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Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is prepared pursuant to the presidential statement dated 26 October 2010 (S/PRST/2010/22), in which the Security Council requested annual reports on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000); resolution 2122 (2013), which called for updates of progress across all areas of the women, peace and security agenda, highlighting gaps and challenges; and resolution 2493 (2019), which called for reinforced measures to implement the agenda in full. It follows up on the Secretary-General's directives to the United Nations and the five goals for the decade laid out in the reports of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security from 2019 and 2020, paying special attention to the goal of reversing the upward trajectory in global military spending with a view to encouraging greater investment in the social infrastructure and services that buttress human security.

2. In October 2020, the international community commemorated the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in hundreds of mostly virtual events throughout the world. By then, the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on both international peace and security and on gender equality was already devastating and projected to worsen. A year later, these forecasts have largely been proven right. For example, 100 million people now experience food insecurity because of conflict, compared with 77 million only a year ago. By the end of 2020 the number of people forcibly displaced owing to conflict, humanitarian crises, persecution, violence and human rights violations had grown to 82.4 million, the highest number on record and more than double the level of a decade ago.

3. Meanwhile, even though the response to the COVID-19 pandemic added to the evidence of the effectiveness of women's leadership at the highest levels, women continued to be underrepresented in that response and in other decision-making forums, pushed out of the workforce and subjected to a surge of violence across the world as soon as lock-downs and quarantines were put into effect. This marginalization has a negative impact on crisis prevention and recovery and on international peace and security in general. Nearly a hundred studies indicate some type of link between sex and gender inequality and violent outcomes.¹

¹ Dara K. Cohen and Sabrina Karim, "Does more equality for women mean less war? Rethinking sex and gender inequality and political violence", *International Organization*, vol. 75, No. 3 (Summer 2021).



4. The recent takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban has attracted much of the world's attention. But in the months leading up to it, the United Nations had already documented a record number of women killed in the country in 2020, including civil society activists and journalists, and the targeting of academics, vaccinators and even women judges in the Supreme Court. And yet, Afghan women were not included among the negotiators with the Taliban in 2020. When delegates representing the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan met in Moscow in March 2021 to discuss the peace negotiations, there was only one woman among them. This juxtaposition of violence targeting women and their rights, on the one hand, and their extreme marginalization and exclusion, on the other, still encapsulates the women and peace and security agenda in 2021.

5. Other examples of shortcomings are included in the present report, which is informed by data and analysis provided by entities of the United Nations system, including peace operations and United Nations country teams; input from Member States, regional organizations and civil society; and analysis of other globally recognized data sources. Some examples include:

(a) In 2020, women represented only 23 per cent of delegates in peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations. Without measures adopted by the United Nations, this number would have been even lower;

(b) After a downward trend, the percentage of peace agreements with gender provisions has started to rise, but at 28.6 per cent the share remains well below the high of 37.1 per cent recorded in 2015. None of the ceasefire agreements reached between 2018 and 2020 included gender provisions;²

(c) As at 31 December 2020, only 5.2 per cent of military troops in peace operations were women, which is below the 6.5 per cent target set by the United Nations for 2020;³

(d) Only 42 per cent of the over 3,100 policy measures adopted throughout the world to respond to the social and economic consequences of COVID-19 can be considered gender-sensitive, and a similar proportion is found in conflict-affected countries;⁴

(e) In countries that spend relatively more on the military as a share of government spending, pandemic-related measures to support the particular needs of women and girls during this crisis were significantly fewer;⁵

(f) In humanitarian funding, sectors that address gender-based violence and reproductive health received only 33 and 43 per cent of requested funding, respectively, compared with average funding of 61 per cent for United Nations appeals overall;⁶

² This includes both United Nations (co)-led and non-United Nations (co)-led peace agreements. For more analysis, see Robert Forster and Christine Bell, "Gender mainstreaming in ceasefires: comparative data and examples", 2019.

³ See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>.

⁴ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker database, available at <https://data.undp.org/gendert tracker/>.

⁵ Ruth Carlitz, "Comparing military and human security spending", research commissioned by UN-Women (forthcoming).

⁶ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN-Women, *Funding for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Programming* (2020).

(g) In conflict and post-conflict countries, women hold only 18.9 per cent of parliamentary seats, compared with 25.5 per cent globally, which itself is a figure that is still too low;⁷

(h) Women's representation in public administration in fragile and conflict-affected countries averages just 23 per cent, less than half of the average in all other countries;⁸

(i) Women make up only one quarter of members among COVID-19 task forces examined across 36 conflict and post-conflict countries;⁹

(j) Bilateral aid to women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries remains strikingly low, well below 1 per cent, and has been stagnant since 2010.¹⁰

II. Goals for the decade on women and peace and security: reversing the upward trajectory in military spending

6. Curbing military spending has been a chief strategic objective of the women's movement for peace and a core commitment of the United Nations since its foundation.¹¹ It is especially resonant in the current moment, when people's lives and security are threatened by disease, forced displacement, hunger, racism, violent misogyny and the climate crisis. Commitments to reducing military expenditure and controlling the availability of armaments had already been included in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 and reaffirmed more recently during the 2021 Generation Equality Forum. Recent research commissioned by UN-Women, using data from 153 countries from 1990 to 2019, suggests a clear association between militarization and gender inequality. This association is stronger in countries with lower income or lower levels of democracy.¹² Measures to advance global disarmament objectives are outlined in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. Recently, in its resolution 75/43, the General Assembly expressed concern at increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on development needs.

7. Amid a global pandemic, unprecedented stress in meeting people's social, economic and health needs and a 3.3 per cent contraction of the global economy,¹³ global military expenditure increased by 2.6 per cent, totalling nearly \$2 trillion in 2020.¹⁴ Military spending as a share of gross domestic product reached a global average of 2.4 per cent, the largest increase since the global financial crisis in 2009.¹⁵ The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons noted that part of this

⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), "Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments", as at 1 January 2021, Global Data on National Parliaments database. Available at <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=1&year=2021>.

⁸ UNDP and University of Pittsburgh, *Gender Equality in Public Administration* (2021).

⁹ Based on calculations from UNDP and UN-Women, COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker database.

¹⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Creditor Reporting System database, available at <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1>.

¹¹ *United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditure: A Historical Overview*, UNODA Occasional Papers, No. 33 (United Nations publication, 2019).

¹² Adem Elveren, "Evidence on the impact of militarization on gender inequality: preliminary findings", research commissioned by UN-Women (forthcoming).

¹³ International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook: Managing Divergent Recoveries* (Washington, D.C., 2021).

¹⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "World military spending rises to almost \$2 trillion in 2020", 26 April 2021.

¹⁵ Ibid.

spending went to bolstering and modernizing nuclear arsenals, with nine nuclear-armed countries spending \$72.6 billion on this in 2020, also a larger sum than the previous year.¹⁶

8. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed many countries to take extraordinary fiscal measures in response to the health emergency and to provide economic relief. However, during 2020, military spending outpaced pandemic-related health spending in much of the world, and particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Historically, conflict-affected countries spend two to three times more on defence than on health care, whereas the opposite is true in more stable countries. Trends are similar with regard to spending on social protection, such as benefits for sickness, disability and unemployment, and old age pensions. For example, military spending in Afghanistan has exceeded one third of total government spending over the past decade, compared with 3 per cent of government spending devoted to social protection.¹⁷ Most of the highest annual increases took place in the Sahel region, in countries such as Chad, Mauritania, Nigeria and Mali. In Burkina Faso, the Government budgeted nearly 10 times as much for defence as for social protection. South Sudan spends six times more on the military and on debt servicing than it does on vital public services and has three times as many generals as doctors.¹⁸ This is compounded by the fact that many countries have weak democratic governance of the security sector and thus overspend the military budget and underspend the budget on social programmes, such as health or education infrastructure. Low-income countries overspend their defence budgets by 51 per cent on average.¹⁹

9. However, conflict-affected countries can reverse this trend. In the Sudan for example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) collaborated with the University of Khartoum to bring together government representatives, civil society, academia and the donor community to discuss human rights and gender-based public budgeting, promote the adoption of a national strategy for social protection and improve distribution of cash under the Family Support Programme, which benefits economically marginalized women. A few months later, in its new budget for 2021, the education budget in the Sudan exceeded the defence budget for the first time.

10. Extensive academic literature has shown the cost of privileging warfare over welfare and has provided increasing evidence of an inverse relationship between military spending and economic growth, especially in low-income countries.²⁰ In 2017, military expenditure was the largest contributor (37 per cent) to the global economic cost of violence, estimated at \$14.7 trillion.²¹ In addition, high military spending in post-conflict settings significantly increases the risk of renewed conflict. High military spending also entails an opportunity cost, as can be seen by comparing it with the funding estimates associated with the Sustainable Development Goals. It has been estimated that the cost of providing basic water, sanitation and hygiene to unserved populations, achieving quality universal primary and early secondary

¹⁶ International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, *Complicit: 2020 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending* (Geneva, 2021).

¹⁷ Carlitz, "Comparing military and human security spending".

¹⁸ Development Finance International and OXFAM, *Fighting Inequality in the Time of COVID-19: The Commitment to Reducing Inequality Index 2020* (2020).

¹⁹ Carlitz, "Comparing military and human security spending".

²⁰ Nan Tian, Diego Lopes da Silva and Alexandra Kuimova, "Military spending and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in *Rethinking Unconstrained Military Spending*, UNODA Occasional Paper, No. 35 (United Nations publication, 2019).

²¹ Institute for Economics and Peace, *The Economic Value of Peace 2018: Measuring the Global Economic Impact of Violence and Conflict* (Sydney, 2018).

education for all and eliminating extreme poverty and hunger would cost only 2 per cent, 6 per cent, and 13 per cent of global military spending, respectively.²²

11. Furthermore, recent research has found that pandemic-related measures to support the particular needs of women and girls during this crisis were significantly less likely to be enacted in countries that spend relatively more on their militaries as a share of government spending.²³ Fragile and conflict-affected countries enacted fewer than two measures on average to address the sharp increase in violence against women during the pandemic, which suggests that military spending not only crowds out broadly beneficial social spending but may also leave policymakers without the ability or attention required to respond to the particular needs of women and girls. In comparison with the global annual military expenditure of nearly \$2 trillion, it is estimated that the direct and indirect annual cost of providing modern contraceptive services to meet the needs of all the women and girls in developing countries would be \$12 billion (0.6 per cent of annual military spending).²⁴ A 2019 study by the International Rescue Committee and VOICE found that two thirds of requests for gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and response in humanitarian emergencies went unfunded, and the actual allocated funding only amounted to 0.12 per cent of the \$41.5 billion spent on humanitarian aid between 2016 and 2018. Covering the funding appeals fully would have cost only \$155.9 million.²⁵ In 2016, the total operating budget of 740 feminist civil society organizations worldwide was \$106 million, less than the cost of one F-35 fighter plane.²⁶

12. Further research is needed to understand the contextual and policy pathways towards reduced military spending and increased social spending that benefits women and girls. For example, a new study has found that higher levels of military spending are correlated with lower levels of women's equality in terms of choice, agency and participation in decision-making both during and after conflicts, and that the presence of United Nations peace operations can contribute to avoiding renewed militarization in post-conflict societies and to improving gender equality over a period of 5 to 10 years.²⁷

13. Despite all this evidence, and the advocacy of women's groups in conflict-affected countries, attention to military spending has been lacking in women and peace and security normative frameworks, both globally and nationally. According to research by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), only 39 per cent of national action plans adopted by 2020 had at least one mention of weapons-related issues, although more than half of them had been developed in the past five years.²⁸ Of the 10 Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, weapons and military expenditure are addressed in only 4 of them: [2106 \(2013\)](#), [2122 \(2013\)](#), [2242 \(2015\)](#) and [2467 \(2019\)](#). In these resolutions, the issue is addressed only through a focus on small arms and light weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty, article 7 (4) of which addresses the need to determine the risk of gender-based violence in arms exports assessments. In annual debates at the Security Council on these resolutions, fewer than 15 per cent of speakers representing Member States or

²² *The United Nations Disarmament Yearbook (Part II)*, vol. 44 (United Nations publication, 2019).

²³ Carlitz, "Comparing military and human security spending".

²⁴ Jacqueline E. Darroch, *Adding It Up: Investing in Contraception and Maternal and Newborn Health, 2017: Estimation Methodology* (New York, Guttmacher Institute, 2018).

²⁵ UNFPA and UN-Women, *Funding for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*.

²⁶ See www.wilpf.org/move-the-money/.

²⁷ Michelle Benson and Ismene Gizelis, "Militarization and women's empowerment in post-conflict societies", research commissioned by UN-Women (forthcoming).

²⁸ Most mentions refer to small arms and light weapons, followed by mines, cluster munitions, and explosive remnants of war. See Henri Myrtilinen, *Connecting the Dots: Arms Control, Disarmament, and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda* (Geneva, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 2020).

regional blocs have referred to arms control or disarmament. Very few of the bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements signed since 1945 have gender provisions.

14. To reverse the upward trajectory in military spending, it is important to improve the reliability and availability of data, increase cooperation and confidence-building measures among countries and have a better understanding of decision-making processes at the national level, including the role and involvement of women in them. For example, the United Nations has partnered with the World Bank and five research organizations to articulate policy and guidance on security and defence sector expenditure, with a focus on strengthening transparency and broadening donor assistance, from equipment and training to addressing governance deficits in security and defence forces. These governance deficits range from limited transparency in military expenditure and weak civilian oversight to a patriarchal culture that can be abusive and violent towards communities and discriminatory towards women, who are extremely underrepresented in security forces and in positions of power that influence military spending decisions.

15. The low representation of women in disarmament forums has been extensively documented; it averages between 20 and 35 per cent. Historically, the First Committee of the General Assembly has had a low proportion of women representatives, especially among heads of delegations.²⁹ The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs has committed to equal representation of women and men in all activities led by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and considerable progress has been made in ensuring gender parity in groups of governmental experts. The Office systematically tracks gender statistics in disarmament forums with the aim of making this data publicly available, and UNIDIR is carrying out research on women's employment in technical roles related to conventional weapons and ammunitions, including as export licensing officers, armourers, ammunition technical officers, deminers and others.

16. New initiatives and research seek to learn from the longstanding work to integrate gender perspectives into the prevention of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons or into mine clearance programmes. As part of the multi-year project of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on gender mainstreaming and small arms control, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Cameroon have taken steps to include gender analysis and gender-responsive monitoring in national small arms control mechanisms. The Seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on Small Arms, held in 2021, called for the full and equal participation of women in all processes related to reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability; and the harmonization of national action plans on women and peace and security with national policies on small arms. A survey supported by the Mine Action Service and implementing partners in 2021 showed that 100 per cent of the women participants in a project that trained and employed women as part of a mixed-gender demining team in Afghanistan felt that they were able to influence decision-making in their communities, compared with 60 per cent at the start of the project.

²⁹ Renata Hessmann Dalaqua, Kjølvi Egeland and Torbjørn Graff Hugo, "Still behind the curve: gender balance in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy", 2019.

III. Update on progress, gaps and challenges across the women and peace and security agenda: trends and emerging issues

A. Advancing gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and political transitions

17. Gender equality is a question of power. But power will not redistribute itself equally in a male-dominated world. There are clearly persistent gaps and stagnation in women's participation in political leadership, peace and security and access to economic resources and decision-making. Championing positive measures to increase women's participation in peace processes and political transitions is critical to ensuring de facto equality, contributing to the Secretary-General's forward-looking goals on women and peace and security for the decade and his call to action for human rights, and rethinking processes to make them both more inclusive and sustainable over the long term (S/2019/800).

18. In response to the Secretary-General's commitment in his 2019 report (S/2019/800) and Security Council resolution 2493 (2019), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs held context-specific high-level strategy meetings, which identified key actions and approaches to enhancing United Nations support for gender inclusion in ongoing peacemaking efforts in Yemen,³⁰ the Geneva International Discussions³¹ and Afghanistan.³² For Yemen, this set out gender inclusion commitments for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and his office. For the Geneva International Discussions, this resulted in steps to enhance the inclusiveness of the process through different modes of engagement with the Co-Chairs and mainstreaming gender perspectives.

19. Despite complications and delays because of restrictions on in-person meetings related to COVID-19, all four peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations in 2020, two of which were led by women,³³ consulted with civil society and were provided with gender expertise.³⁴ The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria regularly consulted with women civil society and human rights defenders, including the Syrian Women's Advisory Board, both virtually and in person. In the Geneva International Discussions, the Co-Chairs consulted with women activists and conflict-affected women. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) organized a multi-stakeholder consultation with women's groups and activists, which produced recommendations taken up by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, including that the new interim Government of National Unity include at least 30 per cent women. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen conducted an innovative large-scale virtual consultation with over 500 civil society representatives, of whom more than 30 per cent were women, as well as digital consultations over two days with women peace actors on gender-inclusive ceasefires and community safety. Overall, the pandemic demonstrated that digital inclusion is not a panacea, and that both digital and physical spaces must be designed to ensure equitable access for diverse women and to address gender-specific security risks.

³⁰ Meeting held on 7 April 2020, and a follow-up meeting on 14 December 2020.

³¹ Meeting held on 13 November 2020, and an expert-level follow-up meeting on 22 February 2021.

³² Meeting held on 8 December 2020.

³³ Two women, the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions, Ayşe Cihan Sultanoğlu, and the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Libya, Stephanie Williams, served as lead mediators in United Nations-led or co-led peace processes in 2020.

³⁴ These included: (1) Libya (Intra-Libyan dialogue process, including the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission and the Libyan Economic Dialogue); (2) the Geneva International Discussions; (3) the Constitutional Committee of the Syrian Arab Republic; and (4) a meeting on prisoner exchange in Yemen.

20. In line with the Secretary-General's gender parity strategy, women's participation has increased as United Nations mediators, in other leadership positions in peace and security, and on United Nations mediation support teams, demonstrating that the Organization is leading by example. As at February 2021, women represented 57 per cent of heads or deputy heads of United Nations special political missions and were leading efforts to find political solutions to crises. This is a substantial increase from just 14 per cent in 2015. In 2020, women accounted for 40 per cent of staff in United Nations mediation support teams.

21. Women were included as delegates in 3 out of 4 United Nations (co)-led process (75 per cent) in 2020, and in 8 out of 13 total delegations. However, women represented 23 per cent of delegates from parties to conflicts in these processes. Without persistent measures supported by the United Nations, this number would have been even smaller.

22. Governments and parties to conflicts must do more to ensure women's meaningful participation in peace processes. In 2021, the Secretary-General called on Member States to implement measures, including temporary special measures such as quotas, to increase women's equal participation in peace, political and other decision-making processes. This has been included as a priority for senior leadership support at the country level and is a strategic action for follow-up of the system under the call to action for human rights.

23. Bold targets, practical and concrete mechanisms and the principle of inclusion should be prioritized from the outset to increase the participation of women. The consistent calls made by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria for women's direct and meaningful participation in the political process set the stage for women making up nearly 30 per cent of the 150 members of the Constitutional Committee of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions made inclusion of women a priority in the framework for the Discussions in 2021.

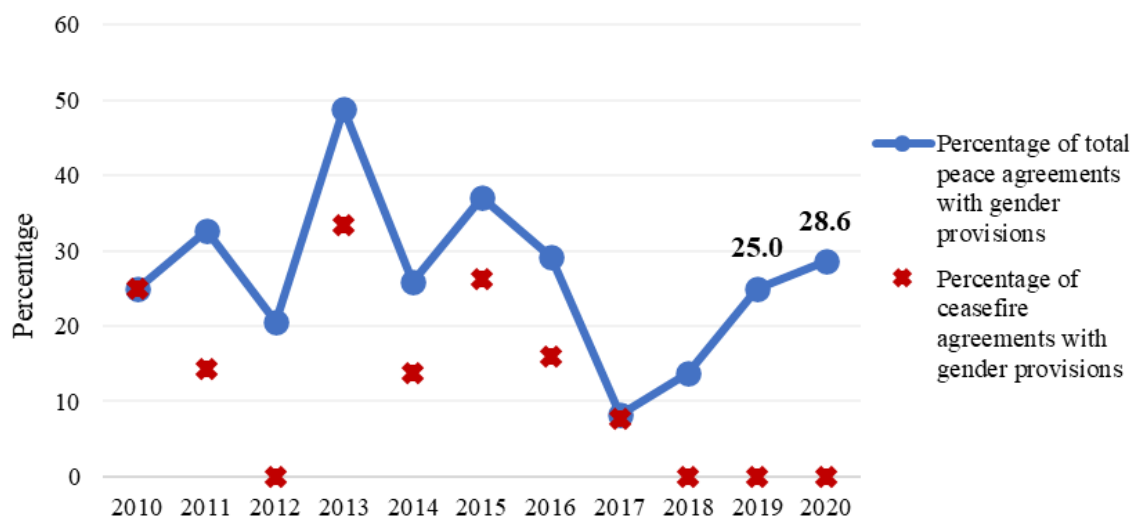
24. However, targets and incentives are not always enough. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen publicly committed in October 2020 to reserved, non-transferrable seats for Yemeni women in future talks, yet neither the Government of Yemen nor the Houthi movement have thus far included women representatives in their negotiating teams or high-level meetings. In the Sudan, despite the national commitment to women's participation in the Constitutional Declaration of October 2019, women made up only 10 per cent of the negotiators of the Juba Peace Agreement and are underrepresented in the transitional government.

25. To counter women's marginalization in formal negotiations, including when parties fail to include women, the United Nations will actively seek alternatives to ensure women's track-one participation, such as inclusive selection measures and independent delegations that prioritize women's direct involvement. This should build on ongoing active efforts to include women at the earliest stages of exploratory dialogues and talks. The initial Libyan delegations to the political dialogue track in early 2020 were almost exclusively made up of men. Through engagement with relevant actors and separate multi-stakeholder consultations, UNSMIL promoted the direct participation of women in the meeting of the political track launched in October 2020. As a result, the October meeting of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum included 17 women out of 75 delegates, or 23 per cent. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations played a central role in the configuration of the so-called "middle third" civil society delegation of the Constitutional Committee, which included nearly 50 per cent women.

26. Ensuring that peace agreements address the rights, concerns and perspectives of all women regardless of their ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age or religion is important to opening the door to women's participation and rights in the

implementation phase. However, the inclusion of references to women, girls or gender continues to fluctuate widely, and a low number of ceasefire agreements contain them. After a downward trend, the percentage of peace agreements more broadly with gender provisions has started to rise, but at 28.6 per cent in 2020 it remains well below the 37.1 per cent recorded in 2015 (see figure I). Research shows that the agreements most likely to mention women, girls or gender often arise at the comprehensive agreement stage, and ceasefire agreements remain a key gap. None of the ceasefire agreements reached between 2018 and 2020 included gender provisions or the prohibition of sexual violence.

Figure I

Percentage of peace agreements with gender provisions, 2010–2020

Source: PA-X Peace Agreements Database (2021), v. 5. Political Settlements Research Programme, University of Edinburgh, accessed June 2021.

27. Prioritizing women's direct inclusion in post-agreement implementation is essential to translating words into action. Building on the historic gender provisions of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia, women play a central role in its implementation. In the Truth Commission, women make up 80 per cent of the management team, 60 per cent of the technical team and 35 per cent of the commissioners. After years of advocacy by women leaders, women's representation in the monitoring commission on the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali increased from 3 to 31 per cent, reaching the 30 per cent quota for the first time in 2020. As a result, the committee discussed issues raised by Malian women, such as the closure of schools in central and northern regions and the absence of health services in specific localities. Building on the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, where women participated in the negotiations for the first time, women make up 16 per cent of those active in the implementation and monitoring mechanisms at the national level and 30 per cent in the 41 local peace and reconciliation committees. In South Sudan however, women's representation remains stagnant, with only two committees meeting the 35 per cent quota for women set out in the peace agreement. Taking positive steps to amplify the voices of women, including of young women, and women's rights activists – whether as leaders of peaceful protests in Lebanon and Myanmar, as members of women mediator

networks³⁵ or via inclusivity mechanisms, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Yemen – remains critical to leveraging pressure to promote women’s participation and rights, so that women can lead in a wide range of policy areas.

28. Governments, mediators, regional organizations and the United Nations have expressed their commitment to drastically accelerating action over the next five years to meet global commitments on women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and the inclusion of gender-related provisions in peace processes. Inclusive selection measures such as in Libya, independent delegations such as in the Syrian Arab Republic, greater use of temporary special measures and reinforced efforts by Member States such as the Commitment 2025 initiative led by Finland and Spain, as well as investment in better data collection, gender analysis and monitoring of results across all peace efforts, will be key to making any radical shift on women’s meaningful participation possible. The Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund’s rapid response window on women’s participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements, established in direct response to the Secretary-General’s 2019 recommendations and launched in January 2021, has already demonstrated the value of increased access to flexible and targeted support. Contributions to this window have enabled the Fund to support civil society-led peace initiatives in Afghanistan, Liberia, Mali and South Sudan.

B. Gender-responsive peacekeeping and peace operations

29. Women and peace and security is a core priority of the Secretary-General’s Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The Department of Peace Operations created strategic opportunities for local women leaders to influence peacekeeping, which culminated in a new call to action by the Secretary-General, urging peacekeeping partners to invest in grass-roots women’s networks and support women’s mobilization for peace.³⁶ In addition, the leadership of peace operations advocated for women’s participation and leadership in their respective contexts and pushed for robust mandates from the Security Council, including through their engagement with the Council’s Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. Mission mandates on women and peace and security were generally strengthened over the past year. However, in resolutions renewing peacekeeping mandates, the Security Council added gender considerations to the request for support to the reform of security and defence forces in only 4 out of 11 country-specific situations.³⁷

30. Despite challenges such as the pandemic, escalations of violence before and after elections, military coups and disregard of some political actors for existing commitments on gender equality or quotas for women, United Nations peacekeeping operations remain steadfast in their support for women’s participation in peace and political processes. Examples include supporting the Darfur Women’s Platform and elevating women’s voices and influence in the Juba Peace Agreement for the Sudan; facilitating women-led intercommunal dialogues through virtual platforms in Cyprus and women’s engagement in the constitution-making process and legislation reform on housing, land, and property in South Sudan; or, in the Central African Republic, supporting the establishment of Women’s Situation Rooms in each prefecture, a hotline

³⁵ In 2020, FemWise-Africa supported deployments to Côte d’Ivoire, Libya, Mali and South Sudan, with continued support from the United Nations Office to the African Union.

³⁶ United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, “Call to action: women transforming peace and security”, 2020.

³⁷ UNSMIL, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

for the protection of women voters and electoral candidates, and women's voter registration ahead of the elections, which reached 46 per cent of the electoral roll.

31. Peace operations contributed to the protection of women and girls, their access to justice, their participation in early warning systems, conflict prevention, community violence reduction, and the response to COVID-19. In Kosovo,³⁸ the mission supported domestic violence shelters and their continued operations during the lock-downs. The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei facilitated the release of girls unlawfully detained for running away from forced marriages, and partnered with women's groups to identify gender-specific triggers of local conflicts. In the Central African Republic, the mission de-escalated situations where armed groups had confiscated the assets of women electoral candidates and had blackmailed them to guarantee their protection. Nearly half of the early warning mechanisms supported by MINUSCA reached 30 per cent of women's representation. In Darfur, 54 women-led protection networks established by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) helped to build a protective environment in anticipation of the security vacuum left by the departure of the Operation. In South Sudan, gender-responsive patrols and mixed engagement teams deployed by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) enhanced the security of women leaders, peacebuilders and human rights defenders in several states. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO helped women's groups to map out security threats and hotspots for women and girls, and to inform interventions by protection actors. In Ituri and South Kivu, women's active engagement resulted in more than 900 militia members participating in the demobilization process. Women and girls represented over a quarter of the beneficiaries of community violence reduction projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Sudan, but a much lower number in demobilization and reintegration processes: as low as 2.3 per cent in Mali or 5 per cent in the Central African Republic.

32. Of the total allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse received across the United Nations system in 2020, 17 per cent involved personnel in peace operations and special political missions. Of the 66 reported allegations, 70 per cent were related to MINUSCA and MONUSCO, a proportion similar to 2018 and 2019. The number of allegations relating to incidents happening during the reporting period was the lowest since such data started being compiled in 2010. The share of incidents that involved sexual abuse, as opposed to sexual exploitation, was the lowest since 2010, and the proportion of child victims fell below 20 per cent for the first time (see [A/75/754](#)). Beyond the United Nations, other multilateral peace operations also had to address this issue. For example, in the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, a former soldier accused of rape was tried and imprisoned in Mauritania, and allegations against the Chadian battalion in the Niger resulted in prompt and open collaboration between the two countries to start both internal and independent investigations.

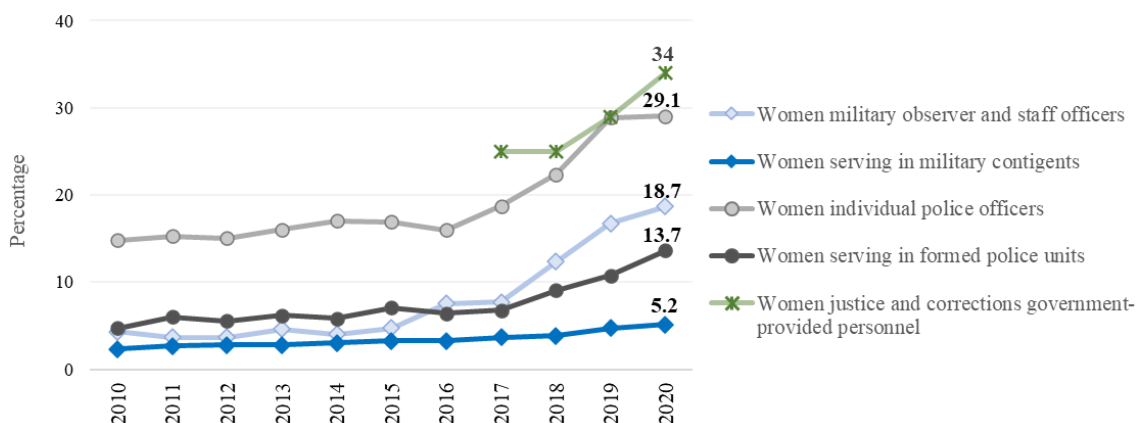
33. As of December 2020, the United Nations exceeded the 2020 targets set in the uniformed gender parity strategy 2018–2028 for military observers and staff officers (19 per cent against 17 per cent), individual police officers (29 per cent against 22 per cent) formed police units (14 per cent against 10 per cent) and justice and corrections government-provided personnel (34 per cent against 27 per cent), but lagged behind for military troops (5 per cent against 7 per cent), who represent the overwhelming majority of total deployments (see figure II). Nevertheless, in 2020 the percentage of women in police and military components increased and these numbers have continued to inch up in the first half of 2021. By way of comparison, the percentage

³⁸ All references to Kosovo should be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution [1244 \(1999\)](#).

of women in the police component saw only a small increase, from 9.6 to 10.2 per cent between 2010 and 2015.

Figure II

Proportion of women in military and police personnel by types of positions, and justice and corrections government-provided personnel in United Nations peacekeeping missions, 2010–2020



Sources: United Nations Peacekeeping gender data, accessed July 2021; the Department of Peace Operations.

34. At the leadership level, as at 31 December 2020, there were three women serving in the most senior military positions in the field and four women leading United Nations police components: a record number of women serving in such senior uniformed positions in the Organization.

35. The focus on increasing the number of women active in peace operations must continue, and the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations meets regularly with heads of components to review progress and to prioritize the deployment of contingents that are meeting their targets. The United Nations is strengthening its efforts to create an enabling environment for the meaningful participation of women in peace operations, which include gaining a better understanding of the challenges faced by uniformed women, improving mission camp layouts for the military and the police, supporting existing women's networks at mission level and launching networks such as the United Nations Women Corrections Officers Network in May 2021. The United Nations and Member States have also taken significant steps to increase the number of women in peace operations. The Elsie Initiative Fund, established by Canada and the United Nations with strong donor support, provides financial and technical support to troop- and police-contributing countries and to United Nations projects designed to incentivize the deployment of women military and police in peace operations and to promote gender equality in the security sector.

36. Initiatives by Governments across the world to integrate gender equality into the reform of their security sectors are a crucial part of this effort. For example, the Lebanese national action plan mandates the relevant authorities to double the number of women in the security sector annually between 2019 and 2023, and 43 per cent of the most recent class of recruits to the military academy were women. In the Central African Republic, MINUSCA has supported national security and defence institutions in identifying barriers to women's recruitment. Gender-sensitive recruitment practices enabled the national police to reach over 31 per cent female representation. In 2020, the Department of Peace Operations published a report on gender-responsive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, and highlighted the enormous gap between the expectations raised by the resolutions of

the Security Council and the paucity of political, technical and financial support made available to the United Nations for their implementation, as well as the lack of a global platform with data on the proportion and status of women in national security services around the world. Currently, such data remains incomplete, hampering efforts to track progress and promote accountability. Promoting the participation of women in the negotiation and implementation of security-related provisions of ceasefires and peace agreements, including in Libya, Mali, South Sudan and Yemen, remains challenging. The United Nations should continue to strengthen efforts in this area, including in response to Security Council resolution 2553 (2020), in which, for the first time, the Council encouraged Member States to develop context-specific security sector reform strategies that mainstream a gender perspective and increase women's representation at all levels within the security sector.

C. Protecting and promoting the human rights and leadership of women and girls in conflict settings and in the context of humanitarian emergencies

37. In November 2020, conflict erupted in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Shortly thereafter, health-care workers and human rights organizations began reporting daily cases of rape and gang rape committed by armed men, a horror of unknown scale but a familiar pattern.³⁹ Earlier in 2021, the United Nations reported 2,500 verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed in 2020 across 18 countries, mostly against women and girls. More than 70 per cent of the 52 parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for these atrocities have been listed by the United Nations for five or more years without having taken any remedial or corrective action (see S/2021/312). In 2020, sexual violence against children increased by 70 per cent compared with 2019 (see S/2021/437). In the Central African Republic, five times the incidents of conflict-related sexual violence were recorded in the first quarter of 2021 than in the last quarter of 2020. The number of real cases is likely much higher, as the pandemic has made it harder for survivors to receive help or justice, or even for their stories to be known and counted.

38. Misogynistic violence took many other forms. The United Nations has been warning about the shadow pandemic of intimate partner violence since the beginning of the lockdowns worldwide, and the increase in domestic violence against women and girls has been staggering.⁴⁰ Many countries registered a sharp and immediate surge in cases and calls for service, and conflict-affected countries were no exception, as increases ranged from 20 per cent to 100 per cent in most cases. In a survey of 850 refugee and internally displaced women across 15 countries in Africa, 73 per cent reported an increase in domestic violence.⁴¹

39. This surge coincided with an increase in the demand for and sale of firearms in many countries, which triples the risk of a woman being murdered, and with difficulties in accessing services that address gender-based violence in the first months of the pandemic. For example, these services reached 220,000 people in the Sudan in the first quarter of 2020, but only 120,000 in the second, once the measures to contain COVID-19 were in place. In 2020, the Spotlight Initiative devoted more than \$21 million to addressing violence against women in the context of the

³⁹ Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, statement urging all parties to prohibit the use of sexual violence and cease hostilities in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, New York, 21 January 2021.

⁴⁰ See www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19.

⁴¹ International Rescue Committee, "What happened? How the humanitarian response to COVID-19 failed to protect women and girls", October 2020.

COVID-19 response and obtained important results in conflict-affected countries. In Mali, for example, the heads of the country's two main religions reached millions of people in television and radio messages denouncing violence against women, and the number of people visiting Bamako's one-stop centre increased by over 65 per cent over the following weeks. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization and UNFPA published updated guidance, entitled *Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence Survivors*. The Emergency Relief Coordinator directed the Central Emergency Response Fund to allocate an additional \$15.5 million to addressing gender-based violence and announced a \$25 million allocation in 2021 for gender-based violence programming led by UNFPA and UN-Women. Women's advocates strongly urged governments and international partners to consider shelters and sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning and safe abortion, as essential and in need of continued support.

40. At the beginning of the pandemic, UNFPA projected that more than 47 million women could lose access to contraception, leading to 7 million unintended pregnancies. An estimated 60 per cent of preventable maternal deaths occur in humanitarian crises or fragile settings, where only 20 per cent of the global population lives.⁴² In displacement camps in the Syrian Arab Republic, only half of pregnant women were able to access obstetric and prenatal care. In Yemen, pregnant women are often unable to safely access maternal care, and one woman dies from childbirth every two hours. In 2013, following a recommendation from the Secretary-General, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution in which it noted the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including for pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination (see [S/2013/525](#), para. 72 (a) and resolution [2122 \(2013\)](#)). In general, humanitarian partners made significant efforts to maintain comparable levels of sexual and reproductive health services during the pandemic.

41. During the COVID-19 crisis, rates of child marriage increased, especially in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Of the 20 countries in the world with the highest prevalence of child marriage, 18 are affected by crisis. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that pandemic-related disruptions to child marriage prevention programmes could result in an additional 10 million child marriages. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimated that more than 11 million girls might not return to school after the COVID-19 crisis.⁴³ More than 54 per cent of the girls not in formal education worldwide are in crisis contexts. The number of women and girls at risk of female genital mutilation has also increased. In early 2021, UNICEF and UNFPA warned of 2 million additional cases likely to occur over the next decade owing to the pandemic.

42. Based on 22 of 34 UNHCR operations where demographic data was available at the end of 2020, women constituted on average 52 per cent of all internally displaced persons, consistent with prior years. The highest reported ratios of women were in the Sudan, Mali, Ukraine and Chad, at around 56 and 57 per cent. Despite women and girls being the majority of the displaced, and being disproportionately affected by family separation, gender-based discrimination and violence, difficulties in accessing basic services and food insecurity, their representation in community management and leadership structures in these camps is still lacking. According to UNHCR, the number of operations reporting that female participation in leadership structures had either improved or been maintained dropped from 56 per cent in 2019 to 48 per cent in 2020. The inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on gender equality

⁴² UNFPA, "Maternal mortality in humanitarian crises and in fragile settings", 12 November 2015.

⁴³ See <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation>.

and the empowerment of women identified the lack of representation of women-led organizations as a gap in humanitarian decision-making. However, there has been notable progress since 2017, including an uptick in consultations with women and the participation of local women-led organizations in the design and planning of the humanitarian programme cycle. Other remaining gaps are the lack of consistent access to and resources for gender expertise in emergencies, such as through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Standby Capacity Project and other surge mechanisms or sustained longer-term gender expertise; and the need for strengthened coordination, leadership and accountability for gender, including through the use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Policy and Accountability Framework.

43. In humanitarian settings, the share of households headed by women typically reaches one third, and those households report higher risks of malnutrition and food insecurity. Nearly 100 million people now experience food insecurity as a result of conflict, an astounding increase from 77 million in 2019. More than 30 million people are one step away from famine, which is especially dangerous to women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or taking care of children. In the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, up to 37 per cent of mothers are malnourished. A rapid gender analysis undertaken shortly after the explosion at the port of Beirut in August 2020 revealed that 51 per cent of affected households were headed by women, and 8 per cent of those women were elderly and living alone.

44. Women and girls are also abducted or trafficked, either by parties to conflicts or by organized criminal bands in conflict settings. Of every 10 trafficking victims globally, 5 are adult women and 2 are girls. While adequate information and analysis about trafficking in conflict settings and its contribution to the war economy is still lacking, with some exceptions such as Libya, trafficking does increase significantly after sharp economic contraction. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for example, the United Nations verified 75 victims of trafficking between 2008 and 2015, but more than 600 between 2016 and 2018. Abductions of women and girls have been one of the elements of the surge of violence in the Diffa and Tillabéri regions of the Niger. Approximately 300 schoolgirls were abducted and later released in northern Nigeria earlier in 2021, an occurrence that has only become more common since the mass kidnapping of girls in Chibok in 2014.

45. Women are also affected by the disappearance and detention of male relatives, are often directly targeted themselves or are further stigmatized and marginalized. Many are also leading advocates for their relatives' release. In countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic or Yemen, women mediate between the authorities, humanitarian organizations and the families of the detainees, track political prisoners, and often manage to negotiate their freedom. Less is known, however, about the fate of women prisoners themselves. Most of the crisis-affected countries that released thousands of prisoners to stem the spread of COVID-19 declined to provide data on the number or percentage of women being released. In September 2020, 50 women detainees were rounded up in a courtyard and at least 21 of them were gang raped, as a result of a prison mutiny in Lubumbashi, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an atrocity that received little attention or redress (S/2020/1150, para. 24).

46. And yet, even as the pandemic drove up the projected estimates of girls being forced to marry or drop out of school, or of women suffering violence in their homes, the driving forces behind these trends were sexism and misogyny, enabled by patriarchal social, religious and other institutions, and often intentionally spread by powerful political actors. It was these actors' mobilization that obstructed legislation against gender-based violence in some countries, and their messages that inspired a wave of political violence against women in public life, including young women; those targeted ranged from elected officials and candidates to journalists, protesters or defenders of human rights.

47. In 2020, OHCHR verified 35 cases of killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in seven conflict-affected countries with data, surpassing the reported numbers for 2018 and 2019.⁴⁴ Many more have been threatened and harassed. Data on these attacks are incomplete, and women leaders are often hesitant to report threats because they are highly defamatory in nature, typically involving their personal lives. Lockdown measures forced many women activists to move to online platforms, exposing them to digital security risks at the same time as governments adopted broad digital surveillance measures.⁴⁵ According to Front Line Defenders, the human rights defenders that were most targeted were those supporting land, environmental and indigenous rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) rights and women's rights.

48. In November 2020, the prominent Libyan lawyer and women's rights activist Hanane Al-Barassi was shot dead in Benghazi by unidentified gunmen. She had spoken out against corruption and cases of alleged assault and rape of women that implicated members of armed groups in Benghazi. In March 2021, three young Afghan women journalists were shot dead in Jalalabad on their way home from their jobs at a local news outlet, only three months after the killing of the Afghan television and radio presenter Malalai Maiwand. The 26-year-old journalist had been an advocate for women's rights and had spoken publicly about the challenges women journalists face in Afghanistan. In Somalia, the Head of the Somali Police Force's Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Child Protection Unit in Garoowe, Puntland, was physically assaulted by four police officers because she was reviewing the sexual violence cases registered at the central police station, and a female journalist was detained after following up on the assault. In Diinsoor in the Bay region, a local civil society leader was targeted and killed by Al-Shabaab for her advocacy for women in close collaboration with the Diinsoor district council, which had reached gender parity. In Colombia, 10 of the 16 members of the Special Forum on Gender, which monitors the implementation of the gender provisions of the peace agreement, reported threats made directly against them, and one organization defending the rights of indigenous women had to withdraw temporarily owing to the severity of the threats.

49. From Belarus to Myanmar, women were attacked, tortured or detained for their participation in protests. Women were at the forefront of the demonstrations opposing the military coup in Myanmar and played a key role in the civil disobedience movement, which was initiated by the staff of the Ministry of Health and Sports, doctors and nurses, almost 80 per cent of them women and many of them young. Union leaders and labour rights activists representing the country's largely female garment sector workforce were prominent figures in the protests. An assessment by UN-Women found that almost 50 per cent of women's organizations had to close their operations due to security reasons, and the police raided and ransacked several of their offices. In Colombia, young women and LGBTIQ persons reported sexual violence allegedly committed by the national police during the demonstrations that began in April 2021. Others were shot by armed civilians, including a young indigenous woman leader who was wounded only a few months after having participated as a guest speaker in global events to commemorate Generation Equality and the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and who collaborated with UN-Women and the Norwegian Embassy in their programme to protect women leaders and human rights defenders in Colombia.

50. The periodic reports from peacekeeping and special political missions are paying closer attention to this type of political violence, and the Peacebuilding Fund allocated more than \$19 million in 2020 to the protection of women and youth

⁴⁴ Data from OHCHR, in cooperation with UNESCO and ILO.

⁴⁵ Front Line Defenders, *Global Analysis 2020* (2021).

peacebuilders and human rights defenders, including to support LGBTIQ rights defenders through its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative. It is encouraging that several countries have included specific goals related to the protection of women human rights defenders in their national action plans on women and peace and security, and to note the increased number of initiatives led by OHCHR and the rest of the United Nations system. In a landmark decision in April 2021, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women found that the Government of Libya had violated the rights of a human rights defender who fled the country in 2012 after being harassed, tortured and forced to close her women's rights organization. However, the scale and severity of these attacks show that much more needs to be done, including securing additional funding, to provide both individual protection and a stronger enabling environment for these activists.

D. Political participation and representation

51. Despite progress in women's representation in decision-making over the past decades, advancements towards achieving gender parity in political and public life have been painfully slow. Women hold just 25.5 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide, and the proportion is even lower in conflict and post-conflict countries, at 18.9 per cent. Globally, women constitute 36.3 per cent of local-level elected positions, and 25.9 per cent at the local level in conflict-affected countries. Women serve as Heads of State or Government in 22 countries. Women made up only one quarter of members among COVID-19 task forces across conflict and post-conflict countries. Women's participation in public administration in fragile and conflict-affected countries averaged just 23 per cent, less than half of the average in all other countries.

52. The long-term effects of historical discrimination, recently compounded by the pandemic, have disadvantaged women in all spheres, including political and public life. To reverse inequality and to implement international and national standards and commitments, the adoption of temporary special measures, including gender quotas, is required (see [E/CN.6/20213](#)). As the Secretary-General's call to action for human rights makes clear, commitment to non-discrimination alone is not enough: proactive measures to increase women's meaningful participation and representation are needed.

53. Gender quotas, in addition to other temporary special measures, have proven to be an effective way to achieve a major shift in the distribution of power. Women's parliamentary representation in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated quotas is twice the amount of those that lack such quotas: 23.3 per cent with quotas compared with 11.6 per cent without. Women's representation in locally elected positions further accentuates this trend. The representation of women in local government in conflict and post-conflict countries with legislated gender quotas is 28 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of those where quotas are not in use.

54. Targeted hiring and appointments have increased women's share of executive positions, as seen in countries where an executive commitment was made to appoint gender-balanced cabinets. Women account for 21.9 per cent of ministers globally, and just 19.2 per cent in conflict and post-conflict countries.⁴⁶ These measures have been underutilized and offer a fast-track remedy where political will exists. In addition, when quotas and other temporary special measures are adopted, it is important to have mechanisms in place to implement them and monitor their progress.

55. Consistent efforts are required at every stage to prevent reversals and non-compliance. In Afghanistan, with the Taliban having taken power, gains made by

⁴⁶ IPU and UN-Women, "Map of women in politics: 2021", 1 January 2021.

women in political representation are evaporating. In Yemen, the Government's cabinet formation in December 2020 without a single woman minister represented a negative development not seen in 20 years, and is closely tied to the negotiations of the Riyadh Agreement, in which no women were represented. In Libya, despite the 30 per cent quota included in the road map to the 2021 elections, the Government of National Unity cabinet formed in March 2021 included only 5 women out of 35 members; however, the cabinet did include a female Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice for the first time. In South Sudan, contrary to the 35 per cent quota set out in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, only one woman occupies a gubernatorial position at the state level. In the Central African Republic, a deterioration of the political and security situation undermined women's participation as voters and candidates, and parties did not adhere to the 35 per cent quota for lists of candidates proposed by the electoral code. Despite this, women mobilized through protests, issuing calls for peaceful elections, and voted, and women's representation in the National Assembly increased slightly from 8.5 to 12.5 per cent, and from 14.7 to 21.8 per cent in the Government overall.

56. Reducing violence against women in politics is essential for reaching equality in political and public life. The pandemic has amplified abuse, harassment and threats in person and online against politically active women. Across regions, violence has been used to silence women leaders and prevent them from running for office and carrying out their duties in any position they hold. In conflict-affected countries with precarious security situations and weak rule of law, threats and violence are exacerbated. Women who participated in the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in 2020 were threatened. According to a survey by UN-Women, Libyan women were nearly twice as likely to cite political reasons as a source of violence in 2021 as in 2018. Member States must take comprehensive measures to ensure women can equally and safely exercise their civil and political rights.

E. Economic recovery and access to resources

57. The annual report for 2020 (S/2020/946) made a case for prioritizing care work in decisions about recovery and reconstruction; investing in social protection instruments, including basic income initiatives; rectifying austerity policies; and boosting spending on education and health. As the global economy contracted in 2020, the accumulated effects of the pandemic have only made this case clearer.

58. According to the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker developed by UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), approximately 42 per cent of the more than 3,100 policy measures identified across 219 countries and territories across the world can be considered gender-sensitive. Among these, nearly two thirds addressed violence against women and girls, but far fewer were aimed at strengthening women's economic security or supporting unpaid care work. Among 1,700 measures related to social protection or the labour market, only 23 per cent targeted women's economic security or provided support for unpaid care. Similarly, out of 580 fiscal and economic measures to help businesses weather the crisis, only 12 per cent channelled resources to women-dominated sectors.

59. In countries affected by conflict, women have been the hardest hit by the economic fallout of the pandemic and represent a disproportionate share of the informal sector. Close to four in five women who are paid for their work in post-conflict countries work in agriculture, and receive low wages and few legal protections. Mandatory social distancing measures made it difficult or impossible for women to sell their products in the market. Women took on heavier domestic burdens and caregiving duties, and income losses impaired their ability to buy seeds and other

materials for the next planting season.⁴⁷ In the Great Lakes region, women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises experienced the worst impacts, and cross-border trade, another important source of income for many women, also diminished. In Haiti, the garment and apparel sector, which represents 90 per cent of the country's manufacturing exports and has a workforce that is 70 per cent female, was the hardest hit. In Lebanon, the unemployment rate for women is expected to increase from 14 per cent before the pandemic to 26 per cent. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, women's participation in the labour force was only 21 per cent in 2018. By 2020, it had dropped even further, to 16 per cent, and 27 per cent of women-led businesses shut down as a result of the lockdowns.

60. Only three fragile countries adopted measures to support unpaid care work. There is a continued expectation that women's care work is a catch-all safety net that can absorb the costs of wars, disasters or pandemics to the detriment of women's own economic aspirations or participation in public life. However, this safety net has a limit, and when the care burden of women is invisible and unsupported it condemns women to extreme poverty⁴⁸ and leaves their children vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups and violent extremists. In Colombia, the Government has recognized that the lack of childcare is a major barrier to the economic recovery of women, including for female former combatants engaged in productive projects as part of their economic reintegration.

61. Targeted measures are needed to ensure women's inclusion in economic as well as other decision-making forums. In Libya, there were only 4 women among the 35 participants in the economic dialogue track of the Berlin process. However, following pressure from women's organizations and engagement by UNSMIL, the number of women participants was increased to 13. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the national solidarity fund addressing the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 is overseen by a management committee made up of 2 women and 10 men. Efforts to address these imbalances often have to be mandated, including through clear and specific quotas.

62. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to look for solutions to lockdowns, mobility restrictions and other disruptions brought about by the pandemic. In Guinea-Bissau, UNICEF partnered with the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau and the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region to set up additional markets and decongest the central market in Bissau, where the sellers are predominantly women, and distribute among them masks produced by an association of women with disabilities. When school closures impeded families' access to school meals provided by the World Food Programme, the Programme worked with women smallholder farmers to grow food locally to feed those families. In Yemen, UNDP trained Yemeni women in front-line conflict communities to own and manage community energy microgrids as entrepreneurs, which won UNDP a humanitarian award, cut energy costs by 65 per cent and provided 10,000 people with access to sustainable energy.

63. The pandemic has exacerbated an already dire situation for women and girls in conflict countries. Research from Georgetown University⁴⁹ shows that only 44 per cent of women are likely to be in paid work in fragile and conflict-affected countries,

⁴⁷ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, *Advancing Women's Participation in Post-Conflict Reconstruction* (2020).

⁴⁸ Jay Lingham and Melissa Johnston, "The hidden work of post-conflict recovery", *openDemocracy*, 2 October 2019.

⁴⁹ Yvonne Quek, *Women's Work Amid Fragility and Conflict: Key Patterns and Constraints* (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2019).

compared with 66 per cent of men in the same countries. Women fare much worse in countries experiencing protracted conflicts, where this percentage drops below 20 per cent, than in post-conflict countries, a variation that is not observed among men. Women own 10 per cent of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in fragile and conflict-affected countries, compared with nearly 30 per cent in other developing countries. Not many conflict-affected countries have data on women's land ownership, but those that do show that it remains low (in Mali, it is just 3 per cent). The fertility rate for fragile and conflict-affected countries averages five children, double the average for developing countries that are not affected by conflict, and access to contraception is much lower. Social norms and expectations regarding women's roles, fear of harassment, high costs of transportation and childcare, low and unenforced minimum wages, perceptions of workplace inequality and discriminatory laws and regulations are all important barriers that prevent women from formally entering the workforce, especially refugee women who face discrimination and legal barriers to the labour market based on both their gender and their displacement status.

F. Rule of law and women's access to justice

64. In Guatemala, the group of elderly indigenous women from the Maya Kekchi community known as the *abuelas* of Sepur Zarco have become local, national and international leaders in the quest for justice, and continue to monitor implementation of the reparations judgment in their case. The visibility and leadership of the *abuelas* have motivated other survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in their country to seek justice in high-profile criminal cases. This experience exemplifies how the meaningful participation of diverse women in justice efforts, including as survivors, activists or justice professionals, has transformative potential and is essential to building inclusive rule of law systems and social cohesion.

65. In countries emerging from conflict and authoritarianism, the reform of laws that discriminate against women and girls is another important guarantee of non-repetition with regard to violations and abuses suffered. In Iraq, the Council of Representatives adopted the Yazidi Female Survivors Law, which established a legal imperative for the prosecution of members of Da'esh for international crimes and reparations for the survivors of those crimes, and recognizes crimes committed not just against Yazidis, but also the Christian, Shabak and Turkmen communities. In Libya, the United Nations has supported the development of a draft law on combating violence against women, in line with international human rights standards. In South Sudan, UNMISS and UNDP supported the development of a family law that protects women's rights with regard to issues of marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance, following extensive consultations with women's networks over several years. In Kosovo, the parliament incorporated the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence into its Constitution. In the Sudan, women's advocacy led to significant legal reforms concerning the protection of human rights and gender equality, including the revision of provisions of the Penal Code referring to "immodest attire", the criminalization of female genital mutilation and cutting, and the elimination of the requirement that a guardian must give permission for mothers to travel with their children.

66. During the reporting period, there have also been important steps towards accountability for crimes and violations against women and girls in conflict-affected contexts. In November 2020, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, former armed group commanders Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka and Serafin Lionso were convicted of war crimes, including rape and sexual slavery, committed in North Kivu (S/2021/312, para. 30). In July 2020, the International Criminal Court convicted Dominic Ongwen, a former member of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, of war crimes and crimes

against humanity, including forced pregnancy – the first conviction at the Court for this crime. In Germany, the trial of Anwar R., a former official of the Syrian General Security Directorate, for torture as a crime against humanity, including rape and aggravated sexual assault, began in April 2020. South Sudan continued to deploy mobile courts to remote areas, with technical and logistical support from the peacekeeping mission. In the Sudan, in June 2021, the Government signalled its willingness to turn former president Omer Al-Bashir and other wanted officials over to the International Criminal Court for genocide and war crimes including rape. In July 2021, the Basic Court of Pristina issued the first-ever conviction for conflict-related sexual violence by a court of Kosovo.⁵⁰

67. Despite advances in high-profile criminal cases, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deep inequalities in women's access to justice in everyday situations, particularly in conflict-affected countries where women's justice needs were already most acute. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the complete lockdown of the family courts in the West Bank and Gaza has had a heavy impact on the ability of women and children to claim alimony, maintenance, custody, visitation rights, protection orders and inheritance rights.⁵¹ In Afghanistan, court proceedings ground to a halt and women were prevented from submitting and moving forward with their cases.⁵² On the other hand, targeted interventions backed up by adequate resources can have a significant impact. Spotlight Initiative programmes, operating in many conflict-affected countries, had a positive impact on the number of convictions of perpetrators of violence against women and girls. In Nigeria, the Spotlight Initiative supported the establishment of a presidential special investigations panel on sexual and gender-based violence, a historic milestone that is already enhancing women's access to justice. With United Nations support, the Supreme Judicial Council in Libya established two courts in Tripoli and Benghazi dedicated to violence against women and children, and selected five female judges out of six to administer these two courts.

68. The United Nations system has continued to advance its joint approach to rule of law support through the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law arrangement, adjusting and scaling up its efforts in response to the pandemic, including its efforts to close the justice gap for women and girls in conflict-affected settings and promote the representation of women in law enforcement and the justice and security sectors. The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict assisted national authorities in strengthening institutional safeguards against impunity in contexts such as Nigeria, South Sudan, Guinea, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

G. Preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism

69. Since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 2242 (2015), which called for the integration of the women and peace and security agenda in an effort to counter violent extremism and terrorism, there has been a significant increase in gender-related recommendations to Member States by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; a growing number of references to gender in Security Council resolutions on issues such as the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters, the links between terrorism, trafficking in persons and conflict-related sexual violence, and efforts to counter terrorist

⁵⁰ On 5 July 2021, the Pristina Basic Court convicted a former police officer of rape and other crimes in 1999. The decision marks the first time a court of Kosovo has convicted a suspect of sexual violence in relation to the conflict. See Alexandrah Bakker, "Monthly news updates: domestic prosecution of international crimes – July 2021", 3 August 2021.

⁵¹ UN-Women and others, "Justice for women amidst COVID-19", May 2020.

⁵² Ibid.

narratives; and an exponential growth in research on this area, including the gender dimensions of extreme right-wing terrorism.

70. Serious concerns continue to be raised, however, including during the six-week global digital consultation on this topic held in 2020, involving more than 140 civil society representatives from 43 countries across the world.⁵³ There continues to be near-complete impunity for human trafficking, crimes of sexual violence and violations of women's rights perpetrated in the context of organized crime and terrorism. The situation of thousands of women who have suspected links to groups designated by the Security Council as terrorist who are held in detention centres and camps in Libya or the Syrian Arab Republic, often accompanied by their children, is dire, and is made worse by restrictions to humanitarian access owing to the pandemic, further delays in repatriation and underinvestment in suitable rehabilitation programmes. The main approaches to counter-terrorism continue to focus on military and criminal justice approaches, take place in spaces that are dominated by male actors, are informed by gender stereotypes and biases, consider women only superficially and often limit them to their roles as mothers and wives, and include mass surveillance and sweeping legislation that may curtail the activities or funding of women's rights organizations and defenders. In more extreme cases, counter-terrorism legislation is used to target women's rights directly.

71. In spite of the pandemic, the United Nations continued to work with Member States to repatriate women and girls held in prolonged detention in camps in the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic to countries such as Tunisia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. In Somalia, the focus on women's rehabilitation has improved significantly over the past two years, as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the International Organization for Migration operate two rehabilitation centres for women formerly associated with Al-Shabaab. These programmes have benefited 279 women and 304 men, with 128 women graduates in 2020 alone. The United Nations also supports women-led initiatives, from Peace Villages in Indonesia to the creation of a women's rapid action and mobilization platform in Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines, which is a network of grass-roots mediators who are now considered essential workers in promoting peace education and developing counter-narratives to tackle extremist propaganda, misinformation and hate speech. Of the 45 projects related to preventing violent extremism run by UNDP, 75 per cent contribute to gender equality as a significant objective, and 11 per cent treat it the principal objective.

72. As examples of good practice, the national action plan on women and peace and security in Jordan includes a dedicated goal on gender-responsive prevention of violent extremism, with funds allocated to its implementation, and is already reporting positive results. Women's organizations in the United Republic of Tanzania are well represented in a national advisory council on preventing violent extremism, guiding the development of the national strategy and action plan.

H. Climate change and its peace and security implications

73. The climate crisis continues to exacerbate conditions that threaten peace and security, disproportionately affecting already fragile or conflict-affected countries.⁵⁴ Since 2007, the Security Council has held several debates on climate security matters. The adverse effects of climate change on stability have been recognized by the

⁵³ UN-Women, "Global digital consultation: civil society voices on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counter-terrorism responses", January 2021.

⁵⁴ Adrien Detges and others, *10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace: A Summary of What We Know* (Adelphi and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2020).

Council in resolutions and presidential statements in 11 different contexts,⁵⁵ as well as in its resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#) on women and peace and security. The Chair of the Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, Nisreen Elsam, in her statement at the high-level open debate on climate and security in February 2021, noted that climate-related emergencies cause the loss of livelihoods, displacement and migration, major disruptions in access to health and life-saving sexual and reproductive health services and increases in gender-based violence and harmful practices.

74. During the reporting period, improvements were seen in both the uptake and integration of considerations linked to the environment and climate change into policies and programmes related to the women and peace and security agenda, and the integration of gender-related considerations into emerging priorities on climate change and security. The policy report *Gender, Climate and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change* documented lessons learned from successful pilot projects aimed at addressing the gender dimensions of climate-related security risks. This has contributed to enhanced awareness and new investments in inter-agency programming to simultaneously address climate adaptation, peacebuilding and gender equality supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, including in such settings as the Gambia, the Niger and the Blue Nile State in the Sudan, and to address transboundary issues between Mali and the Niger. The inter-agency climate security mechanism, a joint initiative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme to help the United Nations system address climate-related security risks more systematically, has increased efforts to integrate a gender perspective into its work, including by applying gender-sensitive risk assessment methodologies in its field work and reviewing good practices regarding the integration of climate security and gender linkages into peacebuilding efforts.

75. Continued efforts are needed to address the linkages between gender, climate and security, and the meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in national policymaking and planning and legal reforms regarding the distribution of natural resources in conflict-affected countries. These include processes to support nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans, national climate change action plans, land tenure policies and the reduction of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. It also includes support for the advocacy efforts of women's organizations and networks to address climate-related security risks.

76. Much focus is now given to climate financing. It is essential that a gender perspective be taken into account when making decisions, applying climate finance instruments and ensuring women's participation in the allocation of financial resources, especially in crisis and conflict settings. The gender, climate and security nexus offers a unique opportunity for funds dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation to address the root causes of conflict and have a greater transformative impact, such as through the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

77. As climate change fuels renewed waves of environmental activism, taking action to protect natural resources and defend environmental rights is becoming ever more dangerous. The increase in violence and threats against environmental defenders who are women, in particular indigenous women, is alarming. Their protection should be an integral part of the global agenda for peacebuilding and for sustaining peace.

⁵⁵ At the time of writing: the subregion of Central Africa, the Central African Republic, Cyprus, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, the Lake Chad basin, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and West Africa and the Sahel.

IV. Action to realize women and peace and security commitments

A. Planning for action and monitoring results at the national and regional levels

78. The implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is the responsibility of all Member States. That includes ensuring that global commitments on gender equality and women and peace and security are translated into national laws, policies and practices and are upheld in externally facing policies and programmes, including in terms of international security and development cooperation, humanitarian aid and support for mediation and peacebuilding efforts globally. Across the agenda, many gaps remain between the normative framework and its implementation, gaps that are at risk of increasing unless targeted efforts are integrated into COVID-19 recovery efforts.

79. There is broad recognition of the need to urgently tackle implementation gaps and prevent any backsliding. The strong support for the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action,⁵⁶ which was launched at the Generation Equality Forum in Paris on 2 July 2021, is a clear expression of this need to realize commitments. As at August 2021, 149 signatories, including Member States, regional organizations, United Nations entities, the private sector, civil society and academia, had endorsed the Compact's preamble and framework actions by investing in at least one of the proposed actions. Guided by the Compact's Board and catalytic members, the Compact will establish a voluntary monitoring and accountability process to realize existing Compact commitments, strengthen coordination across its existing mechanisms, systems, networks, partnerships and capacities, and promote financing for and wider awareness and visibility of the women and peace and security agenda and gender equality in humanitarian action.

80. National action plans have the potential to be important tools to guide implementation efforts. As of August 2021, 98 countries and territories (50 per cent of United Nations Member States) had adopted dedicated action plans on women and peace and security, and 12 regional organizations had regional strategies or plans in place. More countries have taken steps to improve monitoring, evaluation and reporting of their national action plans and 86 per cent of countries with such plans have monitoring indicators to track progress. In 2021, pursuant to the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, the United States of America presented its first report evaluating progress in advancing its strategy on women and peace and security. The integration of national action plan priorities into sectoral policies and plans has also been emphasized. For example, alongside its national action plan, the Ministry of Defence in the Netherlands has adopted a defence action plan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a dedicated plan under development.

81. The Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network,⁵⁷ currently chaired by Canada and Uruguay, stressed the need for a women and peace and security agenda that is both inward and outward facing and fit for purpose in order to address current and escalating crises. The Network convened seven virtual meetings for Member States, regional organizations and civil society and developed recommendations on ways to design and implement impact-driven national action plans, support women peacebuilders, include indigenous communities and racially diverse populations in implementation efforts in a meaningful way and integrate intergenerational

⁵⁶ See <https://forum.generationequality.org/women-peace-security-and-humanitarian-action-wps-ha-compact>.

⁵⁷ See <https://wpsfocalpointnetwork.org/>.

leadership. South Africa and Switzerland will serve as Co-Chairs of the Network in 2022. Moving forward, it is crucial that the Network and its members increase efforts to influence the core decisions on peace and security in their respective governments.

82. Member States are encouraged to make greater use of human rights mechanisms to enhance accountability with regard to women and peace and security. For example, only 7 per cent of recommendations issued in the context of the universal periodic review between 2017 and 2021 were directly related to gender-related issues (see [A/HRC/48/32](#)).

B. Leadership, coordination and accountability within the United Nations

83. In 2019, as part of the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Secretary-General issued 10 directives to United Nations entities, including to review their expenditures, operational and strategic frameworks, accountability tools, internal analyses, public messaging, engagement with women's organizations and technical capacity to lead by example on women and peace and security ([S/2019/800](#), para. 120). So far, entities have taken important steps to implement these commitments, but progress has been uneven. For example, none of the United Nations country teams have reported setting the necessary benchmarks, as directed in the report, to allocate a minimum of 15 per cent of programmatic budgets to gender equality while improving the mainstreaming of gender in all areas of expenditure.

84. Accountability frameworks and compacts for special representatives of the Secretary-General were updated to include objectives related to women and peace and security, from progress in implementing mandated tasks to consistent political advocacy and the strengthening of partnerships with women's civil society organizations. The Department of Peace Operations continued to invest in data-driven accountability, and eight peacekeeping missions systematically monitored and analysed progress, trends and challenges using 15 core indicators related to women and peace and security. The Peacebuilding Commission adopted an implementation plan to improve monitoring and accountability in implementing its gender strategy. In addition, the number of women peacebuilders briefing the Commission increased significantly, from 6 in 2019 to a record 25 in 2020. United Nations senior leaders regularly raised women and peace and security issues, often joining forces across the United Nations system to amplify their messages, whether on the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), on the response to the pandemic and links to the disarmament agenda or on specific peace and security developments in a given country. Such efforts have also resulted in an increase in gender-related references in discussions at meetings of and recommendations by the Executive Committee.

85. One of the most progressive and forward-leaning models of integration of gender equality in strategic planning was the transition in the Sudan from what had been the largest peacekeeping operation to a much smaller special political mission. As this was a complex process, it required systematic engagement and prioritization on gender equality at both the leadership and technical levels across the United Nations system and at various stages. These efforts, which built on gains made on women and peace and security by UNAMID, resulted in gender equality issues being reflected in all key planning documents and the setup of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan. The Security Council confirmed this by including strong and comprehensive instructions on women and peace and security in the mission mandate. This example should serve as a model for other such transitions and reconfigurations of United Nations presence.

86. Engagement with women's organizations can be extensive and extensively reported (and in some cases regularly scheduled, as in Colombia or Yemen) and prioritized (such as by the new United Nations leadership in the Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). However, the Organization will continue to improve on following up on the outcomes of such engagement, ensuring that it is substantive and intentional, rather than ad hoc, and investing in strategic partnerships with local women leaders and networks. Many United Nations country teams include a stand-alone outcome on gender equality and women's empowerment in their development coordination frameworks and gender analysis as part of the United Nations common country analysis. However, the quality of this analysis and its use in policy and programmatic decisions can still be greatly improved. Often, analysis on women and peace and security is limited to references to women or gender and reporting on meetings about inclusion, rather than examples of actual inclusion. There is still a need for more analysis and evidence of the consequences of exclusion and the impact of inequality as a driver of conflict, and for stronger use of this analysis in strategic planning. Meanwhile, the reporting period did show appreciable progress in efforts by the United Nations, including peacekeeping and political missions, to monitor and report on hate speech, threats and attacks against women activists and human rights defenders. However, civil society partners report that the United Nations often falls short in providing protection in these situations.

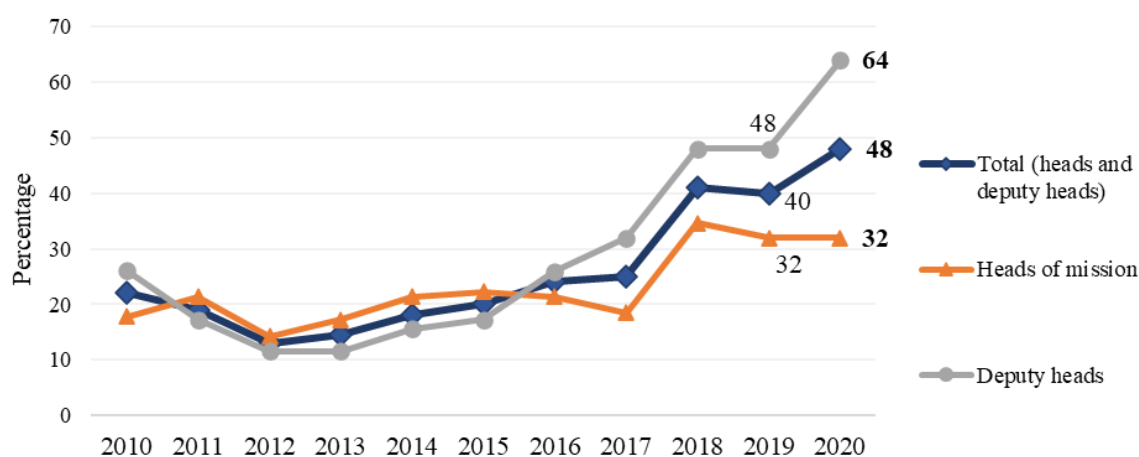
87. The directives set out in the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security in 2019 (S/2019/800) also instructed heads of entities and missions to prioritize and budget for dedicated capacity and expertise within their offices, including at senior levels, on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in budget requests to Member States in special political missions and peacekeeping operations, and to ensure that posts were filled and placed within offices of senior leadership. Of the current peacekeeping missions, eight have gender units, with a total of 52 gender advisors and officers, but only 4 hold positions at the senior level (P-5), and some missions have additional positions at the P-3 and P-4 levels. In addition, there were 15 gender advisers in the United Nations police as at 31 December 2020, and 4 in military components. As at that date, and across 19 special political missions, there were 146 staff engaged in providing gender expertise and support, including 22 full-time gender advisers, most of whom were funded through the regular budget. One quarter of special political missions had a senior gender adviser at the P-5 level. Almost all senior gender advisers were located in the office of the head of the mission.⁵⁸ In addition, across peacekeeping and special political missions there were senior women protection advisers in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. Women protection advisers should also be deployed to advise resident and humanitarian coordinators in all relevant situations of concern, as mandated in Security Council resolution 2467 (2019). During 2020, many special political missions were affected by the liquidity crisis and hiring freezes, which hindered attempts to increase the availability of their gender expertise and capacity. In some contexts, peacekeeping missions had to defend their current capacity from attempts at cuts during budget negotiations.

88. For the United Nations, part of leading by example involves living up to the commitments to gender parity, and the Organization continues to make steady progress in this regard (see figure III). For example, as of February 2021, women comprised 48 per cent of all heads and deputy heads of mission, a substantial increase from 20 per cent in 2015. Several field missions have shown that progress is possible,

⁵⁸ Almost all gender advisers in special political missions are now located in the offices of special representatives or special envoys, with a few in the offices of their deputies. The gender adviser for the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa was located in the mission's section on political affairs.

regardless of the context. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant grew from 5 staff members when it was established in 2017 to 216 personnel deployed in Iraq as of May 2021, while maintaining gender parity. As of January 2021, in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the head of mission, the force commander and the senior police adviser were women, as were other chiefs of major units, and close to 10 per cent of the military component and 43 per cent of the police component were women. Women representation in the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia stands at 49 per cent of civilian personnel, 60 per cent of United Nations Volunteers and 33 per cent of international observers. The Organization will remain committed to ensuring that it can soon report similar results across all United Nations entities and field operations.

Figure III
Percentage of women represented in United Nations mission leadership, 2010–2020



Sources: Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Department of Peace Operations.

89. Building on the indicators created to measure progress on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (S/2010/498, annex), a strengthened monitoring and accountability framework has been proposed to better grapple with the complexity inherent in the agenda, developments over the past decade and the need to make data more accessible. Consultations with United Nations entities on these issues have contributed to enhanced knowledge on and engagement with the women and peace and security agenda within the system and new opportunities for strengthened partnerships, synergies and joint action to address data gaps and leverage technology.

C. Financing for the women and peace and security agenda

90. The COVID-19 crisis and discussions regarding the road to recovery have placed decisions linked to budgets, financing and resourcing under greater scrutiny. Choices made now will affect recovery, peace and stability for years to come, as well as the international community's ability to prevent and respond to future crises.

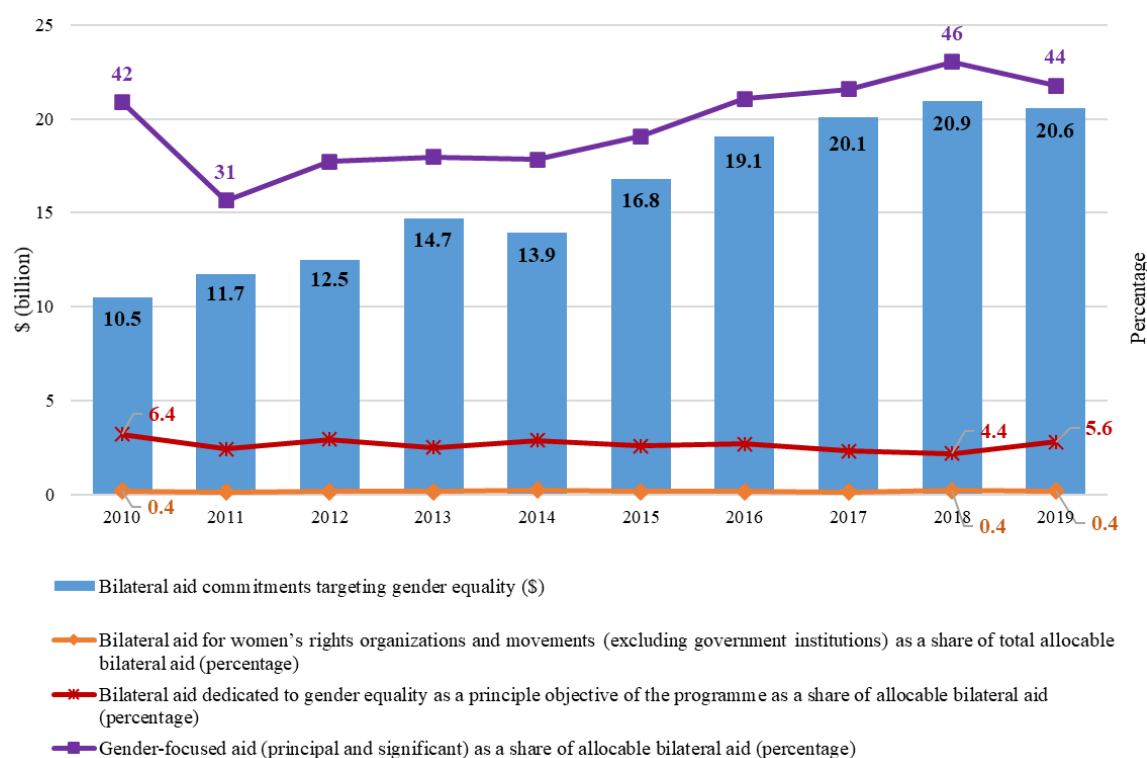
91. Bilateral aid to fragile and conflict-affected contexts and countries has continued to increase, reaching \$47.2 billion in 2019.⁵⁹ Of this aid, \$20.6 billion

⁵⁹ As at July 2021, the latest data available was through 2019. The Development Assistance Committee included 30 members.

(44 per cent) was committed to support gender equality in these contexts (see figure IV). The percentage of bilateral aid dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective of that aid rose to 5.6 per cent (\$2.7 billion) in 2019. However, there has been little change over time. Despite new funding commitments, the share of bilateral aid supporting feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements in fragile or conflict-affected countries remains strikingly low: only 0.4 per cent (\$179 million).⁶⁰ Only \$18 million was received by local women's rights organizations based in fragile or conflict-affected countries, and groups working to reduce intersecting forms of marginalization receive even lower funding.⁶¹ National machineries for gender equality also remain strikingly underfunded.

Figure IV

Bilateral aid in support of gender equality and women's rights in fragile or conflict-affected contexts, 2010–2019



Source: OECD, aid project targeting gender equality and women's movements, and Creditor Reporting System data, accessed 30 June 2021.

92. While none of the fragile and conflict-affected countries were on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment before the pandemic, mounting evidence indicates that hard-won

⁶⁰ Such aid is intended to support feminist, women-led and women's rights organizations and movements and institutions (governmental and non-governmental) to enhance their effectiveness, influence and sustainability. The data have been collected and tracked as purpose code 15170 in the OECD Creditor Reporting System. This aid is usually channelled via non-governmental organizations and civil society (over 50 per cent); multilateral organizations, including support for dedicated pooled funds such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (roughly 20 to 30 per cent); the public sector; and research institutions. The data analysed excluded aid channelled through government institutions.

⁶¹ Association for Women's Rights in Development, "New brief: where is the money for feminist organizing?", 24 May 2021.

progress is rapidly backsliding.⁶² There remains a need to increase the share of bilateral aid in support of gender equality and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in these contexts. The bulk of this aid continues to be contributed by a small pool of donors, and only a few donors have set minimum targets for aid focused on gender equality.

93. During the reporting period, and in follow-up to the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality established by the Secretary-General, the United Nations has increased efforts to strengthen the pool of resources for gender equality and to review and improve systems for tracking gender equality allocations (see [E/2021/52](#)). Certain entities have increased their overall spending on gender equality. In 2020, UNDP allocated \$2,840 million (63 per cent of total expenditure) to programmes or projects contributing to gender equality, \$316 million (7 per cent) of which was dedicated to promoting gender equality as the principal objective.⁶³ The same year, its Crisis Bureau made a series of commitments to incentivize and increase the investments on gender equality made by its offices in fragile and crisis-affected countries. UNICEF allocated \$3,045 million (56 per cent of total expenditure) to contribute to gender equality; 17 per cent of that figure was focused on gender equality as a principal objective. Meanwhile, in addition to committing at least 17 per cent of its annual multi-year appeal budget towards initiatives aimed at women's empowerment and programmes that recognize and help advance the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs also established a new \$3 million window for women and peace and security. For UN-Women, the total expenditure on peace and security programming and humanitarian interventions stood at \$105.52 million in 77 countries, up from 65 in 2019. However, several entities still lack mechanisms to track these expenditures.

94. Building on the experience of the Peacebuilding Fund, greater focus has been placed on systems that track gender-focused allocations across pooled funds. The Gender Equality Marker was tested with success during the second call for the COVID-19 response and recovery multi-partner trust fund. This call exceeded the 30 per cent target set for funding allocated to programmes that had identified gender equality as their principal objective and reached 73 per cent of \$30.8 million contributing to gender equality (see figure V).⁶⁴ The Gender Equality Marker will be expanded to funds that do not yet incorporate this.

95. In 2020, the Peacebuilding Fund approved investments of \$173 million in 41 contexts and allocated 40 per cent towards improving gender equality, the same share as the previous two years. The Fund dedicated 13.5 per cent to projects that had gender equality as a principal objective, and 66.7 per cent to projects that had it as a significant objective.⁶⁵ In 2020, the Fund approved \$36.6 million through the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, including \$19.2 million to advance human rights and support human rights defenders and peacebuilders, including to specifically support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex human rights defenders and peacebuilders.

96. Of the \$847.1 million allocated by the Central Emergency Response Fund to deliver humanitarian assistance in 2020, \$147.8 million (17.5 per cent) was allocated

⁶² OECD, *States of Fragility 2020* (Paris, 2020).

⁶³ Gender Equality Marker codes 3 or 2b indicate programmes/projects with gender equality/women's empowerment as the principal objective.

⁶⁴ The COVID-19 response and recovery multi-partner trust fund did not approve proposals with a Gender Equality Marker code of 0, and it discouraged interventions with a Gender Equality Marker code of 1.

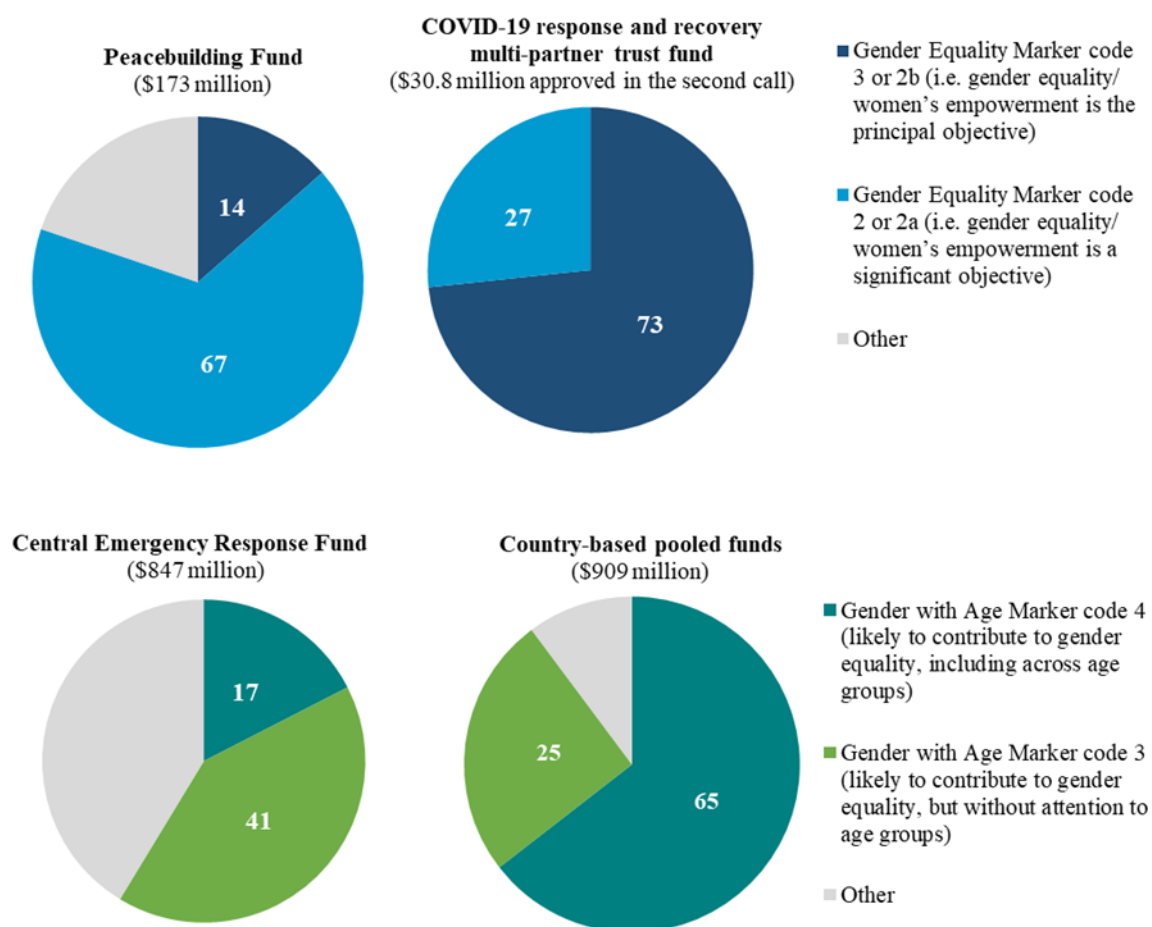
⁶⁵ The Peacebuilding Fund does not approve projects with a Gender Equality Marker code of 0, and it discourages interventions with a Gender Equality Marker code of 1.

to projects likely to contribute to gender equality, including across age groups.⁶⁶ Another \$349.4 million (41.4 per cent) was provided to projects likely to contribute to gender equality, but without attention to age groups.⁶⁷ Support for women and girls, including tackling gender-based violence, reproductive health and economic empowerment, was identified as a priority area – but was underfunded – in country-based pooled funds as well.

Figure V

Share of funding from United Nations multi-donor trust funds allocated to programmes/projects contributing to gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls in developing countries, 2020

(Percentage)



Sources: Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Note: The COVID-19 response and recovery multi-partner trust fund approved \$75 million in the first call and second call for proposals. The information about funding distribution against Gender Equality Markers is available in the second call approved in 2020 and early 2021.

97. Sectors that address gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health services are funded at only 33 and 43 per cent respectively, compared with an average funding of 61 per cent for United Nations appeals overall. In the United Nations-

⁶⁶ Gender with Age Marker code 4.

⁶⁷ Gender with Age Marker code 3.

coordinated appeal to specifically respond to COVID-19 in humanitarian settings,⁶⁸ attention to gender equality was limited in its initial launch, but the challenges and capacities of women and girls in crisis settings were prioritized in later iterations of the appeal.

98. There has been increased donor commitment and support to dedicated mechanisms such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. Since its launch in 2016, the Fund has supported 400 local organizations in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings and reached close to 10 million people across 25 countries around the world.⁶⁹ In Mali, for example, women's representation in targeted local peace committees increased by 150 per cent, which contributed to quality dialogue among stakeholders and improved social cohesion within communities. On 8 March 2021, the Fund launched a new campaign aimed at investing in 1,000 women leaders and their civil society organizations working to build more peaceful and resilient communities. Its goal is to raise \$112 million by the end of 2025.

99. The COVID-19 pandemic, combined with increasing security risks, continues to present grave threats to the critical work and the very existence of local civil society organizations working on the front lines of crises. Early in 2021, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund conducted a survey with its partners that found that 84 per cent of civil society respondents felt that their organization's existence was at risk due to lack of funding – a striking increase from the 30 per cent reported in 2020. Through the COVID-19 emergency response window launched in 2020, the Fund has provided much-needed programmatic and institutional support to over 60 local women's organizations across 18 conflict- and crisis-affected countries to address the gender-specific impacts of the pandemic. At present, the funding window is facing a funding gap of over \$30 million. Greater prioritization of women's organizations in crisis settings is needed in the recovery phase from the pandemic.

V. Work of the Security Council

100. Compared with 2019, in 2020 the Security Council invited fewer women to speak on behalf of civil society and adopted a smaller percentage of resolutions that included explicit references to women and peace and security.

101. Some of these trends can be explained by the temporary working methods used by the Security Council during the first months of the pandemic. The percentage of resolutions with relevant language on women or gender issues, for example, dropped from 67.3 to 61.4 per cent, but this can be attributed to the relatively high number of technical rollovers and short resolutions throughout the year. At the same time, the percentage of presidential statements with references to women and peace and security jumped from 40 per cent in 2019 to 77 per cent in 2020.

102. The percentage of women from civil society who briefed the Security Council decreased in the first half of 2020, dropping by 40 per cent compared with the first half of 2019, and totalled 28 at year end, split evenly between thematic meetings and country-specific meetings. Their statements provided vivid accounts on the situations of women and girls in many conflicts, and contained repeated pleas for the Council to act on their recommendations. The Council heard about Syrian soldiers removing baby formula from aid trucks that had been approved by the Government and dumping it on the ground, about Yemeni mothers whose children have survived so many bombings that they are now fearful of the sound of rain, and were reminded that the sale of Yazidi women still takes place online, as 2,800 remain in captivity and 200,000

⁶⁸ The Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

⁶⁹ See <https://wphfund.org/>.

live in camps for the displaced only hours away from their homeland, seven years after the attack on Sinjar in Iraq. Earlier in 2021, Caroline Atim from South Sudan, a deaf woman, briefed the Council using sign language during the annual debate on conflict-related sexual violence. She drew attention to the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women with disabilities, despite the adoption of resolution [2475 \(2019\)](#) on 20 June 2019, the first-ever Security Council resolution on protection of persons with disabilities in conflict.

103. The increase in targeted attacks against women leaders, activists and human rights defenders was frequently brought up in discussions of the Security Council. These threats and harassment are sometimes directed at women who have briefed the Council. The reports submitted by peacekeeping and special political missions and the monitoring teams or panels of experts that service sanctions regimes provide more detailed information about these incidents. In its resolutions on South Sudan and Libya, the Council recognized explicitly the need to protect women's rights organizations from threats and reprisals.

104. Sanctions committees continue to be underutilized as a means to hold perpetrators accountable for violations of women's rights, but some good practices are emerging. The latest renewal of the sanctions regime for South Sudan, resolution [2577 \(2021\)](#), included the implementation of an action plan for the armed forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence among the key benchmarks used to review the arms embargo measures, as well as an explicit request to include gender expertise on the Panel of Experts on South Sudan and integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue across its investigations and reporting. In 2021, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2140 \(2014\)](#) on Yemen added an individual to its list because of his role in a policy of intimidation, detention and sexual violence against politically active women, the first listing by the Committee in six years. The reports from the expert teams that monitor sanctions in Mali and the Sudan contained extensive examples of United Nations-verified incidents of sexual violence and physical assault on women and girls, including for alleged violations of dress codes or the perceived affiliation of a male relative with an enemy group. The gender balance in these teams has improved, from 19 per cent in 2016 to 36 per cent in 2020. Most sanctions regimes now have mandates that include sexual violence among their designation criteria and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict regularly shares information on implicated individuals and entities with relevant committees.

105. The Security Council strengthened the specificity and scope of women and peace and security references in resolutions on Mali, Libya, the Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, including as priority tasks in mission mandates, and adopted the first-ever resolution on peacekeeping fully devoted to women and gender equality, resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#), which was backed by 97 sponsors.

106. The Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security continued to hold regular meetings on country-specific situations, and held one of the first high-level meetings to explore the impact of the pandemic on women and peace and security. Shortly afterward, the first resolution of the Security Council on COVID-19, resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#), called for concrete actions to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the response. In addition, the periodic reports submitted to the Council by peacekeeping and special political missions also integrate women and peace and security issues. For example, all 33 reports prepared by the Department of Peace Operations in 2020 contained gender analysis or data disaggregated by sex. The same applied to 41 of 42 reports prepared by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 88 per cent of which also included

recommendations on women and peace and security, a percentage that has been increasing gradually, compared with 63 per cent in 2017.

107. While information and analysis on attacks against women human rights defenders have improved, as requested in my previous report, such data still need to lead to concerted action by Member States and the United Nations to protect civic space, including for the women who speak to the Security Council. These actions range from properly assessing the risks and monitoring threats, to planning for contingencies, to making rapid and flexible funding available for the protection of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders in emergency individual cases and taking all necessary measures to enhance digital and physical security, in consultation with the briefers themselves and civil society experts, such as the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

VI. Conclusions

108. From Mexico City to Paris, the resounding expression of political and financial support to gender equality galvanized by the Generation Equality Forum in 2021 could not have come at a better time. In addition to funding pledges totalling \$40 billion, and promises to take specific actions, more than 100 stakeholders signed on to the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, each of them making concrete commitments to advance the agenda over the next five years. The Compact's objectives are in line with the goals for this decade that I proposed in my annual report to the Security Council in 2020 (S/2020/946).

109. In that report, I promised to hold the United Nations senior leadership accountable for implementing their women and peace and security obligations through annual reviews by my Executive Committee. The first such review identified clear progress and important steps taken by United Nations entities, but also showed that most United Nations country teams had yet to set benchmarks to allocate a minimum of 15 per cent of programmatic budgets to gender equality and improve the mainstreaming of gender in all areas of expenditure. We will work with resident coordinators in conflict-affected countries to reverse this trend over the next two years and will continue to review progress annually at meetings of the Executive Committee.

110. Since I took office, reaching gender parity within the United Nations system and in peacekeeping has been one of my top priorities. Parity has been achieved among senior leadership in the Secretariat ahead of the target dates set. Significant progress has also been made in closing the gender gap at the senior mission leadership level in both special political missions and peacekeeping operations. As a result, we are now in a better position to demand far greater representation of women in peace and security processes. My previous report called for a radical shift and tangible results in women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping. As emphasized in my call to action for human rights, this must remain a non-negotiable priority for the United Nations. Supporting positive, proactive measures to increase women's participation in peace processes and political transitions is part of a necessary strategy aimed at achieving sustainable peace and women's de facto equality. We have seen the difference women make when we have parity in the United Nations, and when the representation of women in politics is increased. Half of the top 20 countries with the highest share of women parliamentarians use legislated quotas. Inclusive measures, bold targets and incentives have also been key to broader inclusion in peace processes, from the Geneva International Discussions to Libya to the Syrian Arab Republic.

111. The present moment also calls for a greater investment in women's participation, including through strategic partnerships with local women leaders and

networks, and in virtual diplomacy. The virtual meetings that replaced physical ones as a result of the pandemic sometimes allowed for the involvement of more women, including many who would not have been able to overcome the practical and logistical barriers to participation in international processes, including visa and travel requirements. However, they also exposed divisions with regard to access to political power, technology, a lack of accessibility for women with disabilities and online harassment. The digital gender divide has been known for some time, but it must urgently be taken into account by peace and security actors. It is imperative that governments and technology companies consult more than they already have with women civil society groups to address both this divide and online violence.

112. Data and technology are critical tools for strengthening accountability to the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace. Priority must be given to closing data gaps, increasing capacity and resources and addressing technological limitations, as we work together to make the gender data revolution on women and peace and security a reality.

113. The present report devoted a special section to the goal of reversing the rise in global military spending and greater investment in human security. I am encouraged by signs of increased collaboration across the United Nations system to provide women's organizations and policymakers with evidence-based advocacy and ways to shift spending paradigms. One proven pathway is to increase the number of women in elected and appointed positions. The international community can do more to support the participation of women in decision-making on defence and security sector expenditures, expand the use of gender-budgeting tools and programming to influence military spending levels and strengthen citizen oversight of military budgeting through enhanced transparency and accountability. I encourage United Nations entities to join forces with civil society organizations in innovative campaigns targeted at governments and parliamentarians, using new data and evidence globally and in specific countries, to advocate for people-centred policies, reductions in military spending and enhanced coherence on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. I invite all Member States, and especially members of the Security Council, to join the new Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, which proposes to reshape peace and security and humanitarian action processes to systematically include women and girls in the decisions that affect their lives and, inter alia, to progressively and responsibly shift military expenditure to human security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

114. Next year's report will be devoted to another of the five goals for the decade: turning the unconditional defence of women's rights into one of the most visible and identifiable markers of the work of the United Nation on peace and security. It must include recommendations for better protection for women human rights defenders and against all political violence in public life, and lessons learned from recent developments, including in Afghanistan and the evacuation or attempted evacuation of women at risk. The past few years have seen the proliferation of guidance and initiatives to stem the tide of violence against women activists and leaders. However, there is still a paucity of effective measures to provide protection to individuals at immediate risk or link participation with protection needs, and civil society organizations that work to protect human rights defenders are underfunded. Member States should consider, for example, expediting and facilitating the approval of applications for asylum, temporary relocation or protected status as a result of gender-based persecution.

115. After eight years leading UN-Women and overseeing a significant increase in the entity's investment on women and peace and security, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka summarized the partial progress to date on women's participation in decision-making and the long way ahead with a simple statement: "One quarter is not enough. One

quarter is not equality.”⁷⁰ I will be guided by the same conviction during my second term. We cannot hope to turn the climate crisis around, reduce social divisions and build sustained peace without shifting power towards equality and justice, and we cannot stop until we get there.

⁷⁰ Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director of UN-Women, remarks at the opening ceremony of the Generation Equality Forum, Paris, 30 June 2021.