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Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 16 December 2014 ([S/PRST/2014/27](#)). It provides an update on the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the current status of the partnership and efforts to enhance it. It also provides a description of the main activities carried out by the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations system as a whole since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2019/759](#)) on 19 September 2019, including those pertaining to Council resolutions [2320 \(2016\)](#), [2378 \(2017\)](#) and [2457 \(2019\)](#) and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. The United Nations and African Union strategic partnership

2. The strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union is of paramount importance in addressing complex peace and security challenges in Africa. In recent years, the two organizations have worked to deepen cooperation across the conflict cycle, recognizing their distinct advantages, shared values and common interests, and in their firm commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063: The Africa we want.

United Nations Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council

3. Close coordination and collaboration in decision-making between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council is critical for responding effectively to conflict in Africa. During the reporting period, the two Councils worked to strengthen information-sharing and the three African non-permanent members of the Security Council have continued to provide a critical link.

4. On 22 October 2019, the members of the two Councils held their thirteenth annual joint consultative meeting in Addis Ababa, during which they reviewed peace and security issues in Africa, focusing on the Central African Republic, Libya, South



Sudan and the Sahel region. The meeting was preceded by the fourth informal seminar, at which the two Councils reiterated their support for the African Union “Silencing the guns in Africa” initiative, the importance of which was underlined by the Security Council in its resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#). They underlined the importance of implementing provisions of the United Nations-African Union joint frameworks by prioritizing prevention and early warning, as well as promoting confidence-building measures and peacebuilding efforts that include women and youth. They also agreed on the utility of and the need for joint field visits, although there was no consensus on modalities.

5. During the reporting period, my special representatives and envoys regularly briefed the two Councils on country and regional situations and thematic issues. In many cases, they conducted the briefings jointly with their African Union counterparts, thereby enabling the Councils to benefit from the perspectives and insights of both organizations and underscoring our close collaboration. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, those briefings have taken place via videoconference.

6. The Peace and Security Council conducted field visits to the Gambia, on 29 and 30 July 2019, and South Sudan, from 18 to 20 February 2020, in order to assess the current situation. The Council reaffirmed its support, in line with African Union instruments and principles, for the Gambia and underscored the need for civil service reforms, full ownership of the security sector reform process and the inclusion of women and youth in the prosecution of reforms. In its field visit to South Sudan, which was supported by the United Nations and took place only a few days before the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity on 22 February, the Council interacted with my Special Representative for South Sudan and other officials. The Council expressed solidarity with the people of South Sudan and reaffirmed its support for the full implementation of the revitalized peace agreement.

7. The three African non-permanent members of the Security Council have continued to articulate common African positions, including through joint statements, ensuring that discussion on issues of critical concern to Africa is informed by the perspectives of the continent. They invited the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa and my Special Adviser on Africa to provide monthly briefings on the programme of work of the Security Council.

8. In Addis Ababa, the African Union Commission and UNOAU facilitated monthly coordination meetings between representatives of the incoming President of the Security Council and the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council to discuss priorities and programmes of work for the month ahead and opportunities for enhanced coordination. On 13 and 14 January, the African members of the Security Council and the members of the Peace and Security Council held their annual retreat in Libreville, Gabon, on the theme “Silencing the guns: creating a conducive environment for children in conflict situations”. UNOAU launched a weekly circular, providing the Peace and Security Council with a timely and comprehensive overview of publicly available information on the results of Security Council meetings on Africa.

9. From 30 September to 4 October, UNOAU, supported by the African Union Partnership Team and the Security Council Affairs Division, organized the annual workshop for the Peace and Security Council Committee of Experts at United Nations Headquarters in New York to enhance awareness of the working methods of the Security Council and to hold informal discussions with counterparts. Representatives of all 15 members of the Peace and Security Council attended the workshop.

United Nations Secretariat and African Union Commission

10. Enhanced collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union is essential, in a context of complex threats to peace and security, to addressing the root causes of violence and conflict, sustaining peace and promoting sustainable development. Guided by the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the two organizations are working together more constructively and systematically. In my address to the thirty-third ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa in February, I noted that the challenges we face are complex, multi-faceted and far-reaching and that hence our response to those challenges has to be collective, comprehensive and coordinated. I commended the African Union for adopting “Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development” as its theme for the year and reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to continue working closely with the African Union to achieve the objectives of the initiative and the “Africa we want”, as set out in the Agenda 2063.

11. In October 2019, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security led a joint high-level solidarity mission on women and peace and security to the Horn of Africa. They were joined by a number of senior officials of the United Nations, including my Special Representative to the African Union and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), as well as senior officials of the African Union, including the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Commissioner for Social Affairs, Youth Envoy and Permanent Observer to the United Nations. During visits to Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, the officials engaged with a variety of women leaders and networks, including peacekeepers, entrepreneurs, survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence, mediators, grassroots peace actors, youth representatives and others to hear about their priorities, needs and demands and relay key messages from them to the relevant decision-makers. The mission highlighted women’s achievements in peace, security and development and reaffirmed the need to fully implement the women and peace and security agenda.

12. During the reporting period, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security also undertook joint high-level field visits to the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan.

13. The seventeenth and eighteenth meetings of the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security were held on 21 September 2019 and 11 February 2020 in New York and Addis Ababa, respectively. They were attended by the Commissioners for Peace and Security and for Political Affairs of the African Union and the Under-Secretaries-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, for Peace Operations and for Operational Support of the United Nations, as well as my Special Representative to the African Union. Participants welcomed the progress made in strengthening the partnership and noted, in particular, continued cooperation in conflict prevention, mediation and support for peace operations. The meetings focused on further strengthening collaboration and harmonized approaches, including in the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, the Sudan and the Sahel region. Participants underscored the need for coordination and close cooperation between the organizations’ entities in the field and for the meaningful participation of women in peace processes.

14. The thirteenth annual United Nations-African Union consultative meeting on the prevention, management and resolution of conflict (desk-to-desk) was held in

Addis Ababa on 13 and 14 December 2019. More than 70 desk officers from the United Nations, the African Union and regional economic communities took part and discussed conflict situations across the continent and ways to enhance synergies. Regular horizon-scanning meetings also took place, including virtual meetings conducted with increased frequency following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those interactions have facilitated shared analysis and coordinated responses.

15. The United Nations provided wide-ranging support to the African Union “Silencing the guns in Africa” initiative, in line with Security Council resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#), through the work of the United Nations country teams, seven peacekeeping missions and 12 special political missions, as well as through its good offices engagements on the continent. United Nations peace operations also provided political, technical and logistical support for the mediation efforts of the African Union and the regional economic communities, including in the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, South Sudan and the Sudan.

16. The Task Force to Support the African Union Initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, continued to coordinate and scale up support for the initiative. The support included assistance to strengthen mediation capacity through the African Union Mediation Support Unit and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) and to promote the political and economic empowerment of women through the African Women Leaders Network. Technical assistance was provided for peace support operations, mine action and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs provided 40 young leaders from ministries, armed forces and civil society in Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and the Sudan with training in unarmed civilian protection through an online course run by the Nonviolent Peaceforce, a non-governmental organization. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) replicated the course for 46 Darfuri peacebuilders.

17. On 5 and 6 March 2020, the African Union Commission, the United Nations (including UNOAU and ECA) and other partners convened a consultative meeting of experts on the design and development of the African human security index, which is an objective of Agenda 2063. From 20 to 22 May 2020, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, in collaboration with the African Union, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Global Communications, ECA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), held the 2020 Africa Dialogue Series online on the theme of “COVID-19 and silencing the guns in Africa: challenges and opportunities”. More than 300 participants, including from Member States and civil society, took part. Their recommendations included, *inter alia*, peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as increased inclusion of women and youth in all national and regional efforts in this regard.

18. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant global impact and has affected all African countries. In May, the United Nations issued a policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 in Africa, expressing full solidarity with the people and Governments of Africa and providing recommendations to protect gains in the fight against the pandemic and maximize opportunities in the recovery for a more inclusive and sustainable future as countries emerge from this crisis. The bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, under the Chair of South Africa, has acted swiftly and decisively to address COVID-19, facilitating important discussions with key stakeholders, including regional actors and the private sector. The African Union Commission, in particular through the Africa Centres for Disease

Control and Prevention, is working tirelessly to complement efforts by Member States, and to support and implement a continental response to the pandemic following the development of the Africa joint continental strategy for COVID-19 and the establishment of a continental COVID-19 response fund. The Chairperson of the African Union has appointed four special envoys to mobilize international support for the COVID-19 response in Africa.

19. Governments have been quick to adopt measures to curb rates of infection, including by redeploying available resources to strengthen the health sector and undertaking public health messaging. United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions and resident coordinators have supported those efforts at the national level. The United Nations, through UNOAU, provided advice and support to the African Union Commission in developing security plans for implementing the joint continental strategy and assisted with the formulation of guidelines for troop- and police-contributing countries participating in peace support operations to ensure protection from COVID-19 transmission.

20. In line with Security Council resolution [2320 \(2016\)](#) and the 2016 report by the Secretary-General on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union ([S/2016/780](#)), an assessment of United Nations-African Union cooperation, including the structure and resource capacity of UNOAU to meet the growing demands of the partnership, was conducted from November 2019 to February 2020 and its findings and recommendations were transmitted to the Security Council.

III. The United Nations and African Union operational partnership

Peace and security in Africa: challenges and opportunities

21. Progress in resolving conflict in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan, while significant, remains tenuous. The challenges to peace and security in other parts of the continent are increasingly complex and volatile. The situation in Somalia remains fragile, with the political dynamics further complicated by the removal of the Prime Minister and lack of clarity on elections. The situation in Libya, the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin has deteriorated significantly since my previous report. I am also closely following developments in regard to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project, including the progress made thus far through negotiations facilitated by the Chairperson of the African Union. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has made active mediation and good offices interventions more challenging owing to restrictions on travel.

22. The primary underlying structural challenges to achieving lasting peace and security in Africa remain largely unchanged since my previous report. In many cases, conflicts arise or are perpetuated owing to: a lack of national cohesion, ethnic tensions and weak governance, and the negative implications that the latter has for basic public service delivery, judicial institutions, the rule of law, human rights, the protection of civilians, the equitable management of natural resources, efforts to address corruption and consistent and effective State authority. Drivers of conflict also include poverty and inequalities, lack of economic opportunities, especially for youth, gender disparities and environmental degradation, climate change and natural disasters often leading to food insecurity and loss of livelihoods, poor management of natural disasters and incapacity to combat the adverse effects of climate change. Political and socioeconomic exclusion and discrimination, including historical injustices, also

remain sources of grievance and conflict. Those challenges are sometimes compounded by continued external interference and proxy conflicts, violent extremism and terrorism and organized crime. Many of those challenges are not unique to Africa and hence require a comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative approach involving international, regional and national stakeholders.

23. Since my previous report, the situation in Libya has deteriorated significantly as forces of the Government of National Accord have fought the Libyan National Army. The ongoing violence has brought civilian casualties. Attacks against civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and medical facilities, alarmingly increased and the humanitarian situation has worsened, causing increased displacement and exacerbating the plight of refugees, internally displaced persons, children and migrants. Amid the violence, mass graves, mostly in and around Tarhunah, were discovered in early June. I expressed deep shock and called for a thorough and transparent investigation and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

24. In the Sahel region, intercommunal conflicts, terrorist activities have continued, often mutually influencing each other. Violations and abuses attributed to security forces, militia and armed groups have also increased, with limited accountability. On 10 February, the African Union decided to deploy an additional 3,000 troops to enhance security in the Sahel. It will be critical for those troops to complement the efforts of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force through strong coordination, including on command and control. In Mali, following weeks of demonstrations, a military coup led to the resignation of the President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, on 18 August. The Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) is leading mediation efforts to ensure a speedy return to constitutional order. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is in close contact with ECOWAS, the African Union and Malian stakeholders to facilitate de-escalation and safeguard the mandate of the Mission.

25. There have been encouraging developments in the Horn of Africa, notably the commencement of a civilian-led political transition in the Sudan, the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity in South Sudan, the continuing rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and recent progress in Somalia, which includes reaching the decision point for debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and the enactment of the Electoral Law. Those developments need to be supported and consolidated. Meanwhile, relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and some federal member states remain fraught. Relations between Kenya and Somalia and violence in some regions of Ethiopia continue to be a source of concern. The subregion has also faced additional challenges, including floods caused by heavy seasonal rains and the desert locust infestation.

26. In the Central Africa region, the overall political, peace and security situation remained largely unchanged. Despite some tensions within the ruling coalition, the political situation remained relatively stable in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while armed group violence increased in parts of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. There was an increase in violence in the north-west and south-west of Cameroon. In Burundi, the 2020 general elections and political transition were largely peaceful, while there were continuing reports of human rights violations. Some armed groups in the Central African Republic continued to engage in fighting, in contravention of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. In the Southern Africa subregion, Lesotho established the National Reforms Authority in February 2020. It is mandated to manage, coordinate and lead the implementation of the multisector reforms that were recommended by the Southern African

Development Community as part of efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability in the kingdom. Mozambique, however, is facing a growing insurgency in the north, which could have an impact on its neighbours.

Partnership in conflict prevention and peacemaking

27. The United Nations works closely with the African Union, regional economic communities and mechanisms and other partners in conflict prevention and peacemaking efforts, and strives to ensure that such efforts are well coordinated and mutually reinforcing.

28. With regard to Libya, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and I participated in and supported the launch of the Berlin Conference, hosted by the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel. Participants called for an end to external interference and an immediate ceasefire and outlined steps to advance the political dialogue. My acting Special Representative in Libya, has since continued to facilitate negotiations under the 5+5 Joint Military Commission on the finalization of a ceasefire agreement. As part of those efforts, the African Union co-chairs the security working group of the International Follow-up Committee on Libya. The United Nations, through UNOAU, is working with the African Union Commission to support its potential political and military monitoring engagement in Libya by developing a concept paper to outline options for the possible role of the African Union in support of the implementation of a ceasefire agreement.

29. In June 2020, the Security Council decided, in its resolution [2524 \(2020\)](#), to establish the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). The new political mission will complement the work of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the ground and work closely with the Transitional Government and people of the Sudan in support of the transition, including to advance gender equality and women's rights. The African Union and the United Nations are working closely as planning for UNITAMS advances. In resolution [2525 \(2020\)](#), the Council extended the mandate of UNAMID by two months, to 31 December 2020. UNITAMS and UNAMID will work closely together, with a particular focus on the Juba peace process, peacebuilding and the protection of civilians, especially in Darfur. UNITAMS and UNAMID will support the Government in the country's democratic transition and shift the focus in Darfur from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in order to consolidate gains and minimize the risk of relapse.

30. In Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations, through its Integrated Peacebuilding Office (UNIOGBIS) further worked with the African Union largely in the context of the Guinea-Bissau Group of Five international partners, which include the African Union, ECOWAS, the Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations. The Group of Five has worked together to maintain common positioning and messaging, including to appease tensions around the two-round presidential elections held in November and December 2019.

31. In the Central Africa region, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security conducted joint visits to the Central African Republic with a view to supporting implementation of the February 2018 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in that country. My Special Representatives for the Central African Republic and for Central Africa, working with the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), also continued to support the implementation of the Agreement, the success of which is key to sustaining peace and stability, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections scheduled for December 2020. In that regard, African Union-United Nations-European Union cooperation has produced progress in

implementation of the joint peace analysis with an integrated gender perspective, aimed at supporting a comprehensive political approach to sustain peace outcomes, including through inclusive elections.

32. My Special Representative for Central Africa and the Secretary-General of ECCAS visited Cameroon from 19 to 21 January 2020 and engaged political and non-State actors in favour of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Some armed groups in the country responded positively to my appeal on 23 March 2020 for a global ceasefire in order to concentrate on combating COVID-19. In Burundi, prior to the 20 May elections, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, my Special Representative for Central Africa, my Special Representative to the African Union and the Office of the Special Envoy for Burundi closely coordinated engagements with various national and regional actors, including the Government, the political opposition and non-State actors such as religious leaders, and advocated dialogue, restraint and the peaceful conduct of elections.

33. In the Great Lakes Region, my Special Envoy convened, through videoconference on 2 April, the seventh meeting of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The guarantors (the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community) encouraged signatory countries to favour cooperation and coordinate efforts in fighting the pandemic, in the light of the positive momentum reached in matters of peace and security. Furthermore, the Office of my Special Envoy organized, together with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community, a regional workshop entitled “Participation, Representation and Protection of Women in the Electoral Processes in the Great Lakes Region”, which took place in Addis Ababa on 12 and 13 November 2019, to promote an inclusive electoral process and women’s protection in the context of post-conflict stabilization and peacebuilding.

34. Cooperation in counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism also grew, underpinned by joint assessment missions and the joint pursuit of harmonization and application of international and regional legal frameworks on counter-terrorism. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism worked closely with subregional organizations and the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism on regional counter-terrorism strategies and is working on innovative measures to help Member States to proceed with their implementation. The Office also prioritized capacity-building programmes for the region.

35. In Mozambique, the Office and the Executive Directorate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee worked with the Southern Africa Development Community and the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism to support the Government in designing and implementing robust and comprehensive measures to degrade the capacities of armed groups.

36. The United Nations and the African Union have been strengthening collaboration in mediation support and have begun to focus more of their joint initiatives on the women and peace and security agenda and youth, peace and security agenda. The African Union took steps to deepen the institutionalization of mediation support in the Commission, including by reinforcing its Mediation Support Unit and FemWise-Africa. The Mediation Support Unit in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, in collaboration with the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, invited the African Union Mediation Support Unit to New York from 30 September to 3 October 2019 to conduct consultations with various entities, resulting in a commitment to ensure a more holistic approach to mediation support by reinforcing technical and knowledge management capabilities, and to enhance efforts

in conflict prevention and crisis response. The Department also supported the validation workshops for the African Union's standard operating procedures and mediation handbook, thereby establishing rules and values for mediation. Currently, support is focused on finalizing the strategic plan of the African Union's Mediation Support Unit. The Department, in collaboration with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), also supported the organization of the African Union ministerial conference on access to natural resources and conflict between communities, which was held in Bamako on 29 November 2019.

37. Support for efforts to enhance the participation of women in mediation and conflict prevention continued, in particular through FemWise-Africa, taking the form of assistance in the development of policy documents, outreach strategies, training, capacity-building and support for activities in the field. UN-Women contributed to operational support for FemWise-Africa at the country level, including by deploying FemWise-Africa members to Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Sudan.

38. UN-Women also continued to support the Office of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security with the placement of gender experts to assure the coordination of the African Women Leaders Network. In partnership with the African Union and with the assistance of Germany, UN-Women supported the establishment of 25 national chapters of the Network across Africa, coinciding with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The United Nations and the African Union Commission also helped the Network to convene its first intergenerational dialogue in Nairobi in August 2019. The United Nations and the African Union Commission also continued to conduct regular conflict prevention and joint horizon-scanning meetings, involving the relevant regional economic commissions and United Nations agencies.

Partnership in peacekeeping and peace support operations

39. The United Nations continued to work closely with the African Union Commission to strengthen synergies and interoperability in planning for peace support operations through the exchange of knowledge and expertise, including through the knowledge and expertise exchange programme and the enhanced training for high-level operational support programme. The United Nations also provided technical advice and support to ongoing African Union-mandated peace support operations. In January 2020, the two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding to institutionalize the staff exchange programme.

40. In Somalia, support for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) included: engagement to ensure a common understanding of relevant Security Council resolutions on AMISOM and their implementation; participation in the African Union quarterly assessment visits to Somalia; and support for the development and review of relevant operational policies and guidelines, including harmonization of standard operating procedures for the AMISOM Board of Inquiry and the development of statement-of-unit requirements that will be used to inform a contingent-owned equipment review for AMISOM military units after the force reconfiguration later in 2020. Support was also provided for the AMISOM Logistics Conference, which was held in Mogadishu in September 2019 to deliberate on and draft a synchronized logistics implementation strategy aligned with the mission's concept of operations for the period 2018–2021 and the Somalia Transition Plan, as mandated by Security Council resolution [2472 \(2019\)](#).

41. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations supported the establishment of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Central African Republic as part of efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. That included support provided to two African Union assessment missions to engage with stakeholders, including the host Government, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the African Union Office in Central African Republic. As a result, a memorandum of understanding was signed, under which MINUSCA will provide essential logistical support to the Observer Mission on a cost-reimbursable basis.

42. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, technical, logistical and security support was provided to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the African Union Commission for the African Union Mission Support to the Ebola Outbreak in that country. Joint assessment missions assisted in determining the mission's operational and logistics requirements, concept of operations, support concept and security plan to deal with the Ebola crisis more effectively.

43. In the Lake Chad Basin, UNOAU continued to provide technical advice and support to the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram through the African Union Commission, including the development of standing operating procedures for effective employment of the three services provided by the African Union: command and control communication information systems; intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance; and air mobility. The United Nations also worked with the African Union to implement the organizations' strategies on dealing with the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the Sahel, the United Nations-African Union joint operational assessment visits to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel area of operational responsibility contributed to the identification of operational challenges and improved operational effectiveness. The United Nations is working with the African Union on plans to deploy 3,000 additional troops to support the Joint Force.

44. The United Nations continued to support the African Union and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms to strengthen the African Standby Force (ASF) in the context of the Maputo Strategic Workplan (2016–2020) and the roadmap for the African Peace and Security Architecture. Focus will remain on the workplan and developing a new plan for the ASF. Other support included: further development of the Continental Logistics Base and regional logistics depots and of the Continental Movements Control Centre and regional movements control centres; strengthening of the African Standby Capacity civilian staff roster with a list of qualified and screened personnel available for ASF deployments at short notice; and making the Peace Fund of the African Union operational. The United Nations invited African Union logistics planners to participate in the inaugural virtual supply chain management workshop, hosted two additional staff members at the annual contingent-owned equipment conference in January 2020 and supported letter of assist negotiations for AMISOM air assets from two African Union troop-contributing countries.

45. The Department of Operational Support and UNOAU continued to explore means of enabling African Union access to United Nations services and equipment, including strategic deployment stocks, on a user-pays basis. The arrangement will build on the support model concept, whereby the Department and UNOAU serve as strategic and operational enablers by acting as partners and service providers to the African Union to strengthen joint planning, deployment, management and transition of African Union peace operations.

Partnership in peacebuilding and the rule of law

46. The United Nations continued to support peacebuilding efforts across the African continent. The Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Support Office also continued to work with the African Union and at the country level, in line with the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the memorandum of understanding signed in 2018. On 11 and 12 November 2019, the Peace and Security Council held its annual meeting with the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office in Addis Ababa. Participants focused on country-specific and regional peacebuilding trends in West Africa and heard a briefing by the Peacebuilding Commission on its mission to the Mano River region from 3 to 9 November, during which it visited, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. They also discussed means of engaging more systematically in order to better harmonize their respective efforts.

47. The United Nations continued to support the implementation of the African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform. With the establishment of the first-ever African Union steering committee on security sector reform in September 2019 and development of the three-year strategic plan and programme on the subject, security sector reform has become a priority for the political leadership of the African Union. The tenth high-level retreat on the promotion of peace, security and stability, held by the African Union in Djibouti on 29 and 30 October 2019 on the theme “Security sector reform and governance in Africa: evolving principles and practices from prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding interventions”, was attended by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Commissioners for Peace and Security and Political Affairs, high representatives of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and a number of my special representatives, as well as members of civil society organizations and think tanks. Participants agreed on the need to reinforce the capacity of African Union leadership to better integrate security sector reform governance in mediation efforts and to strengthen the Commission’s political role in facilitating such processes, as set forth in the press statement issued at the 874th meeting of the Peace and Security Council.

48. The United Nations, through the Department of Peace Operations, is jointly supporting the African Union with the World Bank in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) activities in Africa for the period 2020–2022. That builds on the DDR capacity enhancement process initiated in 2013. One of the key priorities is to enhance DDR linkages with the Fiftieth Anniversary Solemn Declaration, in which a commitment to silence the guns by 2020 was enshrined, and with Security Council resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#). The Peace and Security Council increased the number of meetings dedicated to the topic of illicit arms flows, including within the framework of the “Silencing the guns in Africa” initiative.

49. Member States have worked to develop and implement adaptive and context-specific approaches to DDR, particularly in Somalia and the countries of the Lake Chad Basin. The on-going review of international DDR standards and the recent development of the African Union operational guidance note on DDR are important platforms for setting standards.

50. The United Nations continued to support the African Union Commission to address problems posed by the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons, landmines and improvised explosive devices, including with regard to the development of the Union’s mine action strategy for the period 2020–2023, which is key to harmonizing mine action policies and standards between the Union, regional economic

communities, regional mechanisms and Member States. The United Nations, through UNOAU and the Mine Action Service, and the African Union, conducted a joint assessment on the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Zimbabwe. UNOAU, as a member of the African Union technical working group on counter-improvised explosive devices, and the Mine Action Service are providing the African Union Commission with technical expertise to develop a policy on such devices. As part of the “Silencing the guns in Africa” initiative, the United Nations, through UNOAU, is supporting the roll-out of the African Union policy on the management of recovered weapons in peace support operations. It is also working with the African Union Commission and seven African countries to carry out the African Union’s 2020 Africa September amnesty month for the surrender and collection of illegally-owned arms and weapons.

IV. Support for African Union peace support operations

51. Since my previous report, the African Union has made significant progress in rendering its Peace Fund operational. It had secured \$167.9 million by the end of June 2020, the highest level of contributions since it was set up in 1993. The Board of Trustees held its fourth meeting in January 2020. The meeting was preceded by the first retreat of the Peace Fund, the Executive Management Committee and the Peace and Security Council, at which participants discussed medium-term strategic funding priorities. My Special Representative to the African Union participated as an ex-officio member in the retreat and has taken part in Board meetings, of which there had been seven as of July 2020.

52. The structure of the Peace Fund’s secretariat was presented for adoption at the African Union Summit held in February 2020 as part of the African Union Commission’s new departmental structure. It is expected that recruitment of personnel for the secretariat will be completed in the second half of 2020. The requirements for posts in the Independent Evaluation Group were published throughout Africa and the Board of Trustees will oversee recruitment for the group, which is due to begin in the course of 2020.

53. The United Nations, through UNOAU and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, is working with the African Union Commission to develop a joint proposal on making the African Union human rights, international humanitarian law and conduct and discipline compliance framework for peace support operations functional. The aim of the compliance framework is to better protect civilians in peace enforcement missions in complex environments. In August 2019, the European Union earmarked 10 million euros to help to establish the compliance framework. As part of the process to enhance conduct and discipline, support has been provided on case management and the establishment of a misconduct tracking system and database, with a view to identifying and discussing the key elements of case management in African peace support operations. In September 2019, the Department of Peace Operations, the office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations Children’s Fund provided African peace support operations personnel with training in child protection in peacekeeping environments.

V. Partnership with other regional organizations and arrangements

Regional economic communities and regional mechanisms

54. The regional economic communities and regional mechanisms play an important role in addressing Africa’s peace and security challenges and, more broadly,

in supporting the attainment of the objectives of the African Union-United Nations partnership. My special representatives and envoys work closely with counterparts in the communities and mechanisms, including in addressing conflict in the Central African Republic, the Sahel, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. The United Nations and the African Union benefited from routinely involving the communities and mechanisms in working-level meetings, including the United Nations-African Union consultative meeting on the prevention, management and resolution of conflict (desk-to-desk) as well as in conflict prevention cluster meetings.

55. The United Nations, through UNOAU, undertook joint working-level visits with the African Union Commission to the headquarters of the East African Community and the Southern Africa Development Community. Beyond offering a greater understanding of the nexus between peace, security, human rights and development, those interactions boosted awareness of the unique opportunities presented by enhanced coordination and collaboration. The visits also helped to expand networks at the level of the regional economic communities, including women and youth, who are key to facilitating the realization of the objectives of the two organizations' strategic partnership. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa continued to provide valuable technical assistance to ECCAS including the ongoing institutional reform process and establishment of the new ECCAS Commission.

VI. Activities of the United Nations Office to the African Union

56. UNOAU continued to engage regularly with the Peace and Security Council, members of the Permanent Representatives Committee, the African Union Commission, including the Bureau of the Chairperson and Commissioners, the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and representatives of partners based in Addis Ababa. From August 2019 to July 2020, UNOAU and other United Nations entities provided 30 thematic and country-specific briefings to the Peace and Security Council. The Office also actively participated in the Group of Friends of the United Nations-African Union Partnership in Addis Ababa, currently co-chaired by Norway and Rwanda, as well as in events hosted by think tanks and civil society organizations. In those interactions, the Office strove to promote a common understanding of peace and security issues on the continent and of common approaches to addressing them through stronger political and operational coordination.

57. From 6 to 9 March 2020, my Special Representative to the African Union undertook a good offices mission to Malawi. During her visit and throughout the electoral process in Malawi, she engaged with political stakeholders in the Government and opposition, the eminent persons group, civil society leaders and the diplomatic corps in order to defuse growing tensions and enable the conduct of peaceful elections. She also represented me at the meeting of the Contact Group on Libya, which was held on 19 May by the President of South Africa and current Chairperson of the African Union, Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, and the President of Congo and Chairperson of the African Union High-level Committee on Libya, Denis Sassou Nguesso. Participants welcomed my continued commitment to support African Union efforts in Libya and called on the Security Council to take steps to ensure strict observance of the arms embargo.

58. In February 2020, on the margins of the thirty-third ordinary session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, UNOAU and the African Union Commission launched the joint publication *She Stands for Peace: 20 Years, 20 Journeys*, which features the stories of 20 African women and women's organizations that have made outstanding contributions to peace and security on the

continent. The publication, which commemorates the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), is a vehicle for making the voices of women heard and underlines the need for the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Together with the Prime Minister of Norway and the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission, I attended the launch event and introduced the book. The initiative was jointly spearheaded by my Special Representative to the African Union, the African Union Commissioners for Political Affairs and Peace and Security, and the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. It is part of a broader effort to ensure the inclusion of women, especially younger women in strengthening the partnership between the two organizations.

59. A continental study on the roles and contributions of youth to peace and security conducted by the African Union Commission in 2019, with the support of UNOAU, was among the activities undertaken to implement the youth, peace and security agenda. The study and a draft continental framework on youth, peace and security were presented to the Peace and Security Council at its second open session on this issue in November 2019, as were the five regional youth ambassadors for peace, whose appointment the Council had requested the Commission to undertake. In June 2020, the Council endorsed the study, adopted the framework and a 10-year implementation plan and encouraged enhanced collaboration between the African Union and the United Nations on youth matters. UNOAU continues to work with the Youth for Peace Africa Programme, the Special Envoy on Youth of the African Union and other partners to develop initiatives, in particular with a view to addressing the needs of and challenges faced by young African peacemakers, as described in the study.

60. Recruitment procedures for the African Standby Capacity rosters and African Union Commission have undergone significant development and UNOAU has supported the revision of the recruitment manual, drafted generic job descriptions and planned training on competency-based interviewing with the Commission and subregions. The development of guidelines and standing operating procedures for the rostering of police officers as part of the ASF police component has also progressed well.

61. UNOAU continued to support the African Union with regard to policing requirements in peace support operations, including through the revision and finalization of standard operating procedures, policies and guidelines under the auspices of the African Union Police Support Strategic Group. In follow-up to my previous report, a specific police pre-deployment training programme for African peace support operations and the ASF was adopted by the African Union Commission and completed. Thereafter, police trainers of the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and some African Member States benefited from two training programmes. Support will continue to ensure standardization among the communities and mechanisms and police-contributing countries. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, support has been provided to develop e-learning programmes on policing in peace support operations. The United Nations, through UNOAU, continued to support the African Union police component in assessing formed police units and individual police officers for deployment to AMISOM.

62. Apart from post-conflict settings where the United Nations provides stronger support on security sector reform governance, UNOAU continued to support the African Union in peacebuilding settings such as in Madagascar, where discussions with other partners, namely the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations country team and the Peacebuilding Fund, continue on greater political engagement in that regard. The national use and implementation of the seven operational guidance notes on security sector reform in member States of the African Union will be crucial.

63. UNOAU provided extensive technical support to the African Union in the design, development and implementation of training in a number of knowledge areas based on identified capacity gaps: child protection; civilian foundation programmes in African Union peace support operations; the African Union compliance and accountability framework; protection of civilians; monitoring and evaluation in peace support operations; mediation; police and military pre-deployment; gender and human rights; and mental health and psychosocial support in peace support operations. The target audience for those capacity development programmes were civilians and military and police personnel preparing to deploy or already deployed to African Union-mandated and authorized peace support operations. More than 750 personnel from African troop- and police-contributing countries benefited from training-of-trainer programmes facilitated by UNOAU and it is anticipated that the knowledge and skills acquired will be transferred to the various components of their regional standby forces. UNOAU also played a leading role in supporting the African Union and regional economic communities in the planning and conduct of continental and regional field training exercises in operational and logistics planning. The Office is engaging with the African Union in the review of the latter's policies on peace support operations training and on learning and development for its civilian staff, and assisting in the development of management systems for African Union e-learning programmes.

64. At the request of the African Union, UNOAU provided technical advice and direct support for the development of an overarching safety and security service policy and relevant standard operating procedures to enhance the security of civilian personnel and operations, and for the establishment of a safety and security system for peace support operations and other offices away from headquarters.

65. In order to enhance the visibility of the United Nations-African Union partnership in peace and security, UNOAU worked with the African Union to promote joint activities and increase outreach through social media and other public information outlets.

VII. Observations and recommendations

66. During the reporting period, the United Nations and the African Union have made significant progress in deepening the strategic partnership to address the complex and evolving peace and security challenges in Africa. The two organizations have continued to build on commendable achievements of recent years on the path to establishing a more systematic and predictable partnership, as envisaged in the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Our initiatives are better coordinated and rooted in shared values and a strong commitment to multilateralism. I also commend Egypt and Norway on the establishment, on 7 February, of the Group of Friends of the United Nations-African Union Partnership in New York, which mirrors the one in Addis Ababa.

67. The close collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union has contributed to positive developments in the peace processes in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan. Those gains, however, remain fragile and reversible and require that we continue to deploy our collective and sustained efforts to consolidate peace, stability and development in those countries.

68. I remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating situations in Libya, the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel region. Those complex and interconnected conflict situations will require consistent, comprehensive and innovative approaches, including closer collaboration between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council. They will further require the active engagement of regional

economic communities and regional mechanisms, and the involvement and support of grassroots organizations, in particular women and youth groups, and increased efforts towards achieving sustainable development to address the root causes of conflict and promote peacebuilding and reconciliation. In that regard, it is essential that the United Nations, the African Union, the regional economic communities and other international partners continue to work together to implement the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, the regional strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin region and the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in order to ensure consistency and avoid duplication of efforts. In Somalia, the continued collaboration of the United Nations, the African Union and other partners will be critical, in particular over the next 12 months, as the country prepares for elections and a gradual transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Government. I call upon all stakeholders to work together closely in that regard. In Mali, I call upon the authorities and ECOWAS, with the support of MINUSMA and the African Union, to engage all political stakeholders in inclusive consultations on transition arrangements, which should speedily restore constitutional order and build on the recommendations of the national inclusive dialogue and the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali to advance the long-awaited reforms demanded by the Malian people.

69. It is imperative that the United Nations and the African Union continue to strengthen collaboration in conflict prevention, while streamlining and refocusing our efforts on areas where that collaboration can deliver a significant and positive impact. I look forward to further strengthening our respective early warning mechanisms and ensuring preventive, timely and effective action. I also encourage greater collaboration, consultation and coordinated action between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council in preventing conflict.

70. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges to our joint efforts to address peace and security issues in Africa. Its impact will be felt on the economy, social interactions and political processes across the globe for some time and it has demonstrated the need for effective international cooperation. I commend the African Union, African Member States and the regional economic communities for the spirit of solidarity and collaboration in which they have confronted this unprecedented global pandemic. It will also be essential to sustain African Union-led efforts to silence the guns and address violent extremism; in this regard, I welcome African support for my appeal for a global ceasefire.

71. The United Nations system, in line with the policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 in Africa, will continue to work closely with African Member States in dealing with its immediate and long-term impact, including to ensure that it does not undermine peace and security on the continent.

72. I pay tribute to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, for his continued leadership, unwavering support and commitment to the partnership with the United Nations. I also express my appreciation to the organs of the African Union, African Member States and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms for their cooperation in addressing challenges to peace and security in Africa. Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative to the African Union, Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, as well as the staff of UNOAU and all United Nations and African Union entities working to advance the cause of peace and security in Africa.
