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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 [74/91](#), 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 eighth to the Assembly on this item, covers the period from August 2019 to July 2020.

* [A/75/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/91](#), 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 remain an essential mechanism for the United Nations in the areas of peace and security and inclusive conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. Across some of the most volatile and complex environments, special political missions support Member States in preventing the escalation of crises, facilitating dialogue, negotiating peace agreements, promoting human rights and advancing long-term efforts to ensure a sustainable peace. To achieve those goals, they work closely with a wide array of actors. Cooperation with regional and subregional partners and support for their efforts remains a critical priority and underpins much of the work undertaken by special political missions. In addition, these missions work closely with civil society, including women's and youth organizations, and other national stakeholders. They implement their mandates in close cooperation with United Nations development, humanitarian and human rights actors.

3. The reporting period included significant milestones for special political missions. The twentieth anniversary in 2020 of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the contribution of these missions to the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Similarly, the fifth anniversary of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) on youth and peace and security recalls the introduction of a critical new agenda that special political missions are actively pursuing.

4. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected every aspect of the work of the Organization, both at Headquarters and in the field. Despite the impact of the pandemic on operations, movement and personnel, special political missions have continued to deliver on their mandates. They have also supported Member States and communities in their response to the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis requires a truly collective response, and special political missions are demonstrating their vital role in that endeavour.

II. Key operational developments

Africa

5. In January 2020, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) for a period of three years, until 31 January 2023. The new mandate maintains the mission's core functions of good offices and conflict prevention, as well as the promotion of good governance, the rule of law, human rights, and the mainstreaming of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution in the subregion. It introduces new elements such as the impact of climate change on peace and security and support to United Nations mission transitions. The mandate also emphasizes the research and analysis responsibilities of UNOWAS and requests the mission to enhance partnerships with regional and subregional organizations to address cross-cutting and cross-border threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel. It also specifies that UNOWAS should

support the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel through political advocacy and convening while promoting enhanced collaboration among entities of the United Nations system. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel has continued to support national and regional efforts to sustain peace, including through advocacy and support for inclusive approaches to national dialogues and electoral processes, the promotion of human rights and constitutional and institutional reforms.

6. In a statement by its President dated 12 September 2019, the Security Council welcomed the conclusions of the strategic review of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The Council acknowledged that the mandate of UNOCA remained valid and welcomed the recommendation that UNOCA should enhance its work on early warning and analysis with a gender perspective; good offices in non-mission settings, particularly in the lead-up to the upcoming electoral cycle in the region; support for and strengthening the capacity of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); and building partnerships with civil society and supporting subregional civil society networks. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa continued to provide good offices in the subregion, in partnership with ECCAS. UNOCA provided support to the ongoing reform process of ECCAS and worked closely with UNOWAS to address interregional challenges, such as the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and security issues related to transhumance. UNOCA also worked with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, in close cooperation with ECCAS, on issues including the situation in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. The Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, in partnership with the co-guarantors – the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community. Encouraged by the readiness of the countries of the region to engage in confidence-building initiatives and dialogue, the Special Envoy provided good offices to sustain the emerging positive momentum towards greater regional cooperation. He engaged continuously with various stakeholders at both the regional and the international levels, including the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region, to foster peaceful and inclusive electoral and political processes in the region.

8. As part of United Nations engagements in Burundi, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa and Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi conducted several missions to the country for direct interactions with government officials, representatives of political parties, civil society organizations, regional and subregional organizations, members of the diplomatic community and other stakeholders. She discussed how the United Nations could assist the Government in creating a conducive environment for an inclusive political dialogue ahead of the elections that took place in May 2020. The consultations illustrated the importance of continued cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the East African Community in support of Burundi and its people, especially in the context of the elections and the post-election period.

9. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) continued to carry out good offices efforts, in partnership with the other members of the group of five international partners represented in Guinea-Bissau and in close coordination with UNOWAS. Those efforts are aimed at addressing the protracted political dispute following the outcome of the presidential election of December 2019. On 28 February 2020, the Security Council adopted resolution [2512 \(2020\)](#), by which it extended the mission's mandate for a final 10 months until

31 December 2020. As it prepares for closure, UNIOGBIS is working with the United Nations country team, UNOWAS, regionally based United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other partners to ensure that peacebuilding priorities are supported. To prioritize enhanced and coordinated regional support for the political transition in Guinea-Bissau as well as the United Nations mission transition, UNIOGBIS, UNOWAS and ECOWAS established a tripartite integrated cooperation and coordination mechanism that meets twice a month at the technical level and monthly at the principal level.

10. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) continues to work with Libyan stakeholders and the international community to seek an end to the armed conflict and a resumption of political talks, in line with the three-step initiative. A short truce was observed in Libya during Eid al-Adha on 10 August 2019; however, an attack in Benghazi on the same day tragically cost the lives of three United Nations staff members and injured two others. On 19 January 2020, the Secretary-General joined Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives of Security Council members and other Member States, the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States at the international conference on Libya held in Berlin. UNSMIL launched three dialogue tracks in early 2020, facilitating Libyan economic, security and political talks. In June 2020, UNSMIL resumed online meetings on draft ceasefire agreements with the delegations to the 5+5 Joint Military Commission; these meetings had been interrupted, owing in part to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the conflict in western Libya, the attack in Benghazi and movement restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNSMIL and the United Nations country team maintained their presence in Tripoli and at the Benghazi hub, continuing to facilitate dialogue and providing life-saving humanitarian assistance and support to authorities in responding to COVID-19.

11. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) continued to support the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states in advancing key national priorities, including the resumption of dialogue between the Federal Government and the federal member states, the deepening of federalism, the constitutional review process, electoral preparations and the transition of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission in Somalia to the Somali security forces and institutions. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations in Somalia has been assisting the Federal Government in its pandemic response. Mandate delivery has continued, albeit at a reduced level, given pandemic-related restrictions and considerations of staff security and well-being. The United Nations continues to operate in a volatile security environment in Somalia, with significant risks to staff carrying out their duties.

12. In 2020, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa worked to enhance coordination between United Nations entities in the Horn of Africa. The comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa is aimed at encouraging joined-up action and coherence within the Secretariat and among agencies, funds and programmes working in the Horn of Africa, as well as driving consensus on how the United Nations can best contribute to a prosperous, stable and peaceful region. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the region's vulnerabilities. As the immediate focus of the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development has shifted to combating the pandemic, the Special Envoy's efforts have been modified to support that endeavour, while he continues regular mandated activities and good offices work.

13. On 3 June 2020, the Security Council established a new special political mission, the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). UNITAMS will complement the ongoing work of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the ground to assist the political transition,

progress towards democratic governance, the protection and promotion of human rights and sustainable peace; support peace processes and the implementation of future peace agreements; assist peacebuilding, civilian protection and the rule of law, in particular in Darfur and the Two Areas; and support the mobilization of economic and development assistance and the coordination of humanitarian assistance. UNITAMS will integrate gender considerations throughout its mandate and assist the Government in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of peace and political processes. To ensure a smooth transition, UNITAMS will work closely with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

The Americas

14. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continued to verify the implementation of key provisions of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP). The Security Council, in resolution [2487 \(2019\)](#), extended the Mission’s mandate for an additional year, until 25 September 2020. The Mission worked closely with government representatives, the FARC party, civil society and local communities to build trust and verify progress, especially with respect to the implementation of commitments in the peace agreement linked to the Mission’s mandate. The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional challenges for the implementation of the peace agreement, requiring the Mission and its interlocutors to adapt to new online ways of communicating and working together. In that context, the Mission has encouraged more effective protection and security measures and has placed particular emphasis on efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of projects implemented by former combatants.

15. In Haiti, a seamless transition took place from the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, which concluded its mandate on 15 October 2019, to a new special political mission, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), established by the Security Council in resolution [2476 \(2019\)](#). BINUH began operations on 16 October 2019 and opened a new chapter in the support provided by the United Nations to Haiti, based on the full integration of the advisory, advocacy and good offices capacities of BINUH and the programmatic and technical support of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on the ground. During the reporting period, BINUH promoted inclusive dialogue encouraging long-term constitutional, institutional and structural reforms, including through a national strategy to address gang violence and increased support to women and youth. To ensure programmatic continuity through the transition, Haiti was granted eligibility for the Peacebuilding Fund, which provided an envelope of \$8.8 million for continued programmatic support.

Asia and the Pacific

16. Pursuant to its mandate under Security Council resolutions [2460 \(2019\)](#) and [2489 \(2019\)](#), 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 and supported regional initiatives to enhance economic, political and security cooperation as well as regional connectivity. UNAMA also continued its engagement with national, regional and international stakeholders to advocate a reduction in violence and to build momentum for intra-Afghan negotiations. 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 presidential elections in September 2019.

17. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar continued to focus on national reconciliation through advocating the protection of all communities. She engaged leaders of Myanmar, Bangladesh and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to strengthen United Nations support for regional efforts. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, she amplified the Secretary-General's global ceasefire call and extended her support to the civilian leadership's commitment to an inclusive response. However, the vulnerabilities of ethnic groups were compounded by intense fighting, especially between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army in Rakhine and Chin States, where internet bans and humanitarian access restrictions continued. The Special Envoy urged a political resolution and urged all sides to uphold civilian protection obligations, taking account of the specific needs of women and children. She has advocated a unifying and inclusive process ahead of the elections to be held on 8 November 2020.

Europe and Central Asia

18. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia continued to provide good offices functions and implement activities in its main priority areas, including preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism, transboundary water management, promoting the concept of preventive diplomacy among youth, and supporting regional cooperation between Central Asia and Afghanistan. In partnership with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Centre assisted Central Asian States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through the Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Strategy in Central Asia. In 2019, the Centre adopted a triennial strategy (2019–2021) to support Central Asian States in deepening regional cooperation on transboundary water management. Among other priorities, the strategy addresses the role of women in water diplomacy.

19. The Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus continued its engagement with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides to facilitate dialogue and discussions aimed at a resumption of full-fledged negotiations. In January 2019, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council of his intention to continue the consultations carried out by the United Nations senior official with a view to agreeing on terms of reference that would constitute a consensus starting point for meaningful negotiations, leading to a settlement within a foreseeable horizon. The consultation process continued throughout 2019. On 25 November 2019, the Secretary-General held an informal joint meeting with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders in Berlin. At the meeting the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment and determination to achieve a settlement based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions, including paragraph 4 of resolution 716 (1991). The two leaders also agreed that achieving a comprehensive and durable settlement within a foreseeable horizon was of utmost importance to the future well-being of both communities and that the status quo was unsustainable.

20. The Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions continued to work closely with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the situation in Georgia within the framework of the Geneva international discussions, which are co-chaired by the three organizations. Despite travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of 2020, the Co-Chairs have continued to engage directly with each group

participating in the discussions. On 18 April 2020, the Co-Chairs echoed the global ceasefire appeal of the Secretary-General to urge cooperation among all participants in the context of the pandemic. Throughout the reporting period, the Secretary-General continued to urge all participants in the Geneva international discussions to constructively engage with each other and the Co-Chairs to make full use of that unique platform to achieve meaningful progress on all issues of concern in the interest of the conflict-affected population.

Middle East

21. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) prioritized inclusive political dialogue, preventive diplomacy and national reconciliation, as well as the strengthening of Baghdad-Erbil relations. Since the start of nationwide demonstrations on 1 October 2019, UNAMI has engaged with political leaders and facilitated meetings with demonstrators to explore options for defusing tensions and to promote inclusive dialogue. Given that Iraq is facing multiple overlapping challenges, UNAMI and the United Nations agencies in Iraq have continued their support for the Government of Iraq in its efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic and its economic, security and humanitarian ramifications, as well as its efforts towards reforms that meet the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

22. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon worked with national stakeholders and international partners to promote stability in Lebanon, which was especially critical after the onset of nationwide popular protests in October 2019, the subsequent resignation of the Government and the formation of a new Government in January 2020, amid an accelerating socioeconomic crisis. In accordance with Security Council resolution [1701 \(2006\)](#), the Office focused in particular on promoting the consolidation and extension of the authority of the Lebanese State and the de-escalation of tensions between Lebanon and Israel. That included working with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and other relevant actors towards increasing deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces throughout Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs continued to fulfil the reporting functions on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1559 \(2004\)](#).

23. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria worked to promote common ground among stakeholders in support of a United Nations-facilitated political solution to the Syrian conflict that would meet the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people to dignity, freedom and justice, pursuant to Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and the Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué. Particular effort was focused on building trust and confidence, including by appealing for a nationwide ceasefire in line with the Secretary-General's global appeal, calling for concrete action on large-scale unilateral releases of detainees and abductees and on missing persons, facilitating the launch and initial sessions of a constitutional committee, and encouraging constructive international diplomacy on Syria.

24. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen focused efforts on securing a nationwide ceasefire in the country, in particular following military escalation around Sana'a and in Jawf and Ma'rib Governorates at the beginning of 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19 provided additional impetus to his engagement with the Yemeni parties to reach agreement on a joint declaration on a nationwide ceasefire, economic and humanitarian confidence-building measures and the resumption of the political process.

25. Meanwhile, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement continued its efforts to assist the Yemeni parties in meeting their obligations under the terms of the Hudaydah Agreement (see [S/2018/1134](#), annex). In that regard, the

parties reached agreement on the adoption of interim measures focused on ways to consolidate ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanisms, including through the deployment of United Nations monitors along the front lines; the development of a road map on the opening of humanitarian access routes in the Governorate; and options for the disengagement of forces. Efforts to move ahead on those initiatives were, however, directly impacted by COVID-19-related restrictions and a shooting incident in April 2020 involving a Government of Yemen liaison officer, his subsequent death and the ensuing suspension by the Government of Yemen of its participation in the Redeployment Coordination Committee mechanism. The Mission continues to engage actively with the parties to fully restore the operations of the Committee and related de-escalation mechanisms.

Work of sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels

26. In resolution [2498 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council imposed a ban on components that might be used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices in Somalia. The Council called upon Member States to keep records of transactions related to the improvised explosive device components ban and share such information with, among others, the Panel of Experts on Somalia. The Council also requested the Panel to conduct an analysis of Al-Shabaab's revenue sources, their methods of storage and transfer, and mapping of illegal taxation systems, with a view to providing recommendations to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia and including such a focused analysis in its final report.

27. In his letters dated 31 December 2019 ([S/2019/1008](#)) and 29 June 2020 ([S/2020/622](#)) addressed to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General provided updates on the progress achieved by the authorities of the Central African Republic on the key benchmarks for the reform of the security sector, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, and the management of weapons and ammunition, as established in the statement by the President of the Security Council dated 9 April 2019 ([S/PRST/2019/3](#)).

28. In resolution [2509 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council modified the designation period from 90 days to 1 year for vessels designated by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#) concerning Libya in relation to attempts to illicitly export petroleum from Libya. On 15 May 2020, the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution [2473 \(2019\)](#), by which the Council extended the authorizations set out in resolutions [2292 \(2016\)](#), [2357 \(2017\)](#) and [2420 \(2018\)](#) 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/2020/393](#)). Those authorizations were extended for a further 12 months in resolution [2526 \(2020\)](#).

29. In resolution [2511 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council requested the Panel of Experts on Yemen to include information in its mandated reports about the commercially available components which have been used by individuals or entities designated by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2140 \(2014\)](#) to assemble unmanned aerial vehicles, waterborne improvised explosive devices and other weapon systems. The Council asked the Panel to bear in mind that said request should not have an adverse impact on humanitarian assistance or legitimate commercial activities in Yemen.

30. On 28 August 2019, the Secretary-General submitted his fifth report to the Security Council on the progress made by Guinea-Bissau with regard to the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order ([S/2019/696](#)). He recommended that the Council consider maintaining the sanctions regime for a limited period, taking

into account the political situation in the country. He also recommended that the sanctions list be reviewed, should certain conditions be met.

III. The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for special political missions

31. Beyond its devastating health impact, which has rapidly expanded humanitarian needs across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic is having profound social, economic and political consequences. It has created pressing peace and security challenges, including social unrest in some countries, as well as the potential to trigger or escalate violence, which could reverse fragile peace dividends achieved over the past few years. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women, who make up the vast majority of workers in those sectors worst affected, and who generally earn less, save less, hold more insecure jobs or live close to poverty. The large number of female-headed households in conflict settings is a particular concern. In a number of contexts, women have had their access to livelihoods, sexual and reproductive health and other essential services severely restricted. Gender-based violence is increasing significantly, with surges being reported, in many cases of more than 25 per cent.

32. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the work of special political missions, whose operational capacities have been affected by measures taken to limit the spread of the virus. Some peace processes supported by special political missions have stalled. Restrictions on movement have affected the work of confidence-based mechanisms, as well as the ability of missions to engage in crisis diplomacy to de-escalate potential conflicts. Travel restrictions have also impeded the ability of sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels to conduct field visits and investigations on sanctions violations.

33. In the current environment, special political missions are guided by four key objectives: (a) to support national authorities in their response to COVID-19; (b) to protect mission personnel and their capacity to continue critical operations; (c) to ensure that United Nations personnel are not a vector of contagion; and (d) to help to assist vulnerable communities and continue to implement mission mandates. In order to support special political missions as well as other United Nations operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support have established a joint coordination mechanism. The key initial priority was to reinforce the duty of care towards United Nations personnel and the populations served by the United Nations and to help to mitigate the spread of the virus.

34. Special political missions worked closely with national authorities to identify areas in which they could support efforts to respond to the pandemic. In the Great Lakes region, for example, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General carried out a series of outreach and advocacy activities to mobilize the international community and financial institutions to support the region's efforts to address the health and socioeconomic repercussions of the pandemic. In Iraq, UNAMI established a COVID-19 working group and increased coordination efforts with United Nations agencies on the ground to support the Government of Iraq. In Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia supported six women-led projects that produced protective face masks.

35. Given the urgency and unprecedented nature of the crisis, on 23 March 2020, the Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire, urging warring parties to stop violence in order to create conditions for the delivery of aid and to open up space for diplomacy. That call has been widely endorsed by the Security Council, nearly 180 countries, more than 20 armed groups and 800 civil society groups. Special political

missions are playing a central role in operationalizing the Secretary-General's ceasefire call. The Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General immediately engaged with their interlocutors on the ground, encouraging them to agree to effective ceasefires, overcome the legacy of long-lasting conflicts characterized by deep mistrust among the parties, facilitate humanitarian access and dedicate their efforts to the prevention and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19. The acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, for example, is in close contact with the warring parties to work on a de-escalation of hostilities and facilitate ceasefire talks, which have resumed online. In Iraq, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq has called for maximum restraint, facilitation of humanitarian access and cooperation with the United Nations on urgent international response plans and recovery measures. She has also urged all actors to take concrete steps towards a durable de-escalation of regional tensions in Iraq.

36. Special political missions are increasingly using technology to reach out to different stakeholders, including women and civil society groups, and to remain actively engaged with parties to peace negotiations and other processes. Technology has also made it possible to reach out to communities while adhering to physical distancing rules. In June 2020, the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen carried out a large-scale interactive online dialogue with over 500 Yemenis on the opportunities and challenges for peace in the country. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia convened its first online meeting of deputy foreign ministers of Central Asia and Afghanistan, which focused on existing and new cooperation mechanisms in the region during crisis situations.

IV. Interactive dialogue with Member States

37. In its resolution [74/91](#), 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.

38. 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 seventh annual interactive dialogue on special political missions on 17 June 2020, focusing on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for special political missions.

39. The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs provided a comprehensive briefing on how the pandemic had affected the operational capabilities of special political missions and how those missions were devising new approaches in order to maintain critical operations in the current context, such as the use of technology to engage with parties to peace negotiations and other stakeholders. She also provided an update on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. She highlighted that the review had been a broad and inclusive process, guided by the Peacebuilding Commission and informed by meetings open to all Member States, as well as regional and thematic consultations held around the world, many of which had been conducted online owing to the pandemic.

40. The Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support briefed participants on the efforts undertaken to protect United Nations personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic while delivering on mandate implementation. These included prevention and containment measures to slow the spread of the virus, such as voluntarily reducing the footprint of mission personnel where possible, especially for those who might be at heightened risk from the virus, and providing staff with the possibility of

telecommuting from alternative locations. He also described steps taken to provide staff in the field with access to medical evacuation and related treatment options.

41. During the subsequent exchange, 12 Member States and 1 regional organization took the floor. Speakers commended the work carried out by special political missions, and in particular praised their ability to continue to deliver on their mandates during the pandemic. Many participants mentioned the need to ensure adequate funding for special political missions and, more broadly, for activities carried out by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Several reiterated that the current crisis reinforced the importance of the work of the United Nations in conflict prevention, particularly given that the repercussions of the pandemic were likely to be severe in conflict-affected States.

42. Several speakers noted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and noted the important role of special and political missions in promoting the women and peace and security agenda. They highlighted the symbolic significance of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). A number of Member States made reference to the ongoing review of the peacebuilding architecture, noting that it could help to foster reflection on some of the challenges that were currently faced by special political missions and to identify ways to overcome them.

IV. Key policy issues pertaining to special political missions

The women and peace and security agenda

43. The year 2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the landmark resolution which for the first time recognized the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all conflict prevention and resolution efforts, including at all levels in peace processes. The fact that the anniversary has occurred in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the original vision of resolution 1325 (2000) and the importance of redoubling efforts to achieve it. Ensuring women's meaningful participation in all areas of the Organization's work in peace and security is more vital than ever.

44. The United Nations is increasing momentum to deliver on its women and peace and security commitments. Special political missions have played an indispensable role in that regard, making the women and peace and security agenda a priority and finding effective ways to promote its implementation. In the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretary-General particularly welcomes the efforts undertaken by special political missions to create new pathways for the engagement and inclusion of women through online consultations.

45. The Special Envoy for Syria continued to stress the need for meaningful participation of women in the political process. He facilitated agreement between the Syrian parties for a close to 30 per cent female membership of the Constitutional Committee. He also convened regular meetings with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board to discuss issues of concern, including the challenges facing the political process and the persistent risk of renewed escalation.

46. In Afghanistan, UNAMA has supported the inclusion of gender perspectives in technical discussions on topics such as ceasefires and constitutions. To advance the women and peace and security agenda, UNAMA provided a platform for dialogue and co-hosted two workshops with Afghan women on strategic engagement in the peace process. In Iraq, the Iraqi Women's Advisory Group, a platform supported by UNAMI, has enabled a wider reach to various interlocutors, including at the local level, to advance the women and peace and security agenda. In Lebanon, the Office

of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon has continued to support Lebanese-led advocacy efforts for the adoption of the country's national action plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and women's inclusion in decision-making bodies.

47. In Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has advocated the full implementation of gender-related aspects of the peace agreement, in particular security guarantees for women former combatants, social leaders and human rights defenders, and a gender-sensitive approach to the reintegration process. For example, the Mission has promoted gender-sensitive risk analysis and protection measures for women former combatants and candidates of the FARC party and has actively engaged in the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.

48. In the Great Lakes region, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has stepped up engagements and built strong links with regional civil society organizations. This has included setting up, together with the Executive Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, a coordination mechanism to discuss and identify the needs of women and girls in prevention and protection.

Youth and peace and security

49. The year 2020 marks the fifth anniversary of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) on youth and peace and security. The resolution has provided increased impetus for special political missions to work on this important agenda. The newly adopted Security Council resolution [2535 \(2020\)](#) includes a call for special political missions, among others, to coordinate and increase their engagement in the youth and peace and security agenda. Special political missions are strengthening their engagement with young women and men to ensure their meaningful participation in peace and political processes and to harness their potential as agents of peaceful change.

50. In October 2019, in Central Asia, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia launched a new youth initiative called the Preventive Diplomacy Academy. Under the initiative, a number of cross-border workshops were organized for young people to familiarize themselves with preventive diplomacy tools. The activities culminated in the first ever dialogue between political leaders and youth from Central Asia and Afghanistan during the regional meeting of deputy foreign ministers organized by the Centre in December 2019.

51. In Somalia, the United Nations continued to help young women and men to develop initiatives to ensure their active participation in the country's ongoing political processes. In July 2019, UNSOM held a two-day youth engagement dialogue on how best to help youth to participate actively in political processes, including the ongoing constitutional review process, national reconciliation dialogue and preparations for national elections in 2020. In Central Africa, UNOCA supported the participation of 10 young people in the Pan-African Forum for a Culture of Peace in Africa, held in Luanda in September 2019. The Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region organized a meeting of civil society organizations in September 2019 to promote representation and participation of women and girls in decision-making bodies and processes and to highlight the need to ensure the protection of women and girls and the prevention of violence against them in the Great Lakes region, in line with Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#) and [2250 \(2015\)](#).

52. In Iraq, UNAMI continued a series of youth workshops across the country on the theme "Iraqi youth: pioneers for dialogue and stability", bringing together young

women and men from 14 Governorates to exchange perspectives on building social peace and stability, strategies for inclusive conflict prevention and youth inclusion in political processes.

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

53. The third review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, requested in the landmark twin resolutions of 2016 on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution [70/262](#) and Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#)), was launched in October 2019 and has been informed by open meetings of all Member States led by the Peacebuilding Commission, regional and thematic consultations held around the world, a group of independent eminent persons, and the third report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([A/74/976-S/2020/773](#)).

54. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs is leading the Organization's efforts to support conflict prevention and resolution, building on the Secretary-General's reform agenda, which, as a priority, has sought a more coherent and holistic approach to peacebuilding. Special political missions play an important role in that regard. Through their integrated work with United Nations country teams and resident coordinators, they support the implementation of inclusive and nationally led and owned peacebuilding priorities. Adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding remains a critical challenge, and the Secretary-General, in his third report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, underlines efforts and opportunities to secure the resources needed to support peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

55. The Peacebuilding Commission is uniquely positioned to provide clear, realistic, applicable and qualitative peacebuilding perspectives to the Security Council, upon request. The advisory role of the Commission to the Security Council has been particularly important during the Council's consideration of the mandates of special political missions. In 2019, the Commission provided advice to the Security Council on the reviews of the mandates of the Special Envoy for Burundi, UNIOGBIS and UNOWAS.

56. The Peacebuilding Fund continues to support programmatic efforts undertaken together by special political missions and United Nations country teams. In 2019, the Fund directed 12 per cent of its investment to countries where special political missions are deployed. For example, in Colombia, the Fund helped to strengthen the complementary roles of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the country team in areas such as the reintegration of combatants and reconciliation among communities. In July 2019, the Secretary-General granted Haiti eligibility for the Fund, following a request by the Government of Haiti, on the basis of four key priorities agreed with the Government. In response to COVID-19, the Fund is supporting the rapid reallocation of funds in a number of countries to provide support to crisis response, local peace initiatives, community engagement in the implementation of ceasefires, inclusive dialogue, strategic communication to prevent misinformation and hate speech, and engagement of women and youth.

Geographical distribution and gender representation

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

58. As at July 2020, the distribution of the 1,246 internationally recruited staff serving in field-based special political missions was as follows: 30.3 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States, 25.1 per cent from the African Group, 24.3 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 12.5 per cent from the Eastern European Group and 7.1 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Of the 1,826 locally recruited staff, 75.8 per cent were from the Asia-Pacific Group, 15.2 per cent from the African Group, 7.3 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group, 0.4 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States and 0.1 per cent from the Eastern European Group.

59. The Secretary-General is equally committed to improving the representation of women throughout the Organization, including in field-based special political missions. As at May 2020, 33.4 per cent of internationally recruited staff serving in these missions were women, a slight decrease of 0.1 per cent over the previous year. Among the locally recruited staff, 16.7 per cent were women, a decrease of 1.2 per cent.

Implementation of United Nations reforms in relation to special political missions

60. Over the reporting period, the United Nations continued to work on implementing the reforms approved by the General Assembly to restructure the peace and security architecture, reposition the United Nations development system and shift the management paradigm. Each of these three reform streams had implications for the work of special political missions.

61. Almost two years into the reform process, there is early evidence of its impact. A reform benefits management system is in place to monitor progress and ensure transparent delivery against the overarching objectives of reform. A tracker is publicly available online¹ and includes a dashboard displaying indicators and targets. The tracker monitors progress made towards the full implementation of the various reform initiatives pursued under the three broad reform streams. As at 8 July 2020, of the 59 reform initiatives, 93 per cent were on track and 5 per cent had already been completed. The reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: review of progress in the implementation of management reform (A/75/201) and on the review of the implementation of the peace and security reform (A/75/202) contain detailed information about the progress achieved so far, including a number of relevant examples and case studies.

62. As with all other entities within the Secretariat, special political missions have benefited from the alignment of responsibility for mandate implementation with the authority to manage resources under the new delegation of authority framework, which has allowed them to be more effective and accountable in delivery. Special political missions are represented on the Management Client Board, thereby ensuring that the requirements of the various types of missions are reflected in the development of administrative policies and proposals. Mission transition processes have directly benefited from the reforms, which have promoted a more coherent, integrated and effective way of working at Headquarters. Within the peace and security pillar, backstopping of special political missions and peacekeeping operations is carried out within the same regional division, making seamless support and coordination with partner departments not only easier but the norm. Moreover, dedicated capacities exist within the Department of Operational Support to support transition processes,

¹ Available at <https://reform.un.org/content/benefits-tracker>.

including in critical activities such as operational planning, staffing and logistical support.

63. Special political missions more broadly, and mission transition processes specifically, have also benefited from the repositioning of the United Nations development system, which included the introduction of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework – the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities at the country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and the creation of a stand-alone and strengthened resident coordinator system.

64. BINUH, in Haiti, was the first special political mission established in the context of the new reformed structures and has benefited from a more efficient and coherent structure and greater cross-pillar integration. BINUH and the United Nations country team were able to conduct joint planning through an integrated strategic framework that identifies six key areas of engagement as the “One United Nations” plan for Haiti. In the Sudan, the newly established United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) will work closely with UNAMID to ensure a smooth transition, benefiting from the new reformed structures, which allow for greater coherence.

65. The joint project on transitions, an initiative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, UNDP and the Development Coordination Office, remains a key mechanism for bringing together the peace and security pillar and the United Nations development system. In May 2020, the Secretary-General initiated a comprehensive review of the integrated assessment and planning policy to address integration challenges and fully reflect his vision for more integrated, predictable cross-pillar action.

VI. Observations

66. The activities and achievements of special political missions described in the present report demonstrate their important contribution to advancing conflict prevention and sustaining peace. The response of special political missions to the COVID-19 pandemic also shows the flexibility of these missions in devising solutions to mitigate unexpected challenges while continuing to deliver on their priority tasks and meet the demands of Member States.

67. Special political missions continue to face significant challenges related to the evolving nature of conflict and the volatile security environments in which they operate. To implement their mandates, they require and rely on the cooperation of host countries and other stakeholders, as well as the support of the broader United Nations membership.

68. One of the crucial factors for the effectiveness of special political missions is their strong partnerships with regional and subregional organizations. These partnerships are essential to collective efforts to support countries as they strive to end violence and build an inclusive and sustainable peace. The United Nations is committed to continuing to strengthen cooperation with its regional partners in the area of international peace and security.

69. As the world celebrates the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), I am particularly heartened by the depth and breadth of work of special political missions to promote the equal and 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.

70. Special political missions have made the youth and peace and security agenda a priority activity and are committed to continuing to actively ensure and continuously enhance its integration in strategic and planning documents, conflict analysis, frameworks, initiatives and guidance tools at the global, regional and national levels.

71. 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, which has now been before the General Assembly for 10 years.

72. As the world continues to face the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, I reiterate my call for an immediate global ceasefire to reinforce diplomatic action, help to create conditions for the delivery of life-saving aid and bring hope to places that are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19. I commend special political missions for their active work to translate my call into concrete results on the ground.

73. At this complex juncture for the international community, with heightened global tensions, emerging threats and the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is time to return to the foundations of the global system of collective security. The purposes, principles and central mandates of the Charter of the United Nations are as valuable now as they were 75 years ago. Special political missions are an embodiment of those principles and mandates, and of the Charter's core goal of preventing conflict.

74. I would like to pay tribute to my Special Representatives and Envoys and to the dedicated and courageous United Nations staff and affiliated personnel serving in special political missions, who often work under difficult conditions – particularly this year with the significant consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic – 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 16 July 2020)****Special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General**

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

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

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 resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
23. Implementation of Security Council resolution [2231 \(2015\)](#)
24. Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) on the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction
25. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate

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

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

28. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
29. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process¹
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 Union²
38. United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
39. United Nations Support Mission in Libya
40. United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
41. United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
42. United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan

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

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