



# Security Council

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## Situation in South Sudan

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2625 \(2022\)](#), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to 15 March 2023 and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the Mission's mandate every 90 days. The report covers political and security developments, the humanitarian and human rights situation and progress towards the implementation of the mandate from 1 December 2022 to 15 February 2023.

#### II. Major political developments

2. On 31 December 2022, the President, Salva Kiir Mayardit, appealed to the South Sudanese parties to desist from violence and noted that the extension of the transitional period by 24 months was necessary because key provisions of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan remained unfulfilled. The President acknowledged some progress in the implementation of the Agreement but noted that subnational violence threatened the progress made.

3. From 3 to 5 February 2023, the Ecumenical Peace Pilgrimage to South Sudan led by Pope Francis visited Juba. The Pope urged the President and the First Vice-President, Riek Machar, to end the bloodshed, stressing the need to respect human rights. He also emphasized the importance of a role for young people in dialogue and of women's participation in decision-making processes. The President stated that the parties to the Agreement were working together to overcome challenges, adding that the implementation of the road map of 2022 would be fast-tracked. He also announced the lifting of the suspension of the Rome peace talks with the Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Group.

4. On 21 and 23 December, the President assented and signed into law the constitution-making process bill, 2022; the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (amendment) bill, 2022; the National Police Service Act (amendment) bill, 2022; the National Wildlife Service Act (amendment) bill, 2022; the National Prisons Service Act (amendment) bill, 2022; and the National Civil Defence Service bill, 2022.



5. From 2 to 6 December, in Juba, National Liberation Council of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) met and endorsed the nomination of the incumbent President as its presidential candidate. The Council also replaced Mr. Machar with James Wani Igga as the Council's First Deputy Chair, and Pagan Amun with Peter Lam Both as its Secretary-General. Addressing the concluding session, the President declared the SPLM reunification as completed, further stating that two political parties could not be registered under the same name and called upon the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) to stop using the name "SPLM".

6. On 3 December, the President of Kenya, William Ruto, held talks in Juba with the President of South Sudan to strengthen relations between both countries. On 24 December, he issued a statement calling upon the President of South Sudan to de-escalate the conflict in Upper Nile and Jonglei States.

7. Between 2 and 26 December, international partners issued several statements in which they expressed concerns regarding the deteriorating security situation in Upper Nile and Jonglei States. UNMISS, the African Union Mission in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, members of the African diplomatic corps, the European Union, India, Switzerland and the troika comprised of Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, called upon the Government to engage with the armed elements to cease the violence and encouraged Shilluk and Nuer community leaders to restore peace. On 31 January and 1 February, the troika and UNMISS issued statements expressing concerns about reports of a military build-up of the Agwelek forces, loyal to General Johnson Olony, in Upper Nile State.

8. On 14 January, 3,000 necessary unified forces elements graduated in Bentiu, Unity State, completing phase I, under chapter 2, of the Revitalized Agreement. The harmonization of ranks is still pending until a deployment plan is finalized. Phase II, scheduled to start on 30 September 2022, has yet to commence.

9. On 12 January, the head of the Sovereignty Council of the Sudan, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, met the President in Juba. They reiterated their commitment to promoting political and economic cooperation through the cooperation agreements signed in 2012 and called for redoubled efforts towards determining the final status of Abyei.

10. On 26 January, at its twenty-sixth monthly plenary meeting, in Juba, the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission expressed concern over armed clashes in Upper Nile State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area and stressed the need to implement bills, harmonize the ranks of the necessary unified forces and provide for their welfare so that they could be deployed.

### **Economic situation**

11. Local currency depreciation, increasing import and fuel costs, obstacles to trade and seasonal factors led to an increase in food prices, limited economic activity and restricted household purchasing power. On 17 January, the Bank of South Sudan prohibited the use of foreign currency in commercial transactions in the country, arguing that it undermined public confidence in the South Sudanese pound as a legal tender and led to its depreciation, owing to an increase in demand for United States dollars. To date, the measure has not resulted in a convergence of official and parallel market exchange rates. Efforts to stabilize the South Sudanese pound and to address inflation have had limited success.

12. On 9 December, the Council of Ministers approved a new civil service salary structure, in line with the President's announcement in July 2022 of a 100 per cent salary increase for civil servants.

### **III. Security situation**

13. Cattle-related intercommunal violence and land disputes with ethnic undertones continued to undermine the peace process. In Jonglei State, cyclical cattle-related incidents in the Nuer, Dinka and Murle territories escalated, with large-scale mobilization extending into the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, resulting in violent clashes and the displacement of over 40,000 civilians. Meanwhile, the boundary dispute between the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic along the Twic County border with the Abyei Administrative Area resumed. In Central Equatoria State, the presence of Dinka cattle keepers from Bor caused instability and the displacement of 2,800 citizens.

#### **A. Greater Upper Nile region**

14. On 30 November, armed Nuer young people attacked the internally displaced persons camp in Aburoc and its surroundings in Fashoda County, resulting in 180 persons killed and more than 9,000 displaced to the Malakal protection of civilians site and the Kodok company operating base. On 8 December, the Government deployed security forces to the area and halted the clashes between armed Shilluk and Nuer young people. The situation along the Nile corridor stabilized and remained under the control of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and Sudan People's Liberation-Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) forces. Meanwhile, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces also deployed to Kilo 10, a buffer zone, where the Maban and Melut communities had clashed over land.

15. On 9 December, the President met with the Shilluk king, Reth Kwongo Dak Padiet, to seek an end to the violence in the greater Upper Nile region. On 12 December, the Chair of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, Lieutenant General Asrat Denero Amad, stated at the thirty-fifth meeting of its Board that Agwelek forces, Nuer groups known as the White Army, SPLA-IO Kit-Gwang forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces were involved in the fighting in Upper Nile State.

16. In Jonglei State, intercommunal clashes between young people from the Lou Nuer and Murle communities over cattle and abductions displaced some 17,000 civilians to Pibor town and exacerbated acute food insecurity. On 22 December, Lou Nuer young people from northern Jonglei State attacked Murle people in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area to retrieve stolen cattle and abducted civilians. This culminated in a significant outbreak of violence between the two groups in Gumuruk, from 26 to 28 December, which also involved the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and eventually led to the Lou Nuer's overrunning of Gumuruk. In early January, following counter-attacks by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the Murle, the Lou Nuer armed young people returned to their areas of origin, mainly in Uror and Ayod Counties, but the potential for retaliatory attacks remains high

#### **B. Greater Equatoria region**

17. The security situation in Central Equatoria State remains fragile, owing to the presence of Dinka cattle keepers from Bor in the Mangala area and the related

destruction of farmlands induced by the impact of climate change and the harassment of local communities. Between 10 and 16 December, Dinka herders and the Bari local community clashed in Mangala over the destruction of food crops by cattle. At the same time, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces launched operations in the area over allegations that the local community was affiliated with National Salvation Front, resulting in the displacement of over 10,000 civilians.

18. On 2 January, fighting broke out between Dinka Bor and Mundari cattle keepers in the Dukani and Kodoro villages of Wonduruba, Juba County. At least 1,200 residents fled towards Wonduruba Centre and Kuda. Meanwhile, tensions mounted between local communities and Dinka cattle keepers from Bor in Kajo Kaji. On 23 January, local young people reportedly attacked cattle keepers, killing at least 30 head of cattle. In response, on 2 February, Dinka cattle keepers from Bor carried out attacks in Mogiri and Likamere, killing at least 27 civilians and displacing some 2,000 people, mainly women and children. On 5 February, UNMISS condemned the violence and welcomed the Government's deployment of troops to the area to de-escalate tensions and protect internally displaced persons.

### **C. Greater Bahr el-Ghazal region**

19. The security situation in Rualbet, Warrap State, continued to improve, thanks to the presence of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces in the region. However, there were persistent cases of arbitrary detention in the area, as security forces attempted to arrest the perpetrators of the incident of 25 June 2022. In Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, there were further instances of arbitrary detention of political activists suspected of being affiliated with the South Sudan United Front/Army, and 108 detainees were transferred to Juba.

20. Cyclical violence continued in Tonj East County, Warrap State, between the Luanyjang and Baac communities. From 24 to 26 December, reprisal attacks triggered by the killing of a Luanyjang young person resulted in 24 persons killed and 21 injured. Seven civilians who attempted to intervene in the incident were reportedly shot and injured by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces. Furthermore, with the beginning of the dry season, there was an increase in cross-State cattle-related communal violence between Tonj East County and bordering areas in Lakes, as well as Twic County, Warrap State, and Mayom County, Unity State. From 8 to 13 December, a series of cattle raids, revenge killings and abductions occurred between the Luanyjang and Maper communities of Lakes, triggered by the abduction of five Luanyjang minors.

21. Tensions also persisted between the Dinka Ngok from the Abyei Administrative Area and the Dinka Twic from Twic County over the ownership of the Aneet area. From 18 to 22 December, cyclical revenge attacks broke out between the Dinka Twic and Dinka Ngok, resulting in eight persons killed and six injured. Cross-border attacks continued from 29 December to 2 January, resulting in 14 persons killed and 8 injured, and displaced hundreds of people, primarily women and children. On 27 January, 18 persons were killed and 7 injured when Dinka Ngok attacked several villages in Ajakuac Payam. Dinka Twic and Dinka Ngok communities have converged on the disputed boundary, which is leading to increased tension in the area.

## **IV. Humanitarian situation**

22. Following the late December armed clashes between Lou Nuer, Gawaar Nuer and Murle young people in Gumuruk area, an inter-cluster assessment in Pibor town conducted on 31 December found 17,000 newly displaced people sheltering in three

locations in Pibor town, namely, Ngarwale, Pibor primary school and Langachot primary school. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission in Pibor town stated that an unknown number of internally displaced persons had moved from Gumuruk County to Verthet, and from Lekuangole County to Kong and Bebuzen.

23. Between 11 and 13 January, humanitarian partners conducted a three-day response mission to register and verify Mangala internally displaced persons who had moved to Gwerek and Nyuwa in Jebel Lado Payam, Juba County. The number of displaced persons sheltering in the two locations has risen to 9,000 people. On 16 January, humanitarian response to the people assessed in the Gwerek and Nyuwa villages commenced. Humanitarian personnel have been unable to gain access to people displaced on islands on the river Nile owing to ongoing military operations.

24. Violence in Fashoda County, Upper Nile State, resulted in massive population displacement, with over 22,000 people displaced near the UNMISS company operating base in Kodok. The humanitarian response for that group is ongoing. Local authorities reported that over 14,600 displaced people had moved from Fashoda County to Melut town, Melut County. Biometric registration in the Malakal protection of civilians site in November confirmed that some 37,000 internally displaced persons lived in the camp, with 918 new arrivals recorded between 14 December 2022 and 9 January 2023.

25. On 11 December, the Ministry of Health declared a measles outbreak in South Sudan. From January 2022 to 29 January 2023, 46 deaths and 4,339 cases in 25 counties were recorded. United Nations-supported measles vaccination campaigns are ongoing.

26. During the reporting period, access constraints, violence against aid workers, bureaucratic impediments, widespread criminality, intercommunal violence and revenge killings continued to hamper the work of humanitarian actors. Between December 2022 and 10 February 2023, 64 incidents related to humanitarian access constraints were reported, of which 36 involved violence against humanitarian personnel and assets. A total of 64 incidents were reported in 10 States. Since the beginning of 2023, three humanitarian staff members have been killed while on duty, and 78 humanitarian workers have been relocated from Tonj East, Gumuruk, Lekuangole and Nasir to safer locations. Fourteen incidents of looting and theft of humanitarian assets were reported.

## **V. Implementation of the Mission's mandated tasks**

### **A. Supporting the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement and the peace process**

27. UNMISS continued to exercise its good offices by engaging with the parties, partners and stakeholders of the Revitalized Agreement. During the reporting period, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of UNMISS met with the President, the First Vice-President and other cabinet ministers, to take stock of peace implementation and explore ways to address intercommunal violence.

28. The trilateral task force, comprising the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD, in collaboration with the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, held regular information exchange sessions on the Revitalized Agreement and political developments. The task force facilitated workshops with civil society organizations, political party leaders and others to enhance awareness of

the road map and foster participation in and promote a shared understanding of critical aspects of the constitution-making and electoral processes.

29. On 24 January, UNMISS received a formal request from the Government of South Sudan for comprehensive United Nations electoral assistance. This followed on the President's recent commitment to beginning preparations for the elections and creating conditions for the inclusive participation of South Sudanese citizens in the electoral process. UNMISS continued to engage with national interlocutors on electoral best practices. The efforts included dialogue with national counterparts and continuous advocacy and discussions on the need to ensure the timely implementation of key benchmarks on elections contained in the Revitalized Agreement and the road map. UNMISS provided advice and support to the National Constitutional Amendment Committee, the National Elections Commission and civil society Organizations, including of women and youth groups, in their deliberations on the National Elections Act.

30. On 2 December, UNMISS provided support to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to convene a day-long round-table dialogue on access to laws in South Sudan, attended by 26 participants, including five women, from the Ministry, the Office of the President, the Law Review Commission, the reconstituted Transitional National Legislative Assembly, the Bar Association and United Nations agencies. Participants requested that the Ministry establish a working group on access to laws to facilitate the dissemination of printed laws and continue discussions to enhance the accessibility of laws for the general public.

31. In preparation for the formal commencement of the constitution-making process, UNMISS and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation supported the South Sudan Democratic Engagement Monitoring and Observation Programme in convening a series of consultations of civil society organizations in Juba. Civil society leaders, on 11 January (20 men and 9 women), 19 January (15 men and 6 women) and 1 and 2 February (30 men and 17 women), analysed the Constitution-Making Process Act, 2022 and identified provisions in the law that might have an impact on the inclusivity, transparency and credibility of the constitution-making process, and they agreed on the way forward. They also agreed on selection criteria and modalities for the nomination of their representatives to the process-implementing bodies and to work in a coordinated way in the process.

32. In an effort to strengthen inclusive grass-roots support for the peace process and raise awareness among students and local communities of the significance of their participation in the peace process, UNMISS, in collaboration with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction and Rumbek University, facilitated a two-week debate competition in Lakes State for 228 participants, including 73 women, that concluded on 6 December.

33. On 15 December, UNMISS, together with the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, convened discussions with 115 representatives of civil society organizations, including 42 women, from across South Sudan on the implementation of the road map to promote the understanding of the road map and assist civil society members in identifying entry points for their support for its implementation. UNMISS facilitated a similar consultative forum on 20 December for parties signatory to the Revitalized Agreement, civil society organizations and members of the High-level Standing Committee on the road map, with assistance from the African Union, IGAD and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. Participants reflected on progress made and challenges reported and generated recommendations to advance the implementation of the road map and the political transition.

34. On 9 December, UNMISS supported the South Sudan Anti-Corruption Commission in holding a high-level event attended by 86 participants, including 18 women, to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. The speakers discussed the pending draft Anti-Corruption Commission bill and the lack of adequate protections for whistle-blowers. They underscored the importance of combating corruption to the delivery of basic services and economic development.

35. From 23 to 25 January, UNMISS supported the Strategic Defence and Security Review Board's tenth workshop to develop a white paper on defence and security as a tool to formalize and disseminate the national vision for security sector reform.

36. From 26 to 27 January, UNMISS, in coordination with the World Bank, supported the revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly's Specialized Committee on Defence and Veterans Affairs to convene a workshop on the national pension framework for security sector personnel, with a focus on defence personnel. The workshop was attended by 69 participants, including 10 women.

37. On 30 January, the pilot project on community violence reduction in Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, was launched, supported by the Joint Technical Working Group on Community Violence Reduction and under the leadership of the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, with support from the United Nations Development Programme and UNMISS. The one-year project is aimed at bringing together 250 former combatants and 250 community members to foster peaceful coexistence through socioeconomic reintegration, including vocational training and microgrant schemes.

38. From 6 to 9 December, the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission visited South Sudan to meet with government officials and other interlocutors. The delegation also conducted site visits to Peacebuilding Fund projects implemented by the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Wau to identify entry points for violence reduction and social cohesion through the engagement of young people. The second meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission on South Sudan was held in New York on 31 January, during which the Chairs reported on their visit and the Government provided an update on progress made on local governance and community reconciliation as critical elements for peacebuilding in South Sudan.

## **B. Protection of civilians and mitigating intercommunal conflict**

39. UNMISS continued to promote inclusive dialogue, peaceful coexistence, reconciliation and social cohesion at the subnational level to enhance the protection of civilians and create favourable conditions for implementing the Revitalized Agreement.

40. UNMISS provided physical protection at the Malakal protection of civilians site and at the company operating base in Kodok, where conflict between SPLA-IO Kit-Gwang factions in Upper Nile and northern Jonglei States continued to drive displacement and congestion at the site. As at 10 February, UNMISS was providing physical protection to 37,032 persons at the site. UNMISS also provided physical protection to over 9,000 internally displaced persons settled outside the Mission base in Malakal and 12,851 around Kodok town, who had fled confrontations in Fashoda between armed Nuer youth groups and young people from the Shilluk community and an attack on the internally displaced persons site in Aburoc, in November.

41. UNMISS maintained its support for internally displaced persons sites at Bentiu, Bor, Juba and Wau (former protection of civilians sites), through integrated planning, advocacy and response to alleged incidents of sexual and gender-based violence,

weapon smuggling and other alleged criminal activities. Those efforts led to the sustained deployment of the South Sudan National Police Service and joint police unit officers, supported by the United Nations police and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission.

42. UNMISS strengthened the protection of civilians capacity of subnational authorities through 18 capacity-building workshops, which benefited 749 representatives, including 209 women, representing local authorities, the South Sudan National Police Service, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, civil society organizations, traditional leaders and community members in Leer, Koch and Mayendit in Unity State, Aweil in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, Terekeka in Central Equatoria State, and Bor in Jonglei State.

43. To address intercommunal tensions between the Shilluk and the Nuer following widespread violence in August 2022 in Upper Nile and Jonglei States, UNMISS mediated a high-level dialogue forum on 21 December between 27 Juba-based political leaders, including five women, from the two communities. The dialogue resulted in a joint communiqué committing to working for peace in Upper Nile State, restoring relations between the Nuer and the Shilluk, engaging with the affected communities and dissuading against mobilization for further violence. Subsequently, from 27 to 29 December, some of the community leaders, the Upper Nile State Governor and other State authorities travelled to Akoka, Fashoda, Melut and Renk Counties to build confidence and engage with the affected population.

44. On 23 and 24 December, UNMISS and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the Upper Nile State government and community leaders, facilitated a cross-border pastoralist migration conference in Renk for farmers and pastoralists. Fifty community representatives, including seven women, participated in the event, including nomadic pastoralists from the Blue and White Nile States of the Sudan. This resulted in renewed commitment by all sides to upholding resolutions reached at a similar conference in 2021 to ensure a peaceful migration during the 2023 dry season.

45. A similar forum was supported in Wau from 13 to 15 December. It provided a discussion platform for 165 participants, including 26 women, representing cattle keepers and host communities of Western Bahr el-Gazal, Northern Bahr el-Gazal and Warrap States and resulted in commitments similar to those reached in the interstate Marial Bai agreement signed in 2016 on addressing conflict arising during cattle seasonal movement, and an action plan for its implementation to ensure peaceful cattle movement in 2023.

46. To enhance civil-military relations, on 19 January, UNMISS and county authorities organized a confidence-building workshop in Wanyjok, Aweil East County, for 30 South Sudan People's Defence Forces officers, including three women, and 35 community members, including nine women. The workshop resulted in an agreement to conduct regular awareness-raising and social exchange activities to enhance relations. A joint committee comprising 16 persons, including two women, made up of South Sudan People's Defence Forces and community representatives was also formed to improve civilian-military relations.

47. UNMISS conducted 23 workshops, forums, community dialogues and capacity-building programmes on the protection of civilians for communities, State and local authorities, traditional leaders, women leaders and young people. A total of 4,294 participants, including 1,102 women, were reached through those activities.

48. As at 9 February, the UNMISS force had conducted 11,943 patrols, including 948 short-duration, 319 long-duration, 38 dynamic air, 32 riverine, 229 force protection, 1,964 airport/river port, 2,009 city and 1,410 night patrols for the protection of

civilian purposes. Of those, 150 short-duration, 171 long-duration, 30 dynamic air and 14 riverine patrols were integrated patrols, which also included United Nations police and civilian personnel. A total of 4,992 patrols were conducted specifically in and around the Malakal protection of civilians site and internally displaced persons sites, and 8 per cent included uniformed women peacekeepers. The force also conducted several all-terrain patrols in and around Pibor following the crisis in Jonglei State. The force maintained seven extended-duration temporary operating bases in Koch, Tambura, Jamjang, Mundri, Domolotto, Mangala and Nzara to increase operational reach for military components. The temporary operating bases helped to secure main supply routes and control over hotspots in order to deter attacks against civilians.

49. As at 8 February, the United Nations police had conducted 2,109 patrols, including 873 confidence- and trust-building, 32 short-duration, 15 long-duration, 16 dynamic air and 1,011 high-visibility patrols. Of those, 156 were integrated, 47 long-distance, 109 short-distance, 23 dynamic air and 6 river patrols, and 1,319 (63 per cent) included women. The United Nations police also conducted 210 access control patrols, and four cordon and search operations were conducted in the Malakal protection of civilians site.

50. The co-location of 4,137 United Nations police officers, including 817 women, with the South Sudan National Police Service took place at all police stations (96) located close to the internally displaced persons sites, for advising, mentoring and monitoring. In Unity State, the United Nations police supported the South Sudan National Police Service in integrating the gangs into youth peace initiatives. Those operational activities contributed to improved physical safety and security at the sites.

51. The Mine Action Service responded to 418 requests for identification, removal, disposal and clearance of suspected landmines and explosive ordnance from the Mission and local communities. A total of 6,369 items of explosive ordnance were disposed of, and 1,157,135 m<sup>2</sup> of land were released. Altogether, 150,893 persons (22,554 men, 50,305 women, 38,982 girls and 39,052 boys) were provided with explosive ordnance risk education across the country, and 97 per cent of the recipients demonstrated an increase in knowledge.

### **C. Rule of law and accountability**

52. From 10 to 24 December, UNMISS supported the South Sudan People's Defence Forces in deploying a general court martial of eight military justice officials to Maridi, Western Equatoria. The court martial heard five murder cases involving six defendants, resulting in three convictions, two acquittals and one out-of-court settlement. Victim and witness support services were provided through a local civil society organization, and all accused were represented by defence counsel.

53. To enhance the South Sudan People's Defence Forces Military Justice Directorate's capacity to promote accountability for serious crimes by unified South Sudan People's Defence Forces personnel, UNMISS facilitated a workshop for 50 judge advocates, including five women, from 16 to 20 January. The workshop strengthened their capacity to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate serious crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence, and facilitated the exchange of best practices with civilian justice actors.

54. From 2 to 7 December, UNMISS facilitated the deployment of justice actors to Raja, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State, to conduct investigations into serious crimes. Investigations into three sexual and gender-based violence cases were concluded and referred to the Raja circuit court. UNMISS provided the victims and the suspects with psychosocial support during the investigations.

55. On 5, 9, and 12 December, UNMISS conducted three rule of law assessments and outreach exercises with more than 150 local government officials and community members, including 26 women, in Tonj South, Tonj North and Tonj East to raise awareness and secure community support for the new multi-partner reconciliation, stabilization and resilience trust fund project for the greater Tonj area.
56. From 2 to 4 February, UNMISS, together with other project partners, conducted the first dialogue of a series for communities in Jak, Wanhalel and Thiet Payams in Thiet, Warrap State, with 100 participants, including 20 women. The dialogues are aimed at identifying community priorities to address conflict management and curb violence in the area.
57. From 13 to 14 December, UNMISS consulted with 14 justice actors (all men) for Warrap and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States to develop and establish a sustainable mechanism to succeed the joint special mobile court. Justice actors underscored the importance of the court and its successor mechanism in preventing a return to conflict in the border areas of the two States.
58. To address prolonged and arbitrary prison detention, UNMISS continued its support for the National Prison Service of South Sudan and the judiciary to review pretrial detention warrants, including in Aweil and Rumbek central prisons, where pretrial detainees were released in December.
59. From 1 to 9 December, UNMISS partnered with FAO, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the National Prison Service of South Sudan to launch the “Green Prisons” initiative in Lakes and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States. The initiative uses prison farms to address the challenge of food security in prisons.
60. From 3 to 5 and from 7 to 9 December, UNMISS delivered training on prison records management to 58 officers, including 22 women, from the National Prison Service of South Sudan in Wau and Bentiu central prisons, respectively. From 19 to 23 December, UNMISS facilitated human rights and prison management training for 49 National Prison Service of South Sudan officers, including 11 women, in Malakal and Aweil central prisons.
61. From 8 to 12 February, UNMISS conducted a training of trainers for 36 National Prison Service of South Sudan personnel, including four women, which focused on building capacity to provide basic prison management skills to newly inducted National Prison Service of South Sudan officers.

#### **D. Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance**

62. The United Nations police provided security during five humanitarian assistance delivery assignments, 24 security escorts to engineers and very important persons and 16 security escorts during the humanitarian food distribution to the protection of civilians sites.
63. As at 9 February, UNMISS Force had conducted 93 long-duration and 692 short-duration patrols to support the delivery of assistance and ensure the protection of humanitarian workers. Force protection was provided to 266 integrated mission patrols supporting convoys and humanitarian partners, including non-government organizations. UNMISS had also completed nine requests for force protection and logistic support from humanitarian partners and 242 protection requests for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service airfield site.
64. UNMISS facilitated access and delivery of humanitarian assistance by facilitating and supporting the planning of patrols with humanitarian teams in Kodok,

Pibor and Unity State. This enabled humanitarian teams to deliver 263 kg of medical supplies in December 2022 from the Office of the Chief Administrator of the Ruweng Administrative Area to Abiemnom primary health-care centre, bolstering the provision of life-saving assistance and providing equipment for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence in Mayom. UNMISS urged government officials to provide the security required to enable unimpeded humanitarian operations in Kodok and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area.

65. The Mine Action Service verified and cleared 1,131 km of roads prioritized by the Mission, including the Bor-Pibor main supply route, and escorted Mission patrols over 507 km, thereby ensuring the mobility of peacekeepers and humanitarian partners free from the threat of explosive ordnance.

## **E. Monitoring and investigating human rights violations**

66. UNMISS documented and verified 174 incidents that had had a negative impact on the human rights and protection situation, comprising 104 incidents of killing, 24 incidents resulting in injuries, 19 abductions, 12 cases of sexual violence and 15 incidents of arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as the looting and destruction of civilian property. The incidents involved 863 civilians, including 152 women and 134 children, subjected to violence, of whom 340 were killed and 267 injured. Compared with the previous reporting period (September to November), this represents a 36 per cent decrease in the number of victims (from 1,338 to 863), owing to the decrease in the number of killings as compared with the previous reporting period. Thirty incidents were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and other government security services, 124 to community-based militias and armed elements, 5 to the National Salvation Front and 11 to SPLA-IO and splinter groups. Attribution remains under verification for the four remaining incidents.

67. On 15 February, UNMISS published its brief on the human rights situation for the fourth quarter of 2022, covering the period from October to December 2022. At least 202 incidents were documented, verified and reported (compared with 142 in the previous quarter), involving some 969 civilians (745 in the previous quarter) subjected to one of the four major forms of individual harm (killing, injury, abduction and sexual violence). The 30 per cent increase in the number of victims (from 745 to 969) is due in part to the rise in incidents of localized violence involving community-based militias, which accounted for 37 per cent of civilian casualties from October to December. Of the civilian casualties, 61 per cent were attributed to the conventional parties to the conflict, while 2 per cent were attributed to unidentified armed elements.

68. During the reporting period, intercommunal violence continued to adversely affect local populations, resulting in 579 civilian casualties. In Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, for instance, an outbreak of violence between armed young people from Jonglei State and armed Murle young people from the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, as well as persistent attacks on civilians by Murle armed elements, resulted in 425 civilian casualties (124 killed, 158 injured and 143 abducted). UNMISS conducted several missions to affected areas in Jonglei State and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area to advocate the protection of civilians with the authorities. UNMISS also deployed surge capacity to Upper Nile State, where armed confrontations between the Agwelek and SPLA-IO Kit-Gwang forces, supported by Shilluk and Nuer armed elements, resulted in human rights abuses, including at least 146 casualties (28 killed, 38 injured, 26 abducted and 54 subjected to conflict-related sexual violence) during the reporting period.

69. UNMISS continued to receive reports of censorship, harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists, activists and other individuals expressing critical

or dissenting views from the Government. During the reporting period, the National Security Service arbitrarily arrested and detained seven journalists of the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation in connection with their professional activities. Three were subsequently released without any charges on 20 January.

70. On 9 December, the Special Court in Juba acquitted the former Governor of Northern Bhar el-Ghazal State, Kuel Aguer Kuel, of all charges levelled against him. He had been arrested in August 2021, along with six other activists from the People's Coalition for Civil Action, on the accusation of attempting to overthrow the Government.

71. UNMISS carried out 16 human rights due diligence policy risk assessments before travel, and material assistance was provided to the South Sudan National Police Service, the National Prison Service of South Sudan, the Minister for Defence and government officials in support of the implementation of the peace process.

72. UNMISS conducted 91 capacity-building and awareness-raising activities for a wide variety of stakeholders, including government officials, organized forces and armed groups (South Sudan People's Defence Forces, South Sudan National Police Service, National Security Service and SPLA-IO) and civil society organizations. Those activities reached 5,375 people, including 2,249 women, and were focused on fundamental human rights principles, international humanitarian law, transitional justice, conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence. They were aimed at enhancing the capacity of State and civil society organizations to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights in South Sudan.

## **1. Children and armed conflict**

73. The United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting verified 77 grave violations against 68 children (52 boys and 16 girls). Thirty-four boys were confirmed as victims of recruitment and use, 15 children had been abducted (eight boys and seven girls), 13 children (10 boys and three girls) had been killed (nine) or maimed (four) and six girls had been raped. Six children had suffered multiple violations. Three attacks on schools were also verified. Children were affected in the States of Upper Nile (46), Western Equatoria (6), Central Equatoria (5), Eastern Equatoria (4), Northern Bahr el-Ghazal (3), Western Bahr el-Ghazal (1), Jonglei (2) and Warrap (1).

74. Most violations (52), comprising 25 incidents of recruitment and use, 16 abductions, five rapes, four cases of killing and maiming and two attacks on schools, were perpetrated by SPLA-IO Kit-Gwang. Ten violations were attributed to government security forces, namely, the necessary unified forces (5), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (4) and the South Sudan National Police Service (1). Violations were also attributed to the National Salvation Front (five abductions), Agwelek (one maiming) and SPLA-IO (one attack on school). Eight violations had been caused by items of unexploded ordnance, resulting in five children getting killed and three maimed.

75. UNMISS delivered 44 child protection awareness-raising sessions to 2,693 participants (1,516 men and 1,177 women), comprising 1,734 community members, including 811 women, 596 government security forces elements, including 219 women, 42 protection partners, including 37 women, 86 government officials, including 30 women, and 235 necessary unified forces elements, including 80 women. In addition, UNMISS delivered 11 child protection training sessions to 510 participants (400 men and 110 women), among whom were 317 government security forces elements, including 80 women, 80 SPLA-IO elements, including 3 women, 29 community members, including 9 women, and 69 government officials, including 14 women.

## 2. Conflict-related sexual violence

76. During the reporting period, UNMISS documented and verified a total of 14 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 27 survivors, including 23 women and four girls. Survivors ranged in age from 15 to 50 years. Twelve survivors were able to receive medical support, while seven sought to pursue legal action against the perpetrators. The incidents had occurred in the States of Central Equatoria (four), Unity (two), Upper Nile (two), Jonglei (two), Eastern Equatoria (one), Western Bahr el-Ghazal (one), Warrap (one) and Western Equatoria (one) and were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (two), National Security Service (two), South Sudan National Police Service (one), National Salvation Front (one) and other armed groups, comprising community-based militias (five), unidentified armed men (two) and foreign forces (one).

77. On 21 December, UNMISS facilitated a meeting of the Joint Implementation Committee of the Action Plan for the Armed Forces on Addressing Conflict-related Sexual Violence in South Sudan to review the activities conducted in 2022 and to plan for 2023. Achievements of the Committee in 2022 included capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on prevention, response and the zero-tolerance policy for conflict-related sexual violence conducted at five military training centres across the country ahead of the graduation of the first batch of elements of the necessary unified forces.

## F. Women and peace and security

78. On 7 December, UNMISS, civil society organizations and representatives of the national security sector Women's Network Executive Board met to discuss civil sector engagement in security sector reform. They also discussed ways to enhance the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence. The interlocutors agreed to establish a platform for cooperation, with the aim of building a gender-sensitive security sector, which was implemented on 18 January.

79. On 14 December, UNMISS conducted a workshop to validate the findings of the joint assessment on protection, security and early warning for women, covering Bor, Magwi and Juba, bringing together 450 research participants representing young people, women, persons with disabilities, traditional and religious leaders, law enforcement and local authorities, faith-based organizations and community members, including 243 women and young people. The assessment highlighted cultural barriers undermining women and young people's access to protection, slow processing of sexual and gender-based violence cases and heavy reliance on customary justice systems to resolve such cases. A set of recommendations building on survivor and witness-centred frameworks were put forward for different actors in accordance with their mandates. UNMISS will support protection and prevention activities in line with its strategy on sexual and gender-based violence.

80. From 15 to 16 December, UNMISS provided support to the Women's Parliamentary Caucus of the reconstituted Transitional National Legislative Assembly to hold a workshop to draft its strategic plan for 2023–2026. The Assembly Chief Whip, Rebecca Joshua Okwaci, emphasized the importance of unity for women parliamentarians to make progress on women's participation in decision-making processes, as specified in the peace agreement, including achieving and exceeding the 35 per cent representation threshold, and to advocate for gender-sensitive laws. The consultations reviewed the current plan (2018–2022), which will feed into the successor plan for the 2023–2026 period.

81. From 13 to 15 February, UNMISS, in coordination with the African Union, Norway and Sweden, supported the Government in organizing the first International Conference on Women's Transformational Leadership, in Juba. The Conference, which was opened by the President and chaired by the Vice-President, Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior, was held in the context of the forthcoming general election in December 2024 as an opportunity for women leaders to share experiences from across the African continent, expand their networks and deepen their knowledge of key issues from an intergenerational perspective. Women leaders discussed multiple challenges around governance, climate change, economic vulnerability, access to education and finance and gender-based violence, especially for women and girls in South Sudan. Some 400 women leaders from 15 African countries participated in the Conference. Participants included a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Leyma Gbowee, a former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and a former President of Malawi, Joyce Hilda Banda, as well as senior women ministers from South Sudan. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations also provided remarks by means of a video message at the opening of the Conference.

## **VI. Mission staffing, status of deployments, and conduct and discipline**

82. As at 9 February, the number of UNMISS civilian personnel stood at 2,650, consisting of 857 international staff members, including 249 women (29.1 per cent), 1,401 national staff members, including 226 women (16.1 per cent), and 392 United Nations Volunteers, including 170 women (43.4 per cent).

83. Of the authorized 2,101 personnel, UNMISS police strength stood at 1,552 personnel, consisting of 668 individual police officers, including 262 women (39.2 per cent), 848 personnel in formed police units, including 236 women (27.8 per cent), and 36 corrections officers, including 15 women (41.7 per cent).

84. Of the authorized 17,000 troops, UNMISS strength stood at 13,257 military personnel, consisting of 223 military liaison officers, including 67 women (30 per cent), 417 military staff officers, including 80 women (19.2 per cent), and 12,617 military contingent personnel, including 777 women (6.2 per cent).

85. UNMISS maintained awareness-raising and outreach campaigns for local communities concerning the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. A highlight of ongoing activities was the annual sexual exploitation and abuse stand-down day, as part of 16 days of activism under the theme "United against sexual exploitation and abuse". In collaboration with community-based complaints mechanism focal points, United Nations partners and local community members in Juba, Torit, Kuacjok, Aweil, Yambio and Rumbek, UNMISS reached out to over 3,000 people during the campaign, including women, youth leaders, traditional leaders and students. Informational and educational materials related to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse were distributed, including information on how to submit complaints and seek assistance.

86. In accordance with the applicable policy, information on possible unsatisfactory conduct and misconduct was processed in a timely fashion. Between 1 December and 31 January, 31 allegations of misconduct were recorded in the case management tracking system. Three allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded. All identified victims of previously reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse continued to receive support from the Senior Victims' Rights Officer in South Sudan.

## **VII. Violations of the status-of-forces agreement, international humanitarian law and security of United Nations personnel**

87. As at 31 January, UNMISS had recorded 8 violations of the status-of-forces agreement, compared with 23 violations during the previous reporting period. Six violations had involved movement restrictions imposed by government authorities, affecting UNMISS patrols in the States of Central Equatoria, Warrap, Upper Nile and Western Equatoria. On 13 December, South Sudan People's Defence Forces soldiers at the Bilpam checkpoint in Juba denied access to a UNMISS patrol travelling from Juba to Buko and Wulikare, even though, in accordance with established practice, the Mission had informed the Government about the patrol.

88. Regarding two national staff members arrested by government officials in 2014 and declared dead in 2022 by national courts, UNMISS continued to remind the Government of its obligations under international law to inform the families about their fate in order to enable them to achieve closure.

89. United Nations personnel and operations continue to be opportunity targets for criminal actors, as well as subjects of harassment by government security forces. Twenty-four incidents of harassment of United Nations staff by government security forces were recorded.

## **VIII. Performance of uniformed components**

90. The UNMISS force evaluated 13 units, including six infantry battalions in Wau, Juba, Bor and Malakal, five enabling units in Juba, Bentiu and Malakal and two sector headquarters in Juba and Bor. The units were found to be well trained and operationally ready according to military unit evaluation tool standards. Eight units exceeded standards. The units were found to have increased efforts in military peacekeeping-intelligence and the frequency of casualty and medical evacuations and emergency response exercises, and to have improved administrative procedures.

91. In January, three formed police units were evaluated in Juba and Malakal. The overall performance was satisfactory, with some recommendations for improvements to training and administration.

## **IX. Observations and recommendations**

92. During the period under review, progress was noted on the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement. I call upon the parties to sustain this progress. Even minor slippages in the established timelines will have a detrimental impact on reaching the benchmarks agreed to by the parties when they extended the transitional period for an additional two years by adopting the road map in August 2022. For the South Sudanese people, 2023 must bring hope that the Government and parties will redouble their efforts towards a successful and timely conclusion of the peace process by February 2025.

93. While the graduation of the first batch of elements of the necessary unified forces is a welcome development, I call upon the Government to fast-track the harmonization of ranks, finalize deployment and initiate phase II. The forces already graduated must be provided with adequate statutory, budgetary and logistical support so that they may perform their duties professionally, protect civilians and create a conducive environment for elections. In this regard, I encourage the finalization, approval and operationalization of the policy documents culminating from the strategic defence and security review, which set out the roles and responsibilities of

the forces and their oversight. I also encourage the complementarity of those efforts with those aimed at building a gender-sensitive security sector through a platform for cooperation, so as to enhance the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence.

94. I am encouraged by the adoption of key legislation, including the constitution-making process bill, and urge the Government to swiftly implement the enacted laws. The reconstitution of the Political Parties Council is critical for the registration of political parties and for fostering political space. I also urge the Government to promptly enact other pending legislation.

95. I acknowledge the Government's request to the United Nations for assistance for the preparation and conduct of elections as planned in the Revitalized Agreement. The electoral process should reflect broad political consensus to ensure the credibility and acceptability of the results. I urge the Government to undertake all steps necessary to facilitate the holding of elections within the established timeline and legal and institutional framework. I also urge the parties to ensure a conducive environment for political discourse necessary for all South Sudanese to design a new social contract through elections.

96. I remain concerned about undue restrictions to civic and political space, including the closure of media outlets, abductions, harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists, activists and other individuals expressing views critical of the Government, censorship and prevention of some political parties from conducting public meetings and disseminating information, and the exclusion of civil society and ordinary citizens from governance processes. I urge the Government to enhance and protect civic space, ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, prevent violations against journalists, human rights defenders or any civil society actors expressing critical views, investigate any such violations and ensure accountability.

97. I am alarmed at the rapid escalation of subnational violence in the States of Upper Nile, Jonglei, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria and Western Equatoria and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, which has resulted in significant loss of life and property and displaced thousands of civilians. I am appalled by reports of large-scale abductions of women and children. I call upon all parties involved to immediately cease hostilities, release those held against their will, exercise restraint and engage in dialogue to overcome their differences and address the drivers of conflict. I also urge the parties to stop encouraging defections, which are against the letter and spirit of the Revitalized Agreement. I again reiterate that the protection of civilians is the primary responsibility of the Government. In this regard, I call upon the President, the Vice-Presidents and other leaders to urgently intervene to stem the violence and hold perpetrators and peace spoilers accountable.

98. UNMISS and the United Nations country team in South Sudan will continue to work closely with the African Union, IGAD and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, through the trilateral task force mechanism, as well as with the European Union and the troika, to support the Government in addressing subnational violence, including through good offices and conflict prevention efforts.

99. With the beginning of the dry season, I am deeply concerned that the climate-induced migration of livestock is becoming a major driver of intercommunal conflict. I urge the Government to facilitate increased intercommunal dialogues in defining and agreeing on pre-determined passage corridors for cattle to safeguard damages to croplands and ensure the peaceful coexistence of farmers and pastoralists.

100. The impact of the escalation in violence weighs disproportionately on vulnerable civilians. The humanitarian needs of people across South Sudan are staggering, with an estimated 9.4 million people likely to be in need of humanitarian assistance or

protection in 2023. Subnational violence erodes gains made through previous investments and deepens the vulnerability of the most marginalized. Inclusive, sustainable development that leaves no one behind is the only comprehensive solution to the drivers of conflict and humanitarian need. I strongly encourage more investments in development by the Government and international partners to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. I also call upon the Government and parties to facilitate unhindered humanitarian access along the Nile River corridor, which will enable the delivery of services to the most vulnerable persons. I also urge that the corridor be given adequate consideration for its potential to contribute to the economic and social development of South Sudan, and UNMISS will provide the required support in this endeavour, as needed.

101. I am deeply disturbed by the fact that, in the first few weeks of 2023, already three humanitarian colleagues were killed in the line of duty. I urge the Government to investigate those attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice. I call upon the Government to carry out its responsibilities to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian actors and to put in place measures that will help humanitarian partners to conduct their life-saving work without fear of intimidation and harm.

102. Lastly, I express my gratitude to the troop- and police-contributing countries and thank my Special Representative for South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, for his leadership in a challenging operational and political environment. I also thank the uniformed and civilian personnel of UNMISS, the United Nations country team and humanitarian partners, who have continued to work tirelessly towards peace in South Sudan under demanding conditions.

# Map

