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Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2636 \(2022\)](#), by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) until 3 June 2023 and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on its implementation. The report covers developments in the Sudan from 21 November 2022 to 18 February 2023 and contains an update on the implementation of the Mission's mandate, with gender considerations integrated throughout as a cross-cutting issue.

II. Significant developments

A. Political situation

2. Positive developments were observed in the political situation in the Sudan, after more than a year of stalemate resulting from the military coup of 25 October 2021. On 5 December, the military leadership and over 40 political parties, signatory armed movements of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan, trade unions and professional associations signed a political framework agreement in Khartoum. The framework agreement reflects some of the understandings reached bilaterally between the military and the coalition formed by the signatories of the draft constitution developed by the Sudanese Bar Association. The framework agreement stipulates a two-year transition period under "a full democratic civilian authority", starting from the appointment of a civilian Prime Minister. It outlines the general principles of a political settlement, establishes transition period tasks and institutions and proposes the formation of fully civilian institutions, representing a departure from the previous constitutional arrangements based on a civilian-military partnership. It affirms women's rights according to international charters and commits to a minimum of 40 per cent representation of women in the legislative, executive and sovereign bodies at the national level. It further proposes the establishment of a defence and security council, chaired by the Prime Minister and composed of "relevant ministries, the commanders of the regular forces, and six [representatives] from armed movement signatories" of the Juba Peace Agreement.



3. In the framework agreement, five issues requiring further discussion and elaboration were identified: (a) justice and transitional justice; (b) security and military reform; (c) the Juba Peace Agreement and the completion of peace; (d) the dismantling of the 30 June regime; and (e) resolving the crisis in the east of the country. The signatory parties stated their intention to further develop the framework agreement with broad public consultations on these issues; their outcomes are expected to feed into a final agreement to be negotiated between the parties.

4. The framework agreement was broadly welcomed by national, regional and international actors. Nevertheless, some important political forces remained outside the framework agreement, including members of the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC)-Democratic Bloc, such as Minni Minawi, the Governor of the Darfur Region and leader of the Sudan Liberation Army - Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) faction, as well as Gibril Ibrahim, the Minister of Finance and leader of the Justice and Equality Movement. Both are signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement. Also absent were the Communist Party, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and the Beja High Council, among others.

5. Building on the progress achieved with the signing of the framework agreement, the signatory parties, with facilitation from the trilateral mechanism consisting of the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), launched the final phase of the political process in Khartoum on 8 January. Both the Chairperson of the Sovereign Council and Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Sovereign Council and head of the Rapid Support Forces, Lieutenant General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, delivered speeches reiterating the military's commitment to withdraw from politics and work with other stakeholders to reach a political solution. They also referred to the need for the State to acknowledge its past crimes. Members of the international community showed strong support for the process, as expressed in statements delivered on behalf of the Arab Group, the European Union, the Troika (Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) and the Quad (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States).

6. The first public consultations to address outstanding issues outlined in the framework agreement, the Conference on the Road Map for the Revitalization of the Dismantling of the 30 June Regime, was held from 9 to 12 January in Khartoum. The conference brought together 330 individuals from signatory parties, civil society, resistance committees and women's groups, as well as legal experts, academics and youth; 26 per cent of participants were women. They discussed the work of the Committee to Dismantle the 30 June 1989 Regime and Retrieve Public Funds (Dismantling Committee) and the challenges that it had faced, as well as best practices and lessons learned from comparable contexts. They also concurred on the need to provide the next Dismantling Committee with adequate financial, technical and human resources to conduct its work with independence and transparency, while ensuring respect for the rule of law. From 31 January to 3 February, the trilateral mechanism convened a conference on the theme "The Juba Peace Agreement and completing peace" to discuss ways to better implement the Juba Peace Agreement, safeguard its gains – including regarding women's rights – and revitalize the peace process. More than 700 participants attended, including internally displaced persons, nomads, herders, youth, resistance committees, women's groups, political parties and some of the armed movement signatories; about 35 per cent of attendees were women. Logistical difficulties and opposition from some women's groups and activists to the political process prevented a higher degree of women's participation. From 12 to 15 February, the trilateral mechanism convened the third conference on the theme "The road map for political and security stability and sustainable development in

Eastern Sudan”, bringing together more than 440 participants from various tribal, social and political components in the east; 25 per cent of whom were women. The participants discussed the challenges of political participation, representation, peace and development in the east and produced recommendations on a way forward. The wide and diverse range of participants, beyond the signatories of the framework agreement, demonstrated a strong public interest in the process and the issues being addressed.

7. Resistance committees continued to organize protests, mainly in Khartoum, to denounce and call for an end to the military coup. While the protests remained mostly peaceful, in numerous cases security forces responded with excessive and disproportionate use of force. Live ammunition, stun grenades, teargas cannisters and, in some instances, teargas launchers filled with nails and stones were used against mostly peaceful protesters. The use of force resulted in the death of five protesters, including a 17-year-old boy and a 15-year-old boy, and the injury of at least 939 people.

8. During the reporting period, there was increased engagement from regional States. On 2 January, the Head of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate, Major General Abbas Kamel, met with Lieutenant General Al-Burhan and some political actors in Khartoum. He invited parties to Cairo from 2 to 7 February for discussions on the theme “The prospect of a democratic transition towards a Sudan that includes all”. On 18 January, FFC-Central Council issued a statement indicating that it had declined the invitation, maintaining that the workshop would provide a platform for counter-revolutionary forces to undermine the ongoing political process, and adding that the framework agreement laid a good foundation for a Sudanese-led and -owned political process. Members of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front also declined to participate. In contrast, leaders of FFC-Democratic Bloc attended the workshop. Upon the conclusion of the Cairo workshop on 7 February, the participants announced the formation of a new political body called “Coordination of National Democratic Forces” and issued a political consensus document and a “National document governing the transitional period”, proposing 15 amendments to the 2019 Constitutional Document.

9. During an official visit to Khartoum on 26 January, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, held meetings with Sudanese officials, including Lieutenant General Al-Burhan and Lieutenant General Dagalo, armed movements and major political stakeholders, including FFC-Central Council, FFC-Democratic Bloc and resistance committees. The Prime Minister also met with representatives of the trilateral mechanism and affirmed the full support of Ethiopia for the political process and the framework agreement. In a press statement, the Prime Minister said that his visit was aimed at showing solidarity with the Sudan at this important stage in its political process. On the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, he stressed that the dam would not harm the Sudan, but would benefit the country’s electricity supply. In a statement, Lieutenant General Al-Burhan echoed the Prime Minister and noted that the Sudan and Ethiopia were “in agreement on all issues of the Renaissance Dam”.

10. There was limited progress in the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement in the absence of a solution to the political crisis. From 12 to 19 February, South Sudan organized a workshop in Juba aimed at evaluating and revitalizing the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement. The signing of an updated implementation matrix took place under the auspices of the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, in a ceremony attended by Lieutenant General Burhan and Juba Peace Agreement signatories, as well as representatives of UNITAMS, IGAD, Chad and the United Arab Emirates as guarantors and Qatar and Egypt as witnesses.

11. As the trilateral mechanism-facilitated political process unfolded in Khartoum, efforts to mitigate intercommunal tensions continued in other states. In Blue Nile State, on 15 January, the Funj and Hausa communities signed a framework agreement for peaceful coexistence at a ceremony in El Damazin attended by Lieutenant General Al-Burhan and Sovereign Council member Malik Agar, who leads the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar faction. The community leaders agreed to refrain from violence and to peacefully resolve intercommunal disputes. The following day, Lieutenant General Al-Burhan visited the Ulu area of Baw locality, which is the stronghold of the SPLM-N Malik Agar faction. He addressed a large gathering of supporters and combatants of the armed movement, pledging to complete the security arrangements of the Juba Peace Agreement and facilitate the return of displaced persons.

12. Political fragmentation persisted in the eastern part of the Sudan. Despite some local efforts by tribal and religious leaders to promote unity within the Beja High Council, the Council remained divided, and tensions continued to heighten among community and political leaders who hold divergent views on the national political process and eastern issues. On 18 December, a group of Beja announced the formation of a military force to defend the rights of the people of Eastern Sudan. Reportedly, the group stressed that it would not participate in any political process that did not entail the implementation of the decisions of the conference held in September 2020 in Sinkat, which rejected the Eastern track of the Juba Peace Agreement. On 1 January, Nazir Tirik, the head of the Beja High Council, threatened to declare war if the Government refused to launch talks on the self-determination of Eastern Sudan. Other Beja Congress parties expressed support for dialogue.

13. Meanwhile, the peace process with the SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction remained stalled pending restoration of a civilian government and a return to constitutional order. Nevertheless, in a positive development, Abdelaziz al-Hilu issued a statement on 24 December expressing his readiness to resume talks for a just and comprehensive peace once requirements were met to form a credible civilian government.

B. Security situation

14. While the overall number of security incidents decreased, intercommunal clashes, armed conflict and criminality continued to pose serious security challenges. From 21 November to 18 February, 623 security incidents were recorded, compared with 524 during the previous reporting period. Intercommunal clashes reportedly left 111 people dead, including seven women and one child, and 100 people were reportedly injured, including three women and three children, compared with over 300 people killed in 18 incidents during the previous reporting period.

15. Intercommunal clashes took place in Blue Nile, West Kordofan, South Kordofan, Central Darfur, North Darfur and South Darfur States. In Blue Nile, intercommunal tensions and security incidents persisted in Wad al-Mahi locality, leading to the extension of the state of emergency on 21 December, and again on 21 January, for 30 days. Clashes between Hausa and Hamaj tribes in Village 6 were reported on 5 December. On 28 December, a group of Hausa opened fire on a group of young men from the Gumuz, Jabalaween and Berta communities, east of Village 7 in Geisan locality, killing one and wounding another. On 13 January, a group mainly from the Jabalaween, Gumuz, Berta and Hamaj communities clashed with a group of Sudanese Armed Forces personnel after tensions arose during the visit of a Sudanese Armed Forces commander to Village 6 in Wad al-Mahi locality. As a result, three people were reportedly killed and at least 11 others injured. The ongoing tensions in Blue Nile also resulted in the disruption of United Nations activities on 10 December,

when a group of suspected Hamaj and Berta tribesmen stopped two United Nations vehicles in an area south of El Damazin and denied them access to Villages 6 and 7 in Wad al-Mahi locality.

16. Issues related to access to resources and grazing of livestock continued to trigger intercommunal clashes. In West Kordofan, clashes took place on 21 November and 2 December, respectively, in Nuhud locality between the Hamar and Bani Fadul communities over access to a waterpoint, and between the Hamar and Shanabla communities over the rustling of livestock. Tensions also continued between the Hamar and Misseriya communities owing to divergent views about the border demarcation between the two tribes. On 10 December, members of the Hamar community tracing stolen animals came under attack by members of the Misseriya community in Sunut locality, which left at least 24 people dead. On 24 December, a committee formed by the Government to investigate the violent incidents in Lagawa in October 2022 arrived in Kadugli and engaged with internally displaced persons and other stakeholders in South Kordofan and West Kordofan States.

17. In Darfur, two major incidents occurred in December. The first took place between the Dajo and Arab Rizeigat communities in Bileil locality, South Darfur, on 22 and 23 December. The violence, reportedly caused by an attempted robbery, resulted in the killing of 12 persons, the injury of 30 and the destruction of livelihoods in predominately Dajo villages. According to the Government's Humanitarian Aid Commission in South Darfur, an estimated 16,200 people were displaced. On 24 December, South Darfur authorities declared a state of emergency in the locality and reportedly dispatched numerous vehicles of the joint security forces, composed of the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Police Force, to de-escalate tensions. The Executive Director of Bileil locality was dismissed on 25 December and replaced with a new official. On 28 December, the South Darfur Governor set up a committee to investigate the incident. During the second incident, on 28 and 29 December, members of the Arab Rizeigat and Fur communities clashed in the Hamadiya camp for internally displaced persons, Central Darfur, which left nine people dead and 13 injured.

18. From 29 December to 5 January, Lieutenant General Dagalo and the leader of the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC), El Hadi Idris, visited affected communities. The officials pledged to hold perpetrators accountable and sponsored a cessation of hostilities agreement between the Dajo and Rizeigat tribes. Lieutenant General Dagalo also announced that several Rapid Support Forces soldiers had been arrested for their failure to prevent the escalation of intercommunal violence in Central and South Darfur. On 1 January, 11 armed men, reportedly Rapid Support Forces personnel, were arrested for their alleged involvement in the fighting in Bileil. An estimated 15 Rapid Support Forces soldiers then appeared in a video on social media being tried by a special military court formed by the Rapid Support Forces in connection to the violence in Bileil. Also in Central and South Darfur, following reports of gatherings of Arab militias allegedly mobilizing to support armed groups in the Central African Republic in December, Lieutenant General Dagalo declared the closure of the border on 3 January and announced an increase in the presence of border guards.

19. The situation remained tense in North Darfur. In the town of Kabkabiyah, authorities imposed a curfew on 4 December following heightened tensions between members of the Arab Ereigat tribe and internally displaced Fur tribesmen. This followed an attack on a family of Fur internally displaced persons that killed two people on 2 December, which triggered protests condemning the killings and perceived inaction by state authorities. Tensions also rose on 8 January when Arab tribesmen mobilized in Um Dakum locality in response to a perceived attempt by displaced Zaghawa communities to return to Sereif locality with support from some

Juba Peace Agreement signatories. Following interventions by security forces and local authorities, the situation was defused but underlying tensions around access to land and resources remained.

20. Armed clashes involving the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) faction continued to unfold in Darfur. On 23 December, government forces clashed with suspected SLA/AW elements in the Dongola area in North Jebel Marra locality, Central Darfur, owing to attempted cattle rustling, reportedly resulting in the death of three SLA/AW elements.

21. Meanwhile, the deployment of the Joint Security-Keeping Force continued to be delayed. Nevertheless, as part of its commitment to address protection challenges in Darfur, the Government provided 162 military vehicles, including ambulances, to the Force on 2 January to facilitate its deployment.

22. On 27 January, a peacebuilding adviser working for Addition for Disasters Assistance and Development, the national implementing partner of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was killed while in a vehicle travelling from El Damazin to Demsaad village in Geisan locality, Blue Nile, to conduct a peacebuilding training activity for a project funded by the Peacebuilding Fund. The vehicle came under fire from unknown armed men after the driver took a wrong turn. Another person was injured in the attack.

C. Human rights, rule of law and protection situation

23. The human rights situation in the Sudan remained concerning. During the reporting period, UNITAMS documented a total of 72 alleged incidents of human rights violations and abuses involving 316 victims, including 264 men, 31 women and 21 children (12 girls and 9 boys). Of the 72 documented incidents, 58 were verified. Violations of the right to life accounted for 135 victims (122 men, 9 women and 4 boys); violations of physical integrity accounted for 141 victims (123 men, 9 women and 9 children (5 boys and 4 girls)); sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, accounted for 17 victims (9 women and 8 girls); physical assault accounted for 14 victims (10 men and 4 women); there was one case of torture and one case of enforced disappearance (both men). Of the 72 verified incidents, 15 were reportedly attributed to government security forces, affecting 66 victims, and 52 reportedly to non-State armed groups, including armed movements and militia groups, affecting 236 victims. Unknown or unidentified individuals were responsible for 5 incidents affecting 14 victims.

24. Since the military coup of 25 October 2021, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office has documented the killing of 123 people in the context of protests, including one woman and 22 children, of whom two were girls. Of these, 97 people, including one woman and one girl, were reportedly killed by live ammunition. More than 9,096 people have reportedly been injured. Furthermore, the security forces continued to arbitrarily arrest protesters, some of whom reported ill-treatment during arrest or interrogation.

25. Although there was no progress on justice reform, legal proceedings against political opponents in detention were suspended prior to the signing of the framework agreement on 5 December. Wagdi Saleh, a lawyer and spokesperson of the former Dismantling Committee, and Abdalla Suliman, a former police officer who had helped in the implementation of the decisions of the Dismantling Committee, were released on 4 December. On 2 January, the Supreme Court suspended its enforcement order issued on 27 December in favour of the dismantled “Bashir-era” Sudanese Bar Association, against the steering committee of the Bar Association, pending a final

decision. On 5 January, the accounts of the Sudanese Bar Association were unfrozen, enabling the steering committee to resume its work.

26. In keeping with commitments made by Sudanese authorities during the visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Sudan in November 2022, the authorities released in December 113 detainees from Darfur who had been held in Khartoum (Al Huda), El Fasher (Shala) and El Geneina (Ardamata) prisons for several months without trial, on the basis of emergency legislation. On 26 January, 64 detainees were also released from Ardamata prison in El Geneina, West Darfur. On 27 and 29 January, the Government released 94 of the 95 detainees from West Darfur held in the Port Sudan prison and transported them to El Geneina.

27. From 28 January to 3 February, the designated expert on human rights in the Sudan of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Radhouane Nouicer, visited the Sudan for consultations and engagement on human rights and the protection of civilians with national authorities, civil society, victims of human rights violations and their families, UNITAMS, the United Nations country team, and international and regional stakeholders. He advocated for accountability for violations committed since 25 October 2021.

28. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office continued to receive reports of sexual violence against women from camps for internally displaced persons who engage in livelihood activities outside the camps. UNITAMS documented six conflict-related sexual violence incidents affecting four women, including two girls, in Central and South Darfur. Reportedly, in one incident, the perpetrators were identified as armed Arab tribesmen and, in another, as four armed men in Rapid Support Forces uniforms. The low number of reported incidents may not accurately represent the totality of sexual violence in Darfur, as victims are often reluctant to report incidents owing to shame, stigma, lack of accountability and fear of retaliation.

29. During the reporting period, a total of 13 grave violations against 13 children (11 boys and 2 girls) were verified by the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict. Eleven children were maimed and two were killed by unidentified perpetrators in Darfur. In a positive development, on 9 January in Khartoum, the national technical committee for the implementation of the road map based on the 2016 action plan on ending and preventing child recruitment and use held a coordination meeting to plan for the official release and family reunification of 38 children (29 boys and 9 girls) from various armed groups and government security forces in North Darfur.

D. Socioeconomic situation

30. The political stalemate continued to negatively affect the economy. The economy of the Sudan is estimated to have contracted by 0.3 per cent in 2022 owing to low economic activity, civil unrest, suspended international assistance and high import prices. A return to positive real gross domestic product growth, currently forecast at 2.6 per cent in 2023, will be heavily influenced by the course of the political transition.

31. The economic downturn continued to take a toll on service provision throughout the country. During the reporting period, there was an intensification of widespread strikes by workers and trade unions in several sectors (including health care, education, electricity, media and the civil service) to protest declining real wages and the lack of implementation of a promised salary increase in 2022.

32. The impact of high food prices on food security remained a concern. Despite the start of the harvest season in October, prices of key staples remained high. The

prices of locally grown sorghum increased by 146 per cent between January and December 2022, while the cost of the local food basket monitored by the World Food Programme increased by about 75 per cent during the same period.

33. Despite remaining extremely high, inflation has been on a downward trajectory, averaging 164 per cent in 2022 compared with 359 per cent in 2021. In December, inflation reached a low of 87.3 per cent. Economic contraction, a more restrictive monetary policy and a lower-than-expected fiscal deficit played key roles. However, a chronic shortage of foreign exchange reserves, alongside a worsening trade deficit, is expected to continue to pose risks for further downward pressure on the exchange rate and an increase in the cost of imports.

34. Public revenues and expenditures have fallen short of budgeted amounts, with expenditures declining at a higher rate. While this led to a reduced budget deficit, the Government prioritized basic recurrent commitments, with development expenditures essentially eliminated and amounting to 3 per cent of the total expenditure.

E. Humanitarian situation

35. Humanitarian needs across the Sudan reached record levels, with 15.8 million people – about a third of the total population – requiring humanitarian assistance in 2023, according to *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023: Sudan*, which was finalized in November 2022. There are 1.5 million more people in need of humanitarian assistance than in 2022 – the highest number since 2011. An estimated 11.7 million people in the Sudan will need food and livelihood assistance in 2023. Humanitarian organizations aim to reach 8.2 million of the most vulnerable and food-insecure people with food and livelihood assistance. Decreasing financing is hampering the current humanitarian response, which is not meeting growing humanitarian needs.

36. Incidents of localized conflict between communities, mainly over access to and control of resources, intertwined with the deterioration of security and safety conditions and increased criminality, continued to have a negative impact on civilians in parts of the Sudan. Over 12,278 people were displaced in December, including 9,800 in South Darfur, 1,661 in South Kordofan and 817 in West Kordofan States, and a further 3,130 in January, mainly in South Darfur. In 2022, about 310,328 people were displaced, 991 people were reported killed and another 1,173 injured as a result of localized conflict and violence (418,499 people were displaced in total, including as a result of other causes). The majority of those displaced in 2022 followed the fighting that started in July 2022 in Blue Nile (127,961 people), while 46,849 people were displaced in South Darfur and 38,348 in West Kordofan. Overall, 370 security incidents related to localized conflict and armed attacks were reported across the country in 2022, including 36 incidents in December.

37. The Sudan continued to host a refugee population of 1.1 million, which includes refugees and asylum-seekers from South Sudan, Eritrea, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, Chad and Yemen. The conflict in the greater Upper Nile region of South Sudan has caused an increased influx of South Sudanese refugees into White Nile and South Kordofan States since December and resulted in the arrival of approximately 7,700 individuals by mid-January.

III. Role of the United Nations in the Sudan and implementation of resolution 2636 (2022)

A. Objective 1: assist in the political transition, progress towards democratic governance, the protection and promotion of human rights and sustainable peace

38. UNITAMS continued its efforts to support and facilitate the political process in accordance with its mandate and the principle of Sudanese ownership and leadership of the process. The partnership within the framework of the United Nations-African Union-IGAD trilateral mechanism remained at the core of this support. The trilateral mechanism worked closely with the parties throughout the negotiations leading up to the signing of the framework agreement on 5 December and played an instrumental facilitation and coordination role in consultations following its signature. The trilateral mechanism also continued to encourage parties who have not yet signed the framework agreement to join the process. Efforts to foster inclusivity also included the promotion of broad-based participation in workshops and other activities outside the process, such as citizen participation to feed into the public consultations.

39. The trilateral mechanism facilitated the launch of the final phase of the political process by the signatories of the framework agreement on 8 January and supported the signatories in the organization of the first workshop on the dismantling of the 30 June regime from 9 to 12 January. From 31 January to 3 February, the trilateral mechanism convened a conference on the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement. While the representation of women fell short of the 40 per cent target, robust efforts were made to encourage stronger participation in future conferences and to prioritize gender concerns and women's objectives in the agenda.

40. In addition to its facilitation and convening role, the trilateral mechanism assisted the process through the provision of technical expertise, logistical support, coordination and experience-sharing, as requested by the parties. To promote the inclusion of voices from remote locations, the trilateral mechanism facilitated travel arrangements for 344 participants from outside Khartoum to the conference on the Juba Peace Agreement, including internally displaced persons, women, youth, civil society and traditional leaders. In addition, the trilateral mechanism worked closely with regional and international partners to ensure the coherence and coordination of international technical assistance. It performed those roles as part of the joint coordination committee, composed of military and civilian signatories of the framework agreement and principals of the trilateral mechanism, and the joint secretariat, which includes Sudanese and trilateral mechanism staff.

41. In tandem with facilitation efforts, UNITAMS advocated for the promotion and maintenance of a conducive environment for the political process. The Mission encouraged confidence-building among signatory parties and the wider public to maintain the positive momentum generated by the signing of the framework agreement. This included continued follow-up on the release of detainees, advocacy to promote freedom of expression, assembly and peaceful protest, as well as a media strategy to counter misinformation and foster transparency and public participation. The Mission created social media pages for the final phase of the political process, on which the launch of the process and the plenary sessions of the first and second conferences were streamed live to enhance transparency.

42. UNITAMS continued to facilitate regular consultations with women from political parties, armed movements and women's groups from across the country to hear their views on and expectations of the political process and support efforts to strengthen their meaningful participation. On 22 November, the Mission launched an

initiative of state-level consultations on women's priorities for the transition, which will contribute to building a national women's agenda. The consultations began in Khartoum and will be held in each state, with 80 women from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, consultations took place between women from the Eastern region and the trilateral mechanism on 23 November, during which women shared their priorities and proposals on a sustainable agreement. Strategy sessions were also organized with women from political parties and the Women's Rights Group to discuss gender provisions in the draft framework agreement in the lead-up to its finalization.

B. Objective 2: support peace processes and the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement and future peace agreements

43. While talks between the Government and non-signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement remained stalled, UNITAMS continued to engage with the non-signatories to encourage their participation. On 1 December, the trilateral mechanism met with the leaders of the SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction and SLA/AW in Juba, South Sudan, to discuss the political and peace processes. The trilateral mechanism also met with the Security Adviser to the President of South Sudan and the mediation team to discuss the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement and peacemaking efforts with the non-signatories. From 5 to 8 December, in Juba, UNITAMS facilitated a workshop on gender and Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security for 50 women from areas of the Sudan controlled by the SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction, with UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The same workshop was also provided to 40 women of the SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction based in Khartoum. In addition, a UNITAMS delegation visited Kauda, South Kordofan, from 13 to 15 December to exchange views with the Governor, local officials, youth, women and civil society members on political developments, human rights needs, women's participation and UNITAMS engagement in the territory controlled by the SPLMN-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction.

44. The Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee, chaired by UNITAMS, continued to play a pivotal role in efforts to implement transitional security arrangements in Darfur. The Committee actively monitored the security situation in all five states of Darfur, maintained its preventive monitoring activities and closely engaged with the signatory parties, state security committees and other stakeholders to defuse potential tensions that could lead to ceasefire violations through dialogue and mediation. It also continued to undertake outreach to different stakeholders and communities to raise awareness about its role and mandate, which is crucial to facilitate its smooth functioning.

45. Efforts to strengthen the operationalization of the Committee continued in all Darfur states, with the deployment of the first field teams to locations in the five states and the establishment of the Mission's offices in all sectors. New personnel received orientation training aimed at familiarizing them with the mandate and structure of the Committee, approved standard operating procedures and the operating environment and were deployed to their duty stations in El Fasher, Nyala, Ed Daein, Zalingei and El Geneina. As such, the Committee is now fully operationalized in the five Darfur states, which will significantly enhance its operational capacities, particularly in terms of conducting investigations and preventive monitoring. A project is under way to complete the establishment of sectoral committees and other facilities, and provide transportation and other logistical arrangements for operational activities.

C. Objective 3: assist in peacebuilding, civilian protection and the rule of law, in particular in Darfur and the Two Areas

46. The United Nations continued efforts to identify ways to support the Government in accelerating implementation of its National Plan for the Protection of Civilians. In this regard, UNITAMS and the United Nations country team held three consultative meetings with the secretariat of the National Mechanism for the Protection of Civilians regarding a planned joint workshop to accelerate the implementation of the Plan.

47. UNITAMS continued to assess threats against civilians through monitoring and enhanced documentation of conflict-related human rights and protection of civilian incidents and to engage with the Government, civil society, local communities and women protection networks to strengthen their capacities on these issues. The United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict continued to strengthen its engagement with signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement by providing technical assistance to the Government in support of the road map based on the 2016 action plan on ending and preventing child recruitment and use. On 17 and 18 December, UNITAMS trained 40 members of civil society organizations, including 16 women, on human rights and protection standards in El Fula, West Kordofan. From 18 to 27 December, the Mission and the United Nations country team, in collaboration with the Joint High Military Committee for Security Arrangements, provided training to 1,500 members of the Joint Security-Keeping Force in El Fasher, North Darfur, on compliance with human rights and humanitarian law principles. From 28 to 29 December, UNITAMS facilitated a training session on human rights and mediation for 30 members of the Nuba community in East Sudan, half of them women.

48. Over the reporting period, the implementation of peacebuilding programmes continued. In North Darfur, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided conflict analysis and resolution training to parent-teacher associations, water user committees and community child protection networks. UNICEF also supported a civil society platform, the Blue Nile youth mechanism, to conduct dialogues with groups of diverse youth throughout the state, culminating in the holding of the Youth Forum for Peace in El Damazin in December, which brought together almost 400 young people from across the region. In November, UNICEF and UNDP commenced a three-year joint project focused on strengthening capacities for peace and social cohesion in Kassala and Red Sea States.

49. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) provided technical support to the State Ministry of Urban Planning and Infrastructure in West Darfur on the mapping of available land in El Geneina and surrounding villages. The mapping was aimed at identifying areas for potential return, relocation or reintegration. A series of training sessions on spatial planning and mapping techniques was provided to 25 technical staff of the Ministry, including 10 women. In addition, UN-Habitat supported two rounds of training targeting 50 young men and women from camps for internally displaced persons, host communities, nomads and other communities on environmentally friendly and affordable building materials and construction techniques.

50. During the reporting period, UNITAMS concluded six comprehensive peacebuilding assessments in North Darfur, South Darfur, South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Kassala and Red Sea States to provide an evidence base for peacebuilding interventions and conflict-sensitive programming. The outcomes of these assessments will inform the finalization of the interim United Nations Sustainable Development

Cooperation Framework and fund allocation from the United Nations multi-partner trust fund and the Peacebuilding Fund to ensure complementarity and coordination in programming with increased impact and efficiency.

51. In November and December, UNITAMS facilitated six dialogue sessions on intercommunal coexistence in West Darfur State with local authorities, farm protection committees, native administration, peace and reconciliation committees and civil society groups. From 13 to 15 December, the Mission conducted a workshop on combating hate speech and promoting conflict prevention and resolution skills in Port Sudan. Thirty participants, including 13 women, from throughout Red Sea State participated. Workshops on similar topics are planned for Kassala and Gedaref.

52. UNITAMS continued to foster discussion among civil society and lawyers on issues of justice and accountability. On 22 December, the Mission and UNDP, in collaboration with the Sudanese Bar Association, organized a workshop on strategic litigation for lawyers in Kadugli to strengthen their capacity to defend persons who may have been wrongfully detained. Participants agreed to form legal teams in South Kordofan State to provide legal support for cases of human rights violations. On 27 December, in collaboration with the University of Ed Daein, in East Darfur, UNITAMS organized a round-table discussion on justice, accountability and reconciliation in the Juba Peace Agreement.

53. The UNITAMS Police Advisory Unit organized several capacity-building activities for Sudanese counterparts and communities on protection of civilians, community policing, response to sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, investigation and accountability. It provided capacity-building training sessions for 450 police recruits at the Mara Training Camp in Zalingei, Central Darfur, from 3 to 5 January, and 254 police recruits at the Challa Training Centre in El Fasher, North Darfur, from 11 to 17 January. In partnership with UNDP and the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Police Advisory Unit organized two training of trainers sessions for 36 police officers in Khartoum on protection of civilians and response to sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence. The Unit also organized a training session for 50 police officers aimed at enhancing capacity to effectively respond to transnational and organized crime. Overall, the Unit helped to build the capacity of 858 police officers (85 women and 773 men), 1,500 members of the Joint Security-Keeping Force and 113 community members (88 women and 25 men).

54. From 4 to 12 December, UNITAMS, UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights supported a visit of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to enhance coordination among justice actors and bring together practitioners around the topic of conflict-related sexual violence. The visit included the revival of the North Darfur Criminal Justice Forum, which had not been active since the withdrawal of UNAMID in 2021. Awareness-raising sessions on access to justice were organized for internally displaced persons in El Fasher and El Geneina. The Team of Experts also provided training to the Sudanese Bar Association and the Women Judges Forum on investigation, prosecution and adjudication of conflict-related sexual violence crimes.

55. In relation to the issue of overcrowding in Khartoum and Omdurman morgues, on 21 November, UNITAMS facilitated a meeting between representatives of missing persons and an international forensic team to discuss future collaboration with regard to the identification and burial of 3,000 unidentified bodies in the morgues, some of which are believed to be the remains of persons who disappeared following the violent dispersal of a sit-in protest on 3 June 2019. The representatives of families of disappeared persons urged the Attorney-General to send formal invitations to the

international forensic team to assess the conditions of the bodies and determine the required needs and resources to conduct the identification process.

56. UNITAMS cleared 162,689 m² of land contaminated with explosive ordnance in Blue Nile. In the process, it destroyed 435 items of explosive hazards, including seven anti-personnel mines, one anti-tank mine, 225 rounds of small arms ammunition and 172 pieces of unexploded ordnance. In addition, explosive ordnance risk education teams provided risk education and awareness to 57,771 people (17,628 boys, 20,237 girls, 9,005 men and 10,901 women).

D. Objective 4: support the mobilization of economic and development assistance and the coordination of humanitarian and peacebuilding assistance

57. The pause in international development assistance as a result of the military coup of 25 October 2021 continued. However, UNITAMS and the United Nations country team commenced work on coordinating with international partners a support package for a new transitional period and civilian-led government, once formed.

58. As the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the United Nations common approach will complete their cycle at the end of 2023, the United Nations has embarked on the formulation of a new interim cooperation framework for the period 2024–2026. Following the global United Nations guidelines for countries in exceptional circumstances, the United Nations is working to define key sustainable development, peacebuilding and resilience solutions in support of national development needs and priorities for the transitional period. This work is underpinned by a “light” update of the common country analysis, produced at the end of 2022, which analysed recent changes in the country context, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and multidimensional challenges and opportunities.

59. In December 2022, the United Nations and humanitarian partners launched the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Sudan. The Plan is aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to 12.5 million of the most vulnerable people in the country, at a cost of \$1.7 billion. Through the Plan, humanitarian assistance and support will be provided to the most vulnerable internally displaced persons, people who have recently returned to their places of origin, refugees and other affected communities.

60. From 4 to 8 December, UNITAMS facilitated a visit to the Sudan by a delegation of Peacebuilding Fund donors and the Fund’s senior management. The delegation visited four ongoing projects in West Darfur aimed at, among other priorities, providing mental health support and enhanced access to civic space for conflict-affected youth. On 8 December, the Peacebuilding Fund approved two new projects through its gender and youth promotion initiative, which will provide \$3.5 million to two non-governmental organizations to support the empowerment of women-led and youth-led civil society organizations in the Red Sea, South Kordofan, West Kordofan and Blue Nile States.

E. Mission operational and planning issues

61. The Mission’s operations were affected by extensive delays in the timely receipt of visas for new staff and the issuance of travel waivers. While 41 visas were finally received on 22 November (some after a four-month delay), only three visas have been approved since then, and only for deployed police. All requests for civilian staff and members of the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee remain pending (a total of 19). These delays have resulted in continued vacancies across the Mission and

affected its ability to expand its field presence. In November, the Government also unilaterally halted the issuance of travel waivers for UNITAMS staff, which further slowed internal deployments and impeded Mission travel outside Khartoum. A compromise was reached only in January. Similar concerns about visa delays and travel permissions have also affected the wider United Nations presence in the Sudan.

62. As at 18 February, Mission staffing stood at 248 civilian staff, 32 police personnel and 25 military observers. Consistent with the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, over half of senior civilian appointments (at the D-1 level and higher) were held by women.

IV. Observations

63. The signing of the framework agreement on 5 December renewed hope for the resumption of a civilian-led transition. It provides a way out of the current impasse and lays the groundwork for a final inclusive political settlement. Such an accord, resulting in the formation of a new credible civilian government, would set the Sudan towards a path of a democratic transition that meets the aspirations of its people, including the holding of elections. I commend the civilian and military signatories of the framework agreement on the progress that they have made so far, and I am encouraged by their commitment to reach a final settlement that will restore the constitutional transition. I urge non-signatories to put the interests of the Sudanese people first by joining the political process and engaging in meaningful talks to resolve remaining differences.

64. To be sustainable, the political process and ensuing final settlement agreement need to be inclusive and enjoy broad public support. Addressing the most contentious issues at the core of the current crisis, including security sector reform, transitional justice and the full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, requires the participation of affected communities. In that regard, I am encouraged by the wide and diverse range of participants in the final phase conferences, representing non-signatory parties, including civil society, women's groups, youth, resistance committees and experts. I commend the civilian and military signatories for their efforts to broaden inclusivity and increase participation in the political process.

65. The meaningful participation of women is critical to the success of the political process and the transition. Unfortunately, women have so far remained underrepresented. I urge the signatory parties to uphold their commitment to ensure that women make up 40 per cent of their delegations, in accordance with the framework agreement, including in leadership positions, as well as in future transitional institutions. The United Nations remains committed to supporting these ends and to advancing gender equality and the equal participation of women in all spheres. I commend the Sudanese women for their steadfast commitment to peace and democracy, as well as their meaningful contributions to the final phase conferences.

66. From the onset of the political process, the United Nations has emphasized that only a Sudanese-led and -owned process could bring about a lasting solution to the political crisis. Nevertheless, international support is essential. The United Nations will continue to offer its facilitation to the participants, through the trilateral mechanism, in support of Sudanese efforts. To reinforce coherence, I urge the international partners of the Sudan to also provide strong and coordinated support, under the auspices of the trilateral mechanism. I encourage a development-centred approach that addresses the underlying drivers of fragility with coherence across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

67. For the political process to preserve momentum, it is imperative that the authorities create and maintain a conducive environment, including by halting the excessive use of force against protesters and upholding their responsibility to protect the right of peaceful assembly. In this regard, I welcome the release of hundreds of Darfuri detainees from prisons in Khartoum, El Fasher, El Geneina and Port Sudan. I urge the authorities to investigate effectively, impartially and in a timely manner any allegation of unlawful use of force or other alleged violations by members of the security forces.

68. While a political agreement will constitute a significant breakthrough and should usher in a new transitional period, the real work will begin only after such an agreement has been signed. The Sudan will need the international community to step up to accompany the transition. The United Nations has already started planning for that period and is mobilizing its partners to ensure readiness and a coordinated response to anticipated priorities of the transitional period. I call upon the donor community to be prepared to resume financial support once a functioning civilian government is in place.

69. The political crisis in Khartoum has impeded the prospects of attaining lasting peace across the country. The current progress in the political efforts seeking to reverse the setbacks following the coup of October 2021 presents an opportunity to strengthen implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement and encourage long-standing non-signatories to join. I am encouraged that the leader of the SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction has expressed readiness to resume peace talks once requirements are met to form a credible civilian government. It illustrates that the transition to a democratic, civilian rule and the attainment of a broader inclusive peace remain closely interrelated. I urge other non-signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement to also join the peace process.

70. I remain concerned about the impact of intercommunal clashes and conflict on civilians. Progress in the implementation of the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians and towards the full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, including its security arrangements, are urgent priorities for a new transitional government. I urge the authorities and signatory armed movements to expedite the deployment of the Joint Security-Keeping Force in Darfur to effectively protect civilians and ensure stability in the region. I welcome the progress made towards the full operationalization of the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee, which remains one of the few mechanisms established as part of the security arrangements envisioned in the Juba Peace Agreement. For the Committee to be able to fulfil its important role and continue to defuse tensions and promote dialogue, additional funding from the national authorities and their partners is required.

71. To ensure lasting peace in the Sudan, it will be essential to address the root causes of conflict. I welcome the Government's efforts to support reconciliation initiatives. However, deeper reforms are needed to prevent and peacefully and effectively address tensions before they turn violent. This includes durable solutions for internally displaced persons who continue to feel that it is unsafe to return to their places of origin. In this regard, I am encouraged by local peacebuilding initiatives across the country, such as the signing of a framework agreement for peaceful coexistence in Blue Nile state. I call upon all parties to actively promote its implementation and on the international community to support peacebuilding efforts. I also urge the authorities to establish all mechanisms of the Juba Peace Agreement, including those to resolve land disputes.

72. I am distressed by the killing of a peacebuilding adviser in Blue Nile State. This incident illustrates the fragility of the security situation, the need to foster peacebuilding, and the urgent need to protect aid workers.

73. Humanitarian needs have reached record levels and continue to grow exponentially. Some 15.8 million people currently need assistance, for which humanitarian organizations are seeking \$1.7 billion through the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan. I call upon donors to continue to provide generous support in order to reach the most vulnerable populations.

74. Regrettably, administrative impediments continue to hamper the Mission's ability to implement its mandate in support of the Sudanese people. I call upon the Government to abide by the status-of-mission agreement and urgently process the backlog of visas, act expeditiously on future requests and lift movement restrictions for United Nations personnel.

75. I thank my Special Representative, Volker Perthes, and all United Nations personnel in the Sudan, as well as our partners, in particular the African Union and IGAD, for their continued dedication and efforts in support of the country and its people. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the Sudanese people.
