



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-eighth session

Item 53 of the provisional agenda\*\*

### Comprehensive review of special political missions

## Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/127](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report regarding the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and the equal participation of women, as well as youth participation. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to include in the report information on the impact of the reforms in the United Nations on the implementation of the mandates of the special political missions. The report, which is the eleventh submitted to the Assembly on this item, covers the period from August 2022 to July 2023.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 25 October 2023.

\*\* [A/78/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [77/127](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and the equal participation of women, as well as youth participation.

2. In 2023, the United Nations commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the first special political mission, the United Nations Mediator in Palestine, mandated by the General Assembly on 14 May 1948.<sup>1</sup> Since then, special political missions have played a crucial role in the Organization's efforts to maintain international peace and security. They have accompanied Member States through historic times of change, from supporting decolonization in Africa and Asia in the 1960s to assisting in ending civil wars and building peace in the 1990s in Central America; from helping Cameroon and Nigeria settle their border dispute peacefully to accompanying the remarkable peace consolidation process in Sierra Leone; and from aiding Nepal in its transition to peace and democracy in the early 2000s to helping Colombia implement the peace agreement that ended the longest civil war on its continent.

3. Despite this track record, special political missions today face many headwinds, operating as they are in a significantly more complex environment. The nature of conflicts has evolved in ways that have made peace agreements more difficult to achieve. A range of new threats, or old threats with new dimensions, increasingly intersect with and shape conflict dynamics, such as the impact of climate change, increasing inequalities, stalled or limited progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the weaponization of new technologies, including through the use of hate speech and disinformation on a scale never seen before. The resurgence of geopolitical competition, with Member States increasingly exhibiting divergent approaches to crises, has created significant obstacles to finding collective solutions. These multifaceted challenges are not exclusive to special political missions. They affect the entire range of United Nations peace and security engagements. Yet, amid the challenging global environment, special political missions have continued to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

4. On 20 July 2023, the Secretary-General presented to Member States a policy brief entitled "A New Agenda for Peace", in which he set out a vision for the way in which Member States could overcome the logic of competition and embrace cooperation for shared interests. The present report contains references to aspects of the proposals made in "A New Agenda for Peace" that have particular linkages with the work of special political missions and highlights their importance in advancing multilateral action for peace.

## II. Reflecting on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the special political missions

5. On 14 May 1948, in its second special session, the General Assembly decided to deploy a United Nations mediator to address the situation in the Middle East. This marked the first time that the United Nations would conduct mediation in a formal capacity and the first deployment of what were to become special political missions. Folke Bernadotte, appointed as the United Nations Mediator in Palestine within one week of the decision of the Assembly, achieved important successes: he supported the

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution [186 \(S-2\)](#).

parties in reaching an initial truce just two weeks after his deployment and helped to lay the ground for the humanitarian work that would eventually form the basis for establishing the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Mr. Bernadotte was assassinated while serving as a mediator in Jerusalem on 17 September 1948. His tenure demonstrated the potential of the work of special political missions: to use good offices to find common ground between parties, including in the most difficult of negotiations, and to engage politically to help improve the lives of people on the ground. Since 1948, special political missions have sought to carry this torch to help advance the promise of the Charter of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

6. Through the early 1960s, the United Nations deployed a wide range of political missions in response to the complex situations confronting the international community at the time, such as the need to mediate disputes in the Middle East and South Asia or to support the transition to independence in countries under colonization in Africa and Asia. During that formative period, the Organization also deployed several different types of missions. Those included, for example, the deployment of small political offices that carried out facilitation tasks, such as the United Nations presence in Jordan, established by the General Assembly in 1958. In other cases, political missions established in the context of decolonization assisted countries with constitution-making and the building of administrative institutions, as was the case with the United Nations Commissioners in Eritrea and Libya.<sup>2</sup>

7. As cold war rivalries intensified and divisions in the intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations increased, the Organization curtailed the deployment of new political missions from the 1960s until the end of the cold war. While successive Secretaries-General relied on special envoys and good office missions, the deployment of larger field-based civilian missions mandated by the General Assembly or the Security Council declined significantly. Notable exceptions included the designation of a mediator for Cyprus, recommended by the Security Council in resolution 186 (1964), as well as the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Middle East, pursuant to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), with the objective of maintaining contact with Member States in the region and working towards a peaceful settlement.

8. The end of the cold war presented new opportunities for collective security and special political missions. The political transitions witnessed in many parts of the world resulted in increased requests from Member States for United Nations assistance, in particular in areas such as mediation and the provision of good offices in support of regional efforts to restore constitutional order following unconstitutional changes of government; electoral support; constitution-making; reconciliation; and the rule of law. In response, the United Nations established new missions in Asia, Africa and Central America to help Member States address those needs. For instance, in 1993, at the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General dispatched a Special Mission to Afghanistan with a mandate to canvass a broad spectrum of the leaders of Afghanistan to solicit their views on how the United Nations could best assist Afghanistan in facilitating national rapprochement and reconstruction.<sup>3</sup> United Nations political offices were established in Burundi in 1993 and Somalia in 1995 to advance peace and reconciliation in these countries. Electoral support was also a central focus of some of the political missions mandated during the late 1980s and 1990s, such as the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Electoral Process

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 390 (V) of 2 December 1950 on Eritrea; and resolution 289 (IV) of 21 November 1949 on the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 48/208 of 21 December 1993.

in Nicaragua and the United Nations Observer Group for the Verification of Elections in Haiti.

9. Greater consensus in the Security Council during the post-cold war era also contributed to the establishment of missions with multidimensional mandates. This dynamic was exemplified by initiatives such as the joint United Nations-Organization of American States International Civilian Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, the United Nations Mission in Nepal, the United Nations Office in Angola and the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste. Those missions were responsible for carrying out a broad array of thematic functions which, while familiar today, represented important new areas of work at the time. Another notable development during the period was the establishment of offices with regional mandates, led by what was then the United Nations Office for West Africa (now the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)), created in 2002, and followed by the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

10. In response to the outbreak of conflict in different regions in the past 15 years, the United Nations established several new special political missions. These included the deployment of special envoys with the goal to stop violence and broker peace agreements, as in Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, as well as country-based missions, such as the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) established in 2011. In some cases, special political missions were deployed to support positive political momentum and the implementation of a peace agreement, such as the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. That period also saw a significant innovation in the design of special political missions. Examples include the deployment of joint technical missions (e.g. the Joint Mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic), an increasing number of envoys with regional mandates (e.g. in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region) and missions with a focus on the rule of law and the justice sector (e.g. United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti).

11. Since the early years of the United Nations, the international community has relied on special political missions to address a range of complex threats to international peace and security. Yet, in some cases, their impact is hampered by political dynamics on the ground, a lack of commitment to peace by the parties or the lack of unified support by the Security Council. Nevertheless, their flexibility and adaptability have made them a central component of the toolbox available to Member States to prevent and resolve conflicts and sustain peace. The successful closure of several missions, such as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, highlights the fact that special political missions are not designed to be permanent fixtures, but rather mechanisms deployed for specific tasks. The views of Member States on the role of the missions have evolved in response to changing circumstances on the ground, which often required special political missions to adapt. This adaptability and capacity for rapid response have proven critical to their work, allowing these missions to occupy a vital space in the spectrum of peace and security mechanisms that the United Nations can offer to Member States.

### **III. A New Agenda for Peace and its implications for special political missions**

12. On 20 July 2023, the Secretary-General presented to Member States a policy brief entitled “A New Agenda for Peace” ([A/77/CRP.1/Add.8](#)). It contains a clear diagnosis of the current moment: the post-cold war period is over, global power

dynamics have become increasingly fragmented and a geopolitical transition is under way. New poles of influence are emerging, and the international system is experiencing rapid upheavals. International cooperation is more essential than ever to combat rising and interlocking threats. In the policy brief, several of these threats are outlined: the changing conflict landscape, persistent violence beyond conflict environments, the potential weaponization of new technologies, rising inequalities, shrinking civic space and the climate emergency. It contains an examination of the way in which Member States can move away from a logic of competition and embrace cooperation for shared interests that is grounded in the principles of trust, solidarity and universality.

13. In the policy brief, it is acknowledged that conflicts have become more complex, deadly and harder to resolve. Special political missions have experienced this reality first-hand, as peace agreements have remained elusive in contexts such as the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, despite the continuous efforts of special envoys and their teams. In the policy brief, Member States are urgently called on to boost preventive diplomacy in order to bridge growing divides and ensure that humanity is not trampled by unmitigated competition.

14. In the policy brief, Member States are urged to invest in diplomacy and good offices, which special political missions carry out as operational platforms for the Organization's work in this area. From Libya to Iraq and Somalia, special envoys and representatives of the Secretary-General are supporting dialogue and negotiations for political solutions to build and sustain peace. In Yemen, the truce brokered by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen in April 2022 resulted in a substantial reduction in violence and facilitated the resumption of essential services. These gains have endured even after the truce lapsed.

15. In the policy brief, the Secretary-General also calls on Member States to invest in preventing conflict and violence. Many prevention opportunities are missed owing to mistrust among Member States and concerns over national sovereignty. A commitment to develop national prevention strategies to address the different drivers and enablers of conflict and violence in societies is a key component of A New Agenda for Peace. These strategies would aim to strengthen national infrastructures for peace, promote the rule of law, bolster civil society and strengthen social cohesion. In the policy brief, it is stated clearly that prevention requires an urgent shift in approach, whereby all States agree to recognize prevention and sustaining peace as universal goals. The United Nations, including through its special political missions, stands ready to offer its support to the development and implementation of national prevention strategies when so requested.

16. In the policy brief, it is also recommended that Member States enhance the role of the Peacebuilding Commission as a convener of thematic discussions on cross-pillar issues, with a focus on the mutually reinforcing nature of peace and development. With its strong focus on national ownership, the Commission can serve as a platform for Member States to address issues that lie at the intersection of peace and development. This includes examining the links between inequalities, violence, and conflict; recognizing the importance of the 2030 Agenda for prevention and peacebuilding; and understanding the interconnections between development, climate change and peace. The Commission can also create opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation and support countries as they exit the agenda of the Security Council. Over the years, special political missions have greatly benefited from the attention drawn by the Commission to the national peacebuilding priorities of the countries in which they are deployed, and from the role of the Commission in mobilizing international political support and resources to support these priorities.

17. In a time of intensifying global competition, where opportunities for conflict prevention and resolution are narrowing, it is noted in the policy brief that the ability of the United Nations to work closely with regional partners is paramount to its efforts to prevent the outbreak, continuation and recurrence of conflicts. The ties between the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the African Union, have never been stronger. Special political missions have embraced cooperation with regional organizations as a central priority. Many of them, such as UNOWAS and UNOCA, are mandated to work alongside regional counterparts and to support them. The missions remain a vital tool for strategic coherence and coordination when specific situations arise.

18. The policy brief also contains recommendations related to the women and peace and security agenda, which is another central component of the work of all special political missions. In the policy brief, the Secretary-General calls for a transformation of gendered power dynamics in peace and security and urges Member States to introduce concrete measures to secure women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making on peace and security, including quotas and targets. He also calls for a commitment to eradicate all forms of gender-based violence, the enactment of robust and comprehensive legislation and the provision of sustained, predictable and flexible financing for gender equality.

19. At its core, A New Agenda for Peace is about revitalizing multilateral action for peace. Special political missions – like peacekeeping operations – remain vital for operationalizing the collective security system envisioned in the Charter of the United Nations. The policy brief highlights that these missions will remain a central component of the continuum of United Nations responses to some of the current most volatile peace and security contexts of today. At the same time, the many challenges that these missions currently face amid a deteriorating global peace and security landscape are noted, and recommendations are put forward to illustrate the ways in which Member States can strengthen them so that they remain an essential part of the peace and security toolbox of the United Nations.

#### **IV. Interactive dialogue with Member States**

20. In its resolution [77/127](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to hold a regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue on the overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions and requested the Secretariat to reach out to Member States prior to the holding of that dialogue to ensure wide and meaningful participation.

21. Following consultations with the co-facilitators of the General Assembly resolution and the Bureau of the Fourth Committee, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs organized the tenth annual interactive dialogue on special political missions on 11 July 2023. The dialogue focused on the role and contributions of special political missions in advancing multilateral action for peace.

22. In her remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs highlighted that advancing multilateral action for peace was a core priority for the Secretary-General and a central theme in his policy brief entitled “A New Agenda for Peace”. She noted the deterioration of the global peace and security situation and of the operational environment in which several special political missions were deployed, from Afghanistan to Haiti and the Sudan. She stressed that current peace and security challenges were exacerbated by cross-boundary threats, such as the climate crisis and the weaponization of new technologies. Her presentation focused on three central areas that had emerged as priorities for Member States during the consultations for the development of A New Agenda for Peace: the

need to invest more, both politically and financially, in diplomacy; the need to prioritize conflict prevention and peacebuilding; and the urgent need for decisive action in transforming gendered power dynamics in peace and security.

23. The Assistant Secretary-General for Support Operations briefed Member States on the work of the Department of Operational Support to support special political missions in implementing their mandates. In the context of growing complexities in operating environments, the Department strove to ensure a resilient supply chain to missions and the alignment of its global supply chains with the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations Secretariat climate action plan 2020–2030. She noted the Department’s progress in implementing the Secretary-General’s gender parity strategy, in line with the core commitments under the women and peace and security agenda.

24. During the subsequent exchange, Member States recognized the important role played by special political missions in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacemaking and sustaining peace, and expressed their expectations regarding A New Agenda for Peace. Member States noted the importance of clear and feasible mandates for special political missions and reiterated that they must operate based on respect for the sovereignty of States. They welcomed the work of the special political missions to further the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and to mainstream gender in their work and called for the appointment of more women leaders in special political missions. Multiple speakers referred to the ongoing discussions in the General Assembly on financing for peacebuilding and stressed the need to provide more funding for the activities of the special political missions in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Member States encouraged the special political missions to continue their work to strengthen the meaningful participation of young people, integrate climate considerations, as appropriate, and use innovative ways to enhance their effectiveness in implementing their mandates.

## V. Key operational developments

### Africa

25. On 2 September 2022, the Secretary-General appointed Abdoulaye Bathily as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of UNSMIL. Since arriving in Tripoli, the Special Representative has launched a series of inclusive consultations with Libyan and international stakeholders to lead Libya to a path to inclusive presidential and legislative elections as soon as possible. UNSMIL deployed constitutional, electoral and gender expertise to support the “6+6” committee jointly established by the House of Representatives and the High State Council to finalize the country’s electoral laws. In June 2023, the Special Representative intensified his engagement with Libyan stakeholders to reach a compromise on the remaining contentious issues in the draft laws. He also engaged with key military and security actors across Libya through a series of dialogues with the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, to discuss, inter alia, the withdrawal of foreign fighters, foreign forces and mercenaries, the reunification of military institutions and the creation of a security environment conducive for elections.

26. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa coordinated and enhanced the coherence of the collective work of the United Nations in the region to support countries in their pursuit of lasting peace and sustainable development. The Special Envoy carried out her good offices efforts in relation to the situation in Ethiopia, engaging with the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and other partners to advance the peace process. The Office

of the Special Envoy provided technical and advisory support to IGAD and coordinated the implementation of the review of the United Nations Regional Prevention Strategy for the Horn of Africa.

27. For most of the reporting period, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) continued its efforts to facilitate an inclusive political process to restore a credible civilian-led democratic transition in the Sudan. It worked as part of a trilateral mechanism alongside the African Union and IGAD. UNITAMS implemented the four pillars of its mandate, including support for the implementation of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan, by chairing the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee and helping to implement the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians. However, large-scale fighting erupted on 15 April 2023 between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, which severely disrupted the activities of the Mission. As a result, UNITAMS relocated most of its personnel and established a small presence in Port Sudan, focusing on critical priorities, such as good offices in support of peace. In addition, the Mission set up a temporary remote office in Nairobi.

28. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) supported the Federal Government of Somalia in implementing its key state-building priorities. It also advocated for the advancement of the ongoing constitutional review process through a consensus-based, inclusive approach, ensuring that the voices of women, young people and marginalized communities would be reflected. UNSOM also provided good offices assistance to the Federal Government and its states. It supported Somalia in strengthening the rule of law and security institutions and provided technical support to the Federal Government to protect and promote human rights.

29. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA conducted good offices pertaining to the political transition in Chad. He also undertook good offices in Sao Tome and Principe, which he visited jointly with the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States in the aftermath of the events of 25 November 2022. UNOCA continued to serve as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which provided a framework for confidence-building, conflict prevention and resolution for the States in the subregion.

30. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region supported the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, including through shuttle diplomacy and by providing support to the Regional Oversight Mechanism, which held its eleventh summit in Bujumbura, Burundi, on 6 May 2023. The Office of the Special Envoy provided logistical, political, financial and technical support to the Nairobi process, led by the East African Community, and the Luanda process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The Office also supported the efforts of the African Union to bring together all regional entities and initiatives involved in addressing the crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

31. UNOWAS undertook preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention efforts in the region, in close cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States. In the context of the attempted unconstitutional change of government unfolding in the Niger since 26 July 2023, UNOWAS has been providing good offices support to the Community in finding a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the crisis. In addition, UNOWAS facilitated consultations and consensus-building among political actors in countries that held elections and remained engaged in efforts to ensure the return to constitutional order in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. UNOWAS also engaged with Member States to promote good governance, the rule of law, human



rights and the participation of women and young people in political and peace processes. It also focused on analysing the impact of climate change on peace and security in the region. The Office supported the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, as well as the Executive Secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel in its efforts to safeguard the cohesion of the Group following the withdrawal of Mali. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, facilitated the implementation of the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002 concerning the land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria.

### **The Americas**

32. The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti performed good offices to support an inclusive intra-Haitian dialogue, provided strategic and advisory support to police development and promoted and protected human rights. To this end, it engaged with Haitian stakeholders across the political spectrum and civil society organizations, including women's groups, and coordinated with regional actors. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [2645 \(2022\)](#), the Secretariat has conducted consultations regarding options for enhanced security support to combat high levels of gang violence. The findings were conveyed in the letter dated 8 October 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2022/747](#)), in which he recommended the deployment of an international specialized armed force to support the Haitian National Police in addressing the threat posed by armed gangs.

33. The Security Council, in its resolution [2655 \(2022\)](#), extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia until 31 October 2023. Resolution [2673 \(2023\)](#) expanded the mandate of the Mission to include monitoring the implementation of the comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Peace talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) resumed in November 2022, with the support of the good offices of the Secretary-General through his Special Representative for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The peace talks resulted in a ceasefire agreement that entered into effect on 3 August. Pursuant to a request by the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, Security Council resolution [2694 \(2023\)](#) mandated the Mission to monitor and verify the implementation of the ceasefire.

### **Asia and the Pacific**

34. The Security Council, in its resolution [2678 \(2023\)](#), extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) until 17 March 2024. In its resolution [2679 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct and provide an integrated, independent assessment no later than 17 November 2023, to offer recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach to address the current challenges faced by Afghanistan. On 5 April, the de facto Minister for Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Motaqi, verbally notified the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan the decision to impose severe restrictions on national female staff working for the United Nations with immediate effect. The United Nations condemned the decision and requested United Nations national personnel – women and men – not to report to United Nations offices, with limited exceptions made for the performance of critical tasks. This posture remains in place for UNAMA and is under constant monitoring. UNAMA continues in all its interactions with the de facto authorities to seek a reversal of the severe restrictions.

35. Until the completion of her mandate in June 2023, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar worked to mobilize the international community and key regional stakeholders to create conditions conducive to the safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees. Engaging with key stakeholders in Myanmar, the Special Envoy advocated for pragmatic steps towards a cessation of violence and a return to civilian rule based on the will and needs of the people. The Special Envoy worked in a complementary manner with the Special Envoy of the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to support the implementation of the Association's five-point consensus. On 1 August 2023, the military extended the state of emergency for another six months amid intensified violence and conflict throughout the country.

### **Europe and Central Asia**

36. The Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions worked closely with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to co-chair the Geneva International Discussions on security and stability. Despite heightened geopolitical tensions, the co-chairs continued to engage with all participants to encourage constructive dialogue and make progress on core agenda items pertaining to the non-use of force and international security arrangements, as well as humanitarian issues, such as the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

37. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia provided good offices, supported regional cooperation and implemented activities in its priority areas, such as the prevention of violent extremism and counter-terrorism, transboundary water management and the empowerment of women and young people. In partnership with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Centre spearheaded initiatives addressing radicalization and terrorism based on the updated Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. The Centre provided a forum for government officials and experts to enhance dialogue and exchange best practices on transboundary water management.

38. The Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus actively engaged with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to foster trust-building initiatives and facilitate discussions that could contribute to creating conditions for the resumption of formal negotiations. The Deputy Special Adviser spearheaded efforts to revitalize the work of the joint technical committees. Such efforts delivered multiple agreements on issues affecting the daily lives of Cypriots, thus helping to build trust and maintain dialogue channels between the two sides. In March 2023, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, on behalf of the Secretary-General, visited Cyprus to engage with the leaders and other stakeholders of both communities.

### **Middle East**

39. On 30 May 2023, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2682 \(2023\)](#), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2024. In the resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide, by 31 March 2024, an independent strategic review that assessed current threats to the peace and security of Iraq, the continued relevance of the tasks and priorities of UNAMI and options to support the Government in strengthening effective regional cooperation. The review should also provide recommendations to optimize the mandate, structure and staffing of UNAMI.

40. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon worked with Lebanese stakeholders and international partners to preserve the stability of the country despite the multifaceted crisis. On 27 October 2022, the Special Coordinator hosted a meeting chaired by the United States of America at the premises of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in Naqoura, where the maritime boundary agreement between Lebanon and Israel was formalized through an exchange of separate letters with the United States. She worked closely with the international community, calling for the prompt election of a president in Lebanon and the formation of a Government, which remain pending. The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to fulfil reporting functions on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

41. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process worked with the parties and regional and international partners to defuse tensions on the ground and support the advancement of a just, comprehensive two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Special Coordinator engaged intensively with all stakeholders to achieve cessations of hostilities between Israel and armed groups in the Gaza Strip in August 2022 and May 2023, and to address conflict drivers in the occupied West Bank. The Office engaged with the parties and United Nations partners to ensure the continued provision of critical humanitarian and development assistance to the Palestinian people. The Special Coordinator continued his efforts to address the fiscal and socioeconomic challenges in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, strengthen the institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority and formulate sustainable solutions that advance a two-State reality.

42. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria worked to promote common ground among stakeholders to advance a United Nations-facilitated political solution to the Syrian conflict pursuant to Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). Efforts focused on building trust and confidence, encouraging constructive international diplomacy among key stakeholders in support of the process, unblocking obstacles to reconvene the Constitutional Committee and addressing its substantive challenges, pursuing the release of detainees and abductees and information on missing persons, advocating for unhindered humanitarian access and appealing for a nationwide ceasefire.

43. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen engaged with a range of Yemeni stakeholders, with the aim of launching an inclusive, multitrack political process to end the conflict. Despite the expiration in October 2022 of the truce brokered by the United Nations, levels of violence remained at their lowest since the onset of the conflict in 2015. Many elements of the truce continued to benefit the population, in particular the entry of fuel and goods into Hudaydah ports and commercial flights from Sana'a airport. There have been neither Houthi cross-border attacks on neighbouring countries nor Saudi-led coalition air strikes in Yemen.

44. The United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement assisted the parties in implementing the Agreement, with a particular focus on liaison and de-escalation activities, as well as support for initiatives on mine action, civil affairs, and women and peace and security matters.

#### **Work of sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels**

45. On 6 December 2022 and 2 May 2023, the Secretary-General submitted two reports ([S/2022/910](#) and [S/2023/308](#)) to the Security Council pursuant to resolution [2635 \(2022\)](#), related to the authorizations for inspection, on the high seas off the coast of Libya, of vessels bound to or from Libya, to ensure the strict implementation of the arms embargo. Through its resolution [2644 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Libya until 15 November 2023. Through its

resolution [2684 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council extended the authorization for a further 12 months and requested the Secretary-General to report on the resolution's implementation within 6 months and 11 months of its adoption.

46. The mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic was extended until 31 August 2024 through Security Council resolution [2693 \(2023\)](#). In addition, the Security Council extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Mali until 30 September 2023 pursuant to resolution [2649 \(2022\)](#).

47. On 21 October 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution [2653 \(2022\)](#), which imposed targeted sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for or complicit in actions that threaten the peace, security or stability of Haiti. The Security Council established a committee to monitor the implementation of these measures and requested the Secretary-General to create, for an initial period of 13 months, a group of four experts. These experts were appointed on 30 December 2022.

48. In a letter dated 15 September 2022 addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2022/698](#)), the Secretary-General provided recommendations to improve the weapons and ammunition management capability of Somalia and options for benchmarks that could guide the Security Council in its review of the arms embargo. Through its resolution [2662 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Somalia until 15 December 2023. In the resolution, the Security Council decided that the Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia would henceforth be known as the Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Al-Shabaab.

49. In its resolution [2663 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) until 30 November 2032. The Council extended, through its resolution [2675 \(2023\)](#), the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Yemen until 15 December 2023.

50. Through its resolution [2676 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan until 12 March 2024. In its resolution [2688 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo until 1 August 2024.

51. In its resolution [2680 \(2023\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea until 30 April 2024. Through its resolution [2683 \(2023\)](#), the Council extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan until 1 July 2024. The Secretary-General also submitted two reports to the Security Council ([S/2022/490](#) and [S/2022/912](#)) on the implementation of resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#).

## VI. Key policy issues pertaining to special political missions

### Women and peace and security agenda

52. Implementing the women and peace and security agenda is a strategic priority of special political missions. They worked intensively to reinforce advocacy and support for women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace and political processes, including by advancing targeted measures, providing gender expertise and ensuring regular engagements with women's rights constituencies to inform peace work.

53. In the context of the implementation of Security Council resolution [2493 \(2019\)](#), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to hold context-specific high-level strategy meetings to design and support inclusive processes that advance women's full, equal and meaningful participation. This included a session

with UNSMIL in May 2023, which resulted in the launch of a mission plan on inclusive mediation that addressed issues pertaining to women's protection and participation. The Department also supported inclusivity mechanisms in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, which focused on advancing women's inclusion in government formation, parliaments and peace processes, as well as holding periodic meetings with women civil society organizations.

54. In Colombia, the Verification Mission supported women's organizations to actively participate in peace consolidation efforts, including new peace initiatives under the national "total peace" policy, as well as in the elaboration of the first national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Regular consultations held by the Verification Mission and the United Nations country team with these constituencies and high-level advocacy contributed to the inclusion of women former combatants in decision-making processes and the empowerment of women social leaders and human rights defenders.

55. In Somalia, in May 2023, UNSOM, alongside the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund and Somali women chairs of the Federal Parliament, established the Somalia women Members of Parliament/United Nations leadership forum as a platform to support Somali efforts on gender-related priority legislation, the meaningful inclusion of women in the National Consultative Council, the implementation of a 30 per cent target for women's participation in the next national elections and capacity-building for women members of Parliament.

### **Youth, peace and security**

56. Meaningful youth engagement is crucial for the achievement of sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and gender equality goals. In April 2023, the policy brief entitled "Meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes" (A/77/CRP.1/Add.2) was submitted to Member States for their consideration. In it, the Secretary-General called on Member States to make a strong commitment to meaningful youth engagement in decision-making at the local, national, regional and global levels and ensure the systematic integration of meaningful youth participation, including in all United Nations intergovernmental mechanisms.

57. Several special political missions supported the meaningful engagement of youth groups in political and peace processes. Before large-scale fighting erupted on 15 April 2023 in the Sudan, UNITAMS held consultations with youth-led civil society organizations, resistance committees and young women leaders to facilitate the reflection of their views and ideas in the intra-Sudanese political process. In Colombia, the Verification Mission supported multiple events with young people to discuss the status of the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace and broader peacebuilding efforts.

58. Special political missions also promoted youth engagement on issues related to climate change. In Somalia, together with the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of Sweden, UNSOM supported the creation of a platform that facilitated the work and advocacy of youth climate change advocates. In Iraq, UNAMI provided technical and mentorship support to young people on leadership, decision-making and communication to enhance their engagement in climate-related political processes.

59. Special political missions also advocated for the youth, peace and security agenda at the regional level. In December 2022, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia convened the fourth regional dialogue

among the Governments of Central Asia and the graduates of its Preventive Diplomacy Academy, which served as a platform for young people to share their visions with high-level officials on peace and security in the region and beyond. The annual training programme began at the beginning of 2023 with 36 participants representing five Central Asian countries and Afghanistan.

### **Peacebuilding and sustaining peace**

60. Special political missions have continued to play an important role in supporting Member States in a range of peacebuilding activities. Through their integrated work with United Nations country teams and resident coordinators, they support the implementation of inclusive and nationally led and owned peacebuilding priorities. During the reporting period, the Peacebuilding Fund approved \$37.4 million for projects in special political mission contexts. Demand for this type of support continues to be very high. However, adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding remains a critical challenge. The implementation of General Assembly resolution [76/305](#) on financing for peacebuilding is therefore crucial.

61. The Peacebuilding Fund, in collaboration with special political missions, carried out peacebuilding projects to advance peace processes. In Colombia, the Peacebuilding Fund approved \$9 million to support initiatives in line with the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. This investment was developed in consultation with the special political mission and included a project to support the implementation of family care services aimed at empowering women former combatants in the process of reintegration.

62. Special political missions are also implementing the peacebuilding agenda at the regional level. In Central Africa, UNOCA worked on developing regional peacebuilding capacities and infrastructures for peace. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, UNOCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is establishing a network of 1,800 young peacebuilders in Cameroon Chad and Gabon. These peacebuilders will undergo training to help them identify early signs of violent conflict, engage in local mediation and conflict resolution efforts, and build strategies to combat organized crime and illegal trafficking, including trafficking in persons.

63. In West Africa, the Peacebuilding Fund collaborated with UNOWAS, the United Nations country teams and regional partners in identifying peacebuilding priorities and maximizing the collective impact of United Nations peacebuilding activities in the region. The Fund's support in West Africa has been affected and informed by the recent complex political and regional developments, including unconstitutional changes of government in multiple countries, instability around elections and the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. In Guinea, the Peacebuilding Fund has supported the country after the 2021 military coup and is currently funding several initiatives aimed at a more peaceful and inclusive transition.

### **Geographical distribution and gender balance**

64. Under Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, due regard should be paid to the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Promoting geographical diversity is not only a legal obligation under the Charter, but also a critical factor for the effectiveness and legitimacy of the United Nations as a universal organization. The Secretary-General remains committed to promoting a more diverse workforce.

65. As of May 2023, the distribution of the 1,656 internationally recruited staff in the Professional and higher and Field Service categories serving in field-based special



political missions was as follows: 32.0 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States, 26.5 per cent from the African Group, 22.8 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 12.1 per cent from the Eastern European Group and 5.6 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Among the 2,029 locally recruited staff in the General Service and related categories, 69.4 per cent were from the Asia-Pacific Group, 19.1 per cent from the African Group, 9.8 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group, 1.3 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States and 0.2 per cent from the Eastern European Group.

66. The Secretary-General is equally committed to achieving gender parity throughout the Organization, including in field-based special political missions. As of May 2023, 37.7 per cent of internationally recruited staff serving in these missions were women, showing a slight increase from 36.8 per cent over the previous year. Among the locally recruited staff, 20.0 per cent were women, which also represents a slight increase, from 19.6 per cent.

## VII. Observations

67. For the past 75 years, special political missions have been instrumental in advancing preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution and sustaining peace. The activities and achievements of special political missions demonstrate the vital contribution they make, even as they face a more volatile operating environment.

68. The role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security – of which special political missions are a central part – has proven crucial time and again, particularly during challenging times: it has supported Members States efforts to end the injustices of colonialism and conflicts around the world, strengthen the rule of law and building recognition and respect for fundamental human rights. In the face of growing division and interlocking threats to international peace and security, the contribution of special political missions to multilateral action for peace will be critical.

69. As emphasized in A New Agenda for Peace, the choice ahead is clear. Unless the benefits of international cooperation become more tangible and equitable, and unless States can manage their competition and move beyond their current divisions to find pragmatic solutions to global problems, human suffering will worsen. The time to act is now. I count on the full support of Member States for the various proposals I put forward in my policy brief.

70. A decade ago, my predecessor presented the first report on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions (A/68/223). The active participation of Member States in the discussion of the Fourth Committee and their regular interaction with the Secretariat has contributed to improved awareness of the objectives, roles and functions of special political missions, as well as greater support for their work. Continued support from Member States to special political missions is a key element in their ability to implement their mandate successfully. A prominent dimension of this support is political unity behind the efforts of my special representatives and special envoys, for whom the backing of the international community is the most important currency and source of legitimacy. I also note, in this respect, the outstanding question of funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions.

71. I would like to pay tribute to my special representatives, advisers and envoys, and to the dedicated and courageous United Nations staff and affiliated personnel serving in special political missions deployed across the world, who often work under challenging conditions to advance diplomacy for peace and put into practice the promise of the Charter of the United Nations. I deeply value and appreciate their work and commitment.

**Annex****United Nations special political missions (as at 15 July 2023)****Special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General**

1. Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
3. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
4. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#)
5. United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions
6. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
7. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
8. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
9. United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement
10. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar
11. Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa

**Sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and other entities and mechanisms**

12. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
13. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
14. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
15. Panel of Experts on Libya
16. Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
17. Panel of Experts on Yemen
18. Panel of Experts on South Sudan
19. Panel of Experts on Mali
20. Panel of Experts on Somalia
21. Panel of Experts on Haiti
22. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
23. Implementation of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#)
24. Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) on the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction
25. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate



26. United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
27. Office of the Ombudsperson to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities

**Regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions**

28. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
29. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process<sup>1</sup>
30. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
31. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
32. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
33. United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
34. United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
35. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
36. United Nations Office to the African Union<sup>2</sup>
37. United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
38. United Nations Support Mission in Libya
39. United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
40. United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
41. United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan

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<sup>1</sup> Funded from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.

<sup>2</sup> Funded partially from the regular budget but technically not part of the special political mission budgetary category.