased fragmentation among the opposition parties continued. Within SSOA, NDM accused the other parties of failing to adhere to democratic principles in determining the allocation of its allotted positions within the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity. Some members of OPP also complained that the President had filled their ministerial post without consultation.

13. Within the SPLM/A-IO, several defections and desertions were noted, especially following the formation of the Cabinet. On 17 March, four SPLM/A-IO generals, led by Lieutenant General James Koang Chuol, defected to the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces. A member of the SPLM/A-IO political bureau and former national Minister of Petroleum, Dak Duop Bichiok, led another group of defectors, accusing Mr. Machar of nepotism and failing to govern the movement appropriately. SPLM/A-IO criticized the President for allegedly encouraging and facilitating defections at a time when reunification was essential.

Engagement of regional partners

14. On 9 April, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) held its 917th meeting on the situation in South Sudan. The Council urged the parties to adhere to the Revitalized Agreement, in particular the reconstitution of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly and the appointment of State governors. It further requested the holdout groups to continue to respect the permanent ceasefire, in line with the 12 January Rome declaration concluded under the auspices of the Sant'Egidio community.

15. On 23 April, the IGAD Council of Ministers met and issued a communiqué in which it urged the President to reconstitute the Transitional National Legislative Assembly before 10 May and called on the parties to reach an agreement on responsibility-sharing within 15 days. The Council of Ministers expressed appreciation for the commitment of the Government to take remedial measures to rectify alterations made by the constitutional amendment bill. It urged the President to undertake appropriate consultations with the officials and organs concerned when making public political appointments in the future.

Economic situation

16. Falling global crude oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the economy, resulting in the International Monetary Fund revising the gross domestic product growth rate for 2020 from 8.2 per cent to 4.9 per cent. The loss in revenue is expected to create new challenges with regard to funds available for the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement.

III. Security situation

17. While the permanent ceasefire largely continued to hold, the security situation deteriorated as disagreement over gubernatorial positions and the ensuing lack of authority at the State level compounded tensions and exacerbated communal violence and crime. Concurrently, Government and SPLM/A-IO clashes with the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) saw an uptick in late April and mid-May in the Equatorias, following a general lull since the signing of the Rome declaration, which was intended to bring the non-signatories into the peace process.

Greater Equatoria region

18. Efforts to implement the Rome declaration faced challenges, as clashes escalated between the National Salvation Front (NAS) and an alliance between the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and SPLM/A-IO. At least 14 clashes occurred in Central Equatoria, with both sides trading blame for violating the declaration.

19. The SPLM/A-IO in Western Equatoria split when the Division IX B Commander, Major General James Nando, defected to join the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces on 26 March, prompted by an internal leadership dispute and the perception of marginalization along ethnic lines.

Greater Bahr el-Ghazal region

20. The SPLM/A-IO internal discord continued to foment and instigate instability in the greater Bagari area. A fight broke out on 6 May between forces under Major General Abdallah Ujang, and those led by Brigadier General Rizek Otto, loyal to Major General Daniel Dongo, who defected to the Government in February. On 14 May, Colonel William Gabriel Farah and 15 soldiers loyal to Dongo defected to the Government, further indicating disunity within SPLM/A-IO.

21. The cross-border conflict between armed cattle keepers from Tonj and farmers from the Jur River area led to tensions between the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces, which supported the cattle keepers, and SPLM/A-IO, which provided protection to the local farmers. Tensions also emerged when SPLM/A-IO prevented cattle keepers from accessing drinking water in Kuajena and issued an ultimatum for them to leave.

Greater Upper Nile region

22. The intra-Nuer conflict in Maiwut continued, with civilians drawn into both military clashes and communal violence. Forces loyal to Major General Ochan Puot and SPLM/A-IO remained positioned in strategic locations and engaged in sporadic clashes, in breach of their ceasefire commitment.

23. On 24 April, Major General Matthew Puljang was removed as the commander of the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces special forces in Unity, resulting in insecurity and the spillover of violence into neighbouring States. Young people associated with Puljang denounced his dismissal and threatened to instigate violence in Warrap. A cattle raiding incident on 2 May in Dam village in Warrap, in which eight people were killed, allegedly involved those loyal to Puljang.

Intercommunal conflict

24. There was a sharp increase in intercommunal violence, including owing to the leadership vacuum at the State and substate levels, where government institutions remained dissolved, which allowed seasonal and perennial inter- and intracommunal tensions to continue unchecked.

25. In Jonglei, violence spiked owing to attacks by Lou Nuer and Dinka Bor on Murle communities in late February, in which hundreds of people were killed and injured, numerous women and children abducted, cattle looted and thousands of civilians displaced. The process of the return of the abductees was facilitated by UNMISS through local peace engagements, including intra-Lou Nuer and Murle dialogues, virtual meetings between leaders and proactive deployment of patrols to hotspots. The COVID-19 prevention measures restricting movement and public gatherings have delayed the process of identifying and assembling the abducted Murle. Planned consultative peace meetings of Murle youth facilitated by UNMISS

in Pibor were indefinitely postponed. In mid-May, hundreds of Murle men conducted a coordinated attack against Lou Nuer communities, targeting over a dozen villages in Uror county. The ensuing fight between the two sides resulted in the killing of hundreds of people and the displacement of thousands of civilians.

26. In Warrap and Lakes, violent incidents occurred among Dinka communities, typically resulting from land ownership claims, disputes over grazing lands and a culture of revenge. In addition, cross-border attacks by Bul Nuer actors from Unity into Warrap occurred in April and May, resulting in dozens of deaths and looting of cattle. In the same period, an uptick in intra-Nuer violence was also observed in Unity. UNMISS deployed military patrols and integrated teams to hotspots in Warrap, Lakes and Unity to engage communities and reinvigorate previously signed peace resolutions. In addition, UNMISS facilitated direct communication between influential community leaders from the affected areas, including through satellite phones and video conferencing.

IV. Humanitarian situation

27. South Sudan continues to be gripped by a serious humanitarian crisis. The cumulative effect of prolonged conflict, chronic vulnerabilities and weak essential services compounded by emerging health risks have left some 7.5 million people in need, while hunger threatens over half of the population.

28. The existing crisis conditions have made the population extremely vulnerable to experiencing illness associated with the transmission of COVID-19. In a country where 56 per cent of the population has no access to even primary health-care services, along with existing comorbidities, the loss of life resulting from COVID-19 will be almost impossible to prevent. Moreover, the pandemic poses a significant risk to the precarious health system; the potential for health worker absenteeism owing to sickness, death or protest will mean that primary health care will suffer and such diseases as malaria, diarrhoeal disease and malnutrition could result in excess morbidity and mortality far exceeding the fatalities directly related to COVID-19.

29. Displaced persons in camps or camp-like settings are particularly vulnerable to the virus owing to overcrowding, poor access to safe water and sanitation, and limited health-care and related services. With school closures, over 2 million school-age children enrolled in formal and non-formal institutions have not been able to attend school regularly, in addition to the approximately 2.4 million children estimated to be out of school in 2020. The school closures have also limited the access of parents to essential services, such as school feeding and health and nutrition programmes.

30. Infection prevention measures that limit movement and curtail economic activities exacerbate threats to food security and livelihoods in a country where 6 million people were already acutely food insecure between February and April, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. An additional 500,000 people are expected to be acutely food insecure in the coming months, and increases are likely owing to the impact of COVID-19.

31. Restrictions on freedom of movement heighten the risk of gender-based violence, limit the transportation of personnel and essential drugs and medical supplies, and impede access to populations in need. Any cessation of the assistance reaching the broader population could risk an influx to existing locations for internally displaced persons and refugees, where services and assistance could be perceived as more available, thereby increasing transmission.

32. A spike in intercommunal fighting, cattle raiding and revenge attacks between armed youth groups has caused civilian displacement and casualties in Central

Equatoria, Jonglei, the greater Pibor area, Lakes, Unity, Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Warrap and led to the suspension of humanitarian services in affected areas. According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 36,000 persons were internally displaced by communal violence, cattle raiding and fighting between armed groups in the first three months of 2020. Clashes between NAS, the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and SPLM/A-IO, along with intercommunal violence in Central Equatoria, affected over 30,000 people and displaced more than 19,100. Military operations in Central Equatoria disrupted humanitarian operations and access to affected populations.

33. Overall, almost 4 million people remained displaced, driven mainly by years of conflict, intercommunal violence, food insecurity and recent natural hazards, such as floods. That number included close to 1.7 million internally displaced persons. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2.2 million South Sudanese remained displaced as refugees in six neighbouring countries. However, 49,000 South Sudanese refugees spontaneously returned between January and April. In parallel, during the same period, more than 17,000 people fled South Sudan, mainly to Uganda, the Sudan, and Ethiopia, to seek asylum.

34. A total of 170 humanitarian access incidents were reported in the first quarter of 2020, an 18 per cent increase from the 144 in the same period in 2019, owing mainly to localized intercommunal violence. More than 110 aid workers were relocated as a result of escalating tensions. From 1 April to 21 May, 99 access incidents were recorded, of which 22 per cent were related to COVID-19 restrictions, hindering the movement of humanitarian actors and the delivery of assistance. Related to COVID-19, humanitarian personnel experienced movement impediments, visa suspensions and denial of entry into the country. Several international non-governmental organizations reduced their footprint through the relocation of non-essential staff.

35. A total of 24 ambushes were reported in the first quarter of 2020, compared with 15 incidents during the same period in 2019. In Pibor, one aid worker was killed by unknown armed young people in February. On 16 May, 3 humanitarian workers were killed in Jonglei, bringing the number of aid workers killed in South Sudan since the conflict began in 2013 to 119. The vast majority of those killed were South Sudanese.

36. As of 31 May, \$487 million had been secured against the \$1.54 billion requested for the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan. An addendum to the Plan will be released in June to account for new needs and priorities related to COVID-19. During the first quarter of 2020, humanitarian organizations provided assistance to some 3.5 million people. That number represented 63 per cent of the targeted 5.6 million people, a 35 per cent increase compared with the number of people who received assistance in the same period of 2019.

V. Implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks

A. Protection of civilians

37. During the reporting period, UNMISS worked within COVID-19 restrictions to prioritize implementation of its protection of civilians mandate both within and outside of the protection of civilians sites through a sustained presence in conflict hotspots, safe engagement with communities and support to reconciliation and dialogue initiatives. For example, in Jonglei and Warrap, UNMISS established temporary operating bases at Likuangole and Tonj to deter violence and instil confidence in displaced communities. However, the Mission faced considerable

pressure from security forces to either restrict its activities or shut down its temporary operating bases on the grounds of COVID-19 prevention measures.

38. UNMISS conducted 13 workshops, community dialogues, peace campaigns and actions to disseminate local and national peace agreements, along with capacity-building activities for traditional authorities, women and young people, reaching a total of 2,700 participants, including 1,267 women. Those initiatives were scaled down owing to a nationwide ban on public gatherings owing to COVID-19. Continued community engagements and the dissemination of migration agreements sustained peaceful coexistence between pastoralists from Warrap and host farmers in Western Bahr el-Ghazal, as both resolved isolated incidents based on previously signed agreements. In Ruweng, pastoralists from the Sudan and host Dinka communities also renewed their commitment to uphold previously signed migration mechanisms, while local authorities agreed to allocate grazing lands to both sides and share water resources to reduce competition.

39. In Western and Eastern Equatoria, UNMISS disseminated the Revitalized Agreement to help improve intercommunal relations. UNMISS also encouraged influential local leaders to promote social cohesion and counter hate speech and the spread of misinformation as a measure to address COVID-19 fears across the country.

40. With regard to COVID-19 measures, movement restrictions were not uniformly applied to all protection of civilians sites. In Bentiu, while the host nation security services cautioned against mass movement and emphasized social distancing, security forces were not deployed, nor were the internally displaced persons harassed. In contrast, at the Juba and Malakal protection of civilians sites, internally displaced persons experienced government movement restrictions. In Malakal, the State Security Committee decided to lock down the protection of civilians site for 14 days. In Juba, UNMISS negotiated with the authorities to allow the supply of vital services, such as water and medical supplies, to the sites. In an effort to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in the densely populated sites, the UNMISS leadership engaged with the Government and the opposition to encourage and support internally displaced persons in the protection of civilians sites to relocate to their places of origin to decongest the sites.

41. UNMISS force and United Nations police operations within and outside the protection of civilians sites were refocused to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission and comply with government restrictions. Following the confirmation of a case within the Bentiu protection of civilians site in mid-May, the force and police components minimized their face-to-face interactions while maintaining surveillance and communications remotely. They continued to carry out mounted patrols around the weapons-free zones and maintained a presence at entry points. A quick reaction force remained on standby and United Nations police intervened when violence necessitated entry to protect women from sexual violence or to safeguard humanitarian activities.

42. United Nations police conducted 2,061 patrols and 1,134 access control activities within the protection of civilians sites and continued to expand their outward projection posture and footprint through 904 confidence- and trust-building patrols, 45 short-duration patrols, 19 long-duration patrols, 3 dynamic air patrols and 458 high-visibility patrols. United Nations police community policing activities, search operations within the sites, co-location with the South Sudan National Police Service and capacity-building and technical assistance workshops, were suspended owing to COVID-19.

43. In conjunction, the UNMISS force established 19 temporary operating bases and conducted 15,979 patrols, including 1,749 short-duration patrols, 463 long-duration patrols, 159 dynamic air patrols and 13 riverine patrols. To enhance its protection

impact, the UNMISS force carried out threat and risk analysis in areas of return and developed a contingency plan for transition to the wet season.

44. UNMISS aviation assets were used to support UNHCR in facilitating the return of 34 internally displaced persons from the Juba protection of civilians sites and 1 from the Bor site to areas of return. Approximately 2,962 internally displaced persons in Juba, 79 in Malakal, 500 in Bentiu and 939 in Wau requested return assistance; however, COVID-19 measures hindered movement. In addition, humanitarian partners provided return assistance to 1,675 internally displaced persons from the Wau protection of civilians site.

Rule of law and accountability

45. UNMISS continued its support for national accountability measures for security incidents affecting protection of civilians sites. A total of 101 persons suspected of being responsible for serious security incidents within protection of civilians sites in Juba, Bentiu and Malakal were detained in UNMISS detention facilities. UNMISS referred 17 persons to national authorities for investigation and prosecution. From 16 to 22 February, UNMISS facilitated a mobile court session in Bentiu, which resolved 26 individual cases, including allegations of rape, sexual assault and damage to United Nations property. Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, other planned mobile court sessions were postponed. However, UNMISS facilitated remote investigations and bail hearings for nine individuals accused of murder, armed robbery, attempted rape and assault to address a backlog of 13 cases in Bentiu. A total of 20 witnesses appeared. Remote hearings for the remaining four cases were paused owing to increased COVID-19 measures.

46. UNMISS also continued to support justice actors to promote accountability for serious offences and process priority cases. As part of its support for juvenile justice reform, from 9 to 13 March, UNMISS facilitated a practice-based training for 50 prison officials assigned to the Juvenile Reformatory Centre in Juba. The curriculum was designed to reinforce the operations manual for juvenile reformatories that national prison officials had developed with technical support from UNMISS. In March and April, UNMISS provided technical, logistical and coordination support to national justice actors to hold juvenile hearings at Juba Central Prison. Owing to the onset of COVID-19, UNMISS advocated to secure the summary release of juveniles on bail as an immediate measure, which led to the release of 84 juveniles on remand, out of a total of 109 juveniles detained at the Juvenile Reformatory Centre in Juba. In addition, UNMISS collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund and partners to ensure family reunification as well as support to juveniles whose families could not be traced. Trials were completed or initiated in 95 cases, resulting in 5 cases being summarily dismissed, 28 juveniles tried and acquitted, and 14 juveniles tried and convicted.

47. UNMISS provided technical support to the South Sudan Prison Service to develop a COVID-19 action plan, focusing on prevention and three key areas: (a) education outreach and hygiene; (b) decongestion and early releases; and (c) reduction of admissions. To urgently aid decongestion, UNMISS provided technical assistance on the identification and expansion of categories of prisoners that could be considered for release, which enabled the Director General of the national Prison Service to release prisoners across all prisons and facilitated coordination with other justice actors to ensure prioritization.

48. UNMISS continued to support the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces Military Justice Directorate in promoting accountability for conflict-related sexual violence and other serious human rights abuses. Specifically, UNMISS facilitated the

production of advocacy materials to assist military personnel of the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces in eliminating sexual violence and protecting citizens.

49. UNMISS continued to provide technical assistance to increase national oversight mechanisms, supporting implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. In March, UNMISS supported the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in raising awareness of oversight functions and reporting obligations of financial institutions pursuant to the Anti-Money-Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Act, 2012. The Financial Intelligence Unit plays an important role in anti-corruption efforts by detecting and supporting the investigation of crimes related to money-laundering and related offences.

50. UNMISS reviewed a number of key laws, including the National Audit Chamber Act, 2011, and the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2009. UNMISS conducted an internal review of the Political Parties Act, 2012, to ascertain areas in which further engagement by the Mission and partners might be required to ensure compliance with international best practices on the free and democratic registration of political parties.

B. Monitoring and investigating human rights violations

51. UNMISS documented a total of 295 incidents that negatively affected the human rights and protection situation, including arbitrary killings, abductions, conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detention (including proxy detention), torture and ill-treatment, forced military recruitment and the looting and destruction of civilian property. The incidents resulted in at least 1,314 civilian casualties (733 killed and 581 wounded), including 136 women and 62 children. Of those incidents, 216 were attributed to community-based militias and self-defence groups; 27 to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces; 14 to NAS; 8 to the National Security Service; 7 to the South Sudan National Police Service; 6 to SPLM/A-IO; 2 jointly to the National Security Service, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the South Sudan National Police Service; and 1 jointly to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and SPLM/A-IO. Attribution for 14 other incidents remained pending.

52. As was the trend throughout 2019, the majority of civilians were killed and injured during violence involving community-based militias and self-defence groups (691 killed and 563 injured). Armed raids in northern Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area involving Murle armed elements pitted against allied Dinka and Nuer "White Army" militias resulted in at least 225 killed (including 74 women and 16 children) and 134 injured (including at least 9 women and 9 children), as well as 266 abducted (72 women and 194 children). Attacks led by White Army elements in February showed a degree of planning and coordination, with the alleged involvement of some SPLM/A-IO and South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces elements and a Lou Nuer spiritual leader.

53. Clashes involving forces affiliated with Major General Ochan Puot and SPLM/A-IO in Upper Nile resulted in at least 6 civilians killed and 5 injured, bringing the total of civilian casualties to at least 48 killed and 13 injured since clashes began in July 2019.

54. In the context of COVID-19, the United Nations documented a number of violations linked with the enforcement of measures to prevent the spread of the disease, including arbitrary arrest and detention, ill-treatment, and extortion by national defence and security forces. Women and people living with disabilities were disproportionately affected by the measures, in particular with regard to income-generating activities. The lockdown of protection of civilians sites in response to the announcement of cases of COVID-19 among United Nations personnel also raised

concerns about the disproportionate and potentially discriminatory impact of such measures on internally displaced populations at those sites.

55. UNMISS continued to receive reports of censorship, harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention by the National Security Service of journalists, activists and other civilians expressing critical or dissenting views from those of the Government. For example, *Agamlong*, an English-language newspaper circulated in Juba, was shuttered by the National Security Service in March following the publication of articles critical of a senior government official.

56. During the reporting period, UNMISS continued to advocate for measures to preclude the application of the death penalty, including through de facto and de jure moratoriums, and supported legal aid providers representing juveniles and other defendants on death row.

57. On 19 May, UNMISS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) jointly published a report on the right to health care for conflict-related sexual violence survivors in South Sudan. According to the report, the Government had not sought to make funding of the public health sector a priority, impeding access to medical and psychosocial care for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, despite the substantial presence and funding of international stakeholders in the country. The report contained recommendations to address those gaps, including improving access to and delivery of health services on an equitable basis at the community level.

58. In support of cantonment and training, UNMISS carried out three human rights due diligence policy risk assessments of assistance to non-United Nations security forces.

Children and armed conflict

59. The South Sudan country task force on monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict supported the release of 57 children (54 boys and 3 girls) by the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces (1 boy), the South Sudan National Police Service (1 boy), SSOA (2 boys), the South Sudan United Front/Army (SSUF/A) (15 boys) and SPLM/A-IO (35 boys and 3 girls).

60. A total of 38 children were released by SPLM/A-IO, including 26 (23 boys and 3 girls) from training centres, while 12 boys were informally released by SPLM/A-IO in Jonglei and Unity. The South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces released 15 boys affiliated with SSUF/A who had been apprehended in August 2019 during clashes between the forces. Two boys attributed to SSOA and one boy attributed to the South Sudan National Police Service were also released, while one boy escaped from the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces in Unity and reunited with his family.

61. The number of children affected by grave violations increased from 23 children in the previous reporting period to 32 children (23 boys and 9 girls), attributed mainly to the number of children affected by explosive remnants of war, which increased from 8 to 20 children.

62. A total of 27 children (21 boys and 6 girls) were victims of killing (6 boys and 1 girl) and maiming (15 boys and 5 girls) in 11 incidents. Three children (two boys and one girl) were abducted in three violations, and two girls survived rape. Children were most affected in Western Equatoria (12 children: 9 boys and 3 girls), Upper Nile (9 children: 6 boys and 3 girls), Northern Bahr el-Ghazal (5 boys), Unity (3 boys), Central Equatoria (2 girls) and Eastern Equatoria (1 boy).

63. Children were victims of violations perpetrated by crossfire between the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and Misiriya armed cattle keepers (5 children), NAS

(4 children), forces loyal to Major General Ochan Puot (2 children) and the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces (1 child); 20 children were casualties of explosive remnants of war.

64. UNMISS delivered child protection capacity-building training to 410 members of the security forces (263 male and 147 female); 65 members of SPLM/A-IO (all male), 50 members of the necessary unified forces (45 male and 5 female), 20 members of SSOA (18 male and 2 female), 320 community members (180 male and 140 female) and 29 government officials (25 male and 4 female).

Conflict-related sexual violence

65. Despite an overall decrease in political violence, conflict-related sexual violence remained prevalent and was perpetrated by the parties to the conflict, community-based militia and other armed young people, exploiting protracted insecurity and a lack of protection by authorities. UNMISS verified 38 incidents of such violence, involving 51 survivors, including 14 girls. They were subjected to rape (21), gang rape (15), forced nudity (9), attempted rape (3), threat of rape (2) and forced marriage (1). The incidents were attributed to the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and allied forces under Major General Ochan Puot (13); community-based militias (9); the South Sudan National Police Service (2); SPLM/A-IO (1); forces under Major General Nando (1); and NAS (1). The perpetrators' affiliation in 11 incidents had not been conclusively determined at the time of reporting.

66. UNMISS documented 14 additional incidents of conflict-related sexual violence that occurred prior to the reporting period, involving 19 survivors, including 6 girls and 3 men. The incidents were attributed to the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and allied forces under Major General Ochan Puot (5); SPLM/A-IO (5); NAS (2); and community-based militias (2). Investigations are ongoing concerning the abduction of at least 150 women and girls, who were likely subjected to sexual violence, during intercommunal violence in Jonglei between December 2019 and March 2020.

67. Notably, an SPLM/A-IO commander allegedly involved in widespread conflict-related sexual violence, including sexual slavery, which was documented in a joint 2018 public report by UNMISS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, defected to the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and returned to Yambio in mid-April to begin recruiting forces. Investigations are ongoing, with some arrests made in relation to conflict-related sexual violence cases in Lakes and Central Equatoria.

68. On 6 March, the South Sudan National Police Service established a national committee to oversee the implementation of its action plan. UNMISS is providing technical support to the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces to develop a standardized conflict-related sexual violence curriculum for staff colleges.

C. Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance

69. UNMISS continued to conduct long- and short-duration patrols across the country to support the delivery of assistance or the protection of humanitarian workers. UNMISS provided force protection to 339 integrated missions, enabling access to high-risk areas. It conducted 4,421 force protection patrols supporting convoys, including those of non-governmental organizations.

70. UNMISS horizontal engineering companies undertook the rehabilitation of key supply routes, which ensured efficient and quicker delivery of humanitarian assistance. However, the COVID-19 prevention measures imposed by host nation

security forces on UNMISS significantly impeded maintenance efforts in Warrap and Western Equatoria. Work was fully suspended between 7 and 29 April and partially resumed from 30 April.

71. In response to the ongoing COVID-19 emergency, UNMISS reprioritized its activities in support of national response efforts to prevent, mitigate and respond to the outbreak, focusing in particular on areas where local capacity is limited at the subnational level. Awareness campaigns have been intensified, using mobile teams, promotional trucks, Radio Miraya and other local radio stations. Construction projects to renovate or rehabilitate health facilities have been launched in eight locations, building isolation and treatment wards in State-level hospitals. The Mission is donating various medical and other supplies as well as depreciated equipment to local authorities and health facilities. Hand-washing facilities were installed by the Mission in population centres, such as markets, in several locations, including Juba, Yei and Torit. That support was provided in coordination with State-level COVID-19 task forces and humanitarian partners, using existing Mission resources, including the force engineering capacity, and is expected to be expanded in the coming weeks.

72. The Mine Action Service surveyed and cleared five sites, including three where humanitarian hubs were being constructed. It also supported UNHCR in conducting an assessment of the proposed way station for internally displaced persons. It carried out the assessment of a proposed extension area of the University of Science and Technology in Bor and assessed and cleared several borrow pits for road rehabilitation in Rumbek, Lakes, and Sopo, Western Bahr el-Ghazal. Clearance of a former battlefield adjacent to the internally displaced persons camp in Unity continued.

73. The Mine Action Service deployed 25 teams, which surveyed and released 6,708,608 m² of land and removed and destroyed 2,218 explosive items and 182,846 rounds of small arms ammunition.

D. Supporting the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the peace process

74. My Special Representative continued to exercise good offices to support the peace process and engage with senior government and opposition officials and traditional leaders, as well as with IGAD and African Union member States, to facilitate the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity. On 22 February, my Special Representative participated in the swearing-in ceremony of the new presidency, at which he reiterated the support of the United Nations to South Sudan.

75. Notwithstanding the challenges to mandate implementation posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and government response, UNMISS leadership continued its engagement with key stakeholders to monitor and advocate for the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement through the new committee appointed by the President to oversee implementation. The Mission continued to explore and implement new and creative ways of working with partners to foster civic and political space and encourage unified messages for advancing peace, including by expanding its radio broadcast and dialogue programming.

76. Despite COVID-19-related challenges, UNMISS provided transport to deliver 20 storage containers and 418.55 metric tons of food and non-food items across 10 locations in support of implementation of the transitional security arrangements.

Women and peace and security

77. UNMISS conducted three workshops to strengthen the capacity of women's organizations to continue advocating their participation in governance institutions, as well as to develop skills for participation in decision-making processes.

78. Direct contact with women's organizations was limited owing to COVID-19, but UNMISS remained engaged remotely to sustain the gains. COVID-19 has opened new entry points for women as agents for change through awareness-raising on modes of transmission in communities and prevention measures, referral of increasing domestic violence cases and economic empowerment alternatives, such as the production and sale of masks and soap.

VI. Mission staffing, the status of deployments, and conduct and discipline

79. As at 31 May, the number of UNMISS civilian personnel stood at 2,278, comprising 885 international staff members (245 women, or 28 per cent) and 1,393 national staff members (195 women, or 14 per cent), as well as 401 United Nations Volunteers (159 women, or 40 per cent).

80. The police strength stood at 1,888 (of an authorized 2,101 police personnel), comprising 665 individual police officers (200 women, or 30 per cent), 1,148 personnel in formed police units (220 women, or 19 per cent) and 75 corrections officers (18 women, or 24 per cent).

81. Of the authorized 17,000 troops, UNMISS troop strength stood at 14,558 military personnel: 210 military liaison officers (34 women, or 16 per cent), 416 military staff officers (70 women, or 17 per cent) and 13,932 military contingent personnel (604 women, or 4 per cent).

82. In collaboration with the United Nations country team and other partners and stakeholders, UNMISS continued to address possible misconduct by strengthening prevention, enforcement and remedial actions. From 1 February to 31 May, UNMISS registered a total of 40 allegations on the Misconduct Tracking System, of which 5 were assessed as sexual exploitation and abuse. All information on unsatisfactory conduct received during the reporting period was processed in accordance with the applicable policy and within the required timeline.

83. From 1 February to 31 May, a total of 9,632 UNMISS and affiliated staff were trained on United Nations standards of conduct and the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The Mission adopted a standard operating procedure to enhance and streamline training efforts and ensure maximum compliance with mandatory courses.

84. The sexual exploitation and abuse risk registers and workplans have been completed in 10 field offices in line with the sexual exploitation and abuse risk management toolkit. The collaboration between the community-based complaints mechanisms and the Mission continues to be enhanced through training and other capacity-building efforts to ensure that all such mechanisms remain effective in reporting allegations.

VII. Violations of the status-of-forces agreement

85. UNMISS recorded 75 status-of-forces agreement violations compared with 64 in the previous reporting period. Some 55 violations involved movement restrictions imposed by the Government impeding the Mission's ability to implement its mandate.

86. On 10 April, despite the previous correspondence between the Mission and the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces detained a convoy of UNMISS contingent-owned equipment to be returned to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland after completion of the engineering company deployment. Following engagement with the leadership of the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and officials of the United Kingdom, the vehicles were released on 25 April.

87. UNMISS noted the continued unlawful assertion of jurisdiction by domestic courts over the United Nations, its funds, assets and personnel in disregard of the privileges and immunities of the Organization. On 11 May, UNMISS received a court summons requesting that a former UNMISS staff member who was linked to a road traffic incident in May 2019 and who has since checked out from the Mission should appear before the court. An UNMISS vehicle that was impounded by the South Sudan National Police Service on 30 April 2020, on the orders of the same domestic court in relation to the same road traffic incident, has not been released despite representations by the Mission to the Government that the vehicle, as a United Nations asset, is immune from confiscation.

88. The whereabouts of two national staff members arrested in 2014 remain unknown. The Government has neither granted UNMISS access to them nor provided information about their condition, despite regular requests. UNMISS recorded five new arrests and detentions by the Government of Mission personnel, involving four national and one international staff members. All were released after being detained for periods lasting a few hours to a few days.

89. UNMISS recorded one incident of SPLM/A-IO interference with the implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks, in which a Mission patrol was denied access to the Sue cantonment site in Western Equatoria.

90. The Mission continued to notify the Government of the violations through notes verbales and regular engagements and to share with it the monthly matrix of incidents prepared for the Security Council.

Impact of the coronavirus disease on Mission personnel and operations

91. On 3 March, the Chief of General Staff of the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces informed UNMISS that the rotation of uniformed personnel from five countries affected by COVID-19 had been suspended. On 6 April, a United Nations entity staff member was identified as the first reported case of COVID-19 infection in the country. By then, the Mission had already put in place adequate measures to prevent the spread of the virus. The same day, host nation security services blocked movements in and out of UNMISS compounds in Juba (United Nations House), Kuacjok, Malakal, Rumbek, Torit and Yambio. In Torit, security forces warned United Nations personnel not to leave their compounds and threatened to arrest anyone found outside and impound their vehicles. UNMISS patrols to several locations were restricted on the grounds of COVID-19 prevention. The security forces claimed they were acting on instructions from the high-level task force.

92. In Eastern Equatoria, security services denied access to an UNMISS patrol to Opari Payam near Torit to monitor the progress of a quick-impact project, ostensibly

referring to instructions of the high-level task force to restrict public gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

93. On 7 April, security services blocked access in and out of United Nations House and physically assaulted an UNMISS national staff member, preventing access to the premises. On 9 April, following the engagement of my Special Representative with the authorities, the Government lifted restrictions in Juba, and subsequently on UNMISS compounds in Rumbek, Malakal, Kuacjok and Yambio. On 23 April, restrictions were lifted from the compound in Torit on the condition that only essential movement take place.

94. In Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, since November 2019, the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces have directed all checkpoint commanders to deny access to UNMISS patrols not accompanied by members of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, including patrols to their Wunyiik Division III headquarters for weekly information-sharing meetings. With the onset of the pandemic, the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces continued to impede the Mission's mandated activities in the area citing the implementation of COVID-19 prevention measures.

95. With the increase in domestic and international travel restrictions, critical transport, such as medical evacuations and previously approved flights organized by the Mission to reduce its footprint, were initially delayed. A special flight request for a medical evacuation was delayed by over 28 hours owing to a lack of clearance from the National Security Service. The Mission engaged with the high-level task force on the challenges faced by the Mission in navigating the multiple avenues of approvals required to dispatch flights. As a result, approval for subsequent medical evacuations and special flights improved towards the end of May. Out of the 16 special flights organized by the Mission to transport staff out of South Sudan, 8 were successful.

96. However, COVID-19 has also impacted pre-existing agreements and flight approvals with neighbouring countries, undermining Mission safety and security protocols for the extraction of critically ill staff. With almost 18,800 United Nations personnel on the ground, the limited critical care capacity to accommodate potential incidents of serious COVID-19 cases is of grave concern. The Mission is currently operating in an environment where medical evacuations of its international staff for either COVID-19 or non-COVID-19 cases are challenging, in the light of severe restrictions on movement of patients and global shortages of suitable assets and treatment facilities for COVID-19 cases, in particular.

VIII. Performance of the uniformed components

97. During the reporting period, 13 units were evaluated, with 10 reports completed and three more under way. The evaluations covered mandate comprehension and support, command and control, training and discipline, sustainment and health. The units evaluated included four infantry battalions, eight force enablers and one sector headquarters. Operationally, the performance of four units was rated as "above average". Five units were rated as "excellent". Four units were rated as "satisfactory", while one enabler was rated as "below satisfactory" in sustainment. To further enhance the force's efficiency in mandate implementation, each unit received specific recommendations.

98. During the reporting period, four formed police units were evaluated and found to be satisfactory or excellent with regard to mandate comprehension and support, command and control, training, discipline and health. They were also assessed on shortfalls with regard to sustainment, including the replenishment or replacement of ammunition, non-lethal equipment and crowd control gear owing to factors beyond

the control of the police-contributing countries. Each unit received a performance improvement plan, and UNMISS and police-contributing countries are taking all necessary steps to remedy the issues identified.

IX. Observations and recommendations

99. I welcome the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, in line with the 7 November 2019 Entebbe tripartite agreement. It is a significant achievement in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement, which is a hallmark of the beginning of the transition period. I thank the IGAD Heads of State and Government for supporting South Sudan in reaching this milestone. I also welcome the calls to the parties by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and IGAD to accelerate efforts, among others, to appoint State governors and reconstitute the Transitional National Legislative Assembly.

100. While it is encouraging that the ceasefire among the parties is largely holding, progress on the transitional security arrangements was marginal and the disaffection between Government-aligned and opposition forces in Upper Nile remains unresolved. The recent clashes in Central Equatoria between the South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) on one side against NAS on the other is of concern. The intercommunal conflict, fuelled in part by a governance and security vacuum resulting from the delay in the appointment of governors, has caused a significant disruption to civilians in several areas. The spillover of this violence risks destabilizing the country, eroding peace gains and spilling into politically charged conflict with disastrous consequences. I strongly reiterate my call for a global ceasefire and urge the South Sudanese to focus on our common enemy: COVID-19.

101. I note with serious concern that the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement has slowed considerably, including through a shifting focus to COVID-19-related challenges. Nevertheless, such provisions must not come at the expense of the implementation of peace. In this regard, I urge the parties to advance the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement as an urgent priority and to continue their consultations in good faith. I call on IGAD to impress upon the parties the need to follow through on the stipulations in its most recent communiqué, which is particularly important for overall stability in the subregion.

102. I commend the decision of the President to establish the high-level task force to combat the pandemic. The earlier appointment of the First Vice-President, Riek Machar, and later, the Vice-President, Hussein Abdelbagi, to head the daily operations of the task force was in itself a testament to the progress made in the peace process. I encourage the new national task force to take advantage of the expertise offered by the international community and to continue in the steps of the high-level task force, with a high level of transparency, in particular to address delayed and erratic reporting of COVID-19 laboratory results and to guard against political interference in testing resources. I urge the President to continue engaging the public to clearly and effectively implement prevention measures.

103. I am alarmed by instances of hate speech, incitement to violence and harmful misinformation targeting foreign nationals, including United Nations personnel and international and non-governmental organizations. Such stigmatizing rhetoric risks exacerbating existing social divides that could lead to violence and obstruct efforts to tackle the spread of the virus. I encourage the Government to enhance efforts to counter hate speech and misinformation in their public messaging, while adhering to the principles of freedom of opinion and expression. In this regard, I appreciate the

statements made by the President condemning the stigmatization of the United Nations.

104. I encourage the Government to ensure accountability for serious violations of obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including compliance with the provisions in the Revitalized Agreement prohibiting sexual violence by all parties. I urge the Government to establish a specialized court on sexual and gender-based crimes, the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, and to provide support to survivors.

105. In our united fight against COVID-19, I assure the people of South Sudan of the support of the United Nations to the fullest extent. I commend the Mission's assistance to the national COVID-19 response effort, as well as initiatives facilitating the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 transmission across the country and in the protection of civilians sites, in collaboration with humanitarian partners. The projected impact of COVID-19 on the population of South Sudan is deeply concerning. I acknowledge the good offices provided by my Special Representative and support from other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and, significantly, the World Health Organization, to the task force and the Ministry of Health through technical advice and expertise. More funding is needed to address the growing humanitarian needs. The Humanitarian Response Plan is currently only 30 per cent funded.

106. The efforts of UNMISS to leverage its country-wide presence to enhance the capacity and capability of State-level health facilities to better support efforts in the field is commendable. The impact of COVID-19 risks undermining an already fragile health system that is critical to preventing other curable diseases. I commend the efforts to prevent, bolster and maintain the limited health worker capabilities, which, if lost, would result in excessive collateral mortality among younger generations.

107. Despite the comprehensive efforts of UNMISS to prevent the spread of the virus and compliance with the guidelines of the task force, the Mission continues to face unmitigated violations of the status-of-forces agreement. Unwarranted and widespread restrictions on the movement of United Nations personnel impede the life-saving and critical work carried out by peacekeepers. The United Nations understands the need for the Government to safeguard its people against the spread of COVID-19, but such restrictions should not interfere with United Nations property, restrict access to and from UNMISS compounds and arbitrarily deny entry to personnel who obtained clearances in good faith. The United Nations is in South Sudan to support its people in a time of grave need and relies on a spirit of cooperation to enable this to happen. I request the Government to ensure unhindered access to the United Nations for operations and humanitarian activities.

108. I endorse the efforts of UNMISS to continue prioritizing sustained support to the peace process, along with force deployments for the protection of civilians interventions that are at the core of the Mission's objectives and responsibilities and are essential to preserving the hard-earned peace gains.

109. I urge the Government to move forward together and fully implement the Revitalized Agreement in letter and in spirit so that the people of South Sudan can finally realize the benefits of peace and stability they deserve. I also urge the member States of the African Union, IGAD and the Security Council to ensure consistent and unequivocal messaging to the parties in that respect and to strengthen their political support for the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, including the appointment of the permanent chair of the Commission at the earliest.

110. The imperative to accelerate and consolidate peace implementation has never been so urgent. I also strongly encourage the Government to establish transparent resource allocation and oversight mechanisms that enhance the confidence of international partners in continuing to provide financial support to South Sudan.

111. In conclusion, and in view of the unparalleled challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, I convey my deep appreciation to the uniformed and civilian personnel of UNMISS and to my Special Representative, David Shearer, for their tireless efforts to implement the mandate for South Sudan. I thank the troop- and police-contributing countries for their contributions. I am also grateful to the United Nations country team and humanitarian partners for providing vital assistance across the country, often in an insecure environment. Last, I acknowledge the indispensable efforts of the Heads of State and Government of IGAD, the Chair of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Workneh Gebeyehu, the Special Envoy of IGAD, Ismail Wais, and the Sant' Egidio Community towards ensuring peace in South Sudan.

