

## Thematic issues

### 23. United Nations peacekeeping operations

During the period under review, the Council did not hold any meetings in connection with the item entitled “United Nations peacekeeping operations”, but did, however, hold six open videoconferences in connection with the item. More information on the videoconferences is given in the table below. In addition, the Council adopted resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#) on the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers and resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#) on the role of women in peacekeeping. The resolutions were announced in open videoconferences in accordance with the procedures established following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>639</sup>

In 2020, Council members discussed the role of human rights in United Nations peacekeeping operations and held their annual briefing on peacekeeping reform and meetings with selected force commanders and police commissioners. Council members were briefed twice by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and once each by the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, the force commanders of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the police commissioners of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and MINUSMA, as well as by the representative of a non-governmental organization from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On 30 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#), by which it underscored the importance of ensuring that missions evolve their capacities and systems to remain agile and effective in implementing their mandates in specific operating contexts to enhance safety and security and mission protection, including through the provision of adequate medical facilities and critical capabilities.<sup>640</sup> In that regard, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to take all appropriate measures to strengthen,

where necessary, the situational awareness of missions through measures to improve their information acquisition and analysis capacities.<sup>641</sup> The Council called for measures to enhance operational health support and ensure adequate medical facilities and the deployment of qualified personnel.<sup>642</sup> The Council requested the Secretary-General to review and ensure uniformity of United Nations standards on training and performance and called on the United Nations to further operationalize the light coordination mechanism to facilitate and further coordinate improved training and capacity-building activities between Member States.<sup>643</sup> Moreover, countries contributing troops and police and field missions were encouraged to support field-focused, reliable and cost-effective new technologies.<sup>644</sup> The resolution also called on Member States and the United Nations to ensure safe, enabling and gender-sensitive work environments for women in peacekeeping operations and to address threats and violence against them.<sup>645</sup>

On 4 June, in the context of an open videoconference,<sup>646</sup> Council members held the annual briefing with selected force commanders of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Opening the videoconference, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations stated that peacekeeping operations, including their military components, had shown their capacity to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic by protecting their personnel and capacity to conduct critical operations, containing and mitigating the spread of the virus, supporting national authorities in their responses and protecting vulnerable communities. In the light of the pandemic, the Secretariat had reprioritized activities on strengthening peacekeeping as part of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative to ensure a focus on specific objectives that could be delivered within the following few months.

In addition to addressing the main challenges in their respective theatres of operation, the Force Commanders of MINUSMA and UNMISS and the Deputy Force Commander of UNDOF focused their remarks on the steps their missions had taken to

<sup>639</sup> For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

<sup>640</sup> Resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#), para. 4.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 5.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 9.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 10 and 12.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 6.

<sup>646</sup> See [S/2020/514](#).

prevent the spread of the pandemic and ensure the continuity of mandate operations. The Force Commander of MINUSMA noted that the Mission's military component had implemented a strict quarantine policy, strict prioritizations of air operations and specific instructions for patrols to limit interactions with the population. Notwithstanding these measures, he said he had made it clear that it was not the time for the force to take a step back. Instead, he said that the Mission would continue to focus on the core priorities of the mandate and, at the same time, set conditions for adaptation, focusing on finding a proper balance among ends, ways and means. He also noted that the Mission had made a great deal of improvement in providing its peacekeepers with safety and security, and that there had been far fewer fatalities compared with the previous year. The Force Commander of UNMISS briefed Council members on the readjustment of the Mission's military component with a reduction in the number of troops conducting static protection duties at camps for the protection of civilians and their redeployment in conflict zones. The Deputy Force Commander of UNDOF informed Council members of plans and efforts to resume military inspections of the Alpha and Bravo sides of the ceasefire line. As key operational challenges, she noted ongoing violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces and a deteriorating security situation in the Dar'a Governorate in the Syrian Arab Republic with a shift of security incidents closer to the Force's area of operations.

On 7 July, at the initiative of Germany,<sup>647</sup> Council members held an open videoconference<sup>648</sup> on peace operations and human rights chaired by the Federal Minister of Defence of Germany. Briefing Council members, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights shared the view that human rights were central to the mandate of the Council to maintain international peace and security. Six peacekeeping operations and six special political missions had human rights components that contributed to the overall mission objectives to support political and peace processes. In that regard, the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights was an important element in ensuring that human rights served as a shared, effective basis of the United Nations system and in reinforcing collective engagement, contribution and the responsibility of all components of peace operations in advancing human rights.

<sup>647</sup> The Council had before it a concept note annexed to a letter dated 26 June 2020 (S/2020/604).

<sup>648</sup> See S/2020/674.

The High Commissioner highlighted examples of the work and achievements of human rights components in peace operations, including on monitoring and reporting, conflict prevention and the protection of civilians, supporting accountability mechanisms, capacity-building and the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. Moreover, she stated that grounding regional operations in respect for human rights was crucial to their success and noted that her Office was supporting the development of a compliance framework for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. The High Commissioner concluded by underlining that human rights components required resources and the strong political support of Council members to bind all peace operations around a common effective approach to crisis, from prevention to recovery.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of UNMISS stated that human rights was a core business of the Mission, as it was central both to peace and security and to the protection of civilians. UNMISS had structured its approach to human rights work into three broad streams, namely, documentation and holding abusers to account through definitive reporting and rapid investigation, ending impunity and ensuring accountability by capacity-building through mobile courts and strengthening the police and the judicial system, and engagement with the Government through action plans with national military and police forces and the forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition to create the conditions within those forces for the respect of human rights. Describing the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the President of Groupe LOTUS and Honorary Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights noted the cooperation between the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office within the United Nations Stabilization Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and civil society organizations on information gathering and training, the provision of technical, logistical and security support and advocacy and awareness-raising during the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasized the importance of strengthening political dialogue with the authorities at the national and local levels, of protecting civilians and of providing resources for the activities of the Joint Human Rights Office. He also called for strengthening the presence of MONUSCO throughout the country and for more engagement between civil society and the Mission in future assessments and exit strategy planning efforts.

Council members and other Member States emphasized the important role of human rights in the achievement of the overall objectives of United Nations peacekeeping operations. As key elements for the effective implementation of human rights mandates, Council members and other Member States cited the need for peacekeeping mandates to be clear and achievable, for adequate resources, expertise and training and for the increased deployment of women and their meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making. Several of the statements also underlined the importance of preventing and ensuring the accountability of peacekeepers for human rights violations, including sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>649</sup> Some speakers expressed regret that the topic of human rights had been politicized.<sup>650</sup> The representatives of China and the Russian Federation stressed that human rights were auxiliary to the main objectives of peace operations, namely to support the political settlement of hotspot issues and to promote reconciliation and peacebuilding.<sup>651</sup> Some Council members also maintained that human rights mandates should be undertaken in a context-specific manner, taking into account the specific situation of the country and the mandate, as well as local customs and values.<sup>652</sup> Several speakers called for respect for the basic principles of peacekeeping in the context of human rights, including sovereignty and national ownership of human rights processes.<sup>653</sup> Some also highlighted the need for closer cooperation with host States, particularly on human rights capacity-building efforts.<sup>654</sup>

On 28 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#), by which it called upon Member States, the Secretariat and regional organizations to strengthen their collective efforts to promote the full, effective and meaningful participation of uniformed and civilian women in peacekeeping operations at all levels and in all positions, including in senior leadership.<sup>655</sup> The resolution requested Member States to implement a number of strategies and measures for this purpose, including: (a) disseminating

information and providing access to deployment opportunities; (b) providing access to training; (c) developing a national database of trained women personnel; (d) identifying and addressing barriers in the recruitment, deployment and promotion of women peacekeepers; (e) considering ways, as appropriate, to increase the participation of women in national militaries and police; (f) supporting the capacities of regional organizations in training; and (g) taking measures to provide support and incentives, including childcare and other relevant needs.<sup>656</sup> Furthermore, the Council called upon Member States and the Secretariat to ensure safe, enabling and gender-sensitive working environments for women in peacekeeping operations and urged them, where appropriate, to provide adequate and appropriate infrastructure and facilities for women in the missions.<sup>657</sup> The Council also urged peacekeeping operations to promote full, effective and meaningful participation of women in all components and functions and at all levels at headquarters and in the field, including through the establishment of mixed engagement teams.<sup>658</sup>

On 14 September, at an open videoconference,<sup>659</sup> the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations provided his annual briefing to Council members, pursuant to resolution [2378 \(2017\)](#), on efforts to strengthen peacekeeping as part of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. He stated that the challenging circumstances related to COVID-19 had not impeded peacekeeping missions from providing effective support to political processes and the implementation of peace agreements. He also expressed encouragement over the progress made on the women and peace and security agenda, which had been enabled by a greater focus on data-driven tracking, and noted the expansion of political space for women's participation and leadership in peace and political processes across peacekeeping contexts. He observed that although the pandemic had affected the footprint of missions and restricted some patrolling, missions had taken creative steps to continue their protection work. More broadly, across the four large multidimensional missions, major force transformation processes had been conducted to shift mission postures and presence so as to strengthen strategic flexibility and operational adaptation. Progress had also been made in improving mission performance with the roll-out of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System and the finalization of the integrated peacekeeping performance and accountability framework. Measures had been taken to

<sup>649</sup> China, Estonia, France, Viet Nam, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Nepal and Peru.

<sup>650</sup> Russian Federation, South Africa and Sri Lanka.

<sup>651</sup> China and Russian Federation.

<sup>652</sup> China, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and India.

<sup>653</sup> China, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Viet Nam.

<sup>654</sup> Indonesia, United Kingdom, France, Tunisia and Morocco.

<sup>655</sup> Resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#), para. 1. The resolution was sponsored by all Council members. For more information on sponsorship of resolutions, see part II, sect. IX.B.

<sup>656</sup> Resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#), para. 2.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 6.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 12.

<sup>659</sup> See [S/2020/911](#).

ensure the operational readiness, including in terms of COVID-19 preparedness, of military and police units, increase representation of women both at Headquarters and in missions, strengthen the safety and security of personnel and strengthen partnerships with regional organizations and countries contributing troops and police.

Looking ahead, the Under-Secretary-General stated that, two years after the launch of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, the Secretariat had developed strategic priorities for the next phase of its implementation. In that regard, it was necessary, *inter alia*, to link all peacekeeping actions to overarching political strategies that furthered positive peace, ensured more substantive and strategic integration with development and peacebuilding actors, further enhanced performance and accountability and implemented the United Nations action plan for improving the security of United Nations peacekeeping. He also addressed the need to apply a gender perspective across all areas of work. In their remarks, Council members welcomed the progress made on peacekeeping reform and recognized the challenges and versatility of peacekeeping operations in adapting their work to the pandemic. Council members stressed the importance of continuing to strengthen performance and accountability frameworks. Discussions also addressed the need for sufficient resources and capacities, including training and equipment, further improvements on safety and security, strengthening cooperation with countries contributing troops and police and regional organizations and to increase the number of women personnel.

On 4 November, Council members held the annual meeting with police commissioners in an open videoconference.<sup>660</sup> In his opening remarks, the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions provided an overview and examples of the work of police components in peace operations concerning partnerships with regional organizations, the protection of civilians, the implementation of performance evaluation standards and training, gender-responsive policing and enhancing women's participation and reinforcing the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Police Commissioner of BINUH highlighted the capacity-building work of the Mission's police component in support of the Haitian National Police to improve labour relations, achieve gender equality and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. The Police Commissioner of UNMISS stated that, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mission's police component had reduced its footprint inside protection of civilians sites, but had continued to respond to security situations and provide technical support to the South Sudan National Police Service and had also conducted sensitization activities on COVID-19. The police component was also playing a key role in the redesignation of protection of civilians sites to internally displaced persons camps.

The Police Commissioner of MINUSCA underlined that, to further improve the performance of the United Nations police, it was necessary to provide them with "attention, space and breathing room". In that regard, he noted the accomplishments of the Mission's police component, *inter alia*, in the use of community policing to improve the security situation in the PK5 district of Bangui, support elections and maintain resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Police Commissioner of MINUSMA underscored the important contribution of police components in the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and to the success of exit strategies, as well as their supporting role in political processes and conflict resolution. In their remarks, Council members addressed various aspects of the function of police components, including their role in protecting civilians, the need to allocate sufficient and sustainable financial, operational and human resources and the need to further improve their performance and accountability. Several Council members called for gender-responsive policing and for the equal participation of women in police components. The representative of Tunisia, speaking on behalf of the African members of the Council and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council a report on developments regarding United Nations policing in 2021, as the last report on United Nations policing had been issued in 2018.

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<sup>660</sup> See [S/2020/1092](#).

**Videoconferences: United Nations peacekeeping operations**

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
30 March 2020 <sup>a</sup>	<a href="#">S/2020/268</a>	Letter dated 31 March 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	Resolution <a href="#">2518 (2020)</a> 15-0-0 <a href="#">S/2020/249</a>
4 June 2020	<a href="#">S/2020/514</a>	Letter dated 8 June 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
7 July 2020	<a href="#">S/2020/674</a>	Letter dated 9 July 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
28 August 2020	<a href="#">S/2020/856</a>	Letter dated 28 August 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	Resolution <a href="#">2538 (2020)</a> 15-0-0 <a href="#">S/2020/851</a>
14 September 2020	<a href="#">S/2020/911</a>	Letter dated 16 September 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
4 November 2020	<a href="#">S/2020/1092</a>	Letter dated 6 November 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	

<sup>a</sup> Owing to technical difficulties, instead of an open videoconference to announce the vote on resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#) the videoconference was closed. For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

## 24. International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

In 2020, the Council held one meeting for the issuance of a presidential statement related to the work of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.<sup>661</sup> More information on the meeting, including on the participants and outcome, is provided in table 1 below. Council members also held a total of three open videoconferences and adopted one resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter in connection with the item. The resolution was announced in an open videoconference in accordance with the procedures developed during the

COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>662</sup> More information on the videoconferences is given in table 2 below.

On 28 February, the Council issued a presidential statement by which it recalled that the Mechanism should be a small, temporary and efficient structure, whose functions and size would diminish over time.<sup>663</sup> It also recalled its decision that the Mechanism should operate for an initial period of four years starting from 1 July 2012 and its further decision that the Mechanism should continue to operate for subsequent periods of two

<sup>661</sup> For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II; on the International Residual Mechanism for International Tribunals, see *Repertoire, Supplement 2018*; and on the matters considered under the item, see *Repertoire, Supplement 1996–1999 to 2004–2007*.

<sup>662</sup> For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

<sup>663</sup> [S/PRST/2020/4](#), second paragraph.