



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 28 December 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In accordance with paragraph 15 of Security Council resolution [2559 \(2020\)](#), I have the honour to submit an assessment of lessons learned from the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

The attached report (see annex) provides a summary of the findings of research jointly commissioned and overseen by the African Union and the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would bring the attached document to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**



## Annex

[Original: English]

## Summary report on lessons learned from the experience of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

1. On 22 December 2020, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2559 \(2020\)](#), by which it decided to terminate the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) by the end of 2020. That decision concluded the 13-year deployment of UNAMID in Darfur as the first, and thus far only, hybrid peacekeeping mission, which had begun on 31 July 2007 with the adoption of Security Council resolution [1769 \(2007\)](#) and the transfer of the mandate from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to UNAMID on 31 December 2007. In its resolution [2559 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide it with an assessment of the lessons learned from the experience of UNAMID.

2. The present report builds on a comprehensive desk review of existing literature and internal documents as well as interviews with Sudanese and international stakeholders and current and former African Union and United Nations officials. The study was jointly conceptualized and overseen by the United Nations and the African Union under the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. The present summary report outlines the findings and lessons learned in relation to the methods, achievements and challenges of UNAMID in its core mandated areas and cross-cutting functions, as defined in its revised mandate pursuant to Security Council resolution [2148 \(2014\)](#), and in relation to the unique hybrid mission model.

### Context for the deployment of the Operation and the trajectory of its mandate

3. In February 2003, violent conflict erupted in the Darfur region of the Sudan. To address the crisis, AMIS was deployed to Darfur after the signing of the N'djamena humanitarian ceasefire agreement of 2004. Initially a small observer mission, its mandate was extended to include the protection of civilians and its footprint expanded to about 7,000 personnel. The Mission faced mounting operational challenges and increasing concerns over a lack of financial sustainability, leading to calls for a transition from AMIS to a United Nations peacekeeping operation. The deployment of a hybrid African Union-United Nations mission emerged as a compromise after extensive political negotiations and following the refusal of the Government of the Sudan to consent to an expansion of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan into Darfur.

4. On 31 December 2007, UNAMID assumed authority from AMIS, with an initial mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to cover (a) support to the peace process and good offices, including monitoring and various implementation support roles; (b) security, including the monitoring and reporting of violations of the peace agreement, the protection of civilians, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of the Sudan, and the disarmament and disengagement of armed groups; (c) the rule of law, governance and human rights; and (d) facilitation of the provision of humanitarian assistance and access.

5. Through its resolution [2148 \(2014\)](#), the Security Council streamlined the mandate of UNAMID around three strategic priorities: (a) the protection of civilians, the facilitation of humanitarian access and the safety and security of humanitarian actors; (b) mediation between the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatory armed groups on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur; and (c) support

to the mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address its root causes, in conjunction with the United Nations country team. Furthermore, in 2014, the Council first signalled its intention to initiate a gradual drawdown of UNAMID by requesting recommendations on a future mandate and an exit strategy. Through Council resolution [2363 \(2017\)](#), the mission was mandated to adopt a “two-pronged approach” with a focus on peacekeeping in the Jebel Marra area to address active fighting while calling for a whole-of-system approach to Darfur in order to support community stabilization and peacebuilding efforts in more stable areas of the region. Following a progressive reduction in the size and footprint of UNAMID to about 6,100 uniformed personnel by the end of 2020, the Council terminated the mission’s mandate through its resolution [2559 \(2020\)](#), effective 31 December 2020, while authorizing a six-month period for the final drawdown of the mission to be completed by 30 June 2021 and requesting the Secretary-General to ensure a phased, sequenced and efficient transition from UNAMID to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS), as well as close coordination and cooperation, and the sharing of information and analysis to maximize synergies, leverage resources and prevent duplication of effort.

### **Achievements and contextual challenges**

6. During its 13-year presence in Darfur, UNAMID reduced violence and helped to protect civilians. Through its presence, constructive engagement with civil society and local institutions and challenging engagement with the national government, UNAMID reduced threats to civilians, provided a safe environment for hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and served as a deterrent to large-scale human rights violations. The mission worked with local communities to transform drivers of conflict and generate local peace dividends and developed the capacity of national and Darfuri institutions and actors in the areas of policing, the rule of law, justice and corrections, with achievements in raising awareness of human rights and protection issues. The mission’s work to capacitate and support civil society, and particularly Darfuri women, to become involved in the peace process and to become stakeholders on the national political scene remains one of the mission’s enduring contributions.

7. The operations of UNAMID must be considered in the light of the contextual challenges faced by the mission throughout its deployment. The present study found that the general context and political conditions under which UNAMID was created had a significant bearing on its ability to deliver its mandate, particularly in its initial years. Accompanied by a forceful public campaign for stronger intervention in Darfur, the African Union and the United Nations invested considerable effort in deploying a peacekeeping mission capable of stabilizing the ongoing conflict, stopping atrocities against civilians and helping to alleviate the catastrophic humanitarian situation. To achieve those aims, both institutions had to make considerable concessions to obtain the formal consent of the Government of the Sudan, led by the President, Omer Al-Bashir, which had been agreed with the Government during the high-level consultation on Darfur, held in Addis Ababa in November 2006. Furthermore, the deployment of UNAMID occurred in the context of considerable divisions within the Security Council. These issues which established the context for the implementation of the mission’s mandate for most of its lifespan. UNAMID was confronted with obstruction by the host Government at various times, which adversely affected the mission’s room for manoeuvre to address the conflict dynamics.

8. In addition, and compounded by the constraints imposed by the Government of the Sudan, UNAMID faced significant challenges in its early years with respect to the equipment and training of some of its contingents, aggravated by severe gaps in the availability of critical enablers and mobility assets. In the face of continued fighting

and frequent deadly attacks against both civilians and the mission itself, the challenges affected the ability of UNAMID to maintain a credible posture and implement its protection mandate, although UNAMID peacekeepers demonstrated bravery and courage throughout the mission's lifespan.

9. On the political front, the role of UNAMID was mostly limited to a supporting function for the high-level mediation efforts both before and during the mission's deployment, particularly through the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. The fragmentation of armed groups and the intransigence of key parties at crucial junctures posed further challenges to the mission's role, with the result that successive Darfur peace agreements – notably the Darfur Peace Agreement of 2006 and the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur of 2011 – did not involve major parties to the conflict and thus were incomplete. This factor complicated the ability of UNAMID to carry out its mandated good offices function and support the implementation of the provisions of a peace accord.

10. While the events unfolding in Darfur were the manifestation of a multifaceted, country-wide crisis, the initial mandate of UNAMID did not address the political economy and centre-periphery dynamics, economic marginalization and underdevelopment, compounded by transnational dimensions and the impact of environmental stresses related to climate change and the overuse of scarce natural resources such as water, pasture and farmland. The streamlining of the UNAMID mandate in 2014 and the mission's efforts to devise more effective and innovative tools to address local conflicts helped to address some of the attendant conflict drivers more effectively, albeit with limited long-term sustainability.

11. In relation to the hybrid mission model and the evolving partnership between the African Union and the United Nations, the present study found that the limitations of UNAMID were not linked to its hybrid nature but were determined mainly by the context in which the mission operated and its relations with the host Government. UNAMID was born out of a political compromise for which no template or precedent existed. In reviewing its hybrid set-up, it is therefore important to consider the inherent and considerable challenges in fusing the strategic visions, objectives, and distinct cultures and working methods of the two organizations. Initially, the operationalization of UNAMID was affected by insufficient clarity regarding roles, disparate levels of experience and capacity, and – according to some people – an initial lack of trust between the organizations and their respective councils. Over time and through the committed work of officials in both organizations as well as Member States in the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, the collaboration on UNAMID improved, allowing both institutions to leverage their respective comparative strengths – such as protecting civilians and supporting high-level and local mediation processes – in an increasingly synergetic manner. The UNAMID experience therefore constituted an important building block for the evolution of the broader African Union-United Nations partnership on peace and security.

### **Lessons learned and good practices from the Operation's core mandated areas and cross-cutting functions**

#### *Protection of civilians*

12. UNAMID had a protection-of-civilians mandate throughout its deployment. The overall experience of UNAMID in the protection of civilians exemplifies the operational dilemmas and challenges faced in peacekeeping settings with limited host Government consent, characterized by a lack of collaboration or active obstruction by state institutions and armed groups. Under public pressure to deploy and act to stop further atrocity crimes, UNAMID struggled, especially in its early years, to

effectively implement its protection-of-civilians mandate, particularly when measured against the expectations among the Darfuri population as to what the presence of an African Union-United Nations peacekeeping operation could accomplish. Despite these challenges, the mission's presence saved countless civilian lives. Through its engagement with national and local institutions and civil society, it succeeded in defusing tensions and de-escalating conflicts, thereby minimizing incidents of violence and their negative effects on the civilian population.

13. UNAMID worked assiduously to promote protection through dialogue and engagement, but its efforts were affected by its lack of access to relevant political actors at strategic levels within the central Government. The mission was able to engage with subnational actors, traditional and religious actors and some armed groups, and leveraged the acceptance of its national staff among the population to create entry points and foster relationships. Dialogue and engagement with traditional and local leaders, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence, helped to reduce conflicts within and between communities. As a core part of its protection efforts, UNAMID focused on educating and building the capacities of communities throughout Darfur on issues of human rights, addressing conflict-related sexual violence and women's rights, and non-violent means of conflict resolution. UNAMID contributed to improving the human rights culture and language and helped to mainstream human rights into the Doha peace process. Across Darfur, the establishment of 54 women protection networks, including training to enable women to act as first responders to prevent conflict escalation, and of community alert networks, to enhance community-led early warning and response efforts, were important and effective achievements of UNAMID. Child Protection Officers operated in four Darfur states, conducting deep field visits to monitor and report on allegations of violations against children and engage in dialogue with parties to the conflict. UNAMID also established over 1,800 community-based child protection committees to foster greater prevention of and response to violations against children and to reinforce information and local ownership.

14. As a core mission task, UNAMID also conducted monitoring, reporting and fact-finding with regard to human rights violations across the region, but it often encountered challenges, including a lack of information-sharing, access and visa denials by the Government of the Sudan, and significant access restrictions imposed by armed opposition movements. From 2015, the collaboration of UNAMID with special procedures of the Human Rights Council became increasingly effective in raising specific concerns, such as impunity of perpetrators of attacks against civilians.

15. The presence of UNAMID across Darfur helped to provide physical protection to tens of thousands of vulnerable civilians and had an undeniable deterrent effect. At the same time, especially in the early stages, UNAMID often struggled to effectively and proactively implement physical protection tasks. This was partly due to limited capacities and capabilities relative to the size and inaccessibility of the area of operations and to measures of the Al-Bashir administration that obstructed the mission's efforts. These issues were compounded, in the initial years, by limited experience with the protection-of-civilians concept and its application and by unevenness in how the rules of engagement were interpreted and translated into action by different contingents, which undermined the mission's effectiveness and credibility early on. In addition, given the frequent hostile attacks against the mission that had claimed the lives of 64 UNAMID peacekeepers over the years, the mission was compelled to dedicate resources to the protection of its own personnel, premises and assets and to adopt a more static posture. As a result, internally displaced persons frequently moved towards, and settled near, bases and team sites of the mission so as to benefit from its protection. Progressively, the stricter enforcement of performance standards, better equipment and training for troops and police, and standardized

guidelines for UNAMID military components on the physical protection of civilians helped the mission to adopt a more proactive stance. Innovative patrol methods such as farming, market and firewood escorts proved critical in reducing rapes and assaults on women and supporting the livelihood needs of communities. From 2010, UNAMID was able to mobilize whole-of-mission efforts involving the mission's formed police units, military contingents and civilian personnel to stabilize numerous crisis situations in camps such as Kalma, Hamadiya and Hasahisa, as well as in Thur and Nertiti, to defuse tensions, protect civilians under imminent threat and allow for the provision of humanitarian assistance to populations.

16. UNAMID worked to establish a protective environment by increasing the sustainability of protection measures through various approaches, including advocacy, the promotion of legal frameworks, and governance support. Despite a challenging political environment, successive Joint Special Representatives and UNAMID personnel worked to build relationships in the central Government and at the state level, making it increasingly possible, particularly in the second half of the mission's life cycle, to engage and cooperate with relevant institutions. For example, an effective collaboration was established with the Ministry of Social Affairs to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence across Darfur through the development of policies and programmes such as the national action plan of the Sudan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security, which was first operationalized in Darfur. In addition, the joint advocacy efforts of UNAMID, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and other partners contributed to the signing, in 2020, of a framework of cooperation between the transitional Government of the Sudan and the United Nations on conflict-related sexual violence.

17. UNAMID supported the states and communities to avert conflicts between herders and farmers through peace campaigns ahead of the cattle migration. For example, its sensitization and capacity-building efforts helped to encourage traditional praise singers, who typically chanted to mobilize for war, to use their skills and place in society to advocate peaceful coexistence. The mission's efforts to enhance a protective environment continued during its transition and final drawdown, for example through the programmatic state liaison functions. The experience of UNAMID illustrates that it is essential for a peacekeeping mission to engage constructively with national and local institutions as well as civil society actors in fostering a protective environment for the protection of civilians, even – or especially – amid a challenging relationship with the host Government. It further highlights the importance of civil society engagement in shaping a protective environment, including by ensuring that women's experiences and expertise inform protection efforts and strategies.

#### *Rule of law*

18. Amid the profound breakdown of law and order, widespread criminality and impunity across Darfur, and the limited footprint of state rule-of-law institutions outside the three state capitals of El Fasher, Nyala and El Geneina, UNAMID support to police, justice and corrections institutions was a critical part of its mandate. The mission made significant investments in supporting state rule-of-law institutions and capacities over the years, but their impact in terms of reversing long-standing challenges and underresourcing remained limited. The experience of UNAMID underscores the lesson that capacity-building to re-establish the rule of law requires the ownership and engagement of a committed host Government in order to have a lasting impact, along with the need for national strategies to guide such efforts. The geographical limitation of the mandate of UNAMID to Darfur proved to be an added

challenge in terms of securing the engagement and collaboration of the central Government.

19. The mission did, however, manage to innovate, for example in its work towards re-establishing the criminal justice chain to enhance a protective environment, with a focus on rehabilitating and strengthening rural courts and promoting accountability, particularly in areas where armed conflict had subsided, in order to consolidate peace gains. UNAMID support to corrections institutions helped to bring about an improvement in prison conditions, and the establishment of a five-year strategic plan for Darfur prisons, the foundation of the Office of Public Prosecution independent of the Ministry of Justice and the development of standard operating procedures for prison management are part of the mission's legacy. Following its support for strengthening the rule of law in Darfur, UNAMID was able to engage the armed movements to recognize the state criminal justice system and disband parallel penal structures. The mission's efforts towards greater gender sensitivity and women's inclusion in the rule-of-law chain have helped to raise awareness among law enforcement bodies regarding the factors that contribute to sexual and gender-based violence.

20. On policing, the capacity-building efforts of UNAMID for the Sudan Police Force helped to increase public trust in the institution, but significant challenges remained amid insufficient public investment in the Force presence across rural areas of Darfur. United Nations police supported the capacity-building of Sudan Police Force personnel, for example by establishing police training centres in each Darfur state to ensure continuous and decentralized police training. At the same time, UNAMID capacity-building efforts sometimes lacked long-term impact, for example when police officers were rotated out of Darfur soon after receiving training. Meanwhile, the mission's community policing approach, through the establishment of community policing centres and security committees and the development of community policing volunteers, helped to build confidence, reduced crime and promoted traditional systems of conflict resolution. Capacity-building efforts conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme were focused on general policing practices, investigations and human rights, and community engagements and awareness campaigns. These measures led to a considerable increase in the reporting of cases of sexual violence and child abuse, which suggests that similar efforts should continue to foster community-level stability.

### **Mediation between the Government of the Sudan and non-signatory armed movements**

21. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1769 \(2007\)](#), the initial mandate of UNAMID foresaw support to the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement and subsequent agreements, assistance to the political process with a view to ensuring inclusivity and support to the African Union-United Nations joint mediation in its efforts to broaden and deepen commitment to the peace process. Over the course of the mission's deployment, the successive peace agreements did not offer a comprehensive basis for a political settlement. Nevertheless, important contributions were made, and key lessons learned were identified.

22. The mission was deployed at a time when high-level mediation efforts, including by the African Union and the United Nations, to resolve the Darfur crisis had already been under way for some time. The leadership of the mission did not play a role in these efforts for the first four years of UNAMID deployment, as the mission's efforts were focused on addressing immediate protection needs and facilitating humanitarian assistance across a vast geographical area under its responsibility. Over much of the first half of the life cycle of the mission, its political role and leverage in

the mediation process remained limited amid a challenging political environment and other ongoing high-level mediation efforts, including the broader Sudanese political process supported by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. After the roles of Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator were combined in 2012, concerted efforts were made in 2014 and 2015 to better synchronize initiatives and clarify the complementary roles of UNAMID and the Panel. This experience highlighted the need for a deliberate, mutually agreed framework for strategic and regular coordination between the mission and the lead mediation team, in order to ensure continuous information exchange and maximum harmonization of efforts.

23. Former senior mission leaders consulted for the present study have said that more consistent strategic guidance from the African Union and United Nations headquarters related to high-level mediation could have facilitated efforts to pursue a coherent political strategy and avoid creating openings that allowed the parties to the conflict to exploit contradictions for parochial gains. This observation points to the need, in future collaborative arrangements, for the two institutions to establish clear coordination mechanisms in order to ensure streamlined mediation efforts. The example of UNAMID also demonstrated the importance of empowering a mission to play an effective political convening role, even if in a supporting function, in order to influence the political process and foster coherence in peacemaking and mediation efforts, particularly where there is no comprehensive peace agreement. Moreover, when numerous envoys from Member States and international organizations are involved in the mediation process, effective coordination becomes even more critical.

24. UNAMID provided extensive support to the African Union-United Nations Joint Mediation Support Team in empowering and enabling Darfuri civil society at various stages. For example, it supported the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation following the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement and conducted an extensive range of preparatory workshops with civil society actors, including women-only consultations, in the lead-up to the signing of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and most recently by supporting the participation of women representatives in the civil society track of the Juba peace talks, thus helping to facilitate the inclusion of women as signatories in the talks as well as the incorporation of gender provisions into the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan, including commitments to strengthen women's participation at all levels of decision-making. Six women leaders from Darfur were signatories to the protocols of the Agreement, a culmination of long-standing efforts of UNAMID to mobilize Darfuri women. This shows that a public political strategy to enable civil society actors, and particularly women and youth networks, to engage with the peace process can serve as an important complementary source of influence to the high-level negotiations between the belligerent parties.

25. Lastly, the experience of UNAMID specifically highlighted the positive impact of mobilizing and building capacity towards the full, equal and meaningful participation of both women and young people in peacemaking processes. Its advocacy towards the greater inclusion of women in local governance institutions and structures and its contributions towards a gradual but discernible shift in traditional societal norms and discourse around gender will remain an important legacy in Darfur. A key lesson to draw from this experience is the need for missions to prioritize women's participation as a political imperative, including at the senior mission leadership level, in order to engage tradition-based institutions and their leaders in an ongoing and constructive dialogue among themselves and with local women leaders. Overall, the mission's impact in terms of supporting Darfuri civil society was described by one Sudanese observer as the "untold success story" of UNAMID.



### **Mediation of community conflict, including through measures to address root causes**

26. Support to the mediation of community-level conflict was established as a dedicated priority in the mission's revised mandate pursuant to Security Council resolution 2148 (2014). It also included the targeting of the root causes of conflict which, as assessed at the time by UNAMID, included the loss or severe disruption of traditional livelihoods, weakened traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, impunity and weak rule of law, fragile or absent State administrations in rural areas, the prevalence of arms and armed militias, a lack of trust between and within communities, the instrumentalization of social divisions and cycles of retaliatory violence. These drivers were further exacerbated by long-term demographic and climate change, including urbanization and drought. These intercommunal tensions were fuelled by the competition for diminishing natural resources, including land for agrarian use in particular, access to water and livestock maintenance – dynamics that led the former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, to refer to the Darfur crisis as a climate-related conflict.

27. UNAMID activities to address local-level conflict included the brokering of local peace agreements and support for inter-ethnic dialogue, local dispute resolution mechanisms and institutions, assistance to local authorities and native administrations, and the conduct of targeted patrols along migration routes. For example, UNAMID supported local communities in engaging with the peaceful coexistence committees and agricultural and crop protection committees composed of communal leaders who actively promote dialogue and reconciliation processes. In some instances, these committees were instrumental in quelling the escalation of intercommunal tension and violence. The mission made specific efforts to increase the ability of women to participate in mediation and negotiation activities, including by establishing a women's mediation network and by supporting the inclusion of women in *ajaweed* mediation councils and their active participation in resolving intertribal conflict, thus enabling women to become visible and forceful agents of peace in Darfur. However, the mission drew criticism at times for issues such as weak follow-up on local peace agreements that it had helped to broker or slowness when required to provide rapid support to interventions by Sudanese mediators in response to local conflict, highlighting the need for peacekeeping missions to provide consistent and continued capacity for local conflict management.

28. Programmatic innovations were spearheaded to advance protection and prevention priorities that have provided valuable lessons and good practices for other peacekeeping operations. Quick-impact projects were a central tool in the mission's repertoire for reducing community-level tensions over resources, for example by drilling and maintaining wells and boreholes, although UNAMID faced periodic criticism for insufficient coordination with local stakeholders or the United Nations country team in the planning and execution of such projects. Furthermore, the community-based labour-intensive projects – designed on the basis of the community violence reduction modality – were aimed at providing vocational training and temporary employment for young people at risk of being recruited into armed groups. Building on the community-based labour-intensive projects, the community stabilization projects were aimed at providing local communities with support to improve the security and stability of the situation on the ground, mainly in the conflict-affected Jebel Marra region. The community stabilization project initiative was innovative in the way in which it integrated different programmatic tools in a mutually reinforcing way and in its focus on improving the living conditions and providing a tangible sense of the peace dividends for vulnerable groups, such as young people, women and children. The community participation dimension of these projects created platforms for collaborative engagement between community

members. The experience of UNAMID points to the importance of consulting and engaging the host community at the outset in relation to the design and implementation of programmatic interventions ranging from quick-impact projects to community stabilization projects. The provision of active support, capacity-building and training to local authorities as well as the capacity-building of informal and formal community-based mechanisms can be an impactful contribution to local conflict management and has helped to enhance both service delivery and local confidence in these institutions.

29. UNAMID was also mandated to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of signatories to peace agreements with the Government of the Sudan from 2010 to 2019, which contributed to the disarmament and demobilization of around 11,000 ex-combatants from the armed groups that had signed the Darfur Peace Agreement and the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. The mission provided support to the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, as well as to the Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission. However, the absence of an inclusive peace agreement meant that conditions for a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme were not in place. The mission had only partial oversight of the full spectrum of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and its operational role remained limited to supporting demobilization. Meanwhile, the government-led disarmament efforts lacked transparency, and further-reaching reintegration assistance would have required additional funding for the United Nations country team. Operational successes included the establishment of joint task forces for the coordination of international stakeholders that proved to be an effective practice in overseeing the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The experience of UNAMID highlights that, for traditional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to succeed, key preconditions need to be in place, notably an inclusive political framework, the engagement of the parties, and sufficient and sustainable voluntary funding for reintegration assistance. It also points to the importance of the mission having a clearly defined oversight role in the entire disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and to the need to establish robust verification mechanisms to mitigate against the abuse of the process, along with the focused training of personnel to maintain planning and project management standards.

30. Overall, the experience of UNAMID in addressing local and intercommunal violence shows that, despite the many constraints faced by the mission, its activities had a positive effect in mediating local conflicts, reducing violence and delivering local peace dividends, although the sustainability of those efforts in addressing structural root causes remains modest. This observation highlights that peacekeeping missions have the capacity to bring about positive change at the local level, especially when different programmatic tools are complementary and follow an integrated approach. However, the long-term durability of such efforts remains tenuous in the absence of a broader, nationally owned strategy that addresses the root causes of violence. The example of UNAMID also points to the critical importance of missions undertaking gender-focused responsive conflict analyses as well as political economy analyses to uncover opportunities to address gender-specific conflict triggers as well as key peace drivers, and to integrate such analysis into mission planning efforts and strategies, including transition planning.

#### **United Nations integration and transition**

31. The non-integrated nature of the mission and the United Nations country team, particularly in the early years of the deployment of UNAMID, prevented more systematic information-sharing, joint analysis and a collective United Nations

approach to protection and other critical interventions. The lack of the co-location of the mission and the United Nations country team and the absence of standing mechanisms for integrated assessment and planning was a barrier to United Nations coordination. At the same time, UNAMID worked increasingly closely with protection partners and played an important role in creating an enabling environment for humanitarian and United Nations country team operations in Darfur, including logistics and accommodation, escort and transport services, and the sharing of information on developments in remote parts of Darfur where relief agencies had no direct access. Persistent efforts by senior UNAMID and United Nations country team leaders helped to improve information-sharing and collaboration, for example through discussing and coordinating protection issues through the Joint Protection Group.

32. Emerging discussions around the eventual exit of UNAMID from Darfur, from 2014 onward, gradually elevated the need for closer collaboration between UNAMID and the United Nations country team on transition planning and programmatic delivery around common peacebuilding objectives. Building on the gains made by UNAMID on the issue of women and peace and security, a gender-responsive conflict analysis informed the mission's transition strategy, and gender equality issues were reflected in all key transition planning documents, thus maintaining a strong focus on that thematic area until after the closure of UNAMID. This effort could serve as a model for other transitions and reconfigurations of United Nations presences.

33. In 2018, the African Union and the United Nations jointly defined a whole-of-system approach to the transition and drawdown of UNAMID, which introduced the concept of state liaison functions. The functions emerged as a key programmatic transition tool, enabling UNAMID and the United Nations country team to foster a more integrated approach in the areas of human rights, the rule of law, resilience and livelihoods, and service delivery for internally displaced persons. By utilizing programmatic funding from the assessed peacekeeping budget and allowing United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to capitalize on the expert knowledge of the mission's 90 co-located personnel, the state liaison function proved to be an important innovation that helped to nurture a close programmatic collaboration between the mission and the United Nations country team around critical interventions to avoid conflict relapse, while enabling United Nations agencies to increase their presence and capacity in Darfur. For example, 40 United Nations police personnel with expertise in different policing areas were embedded into agencies, funds and programmes to strengthen joint protection efforts, facilitate a progressive transfer of UNAMID institutional memory and support the joint development of early warning mechanisms. In addition, UNAMID protection-of-civilians staff in state liaison functions guided the protection of vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons and returnees, monitored protection hotspots and supported United Nations agency partners in the planning and coordination of community reconciliation efforts.

34. Administrative hurdles posed challenges to the implementation of the state liaison functions, and the unsustainability of state liaison function projects following the closure of UNAMID might have been prevented by more focused, consolidated resource mobilization efforts, for example for critical protection-related projects. Nevertheless, the functions served as an important proof of concept, and the lessons generated from this experience will inform other transition contexts. For example, the experience in the Sudan suggests that a programmatic transition tool such as the state liaison functions can also be beneficial in advancing, and fostering coherence in, other transition tracks such as the security and political process. Another lesson was that, while the functions were adequate as a transition modality in more stable parts of Darfur to replace a fully fledged UNAMID presence, additional mission capacity for early warning and analysis should have been retained longer in areas with recurring

outbreaks of violence, such as West Darfur. Lastly, it is worth noting that Security Council resolution [2559 \(2020\)](#) helped to facilitate an orderly finalization of programmatic tasks beyond the termination of the mandate, by calling on UNAMID and the country team to jointly oversee the completion of residual programmatic activities that had been delayed owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

### **The unique hybrid mission model of the Operation**

35. The establishment of UNAMID as a hybrid operation between the African Union and the United Nations was unique in peacekeeping history, brought about by a specific political context that necessitated this novel form of partnership. At a time when the relationship between the two organizations was evolving towards a more pronounced degree of convergence on peace and security in Africa, the UNAMID experiment represented a bold step towards an unprecedented level of inter-institutional collaboration, including through the establishment of joint coordination mechanisms and structures.

36. A key strength of the hybrid nature of the mission was that both the United Nations and African Union were able to play to their relative strengths and build on their respective comparative advantages. At the same time, the novelty of the hybrid model entailed a lack of clarity as to how it would be operationalized. Initial stages of its implementation required both organizations to align positions, operationalize strategies and harmonize processes. The hybrid mission model has, over the years, elicited divided assessments of its effectiveness and suitability, with some arguing that it was an important innovation that created new ways in which intergovernmental organizations could work together to achieve shared outcomes, and others hold that UNAMID was a compromise that emerged from the specific demands of the Darfur conflict at the time, and which – given the considerable operational and political obstacles that it faced throughout – should not be replicated in similar form again.

37. In practice, and in line with Security Council resolution [1769 \(2007\)](#), the hybridity of UNAMID was translated into a unified command and control structure and backstopping provided by the United Nations. The mission was financed through the United Nations peacekeeping budget and was subject to the administrative rules and regulations of the United Nations. Administratively, the agreement to apply the rules and regulations of the United Nations to all aspects of mission management proved to be a pragmatic and necessary arrangement. However, according to some observers, additional efforts could have helped to ensure greater African Union involvement in operational backstopping processes and decisions, and future collaborative arrangements could also benefit from the closer involvement, at the mission level, of substantive personnel of both parent organizations to allow the mission to better leverage the strengths of the organizations in sensitive mandate areas.

38. Although constrained in its role in the daily operations of UNAMID, the African Union served as the main interlocutor with the Government of the Sudan, including in addressing various operational challenges faced by the mission. Furthermore, the African Union played a pivotal role in strategic matters, notably in the selection process for senior mission leadership. The Joint Special Representatives and Deputy Joint Special Representatives were appointed through a consensual, if not always easy, process between both organizations, and the Force Commander was selected by the African Union in consultation with the United Nations, in line with the host Government's condition that the mission have a predominantly "African character".

### **Coordination and alignment between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council**

39. The hybrid mission was the first instance of both organizations sharing an operational mandate for a specific country situation. Achieving the necessary alignment on a common vision and political direction between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council proved challenging because of diverging views among the membership of the Councils. The experience of UNAMID illustrates the importance of maintaining an inclusive and collaborative mandating process for hybrid and other operational partnership arrangements. Significant background work had to be undertaken by the two administrations and individual Council members to align the perspectives and approaches of their mandating Councils in order to ensure unity of purpose. Over time, established routines and positive alignment effects set in, for example through annual meetings and direct liaison between members of both Councils, the harmonizing of mandate cycles and the cross-referencing of statements and decisions by the Councils. One outcome of the hybrid mission has been the development and strengthening of the degree of coordination between the Councils, which has helped to lay the groundwork for future partnerships.

### **Methods of collaboration between the two administrations**

40. Similarly to the challenges observed at the intergovernmental level, the creation of UNAMID also compelled the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission to embark on an arrangement for which no precedents, predefined decision-making methods or administrative processes existed. Former senior mission leaders reported sometimes having to balance divergent political positions between the United Nations and the African Union on crucial issues, including on fundamental questions related to peacekeeping and interventions. Another frequently repeated point was that, despite having a dual reporting line, senior UNAMID leaders reported receiving closer oversight from Headquarters. The Joint Support and Coordination Mechanism in Addis Ababa was one effort to ensure more pronounced harmonization between the two organizations and to enhance African Union oversight of UNAMID, but some considered it not to have reached its full potential. Overall, the challenges related to the joint oversight of UNAMID illustrated the effects of imbalances in headquarters backstopping capacities between the two organizations. For similar mission arrangements in the future, a joint coordination mechanism that is more effectively embedded into, and shared by, both headquarters should be considered. Other modalities, such as staff exchanges, should also be explored to enhance coordination.

41. The experience of UNAMID also revealed that, given the different processes and working modalities of different organizations, it is necessary to invest in sustained efforts to achieve strategic alignment and the clarification of roles in an operational partnership arrangement. One specific such effort that contributed to the stronger harmonization of positions and strengthened working relations was the holding of regular joint strategic assessments. These were considered by many to be an important practice in building mutual trust as well as a shared analysis and strategic outlook; it is recommended that this practice be maintained for similar operational partnerships.

42. The experience of UNAMID further underscores the need for mandating authorities to clearly articulate their interpretation of the partnership, particularly in the context of a hybrid arrangement. On the basis of the mandate, the leadership of the organizations should endeavour to provide clear joint guidance to mission leaders on the scope and parameters of their functions. A central coordinating mechanism that

meets regularly should serve as a framework for cooperative leadership and management of the mission.

### **Concluding observations**

43. At the outset of the deployment of UNAMID, virtually none of the essential minimum conditions for peacekeeping were in place in Darfur: there was hardly a peace to keep. UNAMID was seen by many armed actors as an unwelcome and unwanted guest – the result of a negotiated compromise between the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations, perceived as an obstacle to a potential military victory. The Al-Bashir administration persistently tried to limit and undermine the mission's effectiveness, and often succeeded. Despite its authorized size of nearly 25,000 uniformed and civilian peacekeepers, the operational capacities and capabilities of UNAMID to implement its mandate across Darfur often remained limited, as a result of which the mission was frequently exposed to criticism. Yet its presence undoubtedly saved countless lives, strengthened a protective environment and helped to build or reinforce capacities among communities and institutions.

44. The experience of UNAMID underscores that key criteria need to be in place for peacekeeping to be effective – such as the reliable consent of the host Government and the main parties to the conflict to the mission's presence, their commitment and collaboration in implementing the terms of a ceasefire or peace agreement and, most importantly, their will to choose peace over continued violence.

45. Equally, the example of UNAMID shows that collaborative mission arrangements involving two organizations can be mutually beneficial and maximize a mission's impact, as long as such an arrangement is built on a clear mutual understanding of comparative advantages and of roles and responsibilities. In addition, the presence of an agreed set of procedures for joint analysis and decision-making, well-capacitated and, where possible, integrated support structures and, crucially, a willingness among all partners to invest, in good faith, in the collaboration can lead to positive outcomes. A number of the lessons learned from the unique hybrid mission model of UNAMID can serve to inform other collaborative mission arrangements beyond the context of the African Union-United Nations partnership.

46. In the eyes of many practitioners involved in the early years of the mission, it was an experiment whose high transaction costs often outweighed the benefits of a hybrid model. However, many of those consulted for the present study who took a broader view of the 13-year deployment of UNAMID pointed out that the relationship between the two organizations evolved significantly over time, allowing both sides to understand each other better, align processes, build mutual trust and leverage each other's strengths. Thus, UNAMID paved the way for a much closer and more robust African Union-United Nations partnership in peace and security today. The limitations of UNAMID resulted primarily from the contextual, political and operational challenges, many of which can also be found in other peace operations contexts, rather than being unique to, or caused by, the hybrid nature of the mission.

47. On the basis of the lessons learned from the UNAMID model and the views shared by many of the experts interviewed for the study, future mission partnerships should be guided by the following considerations:

(a) **The context and need.** The context should determine the nature and modalities of the partnership that are best suited to facilitate the end of violent conflict and to address the urgent needs of the affected population – form should follow function. This was the case with UNAMID, whose hybrid mission model was designed to meet the requirements of a unique political context. Thus, the question as to whether the hybrid mission model is appropriate for other mission partnerships depends on a close assessment of the respective context. Nevertheless, the experience

of UNAMID revealed a number of broader lessons, outlined in the present report, with relevance for different partnership arrangements;

(b) **The primacy of politics.** The operation must be firmly anchored in a mutually agreed political strategy, in support of – or in preparation for – an inclusive peace agreement. While it can serve as a forceful catalyst for action, international public pressure alone should not guide the deployment of a peace operation if the political conditions for its success are absent;

(c) **Clarity of roles, responsibilities and expectations.** Clarity regarding these factors should be provided from the outset so as to minimize ambiguities between the partners;

(d) **A balanced partnership.** The partnership should be based on, and effectively leverage, the complementary mandates and comparative strengths of the partner organizations while recognizing different capacities and resources. Strong coordination at the strategic and working levels is critical to ensure alignment.

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