



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-fourth session

Item 54 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 [73/101](#), 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 implementation of the reforms in the United Nations in relation to special political missions. The report, which is the seventh to the Assembly on this item, covers the period from August 2018 to July 2019.

The activities and achievements described in the present report demonstrate the critical contribution of special political missions to the efforts of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. United Nations reform is aimed at strengthening capacity to better support special political missions in implementing their complex mandates in preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

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\* [A/74/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/101, 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. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to include in the report information on the implementation of the reform process of the United Nations in relation to special political missions.

2. Special political missions continued to be among the most effective tools at the disposal of the United Nations to maintain and promote international peace and security and to support national and regional efforts in that regard. The present report describes ways in which these missions worked over the reporting period to advance preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and conflict resolution and sustain peace.

3. Special political missions vary considerably in their mandates, scope, structure and approaches. Many of them operate in complex and unstable security situations that are characterized by conflicts with intercommunal, national and regional dimensions, large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, and cross-border threats, such as transnational organized crime and terrorism.

4. In this evolving peace and security context, special political missions are adopting approaches that enable them to better implement their mandates despite the challenges they face. First, they are prioritizing engagement, political dialogue and mediation with all parties to build confidence and find political solutions. In cases of protracted conflicts, they are working to engage more effectively with local processes as a means to help to resolve local-level conflict and to help to create an enabling environment for national-level processes. Second, special political missions are collaborating more closely than ever with regional and other organizations. This is in recognition of the fact that unity of international partners is essential to the sustained success of political efforts, especially in a context of global polarization. Third, they are adopting more inclusive and integrated approaches to fulfilling their mandates, recognizing that peace can only be achieved and sustained if all segments of society are involved, including women and youth. Finally, missions have in several instances calibrated their footprints and security risk, demonstrating significant adaptability, resilience and determination to stay and deliver in high-threat environments.

5. The reform process of the United Nations is enabling an enhanced focus on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, with clear implications for the work of special political missions. Within new structures for cross-pillar collaboration, special political missions are working more closely with United Nations peacekeeping operations and country teams through joined-up and more coherent regional approaches. The integration of the Peacebuilding Support Office into the newly established Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs of the Secretariat is facilitating the closer engagement of special political missions with the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. Substantive backstopping functions for special political missions are now within a single regional political-operational structure at Headquarters, while the enhanced delegation of authority, supported by the new Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, and the advisory and support functions of the new Department of Operational Support have facilitated more effective mandate delivery.

6. The present report, the seventh to the General Assembly on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, covers the period from August 2018 to July 2019. Section II of the report focuses on key operational developments.

Section III provides a summary of the interactive dialogue with Member States on special political missions, which was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 3 July 2019. Section IV addresses a number of policy issues pertaining to special political missions, as requested by the General Assembly, and section V presents some observations on the work of special political missions and ways to maximize their impact.

## II. Operational developments

### Africa

7. In Africa, special political missions supported a range of regional and national efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace. In the Great Lakes region, the Office of my Special Envoy enhanced its support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. It prioritized the promotion of regional cooperation and confidence-building, addressing threats posed by armed groups and reinforcing inclusive dialogue and political processes in the region. My Special Envoy helped to strengthen the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on the Allied Democratic Forces, which remain important platforms to improve information-sharing and regional cooperation to neutralize negative forces.

8. My Special Representative for Central Africa continued to perform good offices in the subregion on my behalf, in partnership with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) worked closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to address transregional issues, such as the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and transhumance.

9. Through an exchange of letters with the President of the Security Council on 24 October 2018 (S/2018/955) and 31 October 2018 (S/2018/979), the remit of my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan was expanded to cover the Horn of Africa region, which was defined to comprise the member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In April 2019, my new Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa was deployed to the region and initiated consultations with regional leaders, the IGAD secretariat, the African Union and its High-level Implementation Panel. In July 2019, in Nairobi, my Special Envoy convened different United Nations entities for a workshop which reflected on ways to effectively implement the comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa.

10. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) continued to support the Federal Government of Somalia and its federal member states in priority areas, including federalism, constitutional review, the preparation of general elections in 2020/21, reconciliation, economic reform and the transition of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission in Somalia to the Somali security forces and institutions.

11. To support the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue and in line with his Security Council mandates, my Special Envoy undertook several engagements in the region with multiple partners and stakeholders, including consultations with the facilitator and the mediator of the inter-Burundian dialogue. My Special Envoy conveyed the commitment of the United Nations to support the dialogue, together with the African Union.

12. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) worked with stakeholders towards the implementation of the United Nations Action Plan for Libya. When clashes between armed groups began in Tripoli in August 2018, UNSMIL

facilitated a ceasefire agreement and supported subsequent security arrangements and economic reforms targeting the funding of armed groups. Most UNSMIL international staff were reassigned from Tunis to Tripoli in early January 2019, ending a period of rotational presence. In March 2019, a United Nations humanitarian hub was opened in Benghazi. After the Libyan National Army began a military offensive against Tripoli in April 2019, UNSMIL focused its efforts on de-escalating tensions, reaching a ceasefire and achieving a return to political talks as well as facilitating humanitarian assistance.

13. My Personal Envoy for Western Sahara accelerated efforts to advance the political process. On 5 and 6 December 2018 and on 21 and 22 March 2019, he convened round-table meetings in Switzerland between Morocco, the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), Algeria and Mauritania. Those meetings were the first face-to-face encounters in the context of the political process since 2012. They were characterized by a sincere, respectful and constructive atmosphere concluding that it could mark a new beginning for the political process. The Personal Envoy encouraged delegations to explore good faith gestures and build more trust. Following those meetings, they issued joint communiqués, conveying their willingness to reconvene under the same format.

14. UNOWAS provided good offices in support of nationally- and regionally-led efforts to prevent political tensions and sustain peace. My Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS engaged with national stakeholders, alongside regional and international partners, to advocate for democratic consolidation in the region ahead of the presidential elections in Nigeria, Senegal and Mauritania, held on 23 February, 24 February and 22 June 2019, respectively. UNOWAS also supported the efforts of regional leaders to address threats posed by terrorism, organized crime, climate change and intercommunal clashes.

15. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) carried out good offices efforts, in partnership with the other members of the group of five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau, comprising the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union, as well as the United Nations. Those efforts were instrumental in addressing the political and institutional crises affecting the country and in urging national authorities to hold twice-postponed legislative elections on 10 March 2019. Further to mediation efforts by ECOWAS, supported by UNIOGBIS and UNOWAS, a new Prime Minister and Government were sworn in on 22 June and 3 July 2019, respectively.

16. The United Nations Office to the African Union continued to play a coordinating role in enhancing the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of international peace and security. My Special Representative to the African Union regularly engaged with the leadership of the African Union Commission, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the diplomatic community to advance collaboration, including through the implementation of the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in April 2017.

### **The Americas**

17. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia provided targeted support for the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. A new Government led by President Iván Duque Márquez took office in August 2018. The Security Council, in its resolution [2435 \(2018\)](#), extended the mandate of the Mission for an additional year, until 25 September 2019. The Mission worked closely with the new Administration, the People's Alternative

Revolutionary Force (Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común, FARC) party, civil society and communities to foster progress and build confidence with respect to key commitments in the Agreement relating to the Mission's mandate: the reintegration of former guerrilla members as well as the implementation of security guarantees for them and for conflict-affected communities. Efforts were made to strengthen mechanisms to address security threats and to prevent killings of social leaders and former combatants. The Mission also worked with the parties to accelerate the implementation of reintegration programmes, including by promoting improved coordination between local authorities and former combatants, encouraging private sector investment and advancing gender-sensitive economic reintegration.

### **Asia-Pacific**

18. Pursuant to its mandate under Security Council resolutions [2405 \(2018\)](#) and [2460 \(2019\)](#), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) supported the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to promote peace and implement its reform agenda. The Mission held regular dialogues with various parties to promote the peace process, reported on the human rights situation, supported regional initiatives to enhance economic, political and security cooperation and advocated for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In November 2018, the Government and the United Nations convened the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, at which international partners demonstrated their continued commitment to Afghanistan and the Government's reform agenda. UNAMA also facilitated the implementation of local peace initiatives, bringing together officials, tribal representatives and other community members – both men and women – to devise approaches for the resolution of disputes. UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through the United Nations Electoral Support Project, provided technical assistance to the Government and the electoral management bodies to hold the parliamentary elections in 2018, and continue to provide assistance for the presidential elections scheduled for September 2019.

19. My Special Envoy on Myanmar has worked to address continued international concern regarding the Rohingya crisis. After her appointment in April 2018, she visited Myanmar on seven occasions and Bangladesh on five occasions, in addition to travelling to several other countries, including in the region. She engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including national authorities, regional and international partners, affected populations and civil society. In her engagements, she called for accountability, ending the violence in Rakhine, providing unfettered access to affected people, addressing the root causes of the crisis and spurring inclusive and equitable development. In May 2019, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDP and the Government of Myanmar extended a tripartite memorandum of understanding for another year. This framework for cooperation aims at creating conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation of refugees to their places of origin or of their choosing.

### **Europe**

20. The Office of my Special Adviser on Cyprus continued its engagement with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders and other interlocutors in Cyprus during an ongoing hiatus in negotiations. The leaders of the two communities met twice at United Nations-facilitated meetings, on 26 October 2018 and on 26 February 2019, and agreed on important confidence-building measures, including the opening of two new crossing points and the clearing of nine suspected hazardous areas on both sides of the island with a view to working towards a mine-free Cyprus. The Office conducted extensive efforts in support of measures to bring the communities closer

together, such as the interoperability of mobile phones and interconnectivity of electricity grids, and continues to facilitate the work of the bicomunal technical committees.

21. The Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions worked closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union on the situation in Georgia within the framework of the Geneva international discussions, co-chaired by the three organizations. In August 2018, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the conflict in Georgia, I urged all participants in the Geneva international discussions to adopt a constructive, forward-looking approach that would allow this indispensable forum to fulfil its mandate. To that end, and with a view to engaging all parties towards political solutions to existing differences, the Office closely coordinated prevention and facilitation activities with OSCE and the European Union.

### **Middle East**

22. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) worked to advance inclusive political dialogue and national and community reconciliation and to strengthen Baghdad-Erbil relations. In the lead-up to the May 2018 parliamentary elections, the first held since the military defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, UNAMI engaged with representatives of political parties to promote a transparent and credible electoral process. The Mission also provided technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission during a vote recount process that was mandated by the Federal Supreme Court. In April 2019, UNAMI, in coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, launched the humanitarian response plan for 2019, which addresses the diverse and nuanced needs of vulnerable people in the post-conflict transition in Iraq.

23. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon worked with national stakeholders and international partners to maintain stability in Lebanon, which was especially critical during the absence of a Government in the period between the parliamentary elections of May 2018 and the formation of a new Government in January 2019. The Office also supported the follow-up to three major international conferences held in 2018, including the revitalization of the economy of Lebanon. In accordance with Security Council resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), the Office focused in particular on actively promoting the consolidation and extension of the authority of the Lebanese State. That included working with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and other relevant actors towards increasing deployments of the Lebanese Armed Forces throughout Lebanon. In the meantime, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to fulfil the reporting functions on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

24. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process works with regional and international partners in efforts to prevent and defuse tensions, encourage improvements on the ground in support of the Palestinian population and advance political negotiations towards a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States, within the framework of a comprehensive regional settlement consistent with Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#), [338 \(1973\)](#), [1397 \(2002\)](#), [1515 \(2003\)](#), [1860 \(2009\)](#) and [2334 \(2016\)](#) and in accordance with the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of land for peace and international law. The Special Coordinator's efforts have focused in particular on the situation in Gaza, including with a view to garnering support for urgent humanitarian projects and supporting Egyptian-led mediation efforts.

25. My Special Envoy for Syria worked to promote common ground among the Syrian parties and international stakeholders in support of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated political solution to the Syrian conflict that would meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to dignity, freedom and justice, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, pursuant to Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and the Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué (see Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), annex II). Particular effort was focused on engaging the parties directly to build trust and confidence; encouraging concrete action on detainees, abductees and missing persons; engaging Syrians from all walks of life; convening a credible, balanced and inclusive constitutional committee; and helping the international community to coalesce in support of those objectives.

26. My Special Envoy for Yemen undertook extensive efforts to engage with the different stakeholders to end the conflict. In December 2018, he convened intra-Yemeni consultations in Sweden, which resulted in agreements on the city and governorate of Hudaydah and the ports of Hudaydah, Salif and Ra's Isa; an executive mechanism on activating the prisoner exchange agreement; and a statement of understanding on Ta'iiz, which together comprise the Stockholm Agreement ([S/2018/1134](#), annex). Subsequently, the Security Council, by its resolution [2452 \(2019\)](#), established a special political mission, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement. This mission, in close cooperation with my Special Envoy for Yemen and his Office, continues to work with the parties towards the implementation of the Hudaydah Agreement.

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

27. The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1718 \(2006\)](#) created a mechanism for obtaining exemptions for international and non-governmental organizations to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in accordance with paragraph 25 of Security Council resolution [2397 \(2017\)](#), in an effort to address concerns with regard to adverse humanitarian consequences of the sanctions measures. This was elaborated upon in Implementation Assistance Notice No. 7, adopted by the Committee on 6 August 2018.

28. In its resolution [2444 \(2018\)](#), the Security Council terminated the sanctions regime on Eritrea established pursuant to its resolutions [1907 \(2009\)](#), [2023 \(2011\)](#), [2060 \(2012\)](#) and [2111 \(2013\)](#). In the same resolution, the Council modified the mandate of the relevant sanctions committee to oversee the measures relating to Somalia only and decided that the committee should be known as the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia. The Council also terminated the mandate of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea with effect from 16 December 2018 and established, with immediate effect until 15 December 2019, the Panel of Experts on Somalia, consisting of six experts and based in Nairobi. The mandate of the Panel of Experts includes the tasks of the Monitoring Group as they relate to Somalia.

29. With regard to the sanctions regime in the Central African Republic, the Security Council, in a statement by the President of the Security Council dated 9 April 2019 ([S/PRST/2019/3](#)), established key benchmarks for the reform of the security sector, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, and the management of weapons and ammunition. These benchmarks are to guide the Council in the review of the arms embargo measures on the Government of the Central African Republic, which is to be conducted by 30 September 2019. In a letter dated 26 July 2019 addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2019/609](#)), I provided an assessment of the progress achieved on the key benchmarks, in consultation with Central African Republic authorities, United Nations entities and other partners.

30. The Panel of Experts on Libya has a mandate to assist the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#) concerning Libya. On 10 May 2019, I reported to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution [2420 \(2018\)](#), by which the Council extended the authorizations contained in resolutions [2292 \(2016\)](#) and [2357 \(2017\)](#) relating to the 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 ([S/2019/380](#)).

31. On 28 August 2018, I submitted my fourth report to the Security Council on the progress made by Guinea-Bissau with regard to stabilization and restoration of constitutional order ([S/2018/791](#)). I reiterated the recommendations in my previous report ([S/2017/715](#)) to maintain the sanctions regime and establish a panel of experts to support the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2048 \(2012\)](#) concerning Guinea-Bissau.

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

32. In its resolution [73/101](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to hold 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 such dialogue to ensure wide and meaningful participation.

33. Following consultations with the co-facilitators of this item and the Bureau of the Fourth Committee, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs organized the sixth annual interactive dialogue on special political missions on 3 July 2019 on the topic “Adapting special political missions to the evolving peace and security contexts”.

34. In her remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs noted that many special political missions were operating in increasingly complex and challenging environments. She highlighted that the missions were prioritizing political dialogue and mediation as well as partnerships with regional and other organizations. She emphasized mission efforts to promote more inclusive political and peace processes, including through the more meaningful participation of women and youth, and highlighted initiatives to address emerging issues relating to climate change and digital technologies. She underscored the positive impact of United Nations reform, especially in terms of system-wide coherence and integration as well as support for the work of special political missions.

35. The Assistant Secretary-General for Support Operations gave a briefing on enhanced services provided to special political missions by the newly established Department of Operational Support. She highlighted the positive overall impact of the management reform, particularly the simplification of human resources processes and the direct delegation of authority from the Secretary-General to heads of missions. The Division for Special Activities within the Department has been better able to support mission start-up, transitions, surge, drawdown and liquidation and rapid response. Other positive innovations include the consolidation of logistics, procurement, health-care management and occupational safety and health functions within one department.

36. During the subsequent exchange, Member States recognized the crucial role played by special political missions in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. They stressed the importance of national ownership and called for a stronger focus on building local capacities for prevention and mediation as well as the increased participation of women and youth in peace processes. Intensified



cooperation with regional and other organizations was also highlighted as critical to the implementation of mission mandates. A number of Member States sought more information on cross-pillar collaboration and encouraged closer coordination between special political missions and United Nations resident coordinators to better support national efforts to sustain peace and advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

37. Some speakers stressed the need for special political missions to look at megatrends, such as climate change and the digital revolution, and their impacts on peace and security in mission contexts. Several Member States noted the importance of clear, credible and achievable mission mandates, accompanied by adequate resources. There were calls for the appointment of more women to senior mission leadership positions. A number of speakers expressed concern over the backstopping and funding of special political missions and called for the issue to be addressed.

## **IV. Key policy issues pertaining to special political missions**

### **Regional partnerships and the work of regional offices**

38. The complexity of today's challenges requires the United Nations to build strong partnerships with regional and other organizations to achieve greater impact on the ground. As illustrated in section II above, much of the work undertaken by special political missions is conducted in close collaboration with regional partners and in support of their efforts. The United Nations regional offices in Central Africa, Central Asia and West Africa and the Sahel work to foster such partnerships across a range of cross-cutting peace and security issues.

39. UNOWAS collaborated with ECOWAS, the African Union and other stakeholders in support of a number of political and electoral processes. For example, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS undertook two joint pre-electoral missions with the President of the ECOWAS Commission to Nigeria in October 2018 and to Senegal in January 2019, ahead of elections in both countries scheduled for February 2019. Those high-level visits were opportunities to meet with government officials, opposition parties, independent electoral bodies and civil society organizations to support national efforts to ensure peaceful, credible and transparent elections.

40. UNOWAS also worked with partners towards greater unity of effort in the Sahel. Two high-level events were convened in the reporting period. On 17 and 18 September 2018 in Abuja, my Special Representative, together with representatives of ECOWAS and the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel, chaired a meeting of organizations active in the Sahel, including the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Liptako-Gourma Integrated Development Authority, to assess priorities and coordinate actions. On 13 October 2018, the United Nations, in partnership with the World Bank, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Sahel Alliance, organized a meeting on the Sahel in Bali, Indonesia, on the margins of the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to explore opportunities to advance the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, through its support plan.

41. Meanwhile, UNOCA and ECCAS stepped up joint messaging, analysis and visits to countries in the region. One example of this was a joint mission conducted by my Special Representative for Central Africa with the Secretary-General of ECCAS to Bangui in April 2019 to provide unified support for the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. In April

2019, UNOCA and the ECCAS secretariat held a retreat to review modalities for cooperation and adopted a joint action plan for 2019. The two entities agreed to prioritize conflict prevention, security cooperation and capacity-building, as well as monitoring and evaluation of their joint activities.

42. The United Nations Office to the African Union worked closely with the African Union to enhance dialogue and collaboration. On 12 February 2019, at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, the United Nations-African Union Joint Task Force on Peace and Security held its sixteenth consultative meeting and discussed progress in implementing the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in April 2017. On 6 May 2019 at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and I convened the third United Nations-African Union annual conference, which provided a platform to review cooperation and current challenges to peace, security and development on the continent.

43. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia worked with the five Central Asian countries and, increasingly, Afghanistan to support their efforts towards greater regional cooperation. On 16 November 2018 in Bishkek, the Centre organized the eighth annual meeting of Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central Asian States to discuss intraregional and cross-border initiatives to address violent extremism, terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking, as well as economic and environmental challenges, including transboundary water management. In December 2018 and June 2019, the Regional Centre convened a regional expert meeting to discuss ways to enhance water cooperation. In January 2019, following regional consultations, it unveiled a new strategy to revitalize its work to promote regional cooperation on transboundary water management, in close collaboration with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

44. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Office of Counter-Terrorism of the Secretariat partnered with national Governments in Central Asia and other organizations to support the regional implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In October 2018, the Regional Centre, in collaboration with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, conducted regional training in Ashgabat on the theme “Good practices in border security and management to strengthen national and regional capacities in countering terrorism”.

### **Promoting women’s participation and empowerment**

45. Special political missions are playing an increasingly important role in promoting women’s meaningful participation in political processes, as well as in peacemaking and peacebuilding more broadly. They are stepping up efforts to include gender-sensitive analysis in their work systematically, to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence and to ensure integration of a gender lens and women’s participation in projects.

46. In Libya, UNSMIL helped to create a new platform for Libyan women in political parties to network and exchange experiences on challenges and opportunities for strengthening women’s participation in political leadership. The Mission also promoted the role of women in national and local-level reconciliation through a national reconciliation project supported by the Peacebuilding Fund and UNDP. A first meeting on women and mediation in Libya was held in December 2018 to set the stage for creating a women’s network of mediators to support and sustain local peace agreements and to enhance women’s political participation and advocacy.

47. In the Syrian Arab Republic, my Special Envoy for Syria expanded the membership of the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and convened several meetings with it to discuss issues relating to the agenda of the intra-Syrian talks. In partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Office of my Special Envoy also developed a new fellowship programme to provide in-depth mediation and negotiation training to Advisory Board members to enhance their skills for effective engagement in the Syrian process.

48. In Iraq, UNAMI held consultations with women leaders and human rights organizations, which led to the establishment of the Iraqi Women's Advisory Group in October 2018. The Group acts as an independent source of expertise and advice to my Special Representative for Iraq and serves as a mechanism for inclusivity to ensure that the voices, concerns and experiences of Iraqi women are heard in political processes.

49. In Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, in partnership with UNDP and UN-Women, continues to support productive initiatives led by female former combatants to facilitate their reintegration process. The Mission adopted a gender directive and developed a practical guide on gender-sensitive verification. This guide provides tools to conduct gender-sensitive analysis of security guarantees as well as the social, economic and political reintegration of female former combatants.

50. In West Africa, UNOWAS, in collaboration with ECOWAS, organized a training-of-trainers course in Accra in May 2019 for over 30 women peacebuilders from 11 countries in the region to reinforce skills in conflict analysis, dialogue facilitation and mediation.

51. In Central Asia, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia conducted a regional seminar in Tashkent in September 2018 on the role of parliaments in engaging Afghanistan in Central Asian cooperation frameworks through preventive diplomacy. A dedicated session for women Members of Parliament was held to explore ways in which women can use parliamentary cooperation mechanisms to enhance peace and security in the region.

### **Youth participation and empowerment**

52. The world currently has the largest young generation in history, and youth often represent the majority of the population in countries with ongoing peace processes. In line with Security Council resolutions [2250 \(2015\)](#) and [2419 \(2018\)](#), on youth and peace and security, and the United Nations Youth Strategy, which was launched in September 2018 and aims to scale up action to meet the needs and aspirations of young people, special political missions are increasingly engaging youth to harness their potential as agents of peaceful change.

53. In Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia adopted a strategy to advance youth and peace and security, focusing in particular on the role of young people in reintegration and security guarantees. The Mission established a network of youth focal points throughout its regional and subregional offices to ensure a youth perspective in its verification and liaison activities. It also facilitated dialogue initiatives between young leaders, including representatives of political parties, to support the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Young women and men who participated in those dialogues are now working on implementing joint action plans and negotiating inter-party youth pacts.

54. In Iraq, between April and July 2019, UNAMI conducted a series of five workshops across the country on the theme “Iraqi youth: pioneers for dialogue and stability”. The workshops gave more than 150 youth leaders the chance to exchange perspectives on the challenges they face and explore opportunities for participation in peace and stability efforts in Iraq.

55. In Central Asia, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia launched a “prevention academy” project to support initiatives by youth for preventive diplomacy in border areas throughout Central Asia and Afghanistan.

56. UNOWAS and ECOWAS, in cooperation with the Government of Burkina Faso, held the first annual youth forum for peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel in December 2018. The forum discussed challenges that limit youth participation in decision-making processes and ways to improve their engagement.

57. In Somalia, UNSOM supported the Joint Gaalkacyo Youth Committee in hosting the International Day of Peace celebrations in Gaalkacyo from 21 to 23 September 2018. Over 300 youth, including regional and local government youth representatives, interacted in group discussions, sports competition and other community activities. UNSOM is now working closely with the Committee to support and achieve formal recognition of its engagement in the Gaalkacyo peace process.

### **Safety and security**

58. Special political missions frequently operate in highly volatile and challenging security environments, characterized in some cases by ongoing and high-intensity military conflicts, insurgency, social unrest and terrorist activity.

59. United Nations personnel face considerable risks while discharging their duties in mission environments such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The mortar attack in the UNSOM compound in Mogadishu early in 2019 and the incidents in which vehicles of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement were hit by stray bullets in the vicinity of the front lines in Hudaydah are illustrative of the risks facing some United Nations personnel working in special political missions. While striving to ensure the right balance between criticality of mandates and exposure to security risks, the Organization is supporting special political missions to adapt their posture to effectively respond to evolving challenges. In doing so, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the leadership of special political missions engage continuously throughout the risk management process with the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system to review and modify strategies. The goal is for any possible negative security impact on personnel and mandate delivery to be minimized for all missions.

60. While the United Nations relies primarily on host Governments for the provision of security to its personnel, in some contexts national authorities have limited capacity to deliver these services. As a result, special political missions maintain significant security mitigation measures, including the deployment of United Nations armed civilian security personnel and armoured vehicles, deconfliction of the United Nations presence and field missions with parties to the conflict, increased cooperation between regional partners and peacekeeping personnel on the ground, the use of guard units provided by Member States and, where appropriate, the employment of private security companies in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions.

### **Geographical distribution and gender representation**

61. Promoting geographical diversity is not only an obligation under the Charter of the United Nations, but is also a critical factor for the effectiveness and legitimacy of the United Nations as a universal organization. I remain committed to promoting a more diverse workforce. As at June 2019, the distribution of the 1,386 internationally recruited staff serving in field-based special political missions was as follows: 23.4 per cent from the African Group, 22.9 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 12.5 per cent from the Eastern European Group, 6.6 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 33.8 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States. Of the 1,899 locally recruited staff, 15.6 per cent were from the African Group, 74.2 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 0.3 per cent from the Eastern European Group, 7.4 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 1.3 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States.

62. I am equally committed to improving the representation of women throughout the Organization, including in field-based special political missions. As at June 2019, 33.5 per cent of internationally recruited staff serving in these missions were women, a slight increase of 1.7 per cent over the previous year. Among the locally recruited staff, 17.9 per cent were women, a slight increase of 1.8 per cent. This slow progress demonstrates that more needs to be done to ensure greater representation of women in the Organization at all levels, with the goal of reaching full gender parity by 2028.

### **Mission transitions affecting special political missions**

63. Ensuring forward-looking mission transitions is a key priority for the United Nations system in its efforts to support countries to sustain peace and advance the 2030 Agenda. Mission transitions are high-stake periods within the much longer process of change undertaken by host countries. They contribute to shaping whether hard-won gains achieved over decades are consolidated or risk being jeopardized. To ensure the success of mission transitions, there is the need for early integrated planning, strong national ownership and enhanced partnerships, including with national Governments, donors, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, local institutions and communities. To that end, I issued an internal planning directive on transition in February 2019 to enhance the transition planning process. During the reporting period, there were two mission transition processes affecting special political missions, in Guinea-Bissau and Haiti.

64. In December 2018, I issued a special report with recommendations for the reconfiguration and reprioritization of tasks of UNIOGBIS (S/2018/1086), pursuant to Security Council resolution 2404 (2018). On 28 February 2019, the Security Council, in its resolution 2458 (2019), renewed the mandate of the special political mission for a further year and endorsed my recommendations, including a three-phase approach for the gradual drawdown of the mission with a view to its prospective closure by 31 December 2020. Entities across the United Nations system are working closely with UNIOGBIS to support this transition process.

65. In April 2019, the Integrated Task Force for Guinea-Bissau established a transition sub-working group co-chaired by the Western Africa Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations and UNDP. In the field, the integrated transition task team, chaired by my Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator, brings together key United Nations stakeholders to facilitate joint transition planning, consultations and information-sharing. On 24 and 25 April 2019, the joint project of UNDP, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations on United Nations transitions and the Western Africa Division conducted a training course in Guinea-Bissau to enhance the capacity of the mission and the

country team on transition planning processes. The joint project is recruiting a transition specialist to be deployed in Guinea-Bissau to support system-wide transition planning, in close collaboration with the mission.

66. In March 2019, I submitted a report to the Security Council on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (S/2019/198), recommending the reconfiguration of the peacekeeping operation to a special political mission. This was informed by a system-wide inclusive and thorough strategic assessment process, undertaken in consultation with the Government of Haiti and other national stakeholders. In a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 13 May 2019 (S/2019/387 and S/2019/387/Corr.1), I outlined the specific role and proposed structure for this special political mission.

67. On 25 June 2019, the Security Council, in its resolution 2476 (2019), requested the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), which is to begin operations on 16 October 2019. BINUH is mandated to advise the Government of Haiti on the promotion and strengthening of political stability and good governance, as well as to support the Government in its efforts to launch an inter-Haitian national dialogue process, address human rights abuses and strengthen the rule of law. The peace and development pillars of the United Nations in Haiti have worked together to formulate a common approach to support national efforts to improve the rule of law and strengthen governance institutions.

68. In post-mission phases, regional special political missions play a key role in supporting resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to sustain peacebuilding gains. In West Africa, for instance, UNOWAS is working closely with the United Nations system and national stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone following the closure of the missions there to ensure continued support to local efforts to sustain peace, development and reconciliation. UNOWAS is also providing support to the United Nations transition process in Guinea-Bissau. This demonstrates the increased demands on UNOWAS, as noted by the Security Council in a statement by its President (S/PRST/2019/7). In this context, I decided to conduct an independent strategic review of the scope of the mandate and activities of UNOWAS and present recommendations to the Council ahead of its discussions on the renewal of the mission's mandate, which will expire on 31 December 2019.

## V. United Nations reform

69. On 1 January 2019, a number of important changes took place as a result of wide-ranging reforms approved by the General Assembly to restructure the peace and security architecture, reposition the United Nations development system and shift the management paradigm. These reforms are making the Organization more effective, more accountable and more responsive, placing more focus on the people it serves and less on internal processes.

70. Each of these three reform streams has implications for the work of special political missions. The restructuring of the peace and security architecture has prioritized prevention and sustaining peace, including by placing the Headquarters backstopping functions for special political missions in a shared single regional political-operational structure. This has ensured a more coherent approach across the range of political and operational engagements of the peace and security pillar. Teams backstopping peacekeeping operations and special political missions operating in the same regions are under the leadership of the same Director and Assistant Secretary-General.

71. In the field, special political missions are increasingly cooperating with United Nations peacekeeping operations and country teams to support countries in their efforts to prevent conflict, sustain peace and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In Central Africa, for example, the regional special political mission, UNOCA, is aligning its efforts more closely with the peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, and the United Nations country team to support the peace process in the Central African Republic and to address regional challenges.

72. Building on this, I have asked the single regional political-operational structure to prioritize the development of coordinated regional approaches to further facilitate engagement between special political missions and other United Nations presences. In the Horn of Africa, for example, my Special Envoy is working closely with different United Nations entities and country teams in the implementation of a comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa. This joined-up approach will facilitate system-wide action in support of regional efforts to promote peace, security and development.

73. The integration of a revitalized Peacebuilding Support Office into the newly established Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs is facilitating a more holistic approach to prevention and sustaining peace. This is making possible the provision of more coordinated advice to special political missions on how to leverage the Peacebuilding Fund and work more closely with the Peacebuilding Commission. Joint engagements by special political missions and the peacebuilding architecture are becoming more frequent. For example, in October 2018, the Head of UNOWAS conducted a joint high-level visit with the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and the Gambia to assess how the United Nations can provide more targeted support to nationally-led peace and reconciliation efforts.

74. Within new structures for cross-pillar collaboration, special political missions are working more closely with the strengthened resident coordinator system to support national efforts to sustain peace and advance the 2030 Agenda. In integrated special political missions such as those deployed in Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Somalia, the triple-hatted Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators play a key role in bringing together different United Nations entities to work with national stakeholders on nationally-owned priorities centred around the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

75. The creation of the Department of Operational Support has improved capacity to provide quick and enhanced support to special political missions, especially during critical junctures such as mission start-up, surge, drawdown and liquidation. This was demonstrated in the case of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, which received support from the Department of Operational Support, working in close cooperation with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, from its inception. The Head of the Mission and the advance team were deployed within one day of receiving an initial Security Council mandate. The deployment of medical capacities, including helicopter extraction and aeromedical evacuation teams, as well as 18 armoured vehicles and an armoured ambulance from strategic deployment stocks, followed within 10 days.

76. The new management paradigm of the United Nations empowers managers and staff and simplifies processes while increasing transparency and improving mandate implementation. I have issued streamlined delegations of authority to more than 200 heads of United Nations entities, including special political missions, therefore

aligning responsibility for mandate implementation with authority for managing resources and bringing decision-making closer to the point of delivery.

## **VI. Observations**

77. The activities and achievements of the special political missions described in the present report demonstrate their important contribution to advancing conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Yet these goals cannot be achieved in isolation from other efforts. The cooperation of host countries and other stakeholders, as well as the support of the broader United Nations membership, remain crucial. I urge all Member States to continue providing support to special political missions as they seek to implement their respective mandates.

78. Special political missions continue to face critical challenges stemming from the evolving nature of conflicts and the complex and volatile security environments in which many of them operate. It is of utmost importance to ensure that missions retain the flexibility to adapt their operations rapidly to changing circumstances on the ground.

79. The reform process of the United Nations is strengthening the focus on conflict prevention and sustaining peace and enabling special political missions to better deliver on their responsibilities. I am committed to ensuring closer coordination and cooperation between United Nations special political missions, peacekeeping missions and country teams in line with their respective mandates. I urge Member States to continue their support for my reform agenda.

80. Strong partnerships between special political missions and other key stakeholders, such as regional organizations, are essential to collective efforts to support countries as they strive to sustain peace. I will continue to engage our strategic partners to explore further ways to advance our shared vision for prevention and deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

81. As special political missions work to prevent and end conflict and sustain peace and development, they are increasingly adopting approaches to promote the meaningful participation of women, which is critical for the effectiveness and sustainability of efforts. It is encouraging to note the establishment of several women's networks now working closely with special political missions to advance complex political and peace processes. However, more efforts are needed to amplify the voices and engagement of women.

82. I urge the scaling up of efforts to ensure attention to the needs and aspirations of youth. Investing in their empowerment is essential to sustain peace and advance the 2030 Agenda.

83. I am confident that Member States will continue to value and support the important work of special political missions. I note, in this respect, the outstanding question of funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions.

84. I would like to pay tribute to my Special Representatives and Special Envoys and to the dedicated and courageous United Nations staff and affiliated personnel serving in special political missions, who often work under difficult conditions to 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 5 August 2019)

#### Special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General

1. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
3. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
4. 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. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
7. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
8. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
9. United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement
10. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi
11. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar
12. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa

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

13. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
14. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
15. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
16. Panel of Experts on Libya
17. Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
18. Panel of Experts on Yemen
19. Panel of Experts on South Sudan
20. Panel of Experts on Mali
21. Panel of Experts on Somalia
22. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to Security Council 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 for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#)
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 of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1904 \(2009\)](#)

**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
  30. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
  31. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
  32. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
  33. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
  34. United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
  35. United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
  36. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
  37. United Nations Office to the African Union
  38. United Nations support team to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
  39. United Nations Support Mission in Libya
  40. United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
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