



Security Council

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Letter dated 27 January 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations on the activities of the Working Group for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Tarek **Ladeb**
Chair

Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations



Annex to the letter dated 27 January 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Report on the activities of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020

I. Organizational matters

1. The Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations was established pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council adopted on 31 January 2001 (S/PRST/2001/3).
2. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb, was elected Chair of the Working Group for the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021.

II. Introduction

3. The present report contains summaries of statements or interventions made by briefers and representatives of Member States during the meeting of the Working Group. Its content is not intended to reflect the consensus position of the Security Council on peacekeeping issues.
4. The Working Group's programme of work for the period under review was disrupted by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; however, it held one meeting to discuss issues pertinent to its mandate.
5. The meeting was aimed at promoting triangular cooperation between the Security Council, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat, with a view to improving coordination between peacekeeping partners.

III. Summary of the activities of the Working Group in 2020

6. On 21 December 2020, the Working Group held a videoconference on "Transitions and exit strategies in peacekeeping operations: taking stock and looking forward".
7. Briefers included the Chief of the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division of the Department of Peace Operations, Rania Dagash-Kamara, and the Deputy Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), Anita Kiki Gbeho.
8. Opening the meeting, Mr. Ladeb noted that transitions were inherent to peacekeeping operations, given their temporary nature, and could be broadly defined to include mission start-up, reconfiguration, drawdown and withdrawal. No transition could be successful without a strategy on how to limit the impact of a Mission's departure in order to safeguard peace and stability gains and avoid a relapse into conflict. He recalled that the Security Council had discussed how to address transition-related challenges and that good practices included the development of benchmarks, working jointly with missions and all relevant stakeholders. In that context, he added, exit strategies had to be tailored to the situation on the ground, foresee long-term conditions required for lasting peace and ensure inclusivity through the participation of all stakeholders, including women and youth. In his opinion, exit

strategies also had to be properly resourced with the requisite technical support for the strengthening of national political institutions, as well as capacity-building for good governance, human rights, elections and the combating of corruption. Furthermore, a smooth handover of responsibilities required close collaboration with all United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as the World Bank and various bilateral and multilateral humanitarian and development partners.

9. Ms. Dagash-Kamara recalled that the Secretary-General had stated that United Nations transitions represented some of the most critical periods during which investments in peacebuilding and sustaining peace could be either sustained or lost in a matter of months. As United Nations missions disengaged, important challenges to lasting peace often remained unaddressed. A mission's departure could embolden parties to the former conflict to address old grievances by forceful means. In that context, transitions presented a phase of heightened risk to the host nation as well as the international community. In the past, the attention given to transition processes – by both the international community and the United Nations – had not been commensurate with that risk. As peacekeeping missions closed, the overall attention given to them waned and support from the international community often withered. Nonetheless, within the United Nations that attention deficit had been addressed and transitions featured prominently and regularly on the agenda of its leadership.

10. Ms. Dagash-Kamara added that the Secretary-General had placed United Nations transitions high on his agenda, including by organizing biannual meetings of his Executive Committee and the Deputies Committee on transitions and launching his 2019 transition planning directive. Through that directive, he had also requested all major peacekeeping operations to articulate, together with their United Nations country team counterparts, an integrated transition calendar that would serve as a road map by forecasting key timelines and milestones for transition planning. Furthermore, the Peacebuilding Fund had created a transition financing window to channel much-needed funding with the intention of catalysing more peacebuilding capacity as missions drew down or withdrew altogether.

11. Ms. Dagash-Kamara said that the commitment of the United Nations to planning and managing transitions in a strategic and integrated way was at the core of the Secretary-General's reforms of the peace and security and development pillars and had been mainstreamed into the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. In recognition of the need to make transitions less United Nations-centric, initiatives to enhance partnerships in transition processes had been initiated with key non-United Nations stakeholders, including the European Union, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

12. Regarding key lessons learned, Ms. Dagash-Kamara noted that in most post-conflict settings the residual risks and challenges to a durable peace were primarily political. Once the mission had left, the political leverage of the United Nations inevitably declined, and its capacity for political analysis and meaningful political engagement diminished. In that regard, she mentioned that there was a need to design strategies that could convene and engage a wide group of stakeholders (the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, Member States, regional organizations, international financial institutions and civil society organizations) around a shared vision of key priorities, milestones and the desired end state.

13. Ms. Dagash-Kamara said that United Nations transitions were not merely about the departure of a United Nations peacekeeping operation but rather a process leading to an overall reconfiguration and strategic repositioning of the United Nations presence. Key to that process were proactive and truly integrated transition planning;

regular, integrated and sound assessments; and continuous engagement and dialogue between national authorities, United Nations missions, country team members, regional partner organizations, the Security Council and contributing Member States.

14. She went on to say that while the international community could provide critical support, only national stakeholders could build a durable peace. That implied putting more emphasis on preparing national stakeholders and institutions for success in the post-mission phase. Transition planning needed to be more closely aligned with national development plans and strategies. Moreover, engagement with national stakeholders must happen at an earlier stage and must go beyond mere consultations and focus on strengthening capacities in areas that would be transferred when the mission exited.

15. Ms. Dagash-Kamara said that the United Nations and the international community were faced with transition contexts in which political settlements remained fragile and instability persisted. In that context, in her view, bringing together actors from across the United Nations system, State and civil society actors and the international community could help. She added that coordinated long-term support in the areas of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, transitional justice and legislative and justice sector reform, where and as mandated, was key to establishing the protective environment necessary for reducing protection threats. It was also critical to ensure that missions in transition adapted to changing realities and emerging needs, and to allow for the gradual development of protection capacities by State actors in tandem with ongoing monitoring and targeted mentoring by missions.

16. Ms. Dagash-Kamara further said that women were critical stakeholders in that journey towards durable peace. Societal gender norms and power dynamics were key factors that shaped the pathway from conflict to peace. Twenty years after the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), more work was needed to make transitions gender-responsive and ensure that gains made while peacekeepers were present did not erode after their departure. She added that introducing a methodology for gender-responsive conflict analysis had been an important step in that direction.

17. Ms. Dagash-Kamara noted that the “financial cliff” represented a major risk for the host country’s pathway to sustainable development. Mission withdrawals often coincided with shrinking and less predictable aid flows, particularly for peacebuilding activities. In a climate of scarce resources, missions, country teams and national authorities needed to be supported in the elaboration of longer-term financing strategies, including tapping into innovative transition financing modalities that would allow those actors to deliver effectively together and strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions and the private sector.

18. Ms. Dagash-Kamara highlighted some best practices from past and ongoing United Nations transitions. In Liberia, the United Nations had transitioned to a strengthened Resident Coordinator’s Office equipped with a political, peace and development analysis unit, a stand-alone office of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and a presence beyond Monrovia. In Haiti, transition planning was anchored in the new United Nations cooperation framework, making it more focused on adjusting and enhancing country team programming in line with national priorities and plans. In the Sudan, the State liaison functions had been created to enhance United Nations integration. She added that that modality had been heralded as one of the most important innovations in peacekeeping in the past 20 years by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network.

19. Next, Ms. Gbeho elaborated on the case of UNAMID, noting that that transition was going to be complex as it was taking place without the holdout movement Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid at the peace table, with approximately 1.8 million

internally displaced persons still in camps and with Darfur experiencing pockets of armed conflict and a spike in intercommunal violence. The operating environment of UNAMID had changed significantly since 2018, partly owing to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent change in the context had been the signing of a peace agreement on 3 October 2020.

20. Ms. Gbeho explained that the UNAMID transition had three pillars: political (through the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan), security (physical protection taken up by the Government) and programmatic (through peacebuilding). In 2018, the Security Council had mandated the United Nations in Sudan to use a unique programmatic transition tool, to be applied in areas of Darfur where armed conflict had ceased and UNAMID had physically withdrawn. The State liaison functions had accordingly been established to shift the focus, in relatively stable areas, from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, with the overall aim of helping to prevent a relapse into conflict and addressing root causes of the conflict in areas where the country team and UNAMID had the comparative advantage of working together. The country team and UNAMID had agreed to work jointly to address the potential conflict triggers, namely, land resources such as water and cattle and the return of displaced persons and refugees. Those programmes were based on assessments, in consultation with Government, and were implemented in four priority sectors: rule of law, human rights, livelihoods and immediate service delivery. Since the State liaison functions began to be implemented in 2019, approximately \$45 million from the United Nations assessed budget had been provided under the programmatic lead of 10 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

21. Ms. Gbeho said that the State liaison functions were aimed at strengthening “liaison” functions in respect of the Government and transitioning activities to the country team, and now also to the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). They had supported national ownership and United Nations system-wide coordination and showcased adaptive management in practice. In the first year alone, East Darfur had seen increased peacebuilding programming and an increased presence of the country team, with three additional agencies establishing offices in the State and others expanding activities; over 10,000 returnees were being supported in host communities; over 60,000 Darfuris had been trained on a range of human rights, rule of law and violence prevention issues; and 29 courts, 46 resource and youth centres and 15 police stations and community policing centres had been constructed or refurbished in areas of potential conflict in Darfur.

22. Ms. Gbeho added that UNAMID had developed an interactive mapping tool that showcased activities related to the State liaison functions, and their results. The flexibility of that tool had enabled UNAMID to adapt to the changing operational environment. For instance, \$1.9 million had been reallocated from the State liaison functions to assist the Government in its COVID-19 pandemic response in Darfur, and during the 2018/19 protests and following the enactment of emergency laws, State liaison function support had been shifted from the Government to host communities. Additionally, the \$23 million in seed funding from the Peacebuilding Fund for the Sudan was closely aligned with State liaison functions.

23. In terms of challenges, Ms. Gbeho explained that UNAMID had not had enough time to plan and operationalize that ambitious programmatic transition concept with the country team and the Government. That challenge had been exacerbated by the geographic separation and different focuses of UNAMID (Darfur-focused) and the country team (Sudan-focused). The fact that the Mission was not integrated with the country team had posed further challenges. Ten memorandums of understanding had been signed, with different financial years and reporting systems. UNAMID had also struggled against the misperception that its transition was limited to the State liaison

functions and therefore peacebuilding, notwithstanding the two other substantive transition workstreams: political and security. That misperception had been corrected by using the State liaison functions to mitigate specific protection risks associated with the closure of the remaining team sites in the greater Jebel Marra area and other hotspots, such as Kalma in South Darfur.

24. Looking forward, Ms. Gbeho stated that UNAMID was implementing its transition in accordance with a scenario whereby operations would cease on 31 December 2020. In that context, peacebuilding and peace-sustaining efforts in the Sudan required sustained support, especially in an unpredictable environment such as Darfur, where significant protection concerns persisted. Post-UNAMID support for the Government, particularly where pockets of conflict persisted and in restive camps where State authority needed to be extended and trust built between the population and authorities, was important. Despite the challenges, the recent Juba Peace Agreement provided an opportunity for lasting peace, including in Darfur, and for the Government and former rebel movements to jointly define priorities with the United Nations. Seven of the eight protocols of the Juba Peace Agreement were related directly to Darfur and included key issues of concern to Darfur, namely, security, land and transitional justice. The Government had adopted a national plan for the protection of civilians and appointed civilian governors in Darfur.

25. In concluding, Ms. Gbeho stressed that a peace agreement would not survive on signatures alone. Peacebuilding, including peace dividends and continued work to enhance the protective environment in the most volatile areas, would be required. With the departure of UNAMID, the generous State liaison function contributions that had begun such work would be gone. In addition, the country team was underfunded and the deployment of UNITAMS had been delayed; the Mission would not arrive without much-needed programmatic resources, both in terms of finances and staffing. At that critical juncture, the support of the international community must be harnessed to mobilize resources for the political and peacebuilding pillars of the transition in the Sudan.

26. Several Working Group members (China, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger and the United States of America) underscored the importance of national ownership of transitions. The representative of France said that transitions should be driven by political strategies coordinated with the host State, provide integrated solutions with the participation of all stakeholders in peace processes and build on the capacities of national and regional actors. The representative of China said that transitions should support national political processes and have a clear focus on development, and that peacekeeping operations and special political missions should be mandated to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to address the root causes of conflict. The representative of the Niger referred to the drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the collaboration with the Ivorian authorities as a good example of national ownership and a successful exit strategy.

27. Some Working Group members called for strong collaboration between stakeholders. The representative of Germany called for a comprehensive approach to transitions, involving joint analysis and planning across all United Nations pillars and with stakeholders outside the Organization, such as international financial institutions, civil society, especially women's groups, and local peacebuilders. Recalling that the Security Council, in its resolution [2553 \(2020\)](#), had recognized security sector reform as a key element of successful transitions, the representative of the United States encouraged missions and country teams to prioritize peacebuilding and capacity-building for national institutions, based on timely strategic consultations with host countries. The representative of Indonesia expressed the view that transitions not only were technical or logistical in nature, but also

involved measures to ensure that the progress and gains made through peacekeeping were sustained. Therefore, a conducive security environment and the protection of civilians after the conclusion of peacekeeping operations were necessary.

28. Regarding the peacekeeping budget, the representative of the Dominican Republic echoed the view of the Secretary-General that budgets should be adapted to missions and not the other way around and warned that poorly managed transitions could lead to relapse or chronic instability. The drawdown and exit of peacekeeping operations should be defined by the situation on the ground. The representative of Indonesia underlined the importance of avoiding “financial cliffs” following the departure of peacekeeping operations, called for the establishment of a partnership between the United Nations and international financial institutions and said that international support for transitions should be provided in line with national peacebuilding strategies. The representative of the Niger maintained that transition resources should be commensurate with the activities involved and the challenges on the ground. The representative of France cautioned against the politicization of exit strategies and emphasized that Security Council guidance on transitions should never be fully dependent on budgetary considerations or host country consent. The representative of Germany maintained that transitions should be guided by end states as opposed to end dates.

29. On lessons learned, the representative of the United States encouraged the development of a “culture of learning” with regard to transitions, with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, adding that transition planning was an ongoing, deliberative, dynamic and collaborative process. The United States held that the lessons from the UNAMID transition should feed back into the Security Council’s future planning and mandating processes. The representative of Germany underlined the need for continued support for UNITAMS, as the successor mission to UNAMID, and said that only a successful transition in all of the Sudan would result in a successful transition in Darfur. The representative of China said that UNITAMS should support the Sudan in the areas of sustainable development, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Beyond Darfur and the Sudan, the representative of South Africa highlighted the significant role of African Union troops in peacemaking across the continent, while underscoring that UNITAMS was crucial in supporting the economic and political transition in the Sudan.

30. On women’s participation, the representative of South Africa underlined the importance of gender considerations in transitions to safeguard gains in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations for 2020 provided an important basis for initiating discussions on inclusive and participatory approaches to transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. The representative of South Africa further called for strong engagement between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission in advance of mandate renewals. The representative of the Niger called for the full involvement of women in the development and implementation of exit strategies.

31. Responding to a question on benchmarks, Ms. Dagash-Kamara noted that the benchmarks mandated by the Security Council were quite broad, which was useful in setting the general direction for peacekeeping operations. However, the timing of a mission’s transition should depend on the context as defined by the leadership on the ground. The transition calendar that the Secretary-General’s directive had put in place allowed for assessment of all missions in transition and of when transitions should start. On the same issue, Ms. Gbeho said that, in the context of the Sudan or Darfur, political will was critical for joint benchmarks that would guide the transition process.

32. Turning to the Peacebuilding Commission, Ms. Dagash-Kamara showcased the transition in Sierra Leone, noting that the Peacebuilding Commission had helped in

two areas. First, its engagement at an early stage had been critical in keeping the conversation focused on peacebuilding priorities as international attention on Sierra Leone waned after the mission had exited. Second, the visibility of that country vis-à-vis international partners had significantly increased, and fundamentally helped to rally international support.

33. On international financial institutions, Ms. Dagash-Kamara informed the Working Group that an officer had been seconded from the Department of Peace Operations to the Peacebuilding Support Office to focus solely on how United Nations engagement with international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank, could be strengthened. Under its new Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence, the World Bank was interested in strengthening its engagement in areas such as justice and the security sector and had created a new financial instrument to address fragility. Intense engagement had been noted in the Democratic Republic of Congo between the World Bank and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to better align their respective engagement with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo in support of peacebuilding and prevention strategies.

34. Ms. Dagash-Kamara went on to say that, in 2020, the United Nations had, for the first time, assigned resources to support the capacity of Governments to plan transitions. Previously, the United Nations had injected transition specialists or extra resources into its own missions, but in 2020 it had directed resources towards injecting a parallel capacity where Governments needed support in transition planning and engaging with the United Nations.

35. Ms. Gbeho hoped that the Peacebuilding Commission could play a role in bridging the resources gap once UNAMID exited on 31 December. As of 1 January 2021, the country team and UNITAMS would be expected to support the Government in moving forward, particularly on the national plan for the protection of civilians and other areas.

36. Regarding national ownership, Ms. Gbeho firmly underscored its importance and said that, through the State liaison functions, UNAMID had created a forum in which it was able to engage with the Government, hear its priorities and make adjustments accordingly. For example, during the early days of the State liaison functions, UNAMID had been heavily focused on capacity-building, while the Government had felt very strongly about infrastructure-building. Following negotiations, UNAMID had shifted the programming towards the Government's priorities, namely, ensuring that infrastructure for the police and rural courts was available.

IV. Conclusion

37. The Chair of the Working Group expressed his sincere appreciation to the experts, the Department of Peace Operations, the Security Council Affairs Division and all relevant United Nations services for ensuring a successful meeting in 2020, despite the extraordinary challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chair recommended that opportunities to hold such exchanges continue to be utilized in 2021.
