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Strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to the statement of the President of the Security Council dated 16 December 2014 ([S/PRST/2014/27](#)), provides an update on the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the current status of the partnership and efforts to enhance it. It also provides a description of the main activities carried out by the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and the United Nations system since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2020/860](#)) on 31 August 2020, including those pertaining to resolutions [2320 \(2016\)](#), [2378 \(2017\)](#) and [2457 \(2019\)](#).

II. The United Nations and African Union strategic partnership

United Nations Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council

2. The United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council continued to prioritize the strengthening of their strategic partnership to enhance peace and security in Africa. The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on peace, security and stability further heightened the urgency of mitigating its impact on people's lives and livelihoods. Using virtual platforms, the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council held regular formal and informal interactions, providing opportunities for greater clarity on the peace and security challenges on the continent.

3. On 30 September 2020, members of both Councils held their fourteenth annual joint consultative meeting virtually. During the meeting, they noted the negative global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including throughout Africa. They discussed the situations in Mali, the broader Sahel subregion and Somalia. They also reflected on progress made under the African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by 2020 and Security Council resolution



2457 (2019), including the activities undertaken by the African Union as part of the 2020 theme of the year “Silencing the guns: creating conducive conditions for Africa’s development”. They further reiterated the commitment to continue to implement the women and peace and security agenda, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000). The joint consultative meeting was preceded by the fifth joint informal seminar, on 29 September 2020. The members of the two Councils exchanged views on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union and called for all stakeholders to intensify their efforts towards the realization of the objectives outlined in the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. On 23 October 2020, the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission conducted a virtual informal consultative meeting to identify ways of further enhancing cooperation in support of peacebuilding in Africa. They recognized the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, and the crucial roles of women and youth in addressing them. They acknowledged the African common position on the 2020 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture endorsed by the Peace and Security Council and called for complementarities between the African Union and the United Nations financial mechanisms, and stronger support for African Union-led post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts.

5. My Special Representatives and Envoys continued to brief the African Union Peace and Security Council, on country and regional situations, as well as on thematic issues, sometimes jointly with their African Union counterparts. UNOAU, with the Peace and Security Council secretariat, facilitated monthly coordination meetings between the Chair of the Peace and Security Council and the President of the Security Council to discuss their respective programmes of work with a view to strengthening coordination and synergies. At the joint Peace and Security Council virtual retreat with the three African non-permanent members of the Security Council and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, known as the African Members of the Security Council plus one (“A3+1”), held in March 2021, measures were adopted to promote greater consultation and consensus on African positions on peace and security matters. With the facilitation of the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations, the Secretariat continued to regularly brief the group on issues pertaining to peace and security in Africa.

6. The African Union Peace and Security Council undertook field visits to South Sudan and the Sudan in March 2021, as a reaffirmation of support for the ongoing political processes, and to the Central African Republic in June and July 2021 to give impetus to the implementation of the February 2019 peace agreement. On the anniversary of its 1000th session, on 25 May 2021, the Peace and Security Council underscored the need to act early and engage strategically in order to prevent conflict. My Special Representative to the African Union and Head of UNOAU encouraged the African Union and its members to adopt and apply the African Union Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework.

United Nations Secretariat and African Union Commission

7. Given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the trauma of recurrent conflicts, as well as emerging threats in Africa, coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and African Union is of paramount importance. Guided by the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development, the two organizations are working together more strategically, constructively and systematically.

8. On 9 December 2020, I met with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the fourth United Nations-African Union annual conference, convened virtually. We discussed cooperation on peace and security, development and human rights, and reviewed progress and challenges in the implementation of our joint commitments. We noted the vital importance of achieving strategic convergence between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council on the continent's peace and security agenda and ensuring that the continent's positions and voice are adequately considered. We agreed to foster complementarity in electoral support for Member States and undertake joint conflict prevention initiatives aimed at mitigating election-related crises. We reiterated the importance of promoting women's rights and equal participation, achieving gender equality and upholding the rights of women and youth in all spheres. We discussed issues relating to development and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasized the need to build back better with a focus on a green and sustainable recovery, placing women and youth at the centre of these efforts. We also discussed the roll-out of vaccines and reaffirmed our commitment to support a coordinated approach on debt relief.

9. On 16 October 2020, the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security held its nineteenth consultative meeting, via a virtual platform. Senior officials reviewed the status of the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union and discussed peace and security challenges in Africa and cooperation in support of electoral processes.

10. From 10 to 12 March 2021, the two Organizations convened virtually the fourteenth United Nations-African Union-regional economic communities/mechanisms consultative meeting on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts (desk-to-desk). Over 140 desk officers and external experts participated. Taking into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on the continent, the participants at the meeting reviewed progress made on the partnership and examined ongoing political transitions, support for Member States on elections, the prevention of violent extremism and counter-terrorism efforts and support for African Union peace support operations and ad hoc security arrangements. The participants underscored the need to continue working towards sustainable and predictable financing of African Union peace support operations. They also agreed to establish joint technical groups to continue the dialogue on these topics.

11. With UNOAU facilitation, the Secretariat and the African Union Commission fielded joint high-level missions, including a visit to the Sudan from 24 to 26 October 2020 by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the then African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. The focus of the joint visit was the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and its drawdown. The Under-Secretary-General also travelled on two occasions to the Central African Republic, from 27 to 30 October 2020, with the then Commissioner for Peace and Security, and from 3 to 5 June 2021, with the Commissioner of the now restructured African Union Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. On 26 and 27 July, my Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs visited Addis Ababa and exchanged views on peace and security challenges and prevention efforts on the continent with the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

12. In accordance with the African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns, extended to 2030, I remain determined to advance, in collaboration with the African Members of the Security Council plus one, the call for predictable financing of African Union peace and security activities. More broadly, the Silencing

the Guns initiative also provides for investment to promote a culture of peace. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to act as coordinator, through the United Nations Task Force on Silencing the Guns in Africa, and provided technical assistance to the African Union Mediation Support Unit and the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). The Department also provided online capacity-building to over 80 young people from Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, developing skills on unarmed approaches to civilian protection. In September 2020, as part of the Africa Amnesty Month for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, with the African Union Commission and the Regional Centre on Small Arms, rolled out national campaigns in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Kenya.

13. In October 2020, pursuant to resolution [2320 \(2016\)](#), I communicated to the Security Council and to the African Union the main findings of the assessment of United Nations-African Union cooperation and of the structure and capacity of UNOAU ([S/2020/1020](#)). The assessment was conducted from November 2019 to February 2020 and led by an independent expert. The assessment highlighted widespread recognition that the partnership remains critical, particularly in the domain of peace and security. I have entrusted joint implementation of the recommendations and observations to a United Nations inter-agency task force, which will work in close collaboration with the African Union.

III. The United Nations and African Union operational partnership

Challenges and opportunities to peace and security in Africa

14. The primary underlying structural challenges to achieving lasting peace and security in Africa continue to be: political and socioeconomic exclusion and discrimination, including gender inequalities; weak governance institutions, including with regard to upholding the rule of law, human rights, the delivery of basic public services and the equitable management of natural resources; and the effects of climate change and food insecurity. Those weaknesses are compounded in some instances by external interference and proxy conflicts, violent extremism and terrorism, organized crime, corruption and the absence of effective State authority in parts of some countries of the continent. The impact of climate change on peace and security in Africa continues to increase stress on already vulnerable institutions and communities, including the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel.

15. With over 7.5 million cases and more than 189,000 registered deaths, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the conflict drivers in Africa. The pandemic has undercut the provision of public services and economic activity and hampered implementation of peace agreements and good offices interventions. A comprehensive and coordinated response to these challenges involving international, regional and national stakeholders is required to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on peace and security.

16. The challenges to peace and security faced in some parts of the continent remain complex and volatile. While some progress was made in resolving conflict, a number of these contexts have remained fragile and require continued engagement and support by the international community.

17. In Northern Africa, the interim executive authority in Libya was inaugurated in March 2021, and progress was achieved in the implementation of the ceasefire agreement with the opening of the coastal road on 30 July. Nonetheless, the peace

remains fragile, and the preparations for and the holding of the elections on 24 December 2021 require significant efforts.

18. In the Sahel and throughout the Lake Chad Basin region, the persistent threats of terrorism and violent extremism posed by terrorist groups affiliated to al-Qaida, Da'esh and Boko Haram, as well as the proliferation of militias, continued to pose major challenges to collective efforts to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development. The West Africa subregion continued to experience terrorist expansion and attacks as witnessed in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria. In addition, unconstitutional changes of government, violent extremism and a growing narcotics trade, as well as intercommunal and farmer-herder conflicts, remained real threats to the subregion and the Sahel. Nonetheless, largely peaceful and inclusive elections in Burkina Faso, the peaceful transfer of power in the Niger following the presidential elections and the appointment of a civilian Prime Minister in Mali were significant developments and were accompanied by joint efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations, in close coordination with other partners.

19. In the Central Africa region, several countries continued to experience protracted armed conflict, including: activities by non-State armed groups; tensions in relation to elections; humanitarian crises, often with significant transborder dimensions; and maritime insecurity and terrorism, including in Cameroon and Chad. The cross-border tensions between Chad and the Central African Republic further threaten regional stability. The incursion of the Libya-based Chadian rebels, Front pour l'alternance et la concorde au Tchad (FACT), into Chad on 11 April also underlined risks pertaining to cross-border movement of armed groups or fighters.

20. In Chad, the recent security, political and socioeconomic developments highlighted the need for a comprehensive regional approach to fighting terrorism and cross-border movements of armed groups, addressing the root causes of conflicts, promoting national dialogue and inclusive governance. In Cameroon, violence persisted in the North-West and South-West regions, including widespread sexual violence, leading to further abuses against civilians, forced displacements and the hampering of humanitarian access and access to basic services. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained fragile, in particular in the eastern part of the country, notwithstanding the increased military operations against the armed groups. The eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano near Goma further aggravated the already dire humanitarian situation.

21. In the Horn of Africa, political transitions continued to pose challenges. The situation in Somalia remained delicate despite the agreement by political stakeholders on holding indirect elections. The ongoing armed confrontation in the Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions of Ethiopia, the developments regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and differences between Ethiopia and the Sudan over their common border, represent important peace and security challenges in the region. I continue to follow closely developments related to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the African Union's ongoing facilitation of negotiations in search of a consensual solution. I am also working with the African Union, together with other regional and international partners to help find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Tigray. In the Sudan, the transitional Government continued efforts to move the transition forward, including through broadening democratic governance, furthering peacemaking and undertaking difficult economic reforms. A key achievement was the signing on 3 October 2020 of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan between the transitional Government and a number of rebel movements. Despite the progress, there are continued delays in the transitional process, including on the establishment of the Transitional Legislative Council. Challenges remained elsewhere in the region, including slow implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution

of the Conflict in South Sudan, and the persistent tense relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and some of the federal member states.

22. The Southern Africa region remained generally stable. However, the deterioration in the security situation in the northern Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique has left an estimated 1.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and over 732,000 people internally displaced. The crisis poses serious risks of spillover to neighbouring provinces and of expansion of the threat of violent extremism to the subregion.

23. The United Nations continued to work with the African Union, the regions and Governments of the affected countries to address those challenges through conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts through common regional approaches.

24. The institutional reform of the African Union continues. In February 2021, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government considered the progress report presented by the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. The Assembly re-elected the Chairperson of the Commission and elected the Deputy Chairperson, as well as four of the six new Commissioners for the restructured six Departments, including a merged Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Some other key decisions, including the division of responsibilities between the Union and regional economic communities, were however deferred to the next Summit, in 2022.

Partnership in conflict prevention and peacemaking

25. Within the peace and security landscape described above, the United Nations collaboration with the African Union and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms, as well as other partners, intensified in support of preventive diplomacy and mediation throughout the continent.

26. In Libya, significant progress has been achieved in the Libyan-led and Libyan-owned dialogue facilitated by the United Nations in the context of the Berlin process and the working groups of its International Follow-up Committee on Libya. The security working group of the Committee, which is co-chaired by the African Union, contributed significantly to developments on the security track and enhanced its cooperation with the 5+5 Joint Military Commission. The United Nations and the African Union also continued their collaboration in support of human rights-based national reconciliation efforts. In a welcome development on 5 April 2021, the President of the Libyan Presidency Council, Mohamed al-Menfi, announced the establishment of the High National Reconciliation Commission.

27. In the Sahel, the United Nations continued to work with the African Union to support the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel in degrading terrorist elements. During my address to the seventh Summit of the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel, held in N'Djamena on 15 and 16 February, I expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation in the region. I also noted that security-focused approaches to combat terrorism needed to be part of a broader, multidimensional response based on good governance, respect for the rule of law and development. During the Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on 2 June, I also welcomed the launch in June of the United Nations Group of Friends of Women of the Sahel by the Niger, the African Union and the European Union.

28. In Mali, coordination between the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS continued to support the transition agenda of Mali to restore constitutional order as set by the African Union and ECOWAS. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), in

consultation with the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel and other partners, continued its efforts to facilitate the implementation of the peace agreement and stabilize the country. In our unified messaging of 24 May, we condemned the second coup in Mali, which denoted the continued fragility of Malian State institutions and the Sahel region.

29. In the Central Africa region, the United Nations maintained regular consultations with the President of the Central African Republic and the African Union. Additionally, my Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations and the then African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security undertook regular joint good offices missions in support of the 2019 peace agreement and towards conduct of the December 2020 elections.

30. Since the death of the President of Chad, Idriss Déby Into, in April, and the takeover of power by the transitional military council, led by his son Mahamat Idriss Déby, my Special Representative for Central Africa has engaged the Chadian transitional authorities and non-State actors. He has called for an inclusive national dialogue to facilitate a peaceful political transition and help lay foundations for sustainable peace in the country, in close coordination with the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In Cameroon, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the African Union continued to hold consultations and coordinated messaging on the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions.

31. In Ethiopia, the messaging of both the United Nations and the African Union emphasized the imperative of the protection of civilians, including from sexual violence, accountability and unhindered humanitarian access in the Tigray region consistent with international human rights and humanitarian laws, as well as a cessation of hostilities and an inclusive political solution to the conflict. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been conducting a joint investigation with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in Tigray since 16 May, which is expected to conclude by the end of August with a public report. Further, the United Nations continues to support efforts of the African Union to help the parties reach a solution to the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and thus promote broader regional stability.

32. In the Sudan, the United Nations and the African Union worked closely together to accompany the successful transition from UNAMID to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). Since the establishment of UNITAMS in June 2020, the transitional Government has continued to make notable advancements in the political transition, but significant challenges remain. Further progress, including the improvement of the socioeconomic situation, an inclusive democratization process reflecting the country's diverse society and the establishment of the remaining transitional institutions, remains essential for its success.

33. In Somalia, the two organizations continued their collaboration, in partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the European Union and others, to encourage the Federal Government and federal member states to overcome the impasse regarding implementation of the electoral agreement of 17 September 2020.

34. In South Sudan, joint efforts have continued to address key drivers of conflict at the local and national levels and strengthening of local administrations to coordinate local reconciliation and sustain momentum throughout the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. Delays in implementing key outstanding provisions of the Revitalized Agreement need to be addressed urgently, and increased humanitarian funding is required to respond to the high levels of food insecurity.

35. In Mozambique, the United Nations engaged with the national authorities, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – which approved the deployment of its Standby Force – the African Union and international partners to address the grave humanitarian crisis and the threat of terrorism.

36. In March, the climate security mechanism at the United Nations and the African Union climate security cluster initiated joint goals on information sharing and mutual support to address the linkages between climate change, peace and security.

37. The national chapters of the African Women Leaders Network continued to actively promote women's leadership. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they supported women leaders and peacebuilders to advocate with armed groups to heed the Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire. In Mali, they contributed to their country's peace and transition process, including by advocating for full implementation of the gender quota law. On 21 March 2021, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the African Union Commission, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as Chair of the African Union, and the Government of Germany co-hosted an event to discuss key achievements of the national chapters and called for increased representation of women in the COVID-19 response.

38. The United Nations intensified its support for Member States and regional and subregional organizations in the operationalization of regional counter-terrorism strategies and the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism also continued to engage with SADC to address the regional dimension of the terrorist threat and deepened its collaboration with the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism.

Partnership in peacekeeping and peace support operations

39. Notwithstanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations and the African Union continued to work closely to enable an effective international response to conflict throughout Africa. The two organizations found innovative ways of dealing with some aspects virtually, while having staff travel to provide the necessary assistance when needed. This included: support for the development of policies and other guiding documents; sharing of information, knowledge and expertise; force generation; and joint reporting.

40. In Somalia, the United Nations remained engaged with the African Union to support the ongoing operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and UNOAU. The Department of Operational Support, in coordination with UNSOS, continued to work closely with the African Union Commission and AMISOM to harmonize practices and implement COVID-19 prevention and containment measures, including inoculation of AMISOM troops.

41. In November and December 2020, an independent assessment was conducted on the international support to the whole security environment in Somalia post 2021 as requested in resolution [2540 \(2020\)](#) and submitted to the Security Council in January 2021. In addition, in line with the communiqué of the 949th meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, held on 24 September 2020, the African Union completed an independent assessment in June 2021 on its engagement in and with Somalia. Consultations are under way to forge a common understanding between the key stakeholders on the way forward in handing over further security responsibilities to Somali security forces and presenting a joint proposal in line with the request in Security Council resolution [2568 \(2021\)](#).

42. In the Central African Republic, the two organizations continued to coordinate and work closely to operationalize and support the African Union Military Observers Mission to the Central African Republic. Facilitated by UNOAU, MINUSCA and the African Union Military Observers Mission signed a memorandum of understanding, specifying the support provided by the United Nations in deployment, safety and security and logistics, which has been reviewed for renewal. Regular consultations were held between the two Organizations to ensure coordinated efforts to revitalize the peace process in a context of heightened political tension, ongoing military operations and a deepening humanitarian crisis.

43. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) provided technical, logistical and security support to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the African Union Commission under the framework of the African Union Mission Support to the Ebola Outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This collaboration was instrumental in ending the tenth Ebola outbreak in the eastern part of the country, declared over on 25 June 2020.

44. The threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan persisted. Regional partners, including the African Union and ECCAS, with the support of international partners, should bolster efforts and synergies to address this threat.

45. In the Lake Chad Basin region, various United Nations entities and offices continued to collaborate with the African Union in its support for the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, as well as on the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) are both members of the steering committee for the Strategy. United Nations technical advice and expertise, provided through UNOAU, remained invaluable to the operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force, including on the implementation of African Union additional logistics support provided to enhance the operational capabilities of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

46. In the Sahel, efforts in aligning operational activities between MINUSMA and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel continued. The Force made progress in implementing its human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework, with the support of OHCHR. Human rights compliance is crucial to the Force's success and continued efforts must be made in this regard. The United Nations will continue to engage and support the African Union interdepartmental task force on the Sahel. The international community is urged to actively remain seized of the matter and provide support to African Union endeavours.

47. The United Nations, through UNOAU, supported the African Union and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms to strengthen the African Standby Force in the context of the Maputo Strategic Workplan (2016–2020) and the road map for the African Peace and Security Architecture. I welcome the adoption of the African Union Doctrine on Peace Support Operations at the third extraordinary meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security, convened virtually on 29 and 30 January 2021, providing strategic guidance for the planning, conduct, management and liquidation of these operations. UNOAU will continue to provide extensive support to the African Union in the review of its peace support operation training policies and directives, and in the design, development and implementation of training and capacity development initiatives within the context of the Doctrine. The ongoing discussions between the African Union and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms to finalize the memorandum of

understanding for the employment of the Force remains of the essence for the full operationalization of the Force.

48. UNOAU actively engaged and collaborated with the African Union Civilian Strategic Support Group to ascertain progress and challenges encountered in the implementation of the African Standby Force civilian dimension policy framework for the past decade, identifying the key elements and additional steps required to further enhance the civilian dimension to achieve increased multidimensionality and integration in African Union peace support operations.

49. UNOAU continued to provide expert advice in the ongoing efforts to develop the African Union Continental Logistics Base and regional logistics depots, and the Continental Movement Control Centre and regional movements control centres. Arrangements are under way for United Nations support in hosting African Union vehicles and equipment at the United Nations Entebbe Support Base.

50. The Department of Operational Support and UNOAU continued to explore means of enabling African Union access to United Nations services and equipment, including strategic deployment stocks and other services, on a user-pays basis. The arrangement will build on the support model concept, whereby the United Nations serves as a strategic and operational partner and service provider to the African Union to strengthen joint planning, deployment, management and transition of African Union peace support operations. Engagement continued with the African Union to build operational support expertise through the knowledge and expertise exchange programme, including by deepening collaboration in the areas of supply chain and knowledge management and by enhancing mutual understanding through remote sharing of expertise and joint learning opportunities.

51. Support was further provided to the African Union and the African regional training centres of excellence and other training institutions in the development of curricula and implementation of training programmes in the context of African Union peace support operations, including on child protection; mainstreaming gender; monitoring, evaluation and learning; mental health and psychosocial support; and the humanitarian, development, peace and security nexus. The training was aimed at building the capacity of the personnel deployed to current African Union-mandated and authorized peace support operations, as well as African Standby Force standby capabilities, targeting civilian specialists, military and police officers at various management and operational levels. In addition, training-of-trainer programmes were organized to ensure the relevant training capacity at the African Union, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and Member State levels.

52. Support in strengthening policing in African Union peace support operations was provided through UNOAU technical assistance and active participation in the African Union Police Strategic Support Group. Guidance documents were reviewed and developed, including: four African Union standard operating procedures on assessment and deployment of formed police units and individual police officers; guidelines for police professional staff; and administrative guidelines for the accreditation, tasking and coordination of the Police Strategic Support Group. UNOAU supported the assessment and selection processes of formed police units and individual police officers for deployment to AMISOM in Djibouti, Nigeria and Ghana. The African Union generic police pre-deployment training curriculum, developed with UNOAU support, was officially approved and adopted, followed by active support in providing training-of-trainers generic police pre-deployment police training in ECOWAS to build regional and Member State capacity for training of African Standby Force police capabilities and police officers to be deployed as individual police officers to peace support operations.

Partnership in peacebuilding and rule of law

53. The United Nations continued to support the implementation of the African Union Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform and the implementation, jointly with the World Bank, of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities in Africa for the period 2020–2022.

54. Following the establishment of the first African Union steering committee on security sector reform in 2019, the United Nations supported the work of the steering committee to assist dialogue, coordination and exchange between actors engaged in this area. The operationalization of the African Union Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Cairo was a priority workstream, especially as it related to the centre's security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration portfolios. In line with the recommendations of the tenth high-level retreat on the promotion of peace, security and stability, held by the African Union in Djibouti in 2019, the two organizations intensified efforts to develop dedicated tools for African Union high-level officials to better address the technical and political aspects of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in field deployments and political processes.

55. Under the framework of the joint support of UNOAU and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research to the African Union Commission titled: "Building and maintaining capacity to implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Africa", owing to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the focus was given to the strengthening the capacities of the training institutions and centres of excellence to deliver disarmament, demobilization and reintegration training in line with the African Union operational guidance notes on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

56. The United Nations supported the development of African Union strategies on countering improvised explosive devices and mine action, now awaiting adoption and ratification by African Union Member States. The United Nations provided support to the African Union as part of the United Nations-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) initiative on improvised explosive device threat mitigation focused on cooperation in the areas of training, security, defence sector capacity-building, inter alia. Through UNOAU, the United Nations collaborated closely with the African Union on its Mine Action Day virtual event "Perseverance, partnership, progress", to strengthen partnership in support of the African Union Silencing the Guns aspirations.

IV. Sustainable funding for African Union peace support operations

57. Building on the significant progress made in 2020, the African Union continued to build the management structures and practices of its Peace Fund. The Fund has secured more than \$200 million, the highest level of contributions since it was set up in 1993. My Special Representative to the African Union continued to participate as an ex-officio member on the Board of Trustees of the Peace Fund. The recruitment process, including developing job descriptions for the Peace Fund secretariat, will continue in 2021. Despite the progress made in operationalizing the Peace Fund, the African Union remains beholden to partners to provide funding for peace operations on the continent. It is therefore important to reinvigorate discussions between the two Councils on financing African Union peace support operations through United Nations assessed contributions. The issue of a common African position on the funding of peace support operations is being considered by the African Union Peace and Security Council and the outcome of those discussions is awaited.

58. The United Nations continued to support the African Union in the development and implementation of the African Union Workplan on Compliance for peace support operations. In follow-up of the adoption of the African Union policies on conduct and discipline, and sexual exploitation and abuse, respectively, the United Nations continued to support the African Union in developing a case management system, vetting mechanisms and victim assistance and support. In the area of compliance, the United Nations supported the development of training programmes. Further support continued in developing and strengthening relevant mechanisms, processes and procedures for the implementation of the policies.

59. While the African Union made progress in mainstreaming international humanitarian law and human rights in terms of the policy development and planning processes for peace support operations, as well as strengthening training, monitoring and accountability capacities at the African Union Commission and African Union mission levels, this area remains work in progress. Discussions are currently under way about possible modalities for a project to further support the capacity and capability of the African Union in this area.

V. Partnership with other regional organizations and arrangements

Regional economic communities and regional mechanisms

60. The need for strengthening and leveraging collaboration between the African Union, the United Nations and regional economic communities and regional mechanisms across the conflict cycle, from conflict prevention to responding to conflict to sustaining peace/peacebuilding, remained a strategic imperative.

61. In West Africa, ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations continued to work together on electoral matters and on peace processes throughout the subregion. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations continued to support the African Union and the efforts of ECCAS, in their capacity as guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Political Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, signed in February 2019. My Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, working with ECCAS, the European Union and the African Union Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security undertook joint missions to the Central African Republic in October 2020 and in June 2021, engaging the signatories on the need to embrace the full implementation of the Political Agreement and facilitate the peace process.

62. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and ECCAS held a joint retreat on 29 March 2021, their first since the establishment of the new ECCAS Commission in 2020. The two offices endorsed their joint strategic plan for the period 2021–2025, focused on: efforts to advance national and regional governance; an integrated approach to transnational security challenges; management of armed groups and rule of law deficits; partnerships with women, young people and other civil society actors for conflict prevention; and strategic planning, resource mobilization and communication.

63. In the Horn of Africa, despite the impact of COVID-19 and other regional challenges, the United Nations worked closely with IGAD, as well as other regional organizations, in promoting peace and security throughout the region. This included supporting mediation processes and enhancing subregional capacities to address cross-border and cross-cutting issues.

64. The United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States continued to closely collaborate within the context of the Libya Quartet, as well as the International Follow-up Committee on Libya.

65. In view of the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations system, including UNOAU, engaged virtually with regional organizations, including the African Union, the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to exchange lessons learned related to COVID-19 in field operations.

66. UNOAU participated in the African Union Police Strategic Support Group and provided training to the police of the Africa Standby Force regional planning elements, in support of the African Union and in collaboration with the Institute for Security Studies and the British Peace Support Team. In addition, the Eastern African Standby Force was supported in its regional senior mission leadership training through the provision of facilitators and trainers.

VI. Other activities of the United Nations Office to the African Union

67. UNOAU played a leading and facilitating role in strengthening the strategic and operational partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. This ranged from political to operational and technical engagement to assist in the alignment of decision-making and implementation.

68. From 31 May to 4 June, my Special Representative to the African Union, accompanied by the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Zambia and other United Nations officials, embarked on a high-level mission to Lusaka, prior to the general election on 12 August with a view to: engaging political stakeholders and civil society; assessing the situation; and identifying ways in which the United Nations could engage in efforts to prevent an escalation of violence and political tensions and support the peaceful conduct of elections.

69. UNOAU continued to engage regularly with the African Union Peace and Security Council, providing briefings on the United Nations perspectives on peace and security challenges and engaging members of the Permanent Representatives Committee, the African Union Commission, including the Bureau of the Chairperson and Commissioners, the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and representatives of partners based in Addis Ababa. Specifically, from September 2020 to August 2021, UNOAU and other United Nations entities remotely provided 33 thematic and country-specific briefings to the Peace and Security Council. The Office also actively participated in the African Union Partners Group, which promotes the United Nations-African Union partnership, as well as the Group of Friends of the United Nations-African Union Partnership, with both groups serving as platforms to informally discuss peace and security-related challenges. UNOAU also participated actively in events hosted remotely by think tanks and civil society organizations. In those interactions, the Office strove to promote a joint understanding of and common approaches to peace and security issues on the continent.

70. UNOAU also hosted multiple, joint, technical-level, horizon-scanning meetings between the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission and subregional organizations, focused on country-specific situations in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Sudan-Ethiopia border issues, Mali and Sahel and Mozambique, while identifying conflict trends and proposing prevention-related actions.

71. Regarding support in peace support operations and strengthening of the African Standby Force, UNOAU, with its civilian, military and police capabilities, continued to build on its strong relationship with the African Union and played a leading role in providing support in the development of policy and guidance documents such as the guidelines and standard operating procedures for the selection, deployment and rostering of police officers in different categories. The United Nations and the African Union further collaborated in joint planning, review and assessment processes, as well as the development and delivery of 30 training programmes, joint planning, review and assessment processes. UNOAU further facilitated interaction between relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes with African Union counterparts, including participation in the United Nations opportunity/issue-based coalition 6 on human rights, peace and security.

72. UNOAU implemented a communications strategy to amplify the collaboration between the two organizations by way of a strengthened online presence, including the introduction of weekly e-information circulars on the work of the United Nations Security Council. UNOAU also launched a podcast series “She stands for peace”, to further enhance the impact of the joint African Union-UNOAU publication. The podcast series commenced in early 2021 and explores the state of implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, thus amplifying the voices of African women involved in these efforts.

73. The United Nations-African Union collaboration on the women and peace and security agenda continued to focus on enhancing the participation of women in mediation and conflict prevention. In this regard, UNOAU continued to provide support to the African Union Mediation Support Unit and FemWise-Africa with planning for the deployment of mediators to capacitate the African Union Liaison Offices in Côte d’Ivoire, Libya and Mali and facilitated coordination between UNOCA and FemWise-Africa and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security in support of African Union mission planning for Chad.

74. The landmark resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security marked its twentieth anniversary in 2020. Africa has made progress in providing legal and policy frameworks, establishing institutional mechanisms and developing regional and national action plans for implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Nevertheless, financing and implementation of laws, policies, strategies and plans needs to be strengthened. UNOAU and the African Union embarked on the hosting of joint high-level events to promote accountability, and to make an urgent call to action for all stakeholders to enhance partnerships in support of these efforts, and advocate for further commitment to increase women’s participation in mediation, peacebuilding and decision-making. Some of the related activities included: (a) a two-day high level virtual dialogue and media campaign on resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#); (b) two virtual intergenerational dialogues; (c) the launch of the African Union youth campaign to “Silence the Guns”; (d) participation at the second ECOWAS annual gender policy dialogue on women participation in peace and political processes and publication of knowledge products; (e) participation in the African Young Women Leaders Fellowship programme. UNOAU and the African Union Youth Envoy pioneered the establishment of the “Youth silencing the guns” campaign with a view to building young women’s capacity in accordance with the parameters enshrined in the African Youth Charter and to meaningfully engage them to contribute to the Silencing the Guns agenda and jointly implemented the “Africa Young Women Fellowship on Silencing the Guns” project.

75. With support from the Governments of Norway and Sweden, two virtual training courses and two virtual intergenerational dialogues were convened with mentors, experts and women leaders who have played a pioneering role in advocating for

women's rights and implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Africa. The events provided a platform for young women to draw lessons from experiences shared by senior women leaders in the field of peace and security and women's rights, but also to create the opportunity for younger women to be recognized as partners in peacebuilding efforts.

76. UNOAU provided support to the African Union Commission in the development of a harmonized curriculum and a manual on gender mainstreaming for African Union peace support operations. This has provided an opportunity to respond to current and emerging issues regarding the women and peace and security agenda in the region. UNOAU also supported UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in concluding negotiations with the African Union on the establishment of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme.

VII. Observations and recommendations

77. The Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security continues to serve both organizations in addressing complex and evolving peace and security challenges in Africa, on the basis of a more systematic and predictable partnership rooted in shared values and a strong commitment to multilateralism. Following the institutional reform of the African Union Commission, I look forward to further strengthening the partnership and working closely with its new leadership, which assumed its mandate in February 2021.

78. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present major challenges to our joint efforts to address peace and security issues in Africa. I reiterate my call for global coordinated approaches to vaccination in order to ensure that everyone on the continent has access to the vaccine, as the only effective response to combating this pandemic. I am concerned by the heightened political tensions, human rights challenges and restricted civic space observed in some situations in the context of countering the spread of COVID-19. Given the hardships and inequalities resulting from the pandemic, I call upon all stakeholders to come together in solidarity to ensure a rapid distribution of vaccines and further invest in strong, just and accountable institutions in order to build the resilience that is needed to better respond to this and future shocks.

79. I remain committed to a surge in diplomacy for peace, including in Africa and in close partnership with the African Union. I believe that our collective action in conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts remains a strategic priority. Women and youth must be at the core of all these efforts.

80. Focus should remain on areas where collaboration can deliver a positive impact in conflict prevention. Recognizing the weak rule of law and judicial institutions as one of the primary underlying structural challenges to achieving lasting peace and security in Africa, I encourage greater collaboration and coordinated action between the Secretariat and the African Union Commission in efforts to build capacity for accountability for serious violations and strengthening justice systems throughout the continent.

81. I encourage and welcome continued collaboration, consultation and coordinated action between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. The close collaboration between the two organizations has contributed to positive developments in peace processes in the Central African Republic, Libya, South Sudan and the Sudan.

82. The United Nations-facilitated Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process has resulted in progress towards peace in Libya. The African Union contributed significantly to these efforts. It is crucial that the United Nations, the African Union and other partners continue to work together to encourage consensus towards the return to constitutional rule and inclusive reconciliation, including the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections on 24 December.

83. In Somalia, the continued collaboration of the United Nations, the African Union and other partners will be critical as the country undergoes indirect elections and a gradual transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali Security Forces. It is essential that the key stakeholders forge a common understanding on the best way forward in supporting the Somali people and authorities in achieving peace and stability in Somalia.

84. In the Sudan, I welcome continued efforts to engage with the non-signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement, including the signing of the Declaration of Principles on 28 March by the transitional Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North al-Hilu faction, and encourage all parties not yet engaged in peace negotiations to join immediately and without preconditions. It is imperative to ensure that the country's transition is not threatened by the instability in the wider region, and in this regard a consensual way forward to resolve the challenges around the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the Ethiopia-Sudan border dispute, as well as the regional threats posed by ongoing conflict in Tigray require urgent resolution. While the holding of the recent elections in Ethiopia is a positive step, more remains to be done to address the political, security and humanitarian challenges that the country faces. The United Nations remains committed to supporting these efforts.

85. I remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating situations in the Lake Chad Basin and the wider Sahel region. Those complex and interconnected conflict situations will require consistent, comprehensive and innovative approaches, including closer collaboration between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council. They will further require the active engagement of regional economic communities and regional mechanisms and ad hoc arrangements, and the involvement and support of grassroots organizations, particularly women and youth groups. There is also an urgent need to increase efforts towards achieving sustainable development to address the root causes of conflict and promote peacebuilding and reconciliation. Equally, our collective efforts are required to encourage Chad and Mali to advance their respective political transitions, considering that the political stability of these two countries is intrinsically linked to the peace, stability and development of the broader Sahel region.

86. I congratulate the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, upon his re-election for a second term, and am grateful for his continued leadership, unwavering support and commitment to the partnership with the United Nations. I also express my appreciation to the organs of the African Union, African Member States and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms for their cooperation in addressing challenges to peace and security in Africa. Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative to the African Union, Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, as well as the staff of UNOAU and all United Nations and African Union entities working to advance the cause of peace and security in Africa.