



Security Council

Distr.: General
13 October 2023

Original: English

Situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 15 of Security Council resolution [2657 \(2022\)](#) and to resolution [2670 \(2022\)](#), provides updates on the implementation of those resolutions, including on the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), covering progress achieved against the benchmarks identified by the strategic review, and on the mandate of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). The report covers significant developments from 8 June to 5 October 2023. In addition, as requested by the Council in its resolution [2657 \(2022\)](#), the report provides an update on the implementation of the UNSOM strategic review.

II. Political, security and economic overview

A. Political developments

2. During the reporting period, the Federal Government of Somalia continued to work to advance its key national priorities and the State-building agenda through political dialogue. On 26 and 27 August, the President of the Federal Government, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, convened the National Consultative Council, which brings together the federal and state leaders, in Dhuusamarreeb, the capital of the Galmudug State. The meeting was attended by the presidents of all federal member states except Said Abdullahi Deni of Puntland. On 15 June, Puntland had issued a statement in which it reiterated its position that it would negotiate bilaterally with the Federal Government on unresolved issues and that it would not participate in the Council. The meeting of the Council convened in August and focused on the offensive against Al-Shabaab, stabilization efforts and reconciliation. In a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, the leaders outlined their decision to, among others, unify the military operations against Al-Shabaab under joint leadership and to accelerate preparations for the second phase of the offensive. They also directed all Federal Government and federal member state agencies to harmonize stabilization efforts and accelerate the implementation of the national plan for reconciliation.

3. On 18 June, the Federal Government of Somalia submitted the agreements reached in May 2023 by the National Consultative Council to the Federal Parliament for its consideration. On 7 July, the Speaker of the House of the People, Adan Mohamed



Nur “Adan Madobe”, appointed a five-member committee to review the electoral model proposed by the Council. On 15 July, the Federal Parliament tasked the joint oversight committee and the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission to develop proposals for the inclusion of the Council agreements in the constitutional review process.

4. In parallel, on 12 and 13 July in Mogadishu, President Mohamud led consultative meetings with former political leaders and politicians to discuss the agreements of the National Consultative Council taken during the convening in May 2023, which were also not attended by Puntland, concerning the system of government, electoral model and electoral timelines. Following the consultations, the Federal Government issued a press release in which it stated that consensus had been reached on the need to re-engage Puntland on the State-building discussions and to ensure that the transition from an indirect to a direct electoral model was consensus-based.

5. On 20 June in Puntland, clan militias aligned with political opposition groups clashed with Puntland security forces near the State Assembly building in Garoowe, as members of the Assembly discussed amendments to the Constitution of Puntland State. Intervention by various stakeholders, including traditional elders and civil society, was able to halt the confrontation. The State Assembly subsequently amended the state Constitution on 25 July to provide for, among others, the registration of nine political associations as political parties and the direct election of the state President and Vice-President. By 9 September, the State Assembly had endorsed the appointment of 12 members of the Puntland Electoral Commission, with two political parties refusing to nominate candidates. On 26 September, the formal transition from the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission to the Puntland Electoral Commission took place. To date, no agreement has been reached to complete the May 2023 Puntland district council elections in the three remaining districts in the Nugaal region.

6. On 8 August, the President of South-West State, Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed “Laftagareen”, opened the sixth session of the State Assembly, which had been in recess since December 2022. On 19 August, the State Assembly approved the May 2023 National Consultative Council agreement to hold the federal member state assembly and presidential elections in November 2024. Opposition actors reacted with concern, calling for elections in the state to be held in January 2024, in line with the provisions of the agreement reached in the South-West State reconciliation conference held in January and February 2023.

7. The President of Jubaland, Ahmed Mohamed Islam “Madobe”, continued to face strong opposition from some political leaders in Gedo region. Meanwhile, the Jubaland opposition, based in Nairobi and in Mogadishu, continued to reject the one-year extension to President Madobe’s term of office.

8. Efforts to advance dialogue between Somalia and “Somaliland” continued during the reporting period. The Federal Government’s special envoy for Somalia-“Somaliland” dialogue, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, held a series of consultative meetings with political and civil society stakeholders, including in Jubaland and South-West State.

9. Regrettably, violence continued with varying levels of intensity in Laascaanood, located in the disputed Sool region, with both the “Somaliland” administration and the Dhulbahante clan militia deploying military reinforcements. Fighting escalated on 25 August, resulting in “Somaliland” forces retreating to Oog and the Dhulbahante clan militia taking control of further territory. During the reporting period, UNSOM documented at least eight civilian casualties (four killed and four injured) in

Laascaanood town, six of whom were medical staff. On 8 July, Laascaanood hospital was also damaged as a result of shelling.

10. National and international mediation efforts continued. A delegation of clan elders that had travelled to Laascaanood and Hargeysa in May, with the support of the Federal Government of Somalia, to discuss a ceasefire returned to Mogadishu on 15 July for further consultations. On 27 August, Somalia's international partners condemned the escalation of the conflict in Laascaanood town and surrounding areas, calling for an immediate ceasefire, for an end to the mobilization and for all those involved to abide by human rights and international humanitarian law. The United Nations also continued engagements to encourage dialogue and a cessation of hostilities.

B. Security developments

11. Activities by Somali authorities to counter Al-Shabaab continued in central and southern Somalia throughout the reporting period. In August, Somali security forces launched an offensive to retake areas long held by Al-Shabaab in Galmudug.

12. During the reporting period, 605 security incidents were recorded, including 173 incidents of terrorism. Improvised explosive devices remain a prominent weapon for Al-Shabaab. A total of 255 improvised explosive device attacks were recorded, resulting in 692 casualties. Twenty-one vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices were used in 18 incidents across eight regions. Six person-borne improvised explosive devices were used in five incidents in Mogadishu, resulting in at least 100 casualties.

13. Indirect fire attacks continued, notably in Mogadishu, using 107 mm rockets. On 25 June, two rockets struck separate locations in the Aden Adde International Airport area without causing significant damage or casualties. The airport area was again targeted on 19 August. While eight rockets were fired, five affected the Aden Adde International Airport area, including one United Nations facility and a commercial compound hosting several United Nations entities. Two non-United Nations personnel were injured, and air traffic was suspended for several hours. In addition, the presidential palace, Villa Somalia, was targeted by indirect fire on 7 July, which resulted in several fatalities. On 1 October, five rockets were fired, with one detonating in proximity of the United Nations compound, causing several civilian casualties.

14. On 9 June, Al-Shabaab launched an attack against the Pearl Beach Hotel in Mogadishu, during which nine people were killed, including one United Nations staff.

C. Economic developments

15. Somalia continued to make progress under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative by meeting additional completion point triggers, including the satisfactory implementation of the poverty reduction strategy and the launch of the unified social registry. Somalia also reached debt relief agreements with additional creditors.

16. During the reporting period, federal institutions signed into law key pieces of legislation, including the national audit bill, important in advancing the State-building agenda and meeting the completion point triggers of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

17. Repeated and compounding shocks, including drought and flooding, continued to have an impact on economic activity, slowing growth and heightening inflationary

pressures. Food and fuel prices decreased slightly compared with the same period in 2022 but remained significantly above five-year averages.

18. In July, to reduce discretionary spending and prioritize security sector compensation and the hiring of teachers, the Federal Parliament approved a supplementary budget for 2023. In addition, the World Bank provided \$75 million in budget support to ease fiscal pressure and strengthen harmonized customs regimes across Somalia.

III. Update on activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team

A. Support to the political process

19. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to support Somalia in advancing its State-building, peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. Following the National Consultative Council meeting held in May 2023, the United Nations engaged with several federal institutions, including the Federal Parliament, that were seeking support for the public consultations for the constitutional review process. Subsequently, the United Nations provided support to the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in a review of the operational outline for public consultations.

20. To support national reconciliation, the United Nations, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, conducted negotiation and mediation training in July for 25 representatives from federal and state institutions, clan elders and civil society. A joint State-building and reconciliation programme, developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNSOM, in collaboration with the Federal Government and federal member state ministries, was also launched in June 2023.

21. The United Nations, the Federal Government of Somalia and international partners agreed on a no-cost extension of the joint electoral support programme until December 2023. The United Nations also continued to provide technical and capacity-building support to the Galmudug Independent Electoral Commission, assisting the Commission in drafting the Galmudug electoral law and the amendments to the political party law.

22. The Special Representative visited Hargeysa on 17 and 18 July, where she met with the “Somaliland” President, Muse Bihi Abdi and the “Somaliland” envoy to the dialogue, Edna Adan Ismail, to discuss the future of the dialogue process. She also met twice with Mr. Guled during the reporting period, reiterating the importance of the resumption of the Somalia-“Somaliland” dialogue.

B. Support to the security sector, rule of law and stabilization

1. Security sector development

23. UNSOM continued its efforts to support the Somali authorities in enhancing national security sector capacity and governance, including with regard to the proposal contained in the National Consultative Council communiqué of March 2023 to revise the national security architecture. UNSOM continued to participate in the Government-led core security partners group (involving the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), the European Union, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the

United States of America and the United Nations) on the coordination of security sector governance and financing.

24. The United Nations continued to support the Federal Government of Somalia in strengthening its weapons and ammunition management capacity.

2. Rule of law

25. UNSOM continued its support to strengthen the capacity of rule of law actors at the federal and state levels, including through a 12-day community dialogue workshop in Baidoa from 5 to 16 July for 55 representatives (33 men and 22 women) from communities and justice and law enforcement institutions. A follow-up workshop on restorative justice for 33 representatives (19 men and 14 women) was held in Baidoa from 11 to 13 September, which was aimed at enhancing trust with communities, and improved sectoral coordination. Gender responsiveness and incident management workshops were held for the Custodial Corps in Banaadir, Puntland and South-West States.

26. The second phase of the Joint Justice and Corrections Programme was launched on 15 July following extensive consultations with federal and state ministries of justice. The initial implementation prioritized support for justice delivery in recovered areas. A pre-assessment of justice needs in Xarardheere, Galmudug State, was completed and a field visit is being planned with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. UNSOM supported the federal ministry and parliamentarians in developing plans towards strengthening outreach and awareness of the justice and corrections model.

27. UNSOM provided support to strengthening police capacities, including by assisting the Somali authorities with strategic advice on drafting the community policing strategy. Sustainable funding for policing remains a concern following the suspension of the payment of stipends to 2,400 police, under the Joint Police Programme, owing to Puntland's withdrawal from the programme.

3. Stabilization

28. During the reporting period, the Federal Government presented a revised stabilization plan and prioritized stabilization initiatives in recently recovered areas of Galmudug and Hirshabelle States, with UNSOM support. From 4 to 12 September, UNSOM conducted an assessment of the stabilization landscape in the recently recovered areas and of future required efforts. The assessment made eight key recommendations, including the need to support social and political reconciliation, improved coordination between stabilization and humanitarian sectors, and scaling up support for stabilization.

4. Preventing and countering violent extremism

29. From 6 to 13 July, UNSOM and UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, conducted a workshop, on preventing and countering violent extremism, with members of the ulama network, government representatives from the federal and member state ministries of religious affairs, and the Office of the National Security Adviser. The workshop facilitated a shared vision based on a conflict transformation approach and on priority activities, including enhancing coordination, providing mediation training and advancing the peace curriculum.

30. As part of its efforts to advocate for a strengthened strategy for defectors from insurgent groups, UNSOM provided advice on the revised defector rehabilitation programme, aligned with the national stabilization strategy, and focused on social cohesion through community-based reintegration. In July, UNSOM funded and

facilitated an outreach workshop in Baidoa, South-West State, to raise awareness of a new community-based reintegration approach among local communities, civil society organizations and security actors.

C. Humanitarian assistance

31. During the reporting period, the scale-up of humanitarian assistance, combined with efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member state authorities, partners and communities, as well as the moderate-to-heavy *gu* rainy season (April to June), improved access to water and pasture, thereby alleviating the extended impact of the severe and protracted drought, averting famine. However, humanitarian needs remain high owing to persistent climatic and environmental shocks, conflict, population displacement, widespread poverty, disease outbreaks and other compounding factors.

32. Displacement remains extensive, with more than 3.8 million people internally displaced. Displaced people have the most severe needs, given that they are often unable to meet their basic needs and face significant protection concerns. Addressing the impact of protracted displacement and the need for durable solutions remains critical.

33. While humanitarian assistance reached 6.3 million people as at July, millions of people continue to battle hunger on a daily basis. According to the September Integrated Phase Classification analysis, some 3.7 million people (22 per cent of Somalia's population) are food insecure (phases 3 (Crisis) and 4 (Emergency)), including 1.5 million children under the age of 5 who are likely to face acute malnutrition through July 2024, with 330,000 children facing severe malnutrition. Global acute malnutrition prevalence remains above emergency thresholds in some areas, with critical levels of 20.2 per cent reported among internally displaced persons in Mogadishu.

34. The outlook for the fourth quarter of 2023 is concerning. A strong El Niño projected in October, combined with a positive Indian Ocean dipole, is expected to generate above-average rainfalls, triggering riverine and flash floods. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations warned that up to 1.2 million people could be affected and 1.5 million hectares of land might be at high risk of inundation. The number of food-insecure people is likely to rise to 4.3 million, including more than 1 million under Integrated Phase Classification phase 4 and 3.3 million under phase 3. More positively, El Niño may increase food and fodder production and improve water availability.

35. Humanitarian partners are working closely with the Somali Disaster Management Agency to support national planning, including developing a humanitarian emergency preparedness and response plan for the anticipated El Niño impact and other scenarios. In August, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board endorsed a \$15 million fast-track allocation for early response action for floods, with priority activities in water, sanitation and hygiene, health, protection, food and shelter.

36. Health partners, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, continue to strengthen Somalia's fragile health system, respond to emergencies and step up efforts to contain disease outbreaks. In June, approximately 44,153 (78 per cent) of the targeted 56,482 children under 1 year of age received the first dose of the measles vaccine in drought-affected districts. Three rounds of polio vaccinations have been conducted in 2023, including in six former hard-to-reach districts of Galmudug State. With improved access, the number of inaccessible children reduced from 560,000 in 2019 to 89,000 by the end of June 2023. Vaccination in July targeted more than

101,780 children under the age of 5 in hard-to-reach areas and some 2.4 million countrywide. This includes more than 826,140 children under the age of 5 reached in South-West in July, during a polio vaccination campaign led by the federal and state authorities supported by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund targeting 18 districts of Bay, Bakool and Shabelle Hoose regions. In Galmudug State, a polio vaccination campaign from 22 to 25 July targeted some 336,780 children under the age of 5, including in hard-to-reach and recovered areas. Some areas were reached for the first time in more than a decade.

37. Conflict and insecurity continue to contribute to an extremely challenging operating environment. On 8 July, during fighting in Laascaanood town of the disputed Sool region, a health facility was struck, resulting in fatalities and the destruction of two ambulances. Partners continue to deliver assistance in Laascaanood but are significantly hampered by security concerns and access restrictions. An estimated 200,000 people have been displaced since the fighting started in December 2022. Following the most recent flare-up, on 25 August, thousands of people fled to villages in "Somaliland". Subsequently, some families have reportedly started to return to Laascaanood.

38. The operation against Al-Shabaab has created access opportunities but requires all partners and parties to mitigate risks for humanitarian actors and for civilians. Notwithstanding challenges, responses are ongoing in newly recovered areas. Partners, supported by the United Nations Children's Fund, delivered medical and nutrition supplies to Xarardheere and Ceel Dheere district hospitals in the newly recovered areas of Galgaduud and Mudug regions. Water, sanitation and hygiene partners rehabilitated the main borehole in Xarardheere town and provided hygiene kits to 700 families. Multi-purpose cash assistance targeted 500 families in Xarardheere, each receiving \$90 per month between July and September.

39. On 11 July, Al-Shabaab imposed restrictions on vehicle movements to and from Baidoa, South-West State, which hosts approximately 650,000 internally displaced persons. Prices of rice, pasta and sugar increased by almost 20 per cent in some areas. The restrictions were lifted on 21 July, but the situation remains concerning, given the possibility of future such restrictions.

40. As at 5 October, the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan was only 37.4 per cent funded (\$942.6 million of \$2.6 billion requested). Humanitarian partners have been forced to reduce assistance, undertake rigorous prioritization and target only the most vulnerable areas and people.

D. Support to coordination of development assistance

41. On 9 August, the Federal Government of Somalia and the United Nations held a meeting of the Joint Steering Committee of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021–2025). The event provided strategic oversight and direction to the implementation of the Cooperation Framework to ensure its alignment with evolving national priorities, including in newly recovered areas, the anticipated completion of the post-Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and efforts to re-energize collaboration towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

42. The United Nations continued to engage the Federal Government on the operationalization of the Somalia Renewed Partnership and new aid architecture. On 29 and 30 August, the United Nations participated in the launch of the pillar working groups, a coordination mechanism aimed at promoting sector-level coordination in alignment with national priorities. A climate change group has been added to the four pillars outlined in the national development plan, as an emerging government priority.

43. United Nations support for the Federal Government and federal member states on climate adaptation and access to climate finance continued to be provided. On 13 June, the Green Climate Fund secretariat agreed to expedite the application process for Somalia and requested that a joint concept proposal for the use of \$25 million already allocated for Somalia be presented to the Green Climate Fund Board in October 2024.

44. During the reporting period, the United Nations Environment Programme began its institutional capacity assessment of the federal Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to develop recommendations on addressing capacity gaps for the Ministry, both in terms of capacities to gain access to climate finance and to ensure the implementation of national strategies. UNDP is supporting the Ministry in finalizing its national adaptation plan in advance of the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

E. Women and peace and security

45. The United Nations continued to support efforts to ensure women's meaningful participation in State-building and peacebuilding processes. During the reporting period, UNSOM convened three meetings of the Somalia women Members of Parliament/United Nations leadership forum. One of the outcomes of the meetings was the decision to organize training on special temporary measures for elections. Participants also agreed to advocate with the presidents of federal member states for the inclusion of women's issues in the National Consultative Council and to convene a conference for all female parliamentarians to adopt a position on issues of women's political participation.

46. On 11 July, UNSOM, in collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), conducted training for 60 members of Parliament (33 female) aimed at enhancing their capacities to enact gender-responsive legislation and promote the inclusion of women in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. In addition, UN-Women organized two training sessions, in July and August, for 55 female parliamentarians on legislative drafting and leadership skills. As part of the Somalia women Members of Parliament/United Nations leadership forum strategic areas of action, from 21 to 23 August UNSOM facilitated capacity-building training for 86 members of Parliament (55 female) aimed at enhancing their capacity to advocate the inclusion of temporary special measures in future legislation. UNSOM developed an action plan to roll out the training for parliamentarians in federal member states.

47. On 9 August, UNSOM met women civil society leaders to discuss strategies for addressing the low-level participation of women in politics, including on ways to ensure that the 30 per cent quota for women is attained. The women leaders expressed frustration over the slow pace and non-inclusiveness of the constitutional review process. The women leaders called for greater participation in State-building.

48. On 29 and 30 August, the federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development, together with UN-Women, UNDP and UNSOM, established a 11-member civil society reference group to provide advice for the implementation of the joint women, peace and protection programme and advocate the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda in Somalia.

F. Youth, peace and security

49. From 11 to 13 June, the United Nations Population Fund, in partnership with the Folke Bernadotte Academy and in collaboration with local youth-led organizations and civil society partners, hosted a forum on young people, elections and democratization in Hirshabelle. The forum brought together more than 120 young people (58 women) and political actors to discuss strategies to increase the electoral participation of young people at the subnational level.

50. From 30 July to 1 August, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in partnership with Cartooning for Peace, trained 20 young Somali artists in Mogadishu on the use of press cartoons to promote peace, good governance and social justice.

51. On 10 August, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations held a webinar that brought together young people, entrepreneurs and other key stakeholders to discuss innovative ideas for strengthening the skills of young people in environmental protection. To celebrate International Youth Day, on 12 August UNSOM, in partnership with Somali youth organizations, hosted “Youth 4 Peace” dialogues in major cities across Somalia. The dialogues brought together some 465 young women and men from various backgrounds who discussed and developed action plans for the meaningful engagement of young people in peacebuilding and decision-making processes.

G. Human rights and protection

1. Human rights

52. During the reporting period, UNSOM recorded 399 civilian casualties (183 killed and 216 injured), a 27 per cent decrease compared with the previous reporting period. Al-Shabaab was the main perpetrator, responsible for 208 civilian casualties (52 per cent), followed by 102 attributed to unknown actors, 53 to clan militia, 36 to State security forces and 12 to other actors. The decline in casualties is attributed to a reduction from March until August in the intensity of the fighting in the ongoing conflict in Laascaanood town of the disputed Sool region, with 97 per cent fewer casualties compared with the previous reporting period. Two air strikes by unidentified aircraft, on 6 and 18 July, in Elcade village, Gedo region, and three incidents involving unexploded ordnance, in Shabelle Hoose, Gedo and Galgaduud, resulted in 46 civilian casualties, contributing to an increase in the number of casualties by unknown actors.

53. On 21 June, UNSOM facilitated a meeting between members of the Somali Bantu community and representatives of the presidential Special Envoy for Civilian Protection and Stabilization to emphasize the need for greater protection of minorities in the planning of military operations.

54. As part of the fight against Al-Shabaab, the Somali authorities have taken legal measures that have an impact on civic space, affecting especially media workers and their right to have access to information and express themselves freely. On 20 August, the federal Ministry of Communications and Technology issued a decision to ban some online platforms and messaging apps, claiming that they “are used by the terrorists and gangs”. During the reporting period, UNSOM documented what appeared to be the arbitrary detention of eight male journalists – five in Mogadishu, two in “Somaliland” and one in Jubaland – and the conviction and sentencing of two others in “Somaliland” to one year in prison. In all the cases, the detention was triggered by the publication of critical social media posts on issues of general interest.

55. With regard to legislative developments, the Federal Government approved the disability rights bill on 27 July and the child rights bill and the juvenile justice bill on 10 and 17 August, respectively. The child rights bill is being debated in the House of the People. The United Nations provided technical support and advice in the drafting of these bills and has advocated bilaterally with key national authorities for their enactment.

56. On 8 August, the First Instance of the Military Court in Mogadishu began the trial of four wives of alleged Al-Shabaab members, arrested on 21 April alongside their driver who was accused of transporting material destined to make explosive devices. The women denied any knowledge of their husbands' affiliation and the transported materials. On 24 August, the driver was sentenced to three years in prisons, while the women were sentenced to two years' imprisonment each but were later released on parole.

2. Compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy

57. On 16 July, the ATMIS-UNSOS-UNSOM joint technical working group on the United Nations human rights due diligence policy discussed the implementation of the ATMIS mitigation measures and reviewed the follow-up steps concerning allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

58. On 7 August, the United Nations human rights due diligence policy task force discussed the implications of the ATMIS drawdown and its impact on the protection of civilians. Recommendations from the audit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy by UNSOM and UNSOS were presented. The task force also endorsed the risk assessment and mitigation measures for a non-lethal support package from the United Nations Office for Project Services to the Somali National Army.

3. Children and armed conflict

59. From 8 June to 30 September, the country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children verified 826 grave violations against 804 children (612 boys and 192 girls). This marked a 67 per cent increase compared with the previous reporting period, which can be attributed to the increase of the violations in Bay, Shabelle Hoose and Hiraan regions. Violations also included 12 attacks on schools, 2 attacks on hospitals and 8 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Al-Shabaab continued to be the main perpetrator, responsible for 61 per cent of the violations. The highest number of violations was verified in Shabelle Hoose, which saw an increase in child casualties because of mortar shells, explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordinance. The country task force verified 33 child casualties in one incident involving an explosive device in Qoryooley, Shabelle Hoose region, by unidentified perpetrators. Al-Shabaab continued to abduct children and coerced communities to hand over children for the purpose of recruitment and use. A total of 263 children were abducted during the reporting period, a 253 per cent increase compared with the previous reporting period.

60. On 31 July, the Federal Government of Somalia endorsed the age verification guidelines and its standardized checklist, a formal procedure for age assessment that was introduced for the first time in the country. The guidelines are intended to prevent the recruitment of children into the armed forces and mitigate the risk of children being detained and tried under adult criminal jurisdiction. This is a significant development, considering the absence of a national birth registration system and past cases of children affiliated with Al-Shabaab being sentenced to the death penalty.

4. Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence

61. UNSOM verified two incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involving one 16-year-old girl in Qardho, Puntland, and one internally displaced woman in Baidoa, South-West State, both by unknown actors. Medical attention was provided to both survivors. While the incident involving the minor was reported to the police, the adult survivor was reportedly discouraged from filing an official complaint. On 25 June and 15 July, the Garoowe Regional Court convicted and sentenced two men to 10 years' imprisonment each for rape in connection with two incidents that occurred in January and July 2023 in Puntland.

62. On 21 June and 26 September, UNSOM convened the second and third quarterly meeting of the Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements Technical Working Group for 2023, during which trends and patterns of sexual violence were reviewed. Participants called for enhanced monitoring of future offensives against Al-Shabaab.

H. Logistical support from the United Nations Support Office in Somalia to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia and Somali security forces in joint and coordinated operations

1. Support to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia

63. During the reporting period, UNSOS continued to provide support to ATMIS in line with the ATMIS concept of operations and the Somalia Transition Plan, as mandated in Security Council resolutions [2628 \(2022\)](#), [2670 \(2022\)](#) and [2687 \(2023\)](#). As part of phase 1 of the ATMIS drawdown, UNSOS supported the closure of one forward operating base and the handover of six others from ATMIS to the Somali security forces. UNSOS also facilitated the internal movement of troops prior to their repatriation, as well as the relocation of equipment to other operating bases through third-party contractors. The tactical handover of the forward operating bases between ATMIS and the Somali security forces was conducted on 29 June. Subsequently, on 6 July 2023, UNSOS formally donated United Nations-owned equipment in the forward operating bases to the federal Minister of Defence.

64. Between 31 August and 9 September, UNSOS supported and participated in the tripartite technical committee assessment of all forward operating bases. The tripartite technical committee agreed on the forward operating bases earmarked for handover or closure. However, following the 90-day "technical pause" requested by the Federal Government on 19 September, the tripartite technical committee will re-engage on the process in October.

65. In July, in support of the ATMIS drawdown and as part of the outreach to troop-contributing countries, the head of UNSOS travelled to Nairobi where she held meetings with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and of Defence, the Chief of Defence Forces of Kenya and the Ambassador of Burundi to Kenya and Somalia. Meanwhile, negotiations on the letter of assist between the Government of Burundi and the Department of Operational Support for the deployment of four additional aviation assets in support of ATMIS operations have been concluded. The deployment is expected for October.

66. On 4 and 5 July, UNSOS organized a senior management retreat, preceded by targeted engagement with the mission's clients, including ATMIS, UNSOM and Somali security forces. Recommendations included implementation of the decentralization programme to ensure that support is delivered more effectively in all sectors, effective communication on UNSOS support, increased accountability and transparency to ensure excellence in service delivery, and capacity-building for national staff.

67. The Mine Action Service continued to deliver improvised explosive device threat mitigation measures that have proved to be helpful for the mobility and safety of personnel from ATMIS troop-contributing countries. These measures included delivering specialized in-country and predeployment training for more than 2,963 ATMIS military and police personnel and pre- and post-convoy briefings for more than 400 ATMIS convoys conducting searches on main supply routes that led to the destruction of 15 explosive devices.

68. During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service supported the ATMIS drawdown by deploying technical advisers and combat engineer advisers to the forward operating bases identified for reconfiguration activities.

69. From 2 to 5 September, the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support visited Somalia and met senior government officials, including the President of Somalia, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and the head of ATMIS, troop-contributing countries, the United Nations country team and the international community. Discussions focused on logistical and operational support to the ongoing security transition and strengthening collaboration between the Federal Government and the United Nations, as well as future logistical support.

2. Support to Somali security forces

70. During the reporting period, UNSOS provided non-lethal logistical support in 22 locations to 13,900 Somali troops and police, in joint or coordinated operations with ATMIS.

71. As at 10 September, the Somali security forces trust fund had a negative balance of \$550,804. Efforts to raise awareness of the status of the trust fund and mobilize additional funding continued.

72. The Mine Action Service continued to focus on national ownership as a key enabler for the transition of explosive threat mitigation responsibilities. Support for the Somali security forces is being enhanced as trained explosive device disposal teams progressively deploy and obtain the capacity to mitigate explosive threats. During the reporting period, the Somali National Army found and neutralized 36 improvised explosive devices.

73. In parallel, the Mine Action Service has contributed to sustaining and growing the improvised explosive devices disposal capacity of the Somali police force. This has been achieved through continuous training and the development and provision of equipment for additional explosive ordinance disposal teams. The Mine Action Service trained an additional 72 Somali police force and 113 Somali National Army personnel during the reporting period.

I. United Nations presence in Somalia

74. United Nations entities remained present in Baidoa, Beledweyne, Berbera, Boosaaso, Dhooble, Dhuusamarreeb, Doolow, Gaalkacyo, Garoowe, Hargeysa, Jawhar, Kismaayo and Mogadishu. As at 5 October, 811 international staff and 1,572 national staff were deployed throughout Somalia.

J. Update on the implementation of the strategic review

75. The UNSOM strategic review completed in September 2022 highlighted that the mandate of UNSOM remained relevant in the current political context and was

aligned closely with the priorities of the Federal Government of Somalia. At the same time, the review stressed the importance of the Mission's leadership in establishing an order of priority among the various elements of the mandate and set forth several other recommendations to ensure that the Mission remained fit for purpose, including strongly aligned workplans with the Government's priorities, a further strengthening of the partnership with the African Union and the development of road maps for the transitions. As mandated, the review also proposed benchmarks to measure the effective implementation of the mandate. Following the endorsement of the review's recommendations and benchmarks by the Security Council, work has commenced towards the implementation of these recommendations.

76. With regard to the first recommendation, UNSOM continues to ensure that its workplans are in line with government priorities and are updated regularly to reflect changing priorities and a realistic sequencing of mandate tasks as recommended. The Mission further continued to support the advancement of the constitutional review process, advocating for progress at the political level and providing support at the technical level. Moreover, the Mission will continue to provide support to several agreements reached by the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states (with the exception of Puntland) through the National Consultative Council framework once public consultations and parliamentary deliberations have concluded.

77. The recommendations regarding the staffing and configuration review had been halted until the arrival of the new Special Representative. The exercises are now envisioned to take place in 2024 following the completion of a strategic review of UNSOS, if mandated by the Security Council, as well as subsequent Council resolutions. In the meantime, efforts are ongoing to increase national staff positions, including through the conversion of international to national staff posts, the creation of national volunteer positions and the recruitment of national consultants, where applicable. In parallel, the Mission also continues to support the capacity-building of national staff, including through the provision of training and skills-building opportunities. While attracting qualified female candidates remains a key challenge, efforts are being undertaken to broaden outreach.

78. As outlined in the strategic review, UNSOM will be affected by the drawdown of ATMIS and scaling back of UNSOS support, and work has commenced towards assessing possible implications pending an independent strategic review of UNSOS pursuant to resolution [2687 \(2023\)](#). The Mission has also begun to plan for the possible implications of the security transition, including the impact on the Mission's presence and operations. In line with the Secretary-General's directive on transition planning and the request from the Federal Government of Somalia, work towards the development of a road map for the eventual transition from UNSOM to the United Nations country team and a high-level dialogue to commonly agree on an end state will commence in 2024. In order to ensure that the Mission is internally prepared for the three transitions that it faces, a transition cell has been established.

79. As identified in the strategic review, joint programmes remain a best practice and an essential tool in preparing for the eventual handover of functions to the United Nations country team. Since the completion of the review, joint programmes have proved to be a key tool for mandate implementation, and several new joint programmes have been established, including on justice and reconciliation.

80. Coordination between UNSOM, UNSOS and ATMIS at the leadership level also remains strong, including through regular meetings. A senior leadership retreat is being planned for early 2024. As recommended in the strategic review, the establishment of joint and co-located teams between UNSOM and ATMIS is also being considered. With respect to the recommendation on the coordination of

assistance to the security sector, regular meetings of the core security partners group, the primary security-focused coordination mechanism, are held, co-chaired by the Federal Government of Somalia and UNSOM leadership. Efforts to streamline security coordination frameworks are under way pending guidance from the Somali authorities on coordination structures to be established following the revision of the national security architecture. In addition, UNSOM is providing support to the Federal Government in its preparations for a conference in December focusing on the security arrangements following the drawdown of ATMIS.

K. Observations

81. I welcome the commitment of the Federal Government of Somalia to advance political dialogue and public consultation on agreements reached on key State-building priorities, including the constitutional review process and electoral preparations. I remain concerned over Puntland's continued absence from National Consultative Council meetings. Somalia's national priorities must be advanced on the basis of political consensus. It is also paramount that the voices of women, young people and marginalized communities be heard and reflected in the agreements reached.

82. I note the critical role of the Somali Parliament and the key legislative processes to advance the national priorities taking place, including the review of the Constitution. I welcome the efforts made by the mandated constitutional bodies to develop a time-bound road map for the constitutional process and call upon them to finalize the process soon. The United Nations remains firmly committed to supporting the finalization of the constitutional review process on the basis of broad and inclusive consultations and the attainment of political consensus.

83. I remain deeply concerned over the continuation of hostilities in Laascaanood and the possibility of a further escalation of the conflict. Any further violence would only exacerbate an already grave humanitarian situation and bring further devastation to the affected civilian population. I call upon all parties to exercise restraint and to refrain from provocative action, incitement to violence and inflammatory rhetoric. This will be essential to de-escalate the situation on the ground and create the conditions for peaceful dialogue and dispute resolution.

84. I am also concerned about reports of large numbers of detainees from the 25 August fighting in Laascaanood and call upon the parties to ensure full protection of their rights. It is imperative that all parties uphold their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

85. I am disappointed at the limited level of women's political participation. I commend the efforts of women's civil society organizations that continue to engage with Somali authorities to ensure that the voices of women are heard and included in decision-making processes, especially those that are key to an inclusive future for all Somalis.

86. The advances made by the Federal Government of Somalia against Al-Shabaab on several fronts through its multi-pronged approach are encouraging. I commend the bravery of the Somali National Army and of ATMIS and further express my condolences to the Government, the troop-contributing countries and the families of the many personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

87. I welcome the ongoing stabilization efforts by the Somali authorities in the recently and previously recovered areas, as outlined in the revised Somalia stabilization plan. Progress has been made towards a holistic understanding of the stabilization process, according to the recently concluded independent stabilization

assessment report. The report recommends increasing the role of women and minorities in decision-making, addressing stabilization underfunding, finding localized solutions and enhancing the delivery of social services in newly recovered areas. Such efforts remain critical to ensuring that gains are consolidated. I encourage the Federal Government to sustain these efforts and urge Somalia's partners to continue to support such initiatives.

88. I welcome the ongoing efforts to ensure that ATMIS is provided with the capacities and capabilities required to implement mandated tasks. I also reiterate my previous calls highlighting the urgency and need to ensure predictable and sustainable funding for ATMIS, as the Mission continues to support Somalia towards attaining a peaceful and secure future. I remain deeply concerned about the current funding shortfall faced by ATMIS and urge donors to provide additional contributions.

89. I take note of the request by the Federal Government of Somalia for a 90-day technical delay of the second phase, which was endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 30 September, and urge donors to provide funding to cover the costs to enable ATMIS to carry out its mandate in full. In parallel, I call upon the international community to contribute to the trust fund in support of the Somali security forces.

90. I acknowledge that the drawdown of ATMIS will have implications for United Nations operations in Somalia and the Organization's ability to deliver on mandated tasks and programmes. To limit the impact that this might have on the civilian population, close cooperation and coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia and ATMIS will be required.

91. I remain deeply concerned by the continued significant funding shortfall for the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan, which seeks \$2.6 billion to meet the priority needs of 7.6 million people. By 5 October, the Plan was only 37.4 per cent funded, which has already resulted in a reduced response capacity. While famine has been averted, and notwithstanding some improvements, the humanitarian situation remains dire, with Somalia at the epicentre of climate change. The anticipated El Niño and positive Indian Ocean dipole event from October is expected to result in severe flooding in the riverine areas of the Juba and Shabelle regions, as well as low-lying areas in other parts of the country, which could lead to loss of life, mass displacement, destruction of property and loss of livelihoods. I urge international partners to support the humanitarian community in its efforts to meet the most urgent needs.

92. I note the developments affecting Somalia's civic space, such as the adoption of measures adversely affecting the rights of access information and freedom of expression. Safe and inclusive civic space is essential to good governance and can help to prevent the stigmatization of individuals or support communities in curbing violence. I urge the Somali authorities to take steps to promote the inclusion of civil society actors and communities in relevant decision-making processes. In line with my call to action for human rights, the United Nations remains committed to supporting national and regional efforts to promote and protect civic space.

93. The increase in child abductions and alarmingly high levels of grave violations against children, attributable primarily to Al-Shabaab, is deeply concerning. To contribute to a protective environment for children, I call upon the Federal Government of Somalia to harmonize legislative and policy reforms to define the child as a person under the age of 18 in accordance with the provisional Constitution of Somalia and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to fully and expeditiously implement its 2012 action plans and 2019 road map signed with the United Nations. I further underline the need to take all precautions necessary to protect children during military operations in Somalia.

94. The progress achieved by the Federal Government of Somalia and all partners towards reaching the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative completion point is commendable. I call upon all partners to finalize debt relief agreements before the end of 2023 to enable Somalia to have access to much-needed additional international development finance. I call upon the Federal Government to continue its reforms post-Initiative to advance good financial governance.

95. I wish to convey my appreciation to the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the European Union, Member States, non-governmental organizations and other partners for their sustained support and engagement in peacebuilding in Somalia.

96. I thank my Special Representative, the United Nations leadership and all United Nations staff in Somalia for their tireless work and dedication in support of peace and stability in the country.

