



Security Council

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Situation in Abyei

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution [2660 \(2022\)](#), in which the Council requested to be informed of progress made in implementing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). It covers the period since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General ([S/2023/305](#)), from 19 April to 3 October 2023. The report provides updates on, among others, political and security developments, women and young people, peace and security, human rights, the humanitarian situation and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. It also highlights the ongoing challenges to UNISFA operations owing to the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan.

II. Abyei

Political developments

2. During the reporting period, no progress was made in the Abyei political process amid the fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in the Sudan, which erupted just five days after the meeting of the High-Level Committee of the Sudan and South Sudan on Abyei, held in Khartoum on 9 and 10 April.

3. As part of the ongoing efforts by the Government of South Sudan to halt violence between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka communities in Abyei and Warrap State, South Sudan, on 1 May the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, called upon the authorities in Warrap State and Abyei to work together to implement the elements of the agreement reached at the peace conference held in Wau, South Sudan, in April.

4. Security forces from both countries continued to be present inside Abyei, including the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the South Sudan National Police in the southern part of Abyei and the Diffra oil police in the north, in violation of the 2011 Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, as well as the mandate of UNISFA. The Force continued to reiterate to both Governments the importance of maintaining the demilitarized and weapons-free status of Abyei.



5. UNISFA continued to monitor the conflict in the Sudan closely owing to its implications for Abyei. From 15 to 18 May, UNISFA leadership travelled to Juba for meetings with the acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan, Deng Dau Deng, and other cabinet ministers, as well as with the leadership of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations country team. Discussions focused on the possible opening of resupply and rotation routes through South Sudan due to the closure of the main supply routes of UNISFA from Port Sudan and Khartoum, as well as efforts to ensure that the humanitarian needs of displaced persons arriving from the Sudan were met.

6. UNISFA facilitated the visit of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee to Abyei from 6 to 14 July. Separately, the mission held several coordination meetings with regional stakeholders, including the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, in Addis Ababa and Nairobi, in March and May, respectively. UNISFA engagement with the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan and UNMISS continued through regular coordination and information-sharing meetings on matters of mutual concern, including cross-boundary security and transhumance issues.

Conflict dynamics and the security situation

7. The security situation in the Abyei Area remained tense, notwithstanding a reduction in intercommunal armed clashes. The major threats to security during the reporting period were related to intercommunal violence, animal rustling, the proliferation of arms and ammunition and robbery activities along the main supply route connecting the Sudan and South Sudan. The ongoing conflict in the Sudan also affected the security situation, notably through an influx of displaced persons from the Sudan into Abyei, and Twic Dinka-Ngok Dinka relations remained a concern.

8. The reporting period also witnessed a static presence of approximately 200 personnel composed of South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the South Sudan National Police in the Agok general area in southern Abyei. In the northern part of Abyei, a presence of approximately 61 Diffra oil police remains. On 8 June, UNISFA issued a note verbale to the Government of South Sudan in which it called for the withdrawal of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and reiterated the mission's mandate to keep the Abyei Area demilitarized and weapons-free.

9. There were 62 arms-related incidents reported, of which 20 were direct armed attacks against civilians, 20 were indiscriminate firings and 22 were cattle rustlings or robberies. Of the 21 direct armed attacks against civilians, 2 were intercommunal clashes between the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities, 6 were clashes between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka communities and 13 were allegedly perpetrated by Nuers. Arms-related incidents during the reporting period led to 82 deaths and 122 injuries.

10. Approximately 28 weapons and 534 rounds of ammunition were confiscated by UNISFA and destroyed by the Mine Action Service. A total of 36 people were apprehended for illegally possessing firearms and handed over to relevant authorities. UNISFA also intercepted eight people transporting arms or ammunition to the Amiet market.

11. The intercommunal clashes between the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities declined significantly during the reporting period, albeit with continuing tensions that led to two recorded incidents. On 19 May, members of the Ngok Dinka and the Misseriya communities clashed over a truckload of onions, resulting in the death of 1 Misseriya man and injuries to 3 Ngok Dinka and 11 Misseriya. Similarly, on 4 August a Ngok Dinka man was stabbed by a Misseriya man during a scuffle due

to alleged non-payment for services. This incident led to an attack by approximately 20 members of the Ngok Dinka community, some of them armed, targeting the Misseriya community at Amiet market, leaving 1 member of the Misseriya community dead and 1 Ngok Dinka and 7 Misseriya seriously injured. The intervention of UNISFA peacekeepers helped to curtail the clash.

12. Clashes between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka communities also declined during the reporting period. Six armed attacks were recorded, resulting in 18 deaths and 9 injuries. The most significant clash occurred on 28 August, when approximately 200 suspected armed Twic Dinkas reportedly from Warrap State, South Sudan, launched a coordinated attack on the three adjoining communities of Majbong, Abathok and Agok, with 4 civilians killed and 5 injured. A total of 119 women and children were also displaced and received assistance from the United Nations. The attackers also fired upon UNISFA peacekeepers returning from an unrelated patrol, injuring three of them. Subsequently, UNISFA deployed a quick-reaction force, and the attackers fled the scene.

13. During the reporting period, incidents involving members of the Nuer community increased within the Abyei Area. Most of the 13 such incidents were related to cattle rustling, with both the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities being targeted. On 20 May, armed elements from both the Nuer and the Ngok Dinka communities rustled cattle from the Misseriya community of Sink, leaving nine people dead, including five Misseriya, three Nuer and one Ngok Dinka, during an exchange of fire.

14. On 29 September, an unconfirmed number of armed persons attacked Ngok Dinka community members at Abyei new market, with at least 11 people killed, including 2 women, and 16 people injured. UNISFA deployed a quick-reaction force to stabilize the situation and has been engaging with the leaders of the relevant communities to address tensions and ensure that the people of Abyei are informed of the multidimensional response by the mission to the situation.

15. Since the activation of the mission-wide early warning system in October 2022, UNISFA has continued to strengthen the mechanism through effective networking with the community protection committees, young people, women and other networks to enhance information-gathering and early response. UNISFA continued its close collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on training community-based early warning committees, including on ways to identify early warning signs and report them to the appropriate authorities. During the reporting period, 99 focal points in the local communities, including 40 women, were trained. On 30 July, approximately 30 armed Nuer men were spotted by community members in the area of Marial Achak. The community members reported the incident to UNISFA through the early warning youth network. On that basis, UNISFA immediately deployed a quick-reaction force to the area and provided an escort to community members as they fled to Wayeng village in Marial Achak, Sector South.

16. During the reporting period, approximately 16,628 ground patrols and 30 air patrols were conducted in the Abyei Area. In addition, UNISFA engagement platoons offered protection to women farmers and other groups to gather firewood. Furthermore, the UNISFA troop-contributing countries embarked on numerous civil-military cooperation activities, including building clinics, schools and a vocational centre, renovating schools, providing boreholes, and donating educational and sports equipment and other materials. Troop-contributing countries also provided generators and established farm gardens to benefit local communities.

Reconfiguration of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

17. During the reporting period, several UNISFA troop contingents reached their full operational capacity, namely, those from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Viet Nam and the Chinese medium-utility helicopter unit. A Chinese quick-reaction force deployed an advance party of 20 personnel, and the deployment of the remaining 130 troops is pending the arrival of their contingent-owned equipment, which is awaiting the dry season to complete its movement. The Nigerian close protection unit personnel of 11 troops is scheduled to deploy in October.

18. The final step towards the full deployment of troops and contingent-owned equipment as part of the reconfiguration, which had been planned for completion by the end of May 2023, has been delayed owing to the conflict in the Sudan. Units whose contingent-owned equipment were not deployed in full, including the Indian battalion, the Ghanaian battalion, the Ghanaian medical unit and the Nigerian base defence company, were supported by United Nations-owned equipment, resulting in their operational capacity being affected only marginally. Contingent-owned equipment of the Chinese quick-reaction force and the Nigerian base defence company was rerouted from the initially planned route through Port Sudan. Rotations of troops, which were initially affected by the conflict in the Sudan, have recommenced.

Freedom of movement violations

19. During the reporting period, four freedom of movement violations were recorded. On 5 May, troops of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces at a checkpoint some 5 km south of Athony junction obstructed the southward movement of a convoy of the UNISFA Integrated Force Mobility Team. On 6 June, South Sudan People's Defence Forces troops blocked access for a UNISFA route reconnaissance team at their checkpoint 5 km south of Athony junction and at Agok. Lastly, on 25 July the South Sudan People's Defence Forces blocked access for a UNISFA joint patrol to the Agok community protection committee station. In Agok, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces insisted repeatedly that UNISFA personnel provide notification prior to patrolling or gaining access to the Agok area, in violation of the status-of-forces agreement and the mandate of UNISFA.

Intercommunity dialogue

20. UNISFA continued its engagement with traditional and local authorities, young people, women and other members of civil society in the north and south of Abyei to build confidence and rally support for intercommunal peace. UNISFA further engaged the joint community peace committee and joint protection committee at Amiet market to defuse tensions.

21. On 31 May, the Juba-appointed Chief Administrator in Abyei reviewed the joint community peace committee membership and appointed 11 new members, who joined their 11 counterparts from the Misseriya side. UNISFA supported 11 joint community peace committee meetings that addressed intercommunal disputes, in particular those affecting Amiet market, including cattle rustling, issues relating to the influx of Nuer people and murder cases.

22. From 7 to 9 June 2023, UNISFA, Concordis International and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations jointly organized a transhumance corridors conference between Misseriya and Ngok Dinka at Noong (Sector Centre). While the paramount chiefs of the two communities did not attend the event, the community representatives agreed on concrete steps to ensure peaceful transhumance,

including acceptance by the Ngok Dinka community that Misseriya people may seek medical treatment in Abyei town.

23. UNISFA continued to engage traditional leaders, the Juba-appointed administration in Abyei, administrative representatives in Diffra and civil society representatives to support the implementation of the agreement reached at Noong, as well as at the seasonal peace conference held in Todach from 20 to 23 March, both of which included calls for greater engagement between the paramount chiefs, the organization of follow-up conferences and a new agreement on freedom of movement within Abyei.

24. At two events organized by UNISFA in Abyei on 15 and 19 August, the Juba-appointed Chief Administrator for Abyei made public statements calling for the settlement of Ngok Dinka people to various parts of northern Abyei, including Diffra.

25. UNISFA continues to engage stakeholders to respond to threats to social cohesion, including those relating to the increase in displaced Nuer community members from South Sudan, and the presence of Ruweng people and other groups in Amiet market and beyond. On 9 August, UNISFA facilitated an emergency crisis management mission by the Ngok Dinka paramount chief and Nuer leaders to Rumamier after an uptick in tensions between the Nuer, Ruweng and Ngok Dinka communities dating from an attack in the area in January 2023 reportedly perpetrated by an armed group consisting of Twic Dinka and Nuer.

26. UNISFA facilitated the travel of members of the Juba-appointed Abyei administration to Wau, South Sudan, to attend reconciliation talks between Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka from 7 to 9 August. Agreement was reached on a ceasefire, the disengagement of armed Nuer and freedom of movement between the areas affected by the tensions. Shortly thereafter, from 11 to 16 August the Minister of East African Affairs of South Sudan, Deng Alor Kuol, visited Abyei to hold talks on security with the Juba-appointed Chief Administrator in Abyei and to strengthen local support for the agreements reached in Wau.

27. UNISFA commenced the implementation of 15 quick-impact projects to benefit local communities, including 5 in Sector North and 9 in Sector Centre and Sector South. Projects undertaken in the communities include support for solar water yards, hand pumps, clinics, classrooms and toilets. A project benefiting both the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities was also undertaken to build a kitchen at the Amiet detention centre. The projects are estimated to each benefit approximately 500 persons. However, owing to the crisis in the Sudan, quick-impact projects in northern Abyei were suspended owing to procurement and mobility challenges.

Rule of law

28. The presence of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces in southern Abyei continued to pose challenges to enhancing the rule of law. As of October 2022, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces have been occupying the Agok community protection committee detention facility, as well as three schools in the Agok area. UNISFA raised this issue with the Government of South Sudan in meetings and through a note verbale, requested the immediate withdrawal of soldiers. However, to date, the facilities remain occupied.

29. On 28 April, as well as on 3, 14, 23 and 29 May, Sudanese police personnel deployed at the Diffra oilfield were spotted by UNISFA in the Dari market, in groups of 10 to 40 members, either undertaking patrols or purchasing commodities. Following interventions by UNISFA and engagement with Sudanese national monitors, no further patrolling activities were observed in northern Abyei.

30. No progress was made towards the establishment of the Abyei Police Service by the Sudan and South Sudan. United Nations police continued to support and enhance the rule of law through support to the community protection committees and joint protection committees. There are 53 community protection committee and joint protection committee stations in Sectors North, Centre and South. The joint protection committee at Amiet market consists of 52 members, of whom 4 are women. Meanwhile, the total number of community protection committee members within the Abyei Area is 1,223, including 181 women, profiled and vetted by United Nations police in close collaboration with the traditional and local authorities.

31. United Nations police continued to train the community protection committees and the joint protection committees in, among others, basic human rights and early warning mechanisms. During the reporting period, United Nations police conducted 40 training sessions for 99 community protection committee members in Sector South, 66 community protection committee and joint protection committee members in Sector North and 192 community protection committee members in Sector Centre. Women represented 44 per cent of all trained, or 157 trainees. On 20 July, United Nations police provided basic human rights training to 30 Abyei fire brigade personnel, including 15 women. Between 19 April and 25 August, the community protection committees and joint protection committees reported 731 general crimes, representing an increase of 115 cases compared with the previous period.

32. United Nations police strengthened the operational capacities of the community protection committees and joint protection committees by providing equipment, including portable rechargeable flashlights, raincoats, reflector jackets, T-shirts, chairs, tables, gumboots, plastic sheets, sanitary materials and stationery.

33. From 19 April to 20 September, United Nations police conducted 1,259 community interactive patrols to mobilize members of the public to participate in peacebuilding initiatives. These include 1,048 joint patrols, 200 independent security observation patrols and 11 air reconnaissance patrols in tandem with military observers and national monitors from the Sudan and South Sudan.

34. UNISFA corrections officers conducted 498 visits to detention facilities throughout Abyei to provide advice on best practices for detention handling. In addition, 4,343 activities relating to law and order were conducted, including 301 awareness-related activities focusing on crime prevention and reduction, road safety and sexual and gender-based violence.

35. Access to justice remained challenging owing to the lack of a unified criminal justice system. Notwithstanding the presence of a statutory court recognized by the Juba-appointed administration in southern Abyei, justice delivery throughout Abyei has depended heavily on traditional courts, which lack the capacity to address serious crimes. Following the resumption of the joint protection committees in May 2023, the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities agreed to reinstitute the practice of “blood money compensation” to settle criminal disputes involving the two communities. The lack of a justice mechanism that can hold perpetrators individually accountable remains a challenge.

Human rights situation

36. The human rights situation remains fragile, with persisting strained intercommunal relations between the communities. During the reporting period, UNISFA activities in the area of human rights included advocacy, awareness-raising campaigns and engagements with various stakeholders.

37. UNISFA conducted nine basic human rights awareness training sessions in various locations benefiting community protection committees and women

representatives. During the training, the importance of including women and young people in human rights-related activities was stressed.

38. Between April and August, UNISFA conducted 90 activities to raise awareness of the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of the rights of women and children, with 1,831 beneficiaries (387 men, 461 women, 557 boys and 426 girls). During the period, United Nations police also conducted an awareness-raising campaign for the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence for 60 pupils in three schools, including 30 girls. The UNISFA gender desk continued to operate as a referral pathway to address the concerns of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the Abyei Area, in particular for women and girls at the highest risk.

39. Between April and August, four human rights violations were recorded in Agok, in which four individuals were improperly detained. United Nations police intervened by transferring them to the Abyei main community protection committee. UNISFA continued to monitor alleged human rights violations of inmates in three detention facilities operated by the community protection committees. UNISFA corrections officers conducted 498 visits to the three detention centres. Of the 624 people in detention, 125 allegedly committed petty crimes. UNISFA intervened to ensure that those detainees were released in line with minimum standards. UNISFA also interceded in one case of an underage child detained with their mother. UNISFA also established a referral system to a local hospital for ailing detainees.

40. From mid-April onwards, displaced populations continued to arrive into Abyei from the Sudan. Amid reports of harassment, sexual and gender-based violence and illegal taxation of displaced persons arriving from the Sudan, UNISFA embarked on an awareness-raising campaign for the community protection committees and communities on the universality of human rights.

Humanitarian situation

41. The influx of South Sudanese returnees, displaced Sudanese and third-country nationals fleeing the crisis in the Sudan continued to affect Abyei. The disruption of economic activities in the Sudan, from where many basic goods and commodities come to the area, posed another serious challenge. In May 2023, IOM established a flow monitoring point at Amiet market to record and track new arrivals. As at 19 September, an estimated 9,331 arrivals were recorded to have entered Abyei from the Sudan, passing through Amiet, while 867 entered through the Agok airstrip. Several thousand Abyei-bound returnees are unable to leave Renk owing to funding constraints. The World Food Programme provided three months' worth of food assistance to approximately 7,000 displaced persons who had arrived in Abyei fleeing the Sudan crisis. In addition, approximately 1,000 asylum-seekers and third-country nationals were provided with seven days' worth of cash assistance.

42. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provided 1,500 households with main season seeds and tools for farming. A vulnerability assessment by humanitarian partners revealed that 546 of the targeted 1,929 South Sudanese returnees and host community households were extremely vulnerable, some of whom received shelter and non-food items from IOM. As at 6 September, IOM health teams at Amiet market had provided primary health services to 1,987 new arrivals, referred 322 severe cases to higher level health facilities and 195 malnourished children to nutrition centres run by partners. IOM also provided an expanded programme on immunization services and delivered coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines to the new arrivals, including refugees in the transit centre. Between 8 June and 6 September, IOM provided psychosocial support services to 2,887 arrivals, including 1,957 adults (848 men and 1,109 women) and 930 children (502 boys and 428 girls).

43. UNISFA also reported a significant influx of refugees from third countries into Abyei. As of August, approximately 1,538 third-country nationals and Sudanese asylum-seekers had arrived at the transit centre in Abyei. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees transported most of those third-country nationals and Sudanese asylum-seekers to Aweil and Jamjang, while 600 mostly Eritrean individuals opted to remain in Abyei.

44. As of August, 6 United Nations agencies and 16 national and international non-governmental organizations had provided humanitarian assistance to a cumulative total of approximately 220,000 vulnerable people in central and southern Abyei, an increase of some 8,000 people compared with the previous reporting period, composed primarily of those who fled the violence in the Sudan into Abyei. Malaria cases increased in Abyei, with humanitarian partners having pre-positioned supplies to provide assistance. Health partners pre-positioned drugs and screened children at the entry points following reported measles cases among the returnees in the neighbouring areas. Access to basic services continued to be affected by limited or non-existent service provision by local authorities, including in the areas of public health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, protection, and farming and livestock technical assistance. Of the 36 health facilities in southern and central Abyei, only 16 are operational, with limited capacity and insufficient resources. UNISFA Sector North provided relief support in coordination with IOM Sudan. UNISFA continued its close coordination with the United Nations country teams of the Sudan and of South Sudan to identify ways to enhance the presence of the United Nations in the areas where the needs are most dire as a result of the violence in the Sudan.

Women and peace and security

45. UNISFA engaged traditional and local authorities, women's networks and civil society on issues relating to women and peace and security. Priority was given to promoting the participation of women in conflict management structures and advocating the inclusion of women in the local administration. In the 31 May new Cabinet of the Juba-appointed administration in Abyei, women were assigned two of eight ministerial positions.

46. UNISFA held nine meetings with 117 women across various sectors between April and August and facilitated three monthly joint women's peace committee meetings. At those meetings, women raised concerns about gender-related threats having an impact on their livelihood. In addressing those concerns, UNISFA conducted more than 1,781 gender-responsive patrols targeting 1,623 men, 1,878 women and 1,125 children. In addition, 40 women were included in the early warning system network. Engagement in northern Abyei remained challenging owing in part to the absence of a well-organized women's network.

47. A total of 24 cases of physical violence against women were reported, of which 16 were domestic violence cases. There were 59 sexual and gender-based violence cases registered and investigated by the community protection committees and the joint protection committees, including 1 kidnapping, 2 rapes, 1 attempted rape, 11 physical assaults and 17 domestic violence cases. UNISFA conducted 341 community awareness-raising sessions and training sessions for 30 gender focal persons on women's rights and the handling of gender-based violence cases.

48. UNISFA continued to strengthen the capacity of uniformed and civilian personnel to integrate gender perspectives into all areas of their work. On 12 May, UNISFA established an internal gender focal point system to enhance coordination and integrated response to the protection needs of women in the Abyei Area. On 22 June, UNISFA launched a United Nations police women's network as a forum to

share experiences, raise awareness of gender mainstreaming in peace operations and promote the implementation of the women and peace and security mandate in the mission and among the host communities in the Abyei Area.

Youth and peace and security

49. UNISFA continued to engage young people on programmes designed to combat disenfranchisement and youth involvement in conflict and armed groups. On 13 August, UNISFA launched a two-week plan of activities to commemorate International Youth Day, including seminars on trauma and reconciliation, the environment, human rights, gender equality, early warning, sporting and cultural activities, and forums with traditional leaders on peacebuilding mechanisms.

50. Recognizing the importance of applying a gender lens in youth and peace and security, a symposium that saw calls for the participation of young women at all levels to influence decision-making was organized on 13 August with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare of the Juba-appointed administration of Abyei. Approximately 18 women and 33 men participated. In northern Abyei, UNISFA continued to encourage the participation of young people in peace processes. An event on youth and peace and security was organized in Diffra on 22 and 23 August to celebrate International Youth Day. The activity attracted 35 youth leaders, 10 of whom were women.

Operations of the Mine Action Service

51. The conflict in the Sudan hindered the full deployment of Mine Action Service personnel within the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli, the Sudan, and its two team sites, with international staff relocated to Abyei on 3 and 4 May.

52. During the reporting period, no movements or deployments by UNISFA, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, humanitarian or civilians were interrupted or cancelled owing to landmines or explosive remnants of war. The Mine Action Service assessed approximately 767,819 m² of land and 45 km of routes in the Abyei Area as safe for use by UNISFA, humanitarian actors and the local population. The land assessed included UNISFA temporary operating bases and patrol routes, as well as an area in the vicinity of Abyei that was planned for a new displaced persons site and two areas north-west of Abyei, Koladit and Makir that were suspected to be contaminated with landmines. All explosive remnants of war and landmines recovered during clearance activities were destroyed in controlled demolitions.

53. The Mine Action Service continued to support UNISFA in destroying confiscated weapons and ammunition, with 28 assault weapons and 534 rounds of ammunition destroyed during the reporting period.

54. The Mine Action Service continued to deliver explosive ordnance risk education, with 261 sessions delivered to 1,983 people in the Abyei Area, including 540 men, 484 women, 557 boys and 402 girls. Community members were given customized educational materials to raise awareness of the danger of explosive remnants of war, including through drama skits delivered to 6,259 children. In addition, 18 safety training sessions were delivered to 603 United Nations personnel and humanitarian actors, of whom 163 were women.

55. The Mine Action Service has continued to provide and maintain 16 mine-protected vehicles for UNISFA peacekeepers under a right-of-use agreement extended to 30 October, pending the expected arrival of contingent-owned equipment. The Mine Action Service has continued to support the UNISFA Integrated Force Mobility

Team directly, whose deployment model is derived directly from the Mine Action Service's self-sufficient clearance team deployment concept.

Abyei joint programme of the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan

56. Implementation of peacebuilding programmes through the Abyei joint programme of the United Nations country teams in the Sudan and South Sudan continued, albeit with challenges due to the ongoing crisis in the Sudan.

57. In April, the World Food Programme established a nutrition screening and support service at Amiet market, which provides nutrition assistance to populations at risk of malnutrition through specialized nutritious commodities to moderately malnourished children under the age of five, and to pregnant and lactating women. In addition to reaching 800 women and children, IOM also provided nutrition screening and life-saving food assistance to more than 7,000 displaced persons who had arrived from the Sudan.

58. Since April 2023, IOM has supported the provision of immunization services against epidemic-prone diseases through the Abyei joint programme for both the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities, benefiting 650 people. Locations covered under this support include the Abyei civil hospital, the Ameth-bek general hospital and primary health care in Amiet, Dokura/Rumajak and Wunrok. During the reporting period, IOM also provided vocational training for 120 young people in Abyei town to enhance their ability to self-employ and contribute to the local economy.

59. On 24 August in Abyei town, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched its Abyei joint programme activities, focused on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. Those activities were undertaken through its implementing partner, the African Christian Ecumenical Alliance, focusing on conflict-sensitive and informed provision of basic services. From July to September, 3,158 beneficiaries were reached in Abyei town, Rumamer and Mijak. In August and September, UNFPA also supported awareness-raising sessions on child marriage and gender-based violence, reaching more than 80 community members in Abyei town. In addition, construction of a women- and girls-friendly space (a place designed to support women and girls through processes of empowerment to seek, share and obtain information, have access to gender-based violence services, express themselves and enhance psychosocial well-being) started in July in Mul-Mul. UNFPA distributed 200 dignity kits to vulnerable women and girls in Mul-Mul in August and September. On 7 August, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in South Sudan deployed one staff member to Diffra who started implementation of the initial phase of UNDP activities under the Abyei joint programme. In September, UNDP Sudan began to conduct community consultations on the joint programme, with the first session conducted on 20 September attracting 129 community members, including 88 women.

60. Owing to the conflict in the Sudan, the deployment of United Nations staff and the delivery of supplies through the joint programme experienced significant challenges and delays. While UNFPA, IOM and UNDP are present in the northern part of Abyei, on 6 September UNFPA Sudan commenced the implementation of its health project aimed at providing protection and health services in northern Abyei through its local partner Global Aid Hand. IOM has also started the procurement of medical supplies to support health services in Diffra.

III. Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism: progress on benchmarks

61. The implementation of the mandate of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism was affected significantly by the deterioration in the overall security situation as a result of the conflict in the Sudan. The outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces led to the closure of Sudanese airspace, which made aerial patrols impossible for the Mechanism's bases in the Sudan. Movements by air were restricted to resupply and movement of personnel on the basis of special clearances granted on a case-by-case basis. Ground monitoring missions at the team sites were also limited to accessible routes owing to mobility challenges during the rainy season. As a result, and after careful preparations, UNISFA conducted road convoys to move personnel and supplies such as fuel and rations from Abyei to the Mechanism's headquarters in Kadugli, with the first such convoy on 29 June. The Sudanese and South Sudanese national monitors remained crucial sources of information because they regularly assessed conditions for the conduct of Mechanism operations.

62. The security situation in the Kadugli area was affected primarily by clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu). After SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu captured four Sudanese Armed Forces positions south and south-east of Kadugli on 7 June, UNISFA evacuated all internationally recruited United Nations staff to Abyei and Entebbe, Uganda, on the basis of a recommendation of the Department of Safety and Security. Other UNISFA personnel, including peacekeepers, military staff officers and military observers, remained in Kadugli. Some United Nations national staff members self-relocated with their dependents to other locations in the Sudan.

63. The presence of armed activity on the north and north-west borders of Southern Kordofan has led to multiple checkpoints and insecurity along the main supply route from El Obeid, the Sudan, to Kadugli. Various segments of the main supply route between El Obeid and Kadugli remain under the control of various armed groups, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North and armed criminals that have set up checkpoints between El Obeid and Kadugli. However, the Sudanese Armed Forces continue to control El Obeid. By 19 September, armed actors around Kadugli had blocked the routes out of the city southwards and northwards. The blockages created food, fuel and other supply shortages and significantly increased the cost of commodities in the Kadugli area, and the electricity supply was also disrupted.

64. On 10 August, a UNISFA helicopter flying with troops from the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli to team site 22 (Abu Qussa/Wunkur) was fired at with anti-aircraft artillery by suspected SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu elements between Kadugli town and Hamran village to the south-east. The flight was consequently aborted, and the helicopter returned safely to Abyei. Three days after the incident, SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu attacked Kadugli, and the Sudanese Armed Forces repelled the attack.

65. The Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism team sites 21 (Tishwin) and 22 (Abu Qussa/Wunkur) remained relatively calm. Patrols were organized on selected routes, given that road conditions during the rainy season made some areas inaccessible. Armed South Sudanese and unarmed Sudanese police forces remained deployed within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone around Tishwin, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) remained present at Fanikan village, near Abu

Qussa/Wunkur. Infighting within factions of the SPLA-IO continued to create security challenges in the area. On 1 July, a group of approximately 70 SPLA-IO soldiers representing one faction visited Fanikan village for peace talks with another. Fighting broke out and seven members of the visiting faction were killed. The Mechanism continued to monitor the situation, in particular against possible retaliatory attacks.

66. In May, UNISFA engaged the Director General of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism of South Sudan, and the Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs of South Sudan with regard to the reopening of Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism Sector 1 at Gok Machar, South Sudan, and its two team sites, which have remained closed since 2021. UNISFA continues to review available options in conjunction with South Sudanese national monitors and other partners. Given that the crisis in the Sudan has led to some security gaps along the border area with South Sudan, the need to monitor the area and, therefore, reoperationalize the Sector has become increasingly pressing.

67. There were no significant activities within the reporting period on the issue of border demarcation and border crossing corridors. The oil ministries, the Joint Border Commission and the Joint Security Committee have yet to form a joint committee to develop a proposal for resolving disputes relating to the Al Nar oilfield. Border-crossing corridors between the Sudan and South Sudan were open to returnees and other displaced persons fleeing the conflict in the Sudan.

IV. Administrative aspects and mission support

68. As at 30 September, the number of civilian staff in UNISFA stood at 287, including 171 international staff, 31 United Nations Volunteers and 85 national staff, against an authorized total of 190 international staff, 38 United Nations Volunteers and 94 national staff. Women accounted for 24 per cent of the civilian component.

69. In line with the directive of the Secretary-General and guided by the mission's gender implementation plan and its workplan for 2021–2023, which focused on increasing the recruitment and retention of female staff, nearly 44 per cent of staff in senior positions are now female. The mission also continued to make progress in the recruitment of women in national staff positions.

70. As at 30 September, UNISFA had 3,071 total military personnel, comprising 284 women and 2,823 men, 2,827 troops, 122 staff officers and 122 military observers. Included in the figures, the Joint Border Verification Monitoring Mechanism accounted for 527 military personnel, comprising 28 women and 499 men (488 troops, 14 staff officers and 25 military observers). Women represented 8.1 per cent of all military personnel.

71. By 4 September, United Nations police strength stood at 37 individual police officers, of whom 17 were women. Between 20 and 25 July, the Government of South Sudan approved visas for eight individual police officers, the Chief of Operations and one expert from the standing police capacity. The mission maintained 50 individual police officers for whom the Government of the Sudan has provided visas to date. Efforts to secure the agreement of Sudanese authorities to increase the number of individual police officers to 148, as authorized by the Security Council, are ongoing. No progress has been made regarding the deployment of the three formed police units that are authorized by the Council and that are needed to respond to increased needs in Abyei relating to the influx of displaced persons from the Sudan.

72. The mission constructed a female engagement team compound at the Pakistani battalion's headquarters at Todach Camp to enable the incoming unit to deploy female personnel and accommodate them appropriately. Construction works for three smart camps, at Athony, Agok and Highway, commenced during the reporting period. The smart camp at Doukra, the construction of which commenced approximately 18 months ago, was completed during the reporting period. The United Nations smart camp initiative includes the replacement of camp infrastructure, incorporating the principles of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. Technology was integrated with newly constructed infrastructure to reduce labour-intensive tasks through automation, benchmark resilience of resources, measuring consumption and reporting on the performance of critical equipment through the United field remote infrastructure monitoring dashboard.

73. The conflict in the Sudan has closed the main supply route from the north. Cargo, including contingent-owned equipment in Port Sudan, has been successfully rerouted through Mombasa, Kenya, and Wau, South Sudan. With rations and fuel resupply abruptly interrupted by the conflict, the mission, with assistance from the Department of Operational Support and UNMISS, re-established the resupply of all cargo through the southern main supply route. This has been achieved through the use of heavy engineering capacity by the mission's Integrated Force Mobility Team, making this the first rainy season on record when the main supply route did not close. This has also benefited humanitarian operations because it has permitted the continued transport of food and humanitarian supplies into Abyei.

Culture of performance

74. UNISFA continued to improve the use of the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System through training on the leveraging of the capacity of the Joint Mission Analysis Centre. Following the implementation of the early warning system, the mission continued to explore innovative technology aligned with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere to enhance its effectiveness and operability. In May, an after-action review on wet season operations was conducted, leading to the issuance of orders to guide and enhance military operations during future wet seasons.

Conduct and discipline

75. During the reporting period, there were no allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Conduct and Discipline Section expanded awareness-raising by training 163 military personnel, including 6 women. Induction training was also delivered to 7 civilians, 33 military staff officers and military observers, 12 police personnel and 17 military contingent personnel, including 14 women. Refresher sessions were delivered to 30 military contingent personnel, including 6 women. The Section continued to advance the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse network and the roll-out of the prevention of the sexual exploitation and abuse simulation exercise for all civilian and uniformed personnel. From 31 July to 3 August, the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse visited Abyei to provide guidance on and promote the mainstreaming of the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse within all United Nations entities.

Public information

76. The Strategic Communication and Public Information Section continued to explore ways to combat disinformation, misinformation and hate speech in the Abyei Area. On 12 July, an Internet radio facility was launched to boost support for the

peace process and the implementation of the mission's mandate. UNISFA also joined forces with youth theatre groups to roll out programmes to give visibility to the work of UNISFA. Efforts to respond to misinformation and disinformation promptly and appropriately continue to be made, including through the integrated cyberspace response platform and by launching the "UNISFA Silver Screen" initiative, in which messages are passed to local audiences during film screenings.

V. Financial aspects

77. The General Assembly, by its resolution [77/290](#) B, appropriated the amount of \$287.2 million for the maintenance of UNISFA for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

78. As at 7 September 2023, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNISFA amounted to \$197.3 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$4,456.3 million.

79. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 March 2023 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule, and reimbursement for contingent-owned major equipment and self-sustainment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2022.

VI. Observations and recommendations

80. I remain concerned about the implications for Abyei of the prolonged fighting in the Sudan, including its potential to exacerbate intercommunal tensions. The conflict continues to block political progress towards a resolution of the final status of Abyei and border issues. The United Nations remains ready to accompany the parties in an inclusive political process when conditions allow for its resumption, working closely with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

81. The continued presence of South Sudanese and Sudanese security forces in Abyei, in violation of the area's demilitarized status, is concerning. I am also concerned about the occupation of schools and community protection committee facilities by South Sudanese forces in southern Abyei, which negatively affects the communities and hinders the work of UNISFA. I recall the 2011 Agreement and the request of the Security Council that the Abyei Area be demilitarized in full, which has yet to be achieved.

82. I welcome the continued efforts of the Government of South Sudan to address the conflict between the Ngok Dinka and the Twic Dinka communities in southern Abyei and Warrap State, South Sudan, and am pleased that the reporting period saw a reduction in violence. However, tensions between the two communities continue to be a cause for concern, and UNISFA is committed to continuing to support the peace initiative between the two communities.

83. I strongly condemn the continued fighting and targeting of civilians and UNISFA peacekeepers. The safety and security of peacekeepers is a top priority, and I call upon the relevant authorities, consistent with their obligations under the status-of-forces agreement, to investigate the attacks promptly and hold those responsible to account.

84. I remain concerned about the proliferation of arms in Abyei. I call upon all stakeholders, including the local authorities and communities, to strengthen

collaboration with UNISFA by supporting and participating in early warning mechanisms.

85. I call upon the representatives of the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities to build on the positive engagement demonstrated in June during the transhumance corridors conference in Noong to work towards peaceful cohabitation, in particular during the period of transhumance, and ensure the meaningful participation of women in the peace process.

86. The efforts of the United Nations police to mentor and build the capacities of the community protection committees and joint protection committees continue to be highly valuable in promoting the rule of law inside Abyei. However, I reiterate the need for the establishment of the Abyei Police Service to address many of the perennial rule of law challenges in the Abyei Area until the parties agree on its final status. UNISFA capacity also continues to be stretched owing to the continued absence of progress in the deployment of the fully mandated level of individual police officers and the three formed police units, in line with successive Security Council resolutions. I urge the parties to allow for their deployment, in particular when the environment in Abyei is affected by the continued flow of displaced persons from the Sudan.

87. I urge the parties to the conflict in the Sudan to facilitate the safe resupply of and freedom of movement for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism headquarters in Kadugli and the two team sites and to provide safe passage for all Mechanism and UNISFA personnel as they rotate in and out of the area. It is critical that they, as well as all United Nations national staff remaining in Kadugli, continue to operate in safe and secure conditions.

88. I thank the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNISFA, Major General Benjamin Olufemi Sawyerr, the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, and all UNISFA personnel, as well as United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Abyei, for their tireless efforts to maintain peace and security in support of the people of Abyei under challenging conditions.

