



Security Council

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Letter dated 29 September 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Al-Shabaab addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Al-Shabaab, I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator pursuant to paragraph 47 (d) of Security Council resolution 2662 (2022) on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia and on any impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia.

I would appreciate it if the present letter and the report were brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Kimihiro **Ishikane**
Chair

Security Council Committee pursuant to
resolution 751 (1992) concerning Al-Shabaab



Letter dated 25 September 2023 from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Al-Shabaab

In accordance with paragraph 47 of Security Council resolution 2662 (2022), I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia and on any impediments thereto.

The humanitarian community working in Somalia wishes to advise that, as in the previous 17 reports, it maintains the definition of “implementing partner” pursuant to paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 1916 (2010), which is as follows:

“Implementing partner” – a non-governmental organization (NGO) or community-based organization that has undergone due diligence to establish its bona fides by a United Nations agency or another NGO and that reports when requested to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia on mitigation measures. Implementing partners have one or both of the following characteristics:

- (a) The organization is part of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia (or the Somalia Humanitarian Fund);
- (b) The organization is represented in a cluster’s 3W matrix (*Who* does *What* and *Where*).

I remain available should you have any questions on the content of the report or need further clarification on the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

(Signed) Martin Griffiths
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and
Emergency Relief Coordinator

Report of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2662 \(2022\)](#), the resolution succeeding resolutions [1916 \(2010\)](#), [1972 \(2011\)](#), [2060 \(2012\)](#), [2111 \(2013\)](#), [2182 \(2014\)](#), [2244 \(2015\)](#), [2317 \(2016\)](#), [2385 \(2017\)](#), [2444 \(2018\)](#), [2498 \(2019\)](#), [2551 \(2020\)](#) and [2607 \(2021\)](#), in which the Council established the reporting requirement. It is the eighteenth submission pursuant to the above-mentioned resolutions. The Council, in paragraph 47 (d) of its resolution [2662 \(2022\)](#), requested the Emergency Relief Coordinator to report to the Council by 1 October 2023 on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia and on any impediments thereto.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. It is focused primarily on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected people in areas under the control or influence of Al-Shabaab, which was included on the sanctions list pursuant to paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution [1844 \(2008\)](#), by the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [751 \(1992\)](#) and [1907 \(2009\)](#) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, on 12 April 2010. As in the previous 17 reports ([S/2010/372](#), [S/2010/580](#), [S/2011/125](#), [S/2011/694](#), [S/2012/546](#), [S/2012/856](#), [S/2013/415](#), [S/2014/177](#), [S/2014/655](#), [S/2015/731](#), [S/2016/827](#), [S/2017/860](#), [S/2018/896](#), [S/2019/799](#), [S/2020/1004](#), [S/2021/847](#) and [S/2022/766](#)), in the present report, constraints on humanitarian access and operational implications are outlined. In addition, mitigation measures established to address the risks of the politicization, misuse and misappropriation of humanitarian assistance are summarized. The report is based on information synthesized in consultation with relevant humanitarian organizations active in Somalia and information from the Risk Management Unit in the Integrated Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia.

Humanitarian situation

3. Somalia has been experiencing a protracted humanitarian crisis for more than three decades, suffering the devastating impact of persistent climate and environmental shocks, including drought and flooding, ongoing hostilities and conflict, one of the highest levels of internal displacement in the world, widespread poverty, disease outbreaks and other compounding factors.

4. The unprecedented drought that began in 2020 was the longest in the recent history of Somalia, surpassing droughts in 2010–2011 and 2016–2017 in duration and severity. At least 7.8 million people were affected by the drought, which caused an estimated 43,000 excess deaths in 2022 (from the expected number of deaths under normal conditions) – half of whom were children, with the highest death rates occurring in southern and central regions¹, especially the areas around Bay, Bakool and Banaadir.

5. While the drought is over from a meteorological perspective as a result of the better-than-expected *gu* rains (April to June), its extended impact is still being felt in many parts of the country and will be for years to come. At the beginning of 2023, nearly half of the population (8.25 million people) needed humanitarian assistance and an estimated 8 million people lacked access to safe water and appropriate sanitation and hygiene services.

¹ See United Nations Children's Fund and others, "From insight to action: examining mortality in Somalia" (2023).

6. Between October and December 2022, famine was projected among rural populations in Baidoa and Buurhakaba districts, and displaced people in Baidoa town in Bay region owing to the severe, prolonged drought and exceptionally high food prices, exacerbated further by concurrent conflict, insecurity and disease outbreaks. The risk was averted owing to a major scaling-up of humanitarian assistance, intensified efforts to respond by local communities and authorities, and better-than-projected *deyr* rainfall (October–December).
7. Across the country, drought devastated the agriculture sector, which accounts for 26 per cent of Somalia's gross domestic product, 90 per cent of informal employment and 90 per cent of exports. Some 3.8 million heads of livestock have died since mid-2021, devastating livelihoods and reducing children's access to milk.
8. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis for Somalia for August to December 2023, released on 18 September, notwithstanding marked improvements resulting from favourable *gu* rainfall in 2023 and large-scale humanitarian and livelihood response, millions of people continue to battle hunger on a daily basis owing to the impacts of decades of conflict, population displacement, erratic rainfall patterns and a severe economic downturn. While the *gu* seasonal rains improved access to water and pasture in several areas, they also resulted in flash and riverine floods that affected approximately 419,000 people between March and May 2023, including 216,000 displaced in Hiraan region, mostly in Beledweyne, where the Shabelle River burst its banks on 9 May 2023.
9. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report, an estimated 3.7 million people (22 per cent of the population) are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, classified as Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 3 (crisis) and phase 4 (emergency). This is an improvement compared with the same time in 2022, when approximately 4.7 million people across Somalia were projected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity, including more than 121,000 people facing catastrophe (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 5) conditions.
10. However, the new projections also indicate that the situation is likely to deteriorate between October to December 2023, owing mainly to the anticipated impact of the El Niño rains. These are projected with a 90 per cent certainty for Somalia, starting in October. The number of people facing acute food insecurity is likely to rise to some 4.3 million between October and December, including more than 1 million in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 4 and 3.3 million facing Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 3.
11. Coupled with a positive Indian Ocean dipole, El Niño is expected to generate above-average rainfall and cause riverine and flash floods that could lead to loss of life, mass displacement, destruction of property and loss of livelihoods. This is likely to outweigh any benefit of increased rainfall for fodder and pasture regeneration. Estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations indicate that approximately 1.2 million people are in areas at high risk of flooding and that 1.5 million hectares of land could be inundated. Timely multisectoral support is needed for vulnerable communities in riverine areas to mitigate the potential adverse impacts of El Niño-related flooding during the October–December *deyr* rainy season.
12. Access to health and nutrition services remains low, in particular in rural areas. Less than one third of people in areas affected by drought are estimated to have access to essential health care. Partners are supporting treatment for wasting and prevention of maternal and child malnutrition, with a special focus on hard-to-reach areas. More than 555,730 children (309,079 girls and 246,651 boys) were admitted for treatment of severe wasting between September 2022 and July 2023 (109 per cent of the annual target), representing a 71 per cent increase compared with the same period in

2021–2022. The highest admissions were in Baidoa, Mogadishu, Kismaayo and Beledweyne. Of the children admitted, 35,213 (18,663 girls and 16,550 boys) were admitted with medical complications, compared with 24,901 during the same period in 2021–2022, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

13. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report released on 18 September 2023 reflects some improvement in the nutrition situation following the scaling-up in emergency response that began in 2022. However, the prevalence of acute malnutrition remains high, with global acute malnutrition rates above 15 per cent (above the emergency threshold) in many areas, including near critical levels among the internally displaced persons in Mogadishu and Gaalkacyo. It is estimated that 1.5 million children under the age of five are likely to face acute malnutrition between August 2023 and July 2024, including 330,603 who are likely to be severely malnourished.

14. Insufficient access to safe water and adequate sanitation have increased the risk of water- and vector-borne infections in Somalia. Cholera is endemic in Somalia, with recurrent outbreaks reported since 2017, the majority in Banaadir region and Hirshabelle and South-West States, among other drought-affected districts. Many of these districts also host large numbers of internally displaced persons in camps where access to basic needs, including clean water and health services, is limited, thus exacerbating the risks. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), from September 2022 to August 2023 the number of cases of cholera, acute watery diarrhoea and measles surged compared with the same period in 2021–2022. There were 18,147 cholera cases, of which 54 per cent were children under five years of age. Nevertheless, the number of cases reduced from June 2023 owing to scaling up response interventions by humanitarian partners. A total of 70,929 cases of acute watery diarrhoea were reported, of which 70 per cent were children under five years of age. None of those affected reported having received an oral cholera vaccine. At least 23,500 measles cases were reported, compared with 16,286 cases in the same period in 2021–2022.

15. The health crisis is worsened by lack of adequate facilities and services. The public health system in Somalia is fragmented, underresourced and ill-equipped. Approximately 6.7 million persons across the country have severe health needs, an increase of 11 per cent compared with 2022. This increase is due to the drought, conflict and insecurity. The average maternal mortality ratio is among the highest globally, with 692 deaths per 100,000 live births. Private sector health services, while available, remain out of reach for millions of vulnerable people owing to high prices.

16. The compounded impact of the severe drought, conflict and insecurity has had a devastating effect on the protection of children in Somalia. According to the Education Cluster, approximately 4.84 million children (64 per cent of 7.59 million children in Somalia) between 5 and 17 years of age are out of school and urgently require access to emergency education services. Only 21 per cent of newly displaced children have access to education, compared with 39 per cent of children who are not displaced. Key barriers to education include the high cost of education and lack of schools in displacement sites. Most of these families have lost their livelihoods because of the drought and conflict and are therefore unable to afford school fees and other basic needs. The available schools cannot absorb additional students owing to the increased number of displacements. This has resulted in an increased number of school dropouts, with the majority being vulnerable to child labour, human rights abuses, including sexual violence, early marriage and recruitment into armed groups. In Galmudug State, an assessment by local authorities and partners conducted from 15 June to 8 July 2023 revealed a lack of learning facilities and that only 26 per cent of school-aged children were enrolled in remote areas.

17. Population displacement remains widespread, with millions of people in less-than-conducive living conditions. Overall, more than 3.8 million people are internally displaced in Somalia owing to the impact of climate change, conflict and insecurity, among other factors. This includes more than 2 million people displaced internally during the reporting period, of whom 914,000 were displaced by drought conditions, 679,000 by conflict and more than 430,000 by floods and other factors, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Protection and Return Monitoring Network.

18. Newly displaced people are particularly vulnerable, have the most severe humanitarian needs and face significant protection concerns, including forced family separation, forced recruitment and gender-based abuse. Some 95 per cent of newly displaced people live in urban areas where humanitarian conditions are dire. Without adequate assistance, they may adopt negative coping mechanisms, such as borrowing and sharing meals, reducing health and education spending and begging for money. Nearly 90 per cent of displaced people in settlements in Banaadir, Garoowe, Hargeysa and Burco are reportedly unable to meet their basic needs. Only 8 per cent of newly displaced people are estimated to have access to adequate shelters, while 43 per cent lack adequate living spaces.

19. Banaadir is one of the regions most affected by displacement, currently hosting more than 1.45 million displaced people. According to the Somalia camp coordination and camp management cluster new arrival tracker, approximately 14,500 people arrived in Daynille, Dharkeynley and Kaxda districts in Banaadir in one week, between 23 to 29 July, bringing the total number of new arrivals during July to more than 23,500 people. New arrivals were reportedly displaced from Bay, Hiraan, Shabelle Hoose and Shabelle Dhexe regions owing to conflict, the impact of the drought and floods.

20. Evictions of displaced people from sites where they have settled is on the rise. Most of the main displacement settlements across Somalia are on privately owned land, increasing the risk of forced evictions. Displaced women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons with minority clan affiliations face the greatest risk of eviction and are considered the most vulnerable. The evictions have resulted in significant damage to basic infrastructure, including access to water points and other sanitation facilities, rendering the displaced people even more vulnerable. Between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023, 31,109 families (186,654 people) were forcefully evicted. This is an increase from the same period in 2021–2022, when 26,826 families (160,956 people) were evicted. Banaadir region accounts for up to 60 per cent of these evictions.

21. Women and children comprise more than 80 per cent of those who are internally displaced and face significant protection risks. Limited access to basic services such as shelter and food render women and girls more vulnerable to gender-based violence and disrupt their ability to live in dignity. Somalia is among the most gender-unequal countries in the world with respect to inclusion, justice and security. Discriminatory structures, norms and practices marginalize women and girls from equal participation in economic, social and political participation and decision-making at all levels. Persistent inequality and marginalization have exacerbated vulnerabilities of women and girls over successive crises.

22. In addition to the humanitarian emergency, Somalia faces structural development challenges, with 71 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. The country's population is estimated to be 16.9 million, 60 per cent of whom is under the age of 18. The country is among those with the highest ranking in infant and child mortality globally: 76.6 and 121.5 per 1,000 live births, respectively. The maternal mortality rate (692 deaths per 100,000 live births) and the fertility rate

(average of 6.9 children per woman) are also among the highest in the world, while 79 per cent of all births are home-delivered without skilled assistance.

23. Somalia is among the countries that have recorded the highest number of grave violations against children, including the recruitment and use of children. While many parties to the conflict in Somalia recruit and use children, Al-Shabaab remains the most prolific perpetrator. From October 2022 to August 2023, the country task force on monitoring and reporting verified 2,174 grave violations against 1,750 children (1,383 boys and 367 girls), the majority of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab, followed by unidentified armed elements and clan militias. The recruitment and use of children are also related to ongoing military offensives and operations in the country. The increasing exposure of children to unexploded ordnance is also of serious concern. Twenty-two children died in an explosion of a remnant of war in the Shabelle Hoose region in July 2023.

24. UNICEF estimates that, in 2023, at least 3.5 million children will need emergency child protection services. Humanitarian partners continue to support children who were subjected to forced recruitment by armed groups. In 2022, UNICEF provided reintegration support to 1,160 children (987 boys and 173 girls) separated from armed forces and groups and to other vulnerable children at risk of recruitment.

Humanitarian response

25. In April 2023, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee extended its system-wide scale-up in Somalia, initiated in August 2022, by a further six months, to September 2023. The scaling-up was centred around five key pillars in response to recent drought: prioritization, coordination, integrated response, rapid response and response monitoring. It enabled the mobilization and deployment of additional humanitarian capacity and resources, especially at the subnational level. Operational areas were categorized according to a three-tier classification (operational priority zones 1 to 3) to facilitate response at the district level, on the basis of severity of needs, ensuring a focus on priority districts. The scale-up played a critical role, along with the improved rainfall, in averting famine in 2022 and 2023. An operational peer review undertaken from 21 May to 1 June 2023 evaluated the response modalities. Pending a formal inter-agency evaluation, the review's recommendations, including the need for a cluster-driven response and strengthening of the subnational coordination, are already being implemented as part of the post-scale-up transition.

26. Localizing humanitarian response and enhancing engagement with national actors at all levels and locations is a key objective. As of August 2023, at least 257 humanitarian organizations were operational in 71 districts in Somalia. This includes 207 (81 per cent) national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 35 (14 per cent) international NGOs and 8 (3 per cent) United Nations agencies.

27. In response to acute watery diarrhoea and cholera, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and WHO, began a cholera vaccination campaign in selected districts in southern and central Somalia in August 2023. Partners also scaled up the vaccination of children, mainly in sites for displaced people, through outreach teams that provide integrated primary health-care services in these camps. In June 2023, 44,135 (78 per cent) of the targeted 56,482 children under one year of age received the first dose of a measles-containing vaccine in drought-affected districts. From 2019 to 2023, measles vaccination coverage has ranged from 78 to 84 per cent per month, compared with the national target of 95 per cent.

28. In July 2023, in South-West State, more than 826,140 children under the age of five were reached during a polio vaccination campaign led by the Federal and federal member state ministries of health. Local authorities supported by WHO and UNICEF

targeted 18 districts in the Bay, Bakool and Shabelle Hoose regions. The campaign covered accessible districts in full, with some covered only in part owing to insecurity and the presence of non-State armed groups. In Galmudug State, a four-day polio vaccination campaign took place from 22 to 25 July 2023, targeting some 336,780 children under the age of five, including in hard-to-reach and recovered areas. Some areas were reached for the first time in more than a decade.

29. By August 2023, 6.3 million people had been reached in 2023 with some form of assistance. In July 2023 alone, the World Food Programme supported 2.7 million people, with total distributions amounting to \$46.8 million as cash-based transfers and 3,767 metric tons of in-kind food. The assistance included an expansion of the government-led shock-responsive safety net for human capital project for 532,000 vulnerable drought-affected people.

30. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service continues to provide critical air services to help humanitarian actors to reach the people most in need across Somalia, including in hard-to-reach and drought- and flood-affected areas. From September 2022 to August 2023, the Air Service transported 21,242 passengers and 736.83 metric tons of relief items and urgent cargo to 15 regular destinations and 16 ad hoc locations, including drought-affected and other priority areas.

31. The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia is intended to meet the needs of 7.6 million of more than 8.25 million people who need urgent humanitarian assistance and protection. Funding for the humanitarian response remains a major challenge. As at 20 September 2023, the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan was only 36.2 per cent funded against its \$2.6 billion requirements. Owing to funding shortfalls, humanitarian partners have been forced to reduce assistance, make difficult prioritization decisions and target only the most severely hit and vulnerable areas and people.

32. In the context of resource shortfalls, the humanitarian country team has identified \$670 million in requirements for priority interventions before the end of 2023. These priorities reflect the likely convergence of severe needs in identified geographical areas (23 districts), for vulnerable people and in relation to key risks ahead, including conflict, disease and the impact of El Niño. Developed in August 2023, an updated emergency preparedness and response plan captures such risks for the rest of the year and is aligned with the new Somalia Disaster Management Agency anticipatory action framework for floods.

33. During the reporting period, the combined pooled funds allocated \$83.3 million to respond to drought, floods and fighting and violence. Of that amount, 58 per cent (\$48.3 million) was released through the Somalia Humanitarian Fund and 42 per cent (\$35 million) through the Central Emergency Response Fund. Both Funds played a pivotal role in boosting drought and famine prevention efforts. Some 84 per cent (\$70 million) of the funds disbursed supported drought and famine prevention efforts in hard-to-access locations, with the Somalia Humanitarian Fund releasing the largest share (\$42 million), followed by the Central Emergency Response Fund (\$28 million). The Somalia Humanitarian Fund also allocated \$1.3 million to facilitate access through the provision of security personnel and information services to humanitarian actors. Pooled funds also stepped in to support communities affected by localized fighting and violence.

34. In January 2023, a Central Emergency Response Fund grant of \$7 million supported partners in responding to the fighting and violence in central and southern Somalia. In March, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund allocated \$2 million to respond to humanitarian needs resulting from the fighting in the disputed territories in Sool and Sanaag. The Somalia Humanitarian Fund also supported partners in responding to the devastating floods in the most hard-hit region along the Juba River and

\$3 million was allocated for floods and cholera response. The Somalia Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board has recently endorsed a fifth reserve allocation of \$15 million for early action and response to address El Niño-induced flooding.

35. It remains essential to ensure that the humanitarian response is consistent with resilience programming and longer-term climate adaptation, enabling vulnerable people to withstand future shocks. Somalia is at the epicentre of climate change, notwithstanding its own negligible greenhouse gas emissions. Investment in Somalia must enable Somalis to adapt to increasingly severe climate shocks and break the cycle of crisis-driven dependence on humanitarian aid. National partners must be at the forefront of the response because they are the first responders and have better access to people in need.

Humanitarian access constraints and operational implications

36. The delivery of assistance in Somalia is challenged by insecurity, bureaucratic and administrative constraints, poor infrastructure and environmental issues. All contribute to movement restrictions, disrupt imports and domestic supply chains and reduce access to basic commodities. Insecurity impedes the ability of humanitarian workers to reach people in need and sustain critical operations and protection services, making it difficult for people to gain access to basic services and assistance.

37. During the reporting period, 432 access incidents were reported. Those incidents revolved around mainly military operations and ongoing hostilities, significantly obstructing humanitarian efforts. Attacks on humanitarian facilities were reported across the country, including in Baardheere, Laascaanood and Luuq, causing disruptions in humanitarian activities. This was followed by reports of 93 cases, representing 22 per cent, in which the movement of humanitarian personnel was restricted within Somalia. In response to potential security risks, alternative work modalities were activated as a precautionary measure, leading to temporary suspensions and the rescheduling of plans by humanitarian workers in some instances.

38. In addition, 76 incidents were documented in which interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities occurred. The interference included the imposition of checkpoints, taxation and the manipulation of beneficiary registration lists. Local restrictions and regulations can hinder the smooth and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance and undermine international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

39. In April and May 2023, the operations of 10 NGOs in Puntland State were suspended but later reinstated. These NGOs comprised two international and eight national partners. Authorities were concerned that those NGOs were operating without licences, lacked accountability and were violating the NGO Act. The suspensions were lifted following engagement to clarify the role of humanitarian actors. In total, 132 incidents were reported, with the majority (53 incidents) relating to violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities.

40. The military offensive launched in 2022 by the Somali security forces, supported by local clan militias, against Al-Shabaab continued. During the reporting period, considerable gains were made and territories recovered from Al-Shabaab in Galmudug and Hirshabelle States. However, the security situation and areas of control remain fluid, which will continue to have an impact on humanitarian access. As of August 2023, a major military operation against Al-Shabaab was under way in Galmudug.

41. In the light of this new phase of military operations, the humanitarian access working group, chaired by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, regularly reviews its analysis of the evolving context and the humanitarian

implications. Where gains are sustained, they could offer possibilities for more predictable access to areas previously under Al-Shabaab control. However, military operations can also increase civilian displacement and other protection concerns and result in a deterioration in humanitarian access owing to insecurity. Such uncertainty requires partners to exercise flexibility in programming to adapt to shifting patterns of insecurity, to be able to quickly assess and provide assistance in newly recovered areas, and to engage in coordinated advocacy for the protection of civilians.

42. The humanitarian community has identified specific areas for comprehensive security assessments with the Department of Safety and Security to enable humanitarian agencies, in particular United Nations agencies, to gain entry into locations that have seen recent conflict. Some regions have already been assessed and deemed accessible, receiving the green light for operational activities with security risk management measures. Additional areas in Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South-West and Jubaland were proposed in August for assessment. However, some missions have encountered obstacles, owing to an inability to manage security risks to an acceptable level or where the security context has changed rapidly. This intricate interplay between accessibility aspirations, security considerations and practical operational challenges underscores the complexity of facilitating humanitarian access in volatile environments such as Somalia.

43. The withdrawal of African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) forces, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2687 \(2023\)](#), has begun. An initial 2,000 troops left Somalia in June 2023 and, in the next phase of the drawdown, a further 3,000 troops and the police component are scheduled for departure in September. The ATMIS withdrawal may result in significant changes in the security context, which could affect humanitarian operations.

44. The presence of ATMIS forces has enabled humanitarian activities in many regions through the provision of convoy protection and area route security. A reduced security presence could impede the movement of humanitarian workers using this access modality, exacerbating their access constraints and ability to reach vulnerable populations. For example, preparations for the second phase of the ATMIS drawdown have led to the reduction in escorts for convoys between the United Nations compound in Kismaayo and areas with humanitarian operations from 12 to 4 per week for all United Nations movements, including humanitarian convoys, effective end of August 2023. This may be reduced further with the withdrawal of the ATMIS police component. Humanitarian access to the internally displaced persons settlements in Luglow, with a current caseload of some 56,000 people, may also be affected. As the safety and mobility of aid personnel become more precarious, it becomes increasingly challenging to provide timely and effective assistance, potentially leaving affected communities more susceptible to the adverse impacts of conflict and displacement.

45. Access to regions under the control of the Federal Government of Somalia remains relatively feasible, although persistent bureaucratic and administrative hurdles exist. In areas recovered by the Somali security forces, access is impeded by continued insecurity, compounded by the presence of improvised explosive devices along critical supply routes. Extortion is frequently encountered at the many illicit checkpoints manned by various actors. The functionality of security checkpoints, often associated with fees, serves as a barrier to secure, prompt and unhindered access. Incidents continue to be documented at approved checkpoints along major routes in southern and central Somalia, especially on the Mogadishu-Afgooye-Baidoa, Mogadishu-Balcad-Jawhar and Beledweyne-Gaalkacyo roads. While efforts are under way to eliminate unauthorized checkpoints along other primary routes, armed actors adapt by establishing mobile checkpoints.

46. Access to some areas controlled by Al-Shabaab may be facilitated through local partners. Al-Shabaab has publicly announced that the United Nations and its implementing partners are not welcome to areas under their control. A humanitarian agency has reported instances in which incitements to boycott the United Nations were repeatedly broadcasted through a radio station associated with Al-Shabaab.

47. The reported reluctance of Al-Shabaab to permit principled humanitarian efforts in the territories under their control, concerns for the safety of humanitarian personnel and resistance from other conflict-involved factions all pose significant challenges to reaching people living in these areas. At the end of 2022, nearly 660,000 people, of whom 375,770 were estimated to need assistance, were living within areas controlled by Al-Shabaab and are largely out of reach by humanitarian actors. This is a reduction from the September 2022 estimate of 770,000 people in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas and is attributable to the recovery of areas such as Aadan Yabaal district in Hirshabelle that had been under Al-Shabaab control for 12 years, although areas of control in contested areas remain fluid.

48. Individuals who endeavour to leave areas under Al-Shabaab control have reportedly encountered retaliation after they seek refuge in government-held areas. During the reporting period, Al-Shabaab has shown increased leniency in allowing temporary departures from their areas of control for the purpose of gaining access to services.

49. The strategy adopted by Al-Shabaab in some government-held towns within Hirshabelle, South-West and Jubaland States includes harassing or controlling key logistical routes and impeding the transportation of both humanitarian and commercial supplies. While humanitarian organizations use air transport predominantly to gain access to some areas as a result of security concerns, reliance on this significantly raises the cost of humanitarian operations. Districts such as Buulobarde in Hiraan, Hirshabelle State, Diinsoor and Qansaxdheere in Bay, Waajid and Xuddur in Bakool, South-West State and Ceel Waaq and Garbahaarrey in Gedo, Jubaland State are particularly affected by this dynamic. Between 11 and 21 July, Al-Shabaab blockaded Baidoa in South-West State, banning the inflow of commodities. This led to a temporary scarcity of vital supplies in a region already at high food insecurity risk. Fuel prices rose from \$1.5 to \$2 per litre, while prices of other commodities such as rice, pasta and sugar increased by almost 20 per cent in some areas. Humanitarian supplies, brought in mainly by air transport, were not affected.

50. Taxation practices continue to have an impact on the civilian population, in particular in southern and central Somalia, amplifying their vulnerability. Disturbingly, in numerous regions traders are compelled to endure the burden of double taxation, given that payments to Al-Shabaab are added on top of government taxation. The situation becomes even more dire owing to instances of dual taxation by various governmental entities. In the Hiraan region, the occurrence of two distinct taxation demands – first by the replaced Governor’s administration and later by the succeeding one – added a financial burden on local populations. On 4 August 2023, for example, in Gaalkacyo South district, approximately 200 trucks were stranded at a checkpoint after the owners voiced their grievances over the exorbitant taxation fees enforced by both the Galmudug and Hirshabelle administrations, specifically targeting movements between Boosaaso and southern Somalia.

51. Such practices affect trade, in particular small businesses, ultimately rendering business unprofitable, increasing prices, affecting economic activity and exacerbating financial strains on individuals and communities. On 13 and 16 August 2023, some business entities and traders in Bari region, Boosaaso district, were required by Da’esh to pay an annual tax for their business operation. On 12 August in

Beledweyne, Hiraan region, Al-Shabaab confiscated trucks from businessmen in lieu of taxes. The trucks were being used in the reconstruction of Gambarlawe bridge, which had been damaged by floods. Even farming communities are not spared. Reports indicate that Al-Shabaab compels them to pay “taxes” to cultivate their fields, in particular after favourable rainfall. Such coercive demands often take the form of monetary contributions or the provision of livestock, under the pretext of *zakat* or even framed as a “voluntary jihad” contribution. The intricate web of financial pressures leaves civilians grappling with a myriad of challenges, further entrenching their vulnerability and necessitating targeted interventions to alleviate their plight.

52. The persistence of inter-clan conflict in areas such as Hirshabelle State also poses obstacles to humanitarian movement and operations. In mid-June, following the removal of the former Governor of Hiraan region, some residents protested against the newly appointed Governor. The refusal of the former Governor to leave office resulted in two administrations whose forces both engaged in patrols in the town. The parallel administrations have triggered clashes on numerous occasions, further compounding the situation. The repercussions extend to humanitarian activities, including the cancellation of vital missions.

53. The conflict in the disputed northern Sool and Sanaag regions has added a layer of complexity to an already challenging context. The fighting has had an impact on civilians and threatened the safety of humanitarian workers. Some humanitarian organizations have suspended operations in the affected areas, including Laascaanood town, as a result. Ongoing hostilities have generated obstacles to both humanitarian movement and operations and displaced more than 200,000 people to nearby regions and Ethiopia in 2023. As mentioned above, the Somalia Humanitarian Fund allocated \$2 million for life-saving response in Laascaanood.

54. The conflict has affected humanitarian operations directly. On 8 July 2023, a health facility in Laascaanood was hit during the heavy fighting. Dozens of people were killed and injured, including health-care workers and patients, and two ambulances were destroyed. The July attack was the fifth time that the health facility had been hit since the fighting in Laascaanood began. The international NGO Médecins sans frontières subsequently announced its withdrawal from the facility and the suspension of health-care services in the town. Attacks on health care deprive people of urgently needed life-saving essential health services and endanger those who provide health care. Following fighting on 25 August, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Somali Red Crescent Society facilitated the transfer of four wounded prisoners to hospital in Garoowe. Over a period of one week, 110 wounded people were transported to hospital, while 42 bodies were collected for dignified and proper burial. Following the flare-up in hostilities on 25 August, thousands of people fled to villages in Somaliland. Subsequently, some families reportedly started to return to Laascaanood.

55. The complex landscape of clan revenge-related issues also has an impact on humanitarian operations. Instances of clan vendettas and reprisals can rapidly escalate, perpetuating a cycle of violence that not only endangers the safety of humanitarian personnel, but also disrupts the delivery of crucial assistance. In August 2023, a humanitarian worker was kidnapped owing to clan-related motives, underscoring the real and immediate danger posed by such conflicts. These clan dynamics often extend beyond isolated incidents. As clans vie for control and dominance, access routes become volatile, increasing the vulnerability of aid workers who operate amid these tensions. Interwoven clan dynamics demand strategic approaches that navigate and mitigate the intricate web of connections while safeguarding the well-being of humanitarian staff.

56. Attacks on aid workers in Somalia are deeply concerning and encompass acts such as abductions, arrests, harassment, threats, violent attacks and the coercive confiscation of assets. They are perpetrated by various parties and severely limit the capacity of humanitarian personnel to effectively reach affected people. Between September 2022 and August 2023, at least 78 attacks were documented against individuals dedicated to humanitarian efforts. Some of those encounters escalated into physical assaults. Tragically, the toll of the violence included the loss of three humanitarian workers during that period. This serves as a poignant reminder of the grave risks that humanitarian workers face daily in their commitment to operating within conflict zones.

57. From September 2022 to August 2023, 13 abductions involving humanitarian workers were documented. All those abducted were later released. Historically, kidnappings have served as a means to generate revenue, sometimes involving the payment of ransoms. The spectre of kidnapping has an impact on the operational capabilities of organizations engaged in delivering vital humanitarian assistance and protection. The immediate consequence often involves a scaling-down or temporary suspension of operations due to safety considerations. Kidnapping instances are not only the domain of clans, but also orchestrated by entities such as Al-Shabaab. One such case involves an international staff member who was abducted in Mogadishu in 2018 and remains in the custody of Al-Shabaab. Kidnapping hinders the ability to carry out humanitarian initiatives effectively, demanding additional measures to mitigate these threats. In addition to the persistent security threats, physical and environmental challenges and hazardous incidents such as vehicle accidents also compound the risks faced by humanitarian personnel. In February 2023, for example, in the Goob Weyn area of Kismaayo district a vehicle rented by an NGO overturned, leading to the loss of one life and causing injuries to four other people.

58. The Aden Adde International Airport area in Mogadishu continues to be targeted. On 25 June 2023, for the first time, 107 mm rockets made impact at the airport. Three rockets fired caused no casualties or significant damage. On 19 August 2023, the area was targeted again with eight rockets, five of which landed at the airport, affecting, among others, one United Nations facility and a commercial compound hosting several United Nations entities. Two non-United Nations personnel were injured and air traffic was suspended for several hours.

59. In the context of such attacks, the need to increase building security protection and tighten security protocols has an impact on the modalities of humanitarian response and considerably increases the cost of maintaining staff presence and security to deliver vital services.

60. An estimated 1.5 million displaced and non-displaced people in 65 districts have needed mine action services in 2023, an increase of 36 per cent compared with 2022. Explosive ordnance contamination threatens the safety and well-being of civilians, with some 120 confirmed hazardous areas whose cumulative area spans reportedly more than 60 km², mainly along the border between Ethiopia and Somalia. This extensive contamination presents significant safety and economic risks to communities in Puntland, Galmudug, Jubaland, Hirshabelle and South-West States and the disputed Sool and Sanaag regions, owing to limited access to land resources and restricted freedom of movement, which subsequently obstruct the delivery of assistance.

61. Humanitarian personnel operating in contaminated areas constantly confront the inherent dangers posed by unexploded ordnance and remnants of war. Similarly, displaced people returning to areas reclaimed from Al-Shabaab encounter an acute deficit of fundamental infrastructure and essential services, resulting in heightened susceptibility. Numerous areas remain fraught with severe protection concerns,

encompassing hazards associated with unexploded ordnance, persisting and renewed conflicts, and retaliatory violence orchestrated by armed actors.

Risk management and due diligence

62. Somalia presents a highly complex operational environment for programming and delivering humanitarian assistance. In response, the United Nations has adopted innovative strategies that allow for the proactive mitigation and management of risks rather than avoiding them entirely. Humanitarian organizations have prioritized efforts to identify and mitigate factors that may lead to aid diversion. They have strengthened their capacity to assess implementing partners and implemented robust reporting and auditing mechanisms to ensure effective monitoring and verification of the delivery of life-saving programmes.

63. In Somalia, humanitarian agencies employ various mechanisms to monitor and verify the implementation of activities. In addition to partner vetting, United Nations agencies use various methods to monitor projects. These include third-party field monitoring, the utilization of satellite imagery and, where feasible, physical monitoring by agency personnel when the security situation permits. In sensitive activities, such as protection, agencies discreetly integrate contractors within communities to maintain a low profile. Details of some of the common approaches include the following:

(a) Robust partner selection process: agencies conduct thorough assessments and evaluations of implementing partners before engaging in partnerships. This includes reviewing their track record, financial management systems and operational capacity;

(b) Monitoring and reporting systems: agencies establish monitoring systems to track the progress and performance of implementing partners. Regular reporting is required, including narrative and financial reports, to ensure transparency and accountability;

(c) On-site visits and field monitoring: agencies conduct field visits to project sites to observe the implementation first-hand. These visits help to identify any discrepancies between reported activities and the actual situation on the ground;

(d) Data and document verification: agencies review supporting documents, such as invoices, receipts, attendance registers and distribution lists, to verify the utilization of funds and distribution of aid;

(e) Internal and external audits: agencies conduct internal audits or engage external auditing firms to independently assess the financial management and compliance of implementing partners;

(f) Hotline and complaint mechanisms/remote call centres: agencies establish channels for receiving and investigating complaints or allegations of aid diversion. Whistle-blower hotlines and community feedback mechanisms allow beneficiaries and staff to report any suspicious activities;

(g) Coordination and information-sharing: humanitarian agencies collaborate with one other, government authorities and other relevant stakeholders to share information and coordinate efforts to monitor and verify aid implementation. There is a monthly information-sharing meeting at which information is shared and discussed intensively.

64. Since 2011, the Risk Management Unit has been supporting United Nations humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions and stakeholders in this ever-evolving high-risk environment. The Unit aims to strengthen humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions in Somalia that are informed by risk

management best practice. This is done through the following outputs: risk analysis and management support that meets requested requirements and is delivered on time; enhanced risk management capacity, information-sharing and collaborative risk management across aid stakeholders in Somalia; the provision of advisory services that contribute to integrated efforts to address anti-corruption in Somalia; contributions to the efficient use of country systems; and leveraging synergies of best risk management practices across United Nations risk management units.

65. In December 2022, some internally displaced persons in one of the areas hit hardest by the drought raised concerns about post-delivery aid diversion. The reports of such interference were taken extremely seriously. The United Nations moved quickly to assess the situation, condemning all interference in the delivery of humanitarian assistance at any time, including after it is received by the people served, given that this robs families of the assistance that they need to survive and recover. Since the reports were first received, in late 2022, the United Nations has strengthened measures to protect internally displaced persons from such post-delivery aid interference, including prioritizing vulnerability-based, instead of community-based, targeting to reduce the influence of gatekeepers; bolstering beneficiary registration, including by further expanding the use of biometrics; increasing the number of third-party field monitors and their key performance indicators; expanding coverage for market monitoring; introducing independent spot checks on vendors and cooperating partners to ensure that contractual obligations are met in full; implementing local risk-sharing practices and data-sharing agreements between United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners; and engaging with donors, NGOs, the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states in Somalia to enable collective action, including a public awareness campaign.

66. Additional actions are also being introduced to further improve risk mitigation as part of constant adaptation to challenges and complex operational realities. This includes the development and ongoing management of a joint humanitarian risk register; initiatives to redesign beneficiary selection processes for food and non-food assistance to minimize the influence of gatekeepers; work to strengthen community engagement and accountability to affected populations; and the scaling-up of investment in durable solutions, in particular those granting land deeds to internally displaced persons, which may address some of the power imbalances on sites and mitigate the risk that a part of humanitarian assistance is being paid for rent. Efforts are under way to further strengthen and improve the early detection of aid diversion practices. These include establishing a multi-layered monitoring system, streamlining protection monitoring across camp coordination and camp management cluster actors and partners, and developing a joint fraud incident management system that includes both internal improvements and referral pathways to government bodies at Federal Government of Somalia, federal member state and local levels.

67. The United Nations and the Federal Government of Somalia have established a joint task force that will develop a collective strategy to mitigate aid diversion and ultimately deepen the impact and efficacy of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations remains committed to working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia, donors, partners, clan elders and people receiving aid to implement strong collective action to ensure that all aid is used by the intended recipients – without any interference.

Impact of paragraphs 28 and 47 of Security Council resolution 2662 (2022)

68. In its resolution 2662 (2022), adopted on 17 November 2022, the Security Council reaffirmed that measures imposed by it in paragraph 3 of its resolution 1844 (2008) should not apply to the payment of funds, other financial assets or economic resources necessary to ensure the timely delivery of urgently needed humanitarian

assistance in Somalia, by the United Nations, its specialized agencies or programmes, humanitarian organizations having observer status with the General Assembly that provide humanitarian assistance, and their implementing partners, including bilaterally or multilaterally funded NGOs participating in the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia. The provision was subsequently supplanted by paragraph 1 of Council resolution 2664 (2022), which established a similar humanitarian exemption benefiting a broader range of humanitarian organizations across Council sanctions regimes. While organizations surveyed for the present report did not comment explicitly on the impact of paragraphs 28 and 47 of resolution 2662 (2022) or paragraph 1 of resolution 2664 (2022) on their ability to implement programmes, the humanitarian exemptions established under these provisions have a significant impact on the ability of partners to deliver life-saving aid and protection.

69. The absence of a humanitarian exemption would make it much more difficult for donors to fund impartial humanitarian operations swiftly and flexibly and for humanitarian organizations to efficiently respond to humanitarian needs, at a time when Somalia is experiencing high levels of humanitarian needs. It would result in increased legal, bureaucratic, administrative, contractual and operational constraints for humanitarian partners. Even incremental increases in such challenges would have a significant adverse impact on the ability to deliver assistance. In turn, the inability to deliver aid would deprive civilians of the supplies essential to their survival while compounding the risk of the humanitarian situation deteriorating. The suspension of aid would result in a greater likelihood of additional displacement, including potential refugee flows to neighbouring countries and internal displacement towards urban, government-controlled areas that are already underresourced and have inadequate basic services. Furthermore, if Al-Shabaab were to prevent civilians from leaving areas under its control, their needs would go unmet, and those soliciting aid, such as older persons and children, could be subjected to human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law, such as extrajudicial executions and child recruitment.

70. All stakeholders – humanitarian organizations, donors, contractors and finance and banking systems – have been relying on a humanitarian exemption to asset freeze measures adopted under Security Council resolution 1844 (2008) to carry out activities necessary for the delivery of needs-based humanitarian assistance in Somalia. The humanitarian exemptions and the measures taken for their implementation over the years are essential to humanitarian programmes in Somalia. As of December 2022, the humanitarian exemption established by the Council in its resolution 2664 (2022) supplanted the humanitarian exemption originally established under Council resolution 1916 (2010). The newly applicable exemption established under resolution 2664 (2022) is similar in large part to the one that Somalia partners had been relying on previously, only with a broader scope in terms of activities and organizations covered.

Conclusions

71. Somalia is at a critical juncture. Humanitarian needs remain high in a context of low funding and ongoing access challenges. The impact of climate change and protracted conflict and outbreaks of diseases, along with volatile global economic dynamics, may contribute to an unravelling of hard-won progress, at a high human and financial cost. While famine was averted in late 2022 and early in 2023 through concerted efforts by humanitarian partners to scale up assistance, supported by authorities and local communities, and the better-than-forecast rains, the humanitarian situation remains critical.

72. Humanitarian organizations in Somalia continue to deliver effective and principled assistance within a challenging and complex security context.

Humanitarians will continue to work to sustain and expand access to those in greatest need, security challenges notwithstanding. Respect for international humanitarian law is paramount, and parties to conflict must allow and facilitate humanitarian access to civilians in need. In addition to requiring greater access to beneficiaries, humanitarian efforts need flexible and timely funding to effectively assist millions of Somalis and to ensure that the security needs of national and local implementing partners are properly factored into proposals and budgets.

73. The humanitarian agencies operating in the country scaled up operations in 2022 and into 2023 to mitigate the severe impact of the drought emergency to prevent a major humanitarian catastrophe. In the face of continued need and financial shortfalls, partners are conducting further strict prioritization of the most vulnerable people in the areas of highest need, including newly displaced families and members of minority clans who are historically disproportionately affected by the impacts of droughts.

74. Humanitarian assistance will continue to be critical for millions of people in Somalia. While drought-related famine was averted, the level of assistance has still not kept pace with the scale and severity of needs, given the cumulative impact of the drought and protracted conflict. The predicted El Niño is likely to lead to disastrous outcomes, including flooding and the displacement of people, especially in low-lying areas along the Shabelle and Juba Rivers. This will compound the extended impact of the recent drought and flooding, as well as that of ongoing conflict. In addition to local security needs, the fluctuating cost of commodities has an impact on populations.

75. According to the World Food Programme, favourable 2023 prospects in major wheat-producing countries, combined with 2022 carry-over stocks, may offset some immediate price impacts. However, other factors, including the forecasted El Niño event, mean that medium- to long-term wheat pricing looks unstable.

76. According to the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit, the sustained provision of scaled-up food and non-food assistance has prevented the worsening of food security and nutrition outcomes in many areas. However, assistance provision continues to fall short of overall requirements, with millions of Somalis still facing food consumption gaps while acute malnutrition levels remain atypically high. To prevent the worsening of food insecurity and nutrition outcomes, additional funding is urgently needed for scaling up and sustaining high levels of multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance that includes food security, nutrition, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, likely through late 2023.

77. In a context of already high and increasing needs, the absence of a humanitarian exemption for Somalia would result in the disruption, interruption or suspension of life-saving humanitarian services throughout the country. This would deprive people who have already suffered too much of the assistance that they need to survive. In the light of the foregoing, I welcome the establishment of a broad, transverse and, in the case of Somalia, open-ended, humanitarian exemption by the Security Council pursuant to its resolution [2664 \(2022\)](#).