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Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2685 \(2023\)](#), by which the Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) until 3 December 2023 and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on its implementation. The report covers developments in the Sudan from 7 May to 20 August 2023 and contains an update on the implementation of the Mission's mandate, with gender considerations integrated throughout as a cross-cutting issue.

II. Significant developments

A. Political situation

2. The situation in the Sudan deteriorated markedly due to the continued fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces since 15 April. Khartoum and the adjacent cities of Omdurman and Bahri remained the epicentre of the violence. The Rapid Support Forces controlled most of the capital and Darfur, except for parts of El Fasher and Nyala, while the Sudanese Armed Forces remained in control of the northern and eastern parts of the country and most of the "Two Areas" of South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. Clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu) and the Sudanese Armed Forces in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States further destabilized the Sudan. Regional and international diplomatic initiatives did not succeed in halting the fighting, as both sides remained intent on achieving a military victory.

3. In May, the Chairperson of the Sovereign Council and Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Abdel-Fattah Al-Burhan, dismissed senior officials, military officers and ambassadors suspected of supporting the Rapid Support Forces and froze their bank accounts. He also terminated the assignment of civil servants seconded to the Rapid Support Forces. On 19 May, Lieutenant General Al-Burhan issued a decree dismissing the head of the Rapid Support Forces,



Lieutenant General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, from his position as the Deputy Chairperson of the Sovereign Council. He was replaced by Malik Agar, a member of the Sovereign Council who leads the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar faction. Lieutenant General Al-Burhan also appointed Lieutenant General Shams El-Din Kabbashi, a member of the Sovereign Council, as Deputy Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces, and two other military members of the Sovereign Council, Lieutenant Generals Yasser Atta and Ibrahim Jaber, as Assistant Commanders.

4. In an audio recording on 20 June, Lieutenant General Dagalo framed the actions of the Rapid Support Forces as aimed at removing the former regime, while asserting that “the war will serve as a bridge to achieve the goals of the revolution”. On 28 July, the Rapid Support Forces posted a video of Lieutenant General Dagalo claiming that the war could end within 72 hours if the current leadership of the Sudanese Armed Forces was removed.

5. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces scaled up mobilization. On 27 June, Lieutenant General Al-Burhan called on Sudanese youth and “all those who are capable of defending themselves” to join the Sudanese Armed Forces. On 3 July, the Sudanese Armed Forces instructed military units to receive and equip the civilian fighters who had responded to that call. On the same day, leaders of seven Arab communities in Darfur declared their support for the Rapid Support Forces, citing the need to prevent the re-establishment of the former regime, and urged their community members in the Sudanese Armed Forces to defect to the Rapid Support Forces. The Rapid Support Forces called on other native administration leaders to follow suit. Rallies in support of the Sudanese Armed Forces were held in several areas of the Sudan. Former regime leaders, including Ahmed Haroun, for whom an arrest warrant has been issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), supported mobilization activities by the Sudanese Armed Forces in Kassala and Gedaref in July. On 15 July, Lieutenant General Kabbashi expressed support for political dialogue and initiatives to stop the war, but other Sudanese Armed Forces leaders continued to oppose negotiations with the Rapid Support Forces. On 15 August, Malik Agar presented a road map for ending the war and called for the formation of a caretaker government.

6. Amid the continued violence, international and regional peace efforts to secure a ceasefire and humanitarian access intensified. On 7 May, in Cairo, the Council of the League of Arab States met in a ministerial-level extraordinary session to discuss the situation in the Sudan. On 11 May, in Jeddah, representatives of the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces signed the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, following talks co-facilitated by Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, which had started on 6 May. On 20 May, the parties signed the Agreement on a Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements, which set an initial seven-day nationwide ceasefire, effective 22 May, and outlined their commitment to international law. The Agreement was widely welcomed by members of the international community and Sudanese political and civil society actors. On 29 May, the ceasefire was extended for five days. However, on 31 May, the Sudanese Armed Forces suspended their participation in the Jeddah process, citing “repeated violations” by the Rapid Support Forces. On 1 June, the co-facilitators suspended the talks due to “repeated serious violations” by both parties. On the same day, the United States announced sanctions against four companies affiliated with the warring parties.

7. A 24-hour nationwide ceasefire was agreed on 9 June, effective the following day, which was largely observed by both parties. However, heavy clashes resumed immediately after its expiry. On 17 June, the co-facilitators announced a new 72-hour nationwide ceasefire, effective the following day. They warned that they would consider adjourning the talks if the parties failed to observe the ceasefire. The parties

largely adhered to the ceasefire on the first day, but fighting resumed on the second day. This led the co-facilitators to adjourn the talks in Jeddah on 21 June. While the ceasefires contributed to reducing the scale of fighting while they were in effect, the warring parties used the pauses to gain military advantage and looting increased, in particular in areas controlled by the Rapid Support Forces. Informal talks under Saudi facilitation continued thereafter. On 27 July, the Sudanese Armed Forces announced that preliminary understandings had been reached on a declaration of principles and a monitoring and verification mechanism, but said that key differences remained on the presence of the Rapid Support Forces in civilian infrastructure.

8. On 27 May, the African Union Peace and Security Council convened a meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa and adopted a road map for the resolution of the conflict in the Sudan, containing six elements: the establishment of a coordination mechanism to harmonize regional and global efforts; the immediate, permanent and comprehensive cessation of hostilities; an effective humanitarian response; the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure; the strategic role of neighbouring countries and the region; and the resumption of a credible and inclusive political transition. The road map underscored the importance of a peace process coordinated under the joint auspices of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the League of Arab States and the United Nations, along with like-minded partners. On 4 June, Malik Agar stated that, given that the Sudan remained suspended from the African Union, his Government could not discuss the initiative.

9. On 2 and 15 June, in Addis Ababa, the African Union convened meetings of the core group of the expanded mechanism on the Sudan crisis established in the context of the African Union road map, to discuss the way forward. Participants included representatives of the African Union, the League of Arab States, the European Union, IGAD, the United Nations, Egypt, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States. They reaffirmed the importance of coordinating international efforts and discussed priority areas for engagement.

10. In parallel, IGAD convened an ordinary summit of Heads of State and Government in Djibouti on 12 June and adopted the road map for the resolution of the conflict in the Sudan. Under the road map, the high-level delegation for the peace process in the Sudan was expanded to include Ethiopia as a fourth member, in addition to Djibouti, Kenya and South Sudan. The President of Kenya, William Ruto, was appointed Chair of this newly formed quartet. In the road map, the quartet stated its intention to arrange a face-to-face meeting between Lieutenant Generals Al-Burhan and Dagalo within 10 days, aimed at establishing a humanitarian corridor within two weeks and initiating an inclusive political process within three weeks. The Sudanese authorities rejected the Kenyan chairmanship of the quartet.

11. On 19 June, the ministers for foreign affairs of the IGAD quartet States met virtually, and on 10 July, the Heads of State and Government of the quartet held a meeting in Addis Ababa. A representative of the Rapid Support Forces also attended the meeting on 10 July. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan announced that a government delegation was present in Addis Ababa, but did not participate in the meeting due to its objection to Kenya chairing the quartet. The quartet meeting concluded with a communiqué, in which the quartet requested, among other things, the Eastern African Standby Force summit to consider a possible deployment to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access. On 11 July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan rejected any deployment of foreign troops in the Sudan.

12. On 13 July, Egypt convened a summit of the neighbouring States of the Sudan in Cairo, bringing together the Heads of State and Government of neighbouring States

of the Sudan, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. The final communiqué called on the parties to commit to an immediate and sustainable ceasefire and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan, and affirmed the need to end any external interference. The participants stressed the importance of preserving the Sudanese State and its institutions and agreed to facilitate cross-border humanitarian aid deliveries. They also agreed to form a ministerial mechanism comprising the foreign ministers of the neighbouring States to coordinate efforts to resolve the conflict. Both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces welcomed the outcomes of the summit. The first meeting of the ministerial mechanism took place in N'Djamena on 6 August.

13. On 23 and 24 July, the Government of Togo hosted a meeting of stakeholders from Darfur, including political actors and members of native administrations. The meeting was attended by the Rapid Support Forces, but not by the Sudanese Armed Forces or any of the major armed movements from Darfur. From 4 to 9 July, the leaders of the Darfuri armed movements that had signed the Juba Peace Agreement met the President of Chad, Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, in Chad to discuss the rising insecurity in Darfur, the consequent refugee crisis in Chad and the need to end the war.

14. Sudanese civilian actors, including political forces, women's rights groups, youth networks, resistance committees, civil society and academia also continued to oppose the war and call for dialogue. On 13 July, 75 civil society organizations launched the Declaration of Principles of Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan. Civilian actors coordinated and presented initiatives aimed at ending the war, fostering humanitarian assistance and resuming the transition towards civilian democratic governance. Many civilian initiatives sought to avoid further empowering military actors and to secure their complete withdrawal from government. Several women-led initiatives emerged, calling for a ceasefire, highlighting humanitarian needs and condemning conflict-related sexual violence. They demanded women's participation in ceasefire negotiations and any future political process, noting the lack of inclusivity to date. Civilian political leaders also visited neighbouring countries to engage with leaders and the diplomatic community.

B. Security situation

15. Despite several ceasefires, the fighting between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces continued largely unabated, in particular in Khartoum, Darfur and North Kordofan. Criminality also surged in several parts of the country, including widespread looting of public and private properties, residences, businesses and government facilities in areas mainly controlled by the Rapid Support Forces. As at 15 August, the number of casualties nationwide reached 1,146 deaths, according to the Federal Ministry of Health, in addition to 12,000 injured. These figures are likely underreported and do not include casualties caused by intercommunal conflict. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as at 15 August, more than 4,000 people have been killed, including hundreds of civilians.

16. Heavy fighting and air strikes intensified in Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri. Fighting concentrated on strategic and symbolic areas, namely the Presidential Palace, the Jabra and Yarmouk military complexes in Southern Khartoum and the Central Police Headquarters. The Sudanese Armed Forces launched major offensives, shelling several Rapid Support Forces positions in Khartoum and Bahri and near the borders of Khartoum state. The Rapid Support Forces carried out attacks against the headquarters of the Sudanese Armed Forces and adjacent areas, besieging strategic

locations. On 22 June, 2 July and 4 July, the Rapid Support Forces claimed to have shot down Sudanese Armed Forces warplanes. On 22 July, they claimed to have infiltrated the Karrari military area, leading to casualties and equipment losses of the Sudanese Armed Forces. The conflict expanded to Al-Gazira State, where air strikes were reported for the first time on 21 and 22 July, and continued on several occasions in August.

17. In Darfur, the conflict escalated into systemic, ethnically based violence against civilians and heightened intercommunal tensions. On 26 May, the Governor of the Darfur Region, Minni Minawi, called on citizens to take up arms in the light of growing insecurity. The Rapid Support Forces asserted control in most areas of Darfur, including the main border crossings and key cities. El Fasher and Nyala remained contested, while the Sudanese Armed Forces retained control of their bases in Zalingei, Ed Daein and El Geneina. In North Darfur, El Fasher saw confrontations on 27 May and 22 June and exchanges of heavy fire on 16 July. The Rapid Support Forces encircled the town, with reinforcements approaching via Zalingei. The Rapid Support Forces also launched attacks in other parts of the state and retained control of the towns of Kabkabiyah, Kutum, Kafod and Tawilah.

18. In South Darfur, clashes continued in Nyala on 18 and 19 May, 13 and 24 June, 1, 2, 4, 20, 27 and 29 July, and from 11 to 16 August. The clashes on 20 July displaced over 5,000 households. At least 17 civilians were killed on 18 and 19 May, and a further 8 were killed on 20 May, along with a high number of casualties among the Rapid Support Forces and Sudanese Armed Forces. Clashes also took place near Am Dafok (12 June), Buram locality (14 June), Kass (15 June, 6 July and 16 July, with significant displacement) and Manawashi locality (27 June), with Am Dafok and Manawashi reportedly controlled by the Rapid Support Forces. On 16 July, clashes erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in the town of Kass, displacing 4,500–5,000 people.

19. In Central Darfur, on 16, 18 and 19 May, clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces resumed in Zalingei. Hostilities restarted on 14 and 22 June, and again on 27 and 31 July when the Rapid Support Forces attacked the Sudanese Armed Forces headquarters. On 27 and 28 June, the Rapid Support Forces and affiliated Arab militia attacked Zalingei and reportedly gained control of the city, except the Sudanese Armed Forces base and the roads leading to El Geneina and Nyala. On 5 July, further clashes were reported in Zalingei and Nertiti. On 7 and 8 August, renewed clashes led the Rapid Support Forces to leave Zalingei, and the Sudanese Armed Forces regained control. However, on 16 August, the Rapid Support Forces reportedly regained control of various locations in Zalingei.

20. West Darfur witnessed a sharp increase in ethnically motivated attacks against civilians, leading to mass displacement of the Masalit and other non-Arab communities. In El Geneina, between 12 and 15 May, violence took place between Arab and Masalit communities. OHCHR reported the presence of a mass grave outside El Geneina containing the bodies of at least 87 ethnic Masalit and others, allegedly killed by the Rapid Support Forces. On 7 and 8 June, there was renewed fighting along ethnic lines, with reported involvement of the Rapid Support Forces and affiliated Arab militias, resulting in injured civilians being displaced to neighbouring areas and to Chad. On 13 June, the brother of the Sultan of the Masalit was killed. On 14 June, the Wali of West Darfur and leader of the Sudanese Alliance, Khamis Abdullah Abbaker, also a Masalit and a signatory of the Juba Peace Agreement, was killed the day after having accused the Rapid Support Forces of perpetrating ethnic violence against civilians. Eyewitnesses attributed this act to Arab militias and the Rapid Support Forces. From 28 June to 2 July, Arab militias, allegedly supported by the Rapid Support Forces, surrounded Murnei locality, preventing residents from leaving, and looted and burned the market, leading to over 17,500

households being displaced from the town of Murnei as at 12 July. From 24 to 26 July, the Rapid Support Forces, supported by Arab militias, attacked Sirba, north of El Geneina, resulting in at least 32 deaths and 32,000 affected households, with most people fleeing into Chad.

21. In North Kordofan, El Obeid continued to be contested, with intermittent fighting in the western and southern areas controlled by the Rapid Support Forces. Following air strikes in El Obeid on 20 and 21 July, Rapid Support Forces troops reportedly moved to Umm Rawaba, where they established new checkpoints and clashed with local communities on 23 July. On 26 July, the Sudanese Armed Forces reportedly carried out an air strike on the El Obeid-Bara-Khartoum road, destroying four Rapid Support Forces vehicles. On 1 August, Sudanese Armed Forces vehicles arrived at Umm Rawaba and attacked three Rapid Support Forces checkpoints. The Rapid Support Forces reportedly attacked Al Rahad, Barra and Sheikan town while the Sudanese Armed Forces continued to send reinforcements from South Kordofan.

22. In South Kordofan, elements of the SPLM-N al-Hilu faction attempted to advance in government-controlled territories. Following clashes on 7 and 8 June, the faction tried to expand its presence in Buram. On 16 June, fighting occurred in the town of Habila, and on 18 June, some of its elements reportedly attempted to attack a Sudanese Armed Forces camp south of Kadugli. On 1 and 2 July, the SPLM-N al-Hilu faction reportedly captured additional Sudanese Armed Forces bases in Talodi. Clashes continued to be reported throughout July in Buram and Habila. The SPLM-N al-Hilu faction encircled Kadugli and continued its attacks throughout July. On 16 August, SPLM-N al-Hilu forces clashed with the Sudanese Armed Forces and entered Kadugli from the Hagar al Makk area. The incident resulted in an unknown number of civilian casualties and the displacement of people. In West Kordofan, the first clashes were reported on 21 July, when the Rapid Support Forces reportedly attacked a Sudanese Armed Forces checkpoint around El Fula. Further incidents were reported in El Fula on 16 August, when the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces exchanged fire. In Blue Nile, on 25 June, forces from the SPLM-N al-Hilu faction attacked a Sudanese Armed Forces position south of Kurmuk, displacing about 6,000 civilians to Ethiopia. Sporadic clashes continued in the area, including on 10 and 12 July and 2 August. On 10 August, the Sudanese Armed Forces launched an offensive towards SPLM-N al-Hilu positions south of Kurmuk, followed by ground movements towards the Jerout mountains. The Rapid Support Forces maintained a footprint in the north-western part of South Kordofan and some parts of North Kordofan, where clashes with the Sudanese Armed Forces took place.

23. Increased criminality, including the targeting of United Nations premises and staff residences, was reported. Such acts were largely attributed to the Rapid Support Forces or criminals operating in areas under their control. These acts displayed a high level of organization and focused on securing basic commodities, including petrol, cars, food and water. The Rapid Support Forces also established bases in residential areas. During the reporting period, 175 security incidents affected personnel of United Nations Security Management System organizations, international non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. Around 60 United Nations premises (offices, guesthouses, warehouses and workshops) were reportedly looted and about 230 vehicles belonging to various United Nations agencies, funds and programmes were carjacked or stolen. On 27 June, unidentified attackers killed a World Food Programme national staff member and his son and kidnapped another son near the Chad-Sudan border in West Darfur. On 3 July, an employee of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) was killed at his residence in Omdurman by suspected Rapid Support Forces members.

C. Human rights, rule of law and protection situation

24. The human rights and protection situation continued to deteriorate dramatically. Civilian casualties and injuries surged, particularly in Khartoum and Darfur. The escalation of violence in densely populated areas of battleground cities resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties and extensive destruction of infrastructure.

25. During the reporting period, UNITAMS documented 655 alleged incidents of human rights violations and abuses in the context of intercommunal violence and clashes between armed elements, affecting 12,629 victims, including 11,907 men, 359 women and 363 children (138 girls and 225 boys). Of the 655 documented incidents, 63 were reportedly attributable to the Sudanese Armed Forces, affecting 435 victims; 295 were attributable to the Rapid Support Forces, affecting 2,477 victims; 192 were jointly attributable to the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, affecting 7,418 victims; 4 were reportedly attributable to the Sudanese Police Force, affecting 32 victims; and 83 were reportedly attributable to non-State armed groups, including armed movements and militia groups, affecting 2,087 victims. Eighteen incidents were reportedly attributable to unknown perpetrators, affecting 180 victims. Furthermore, there were 3,731 victims of violations of the right to life (3,516 men, 70 women, 38 girls and 107 boys); 7,783 victims of violations of the right to physical integrity (7,478 men, 130 women, 67 girls and 108 boys); 165 victims of sexual and gender-based violence (4 men, 134 women and 27 girls); 139 victims of physical assault (121 men, 13 women and 5 girls); and 184 victims of abduction (172 men, 6 women, 5 girls and 1 boy). A total of 471 individuals (460 men, 6 women, 1 girl and 4 boys) were subjected to arbitrary arrest; 6 men were subjected to enforced disappearance; and 150 men were forcefully recruited by armed forces.

26. Air strikes, mainly attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces, continued to cause significant civilian casualties and extensive destruction of properties and infrastructure. From 7 May to 20 August, UNITAMS documented the killing of at least 327 civilians and estimated that a further 294 had been injured, including children, by air strikes. Between 9 and 12 July, at least 116 civilians, including children, were reportedly killed by air strikes, shelling and targeted attacks, rendering that period the deadliest in Khartoum since the conflict began. Two air strikes on 11 July in Alsoug Alshaabi in Omdurman and on 8 July in Dar Elsalam killed 56 civilians.

27. In Darfur, the human rights situation deteriorated severely amid targeted attacks and large-scale violence. In El Geneina, in addition to hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, ethnically driven violence resurged. Concerning trends saw targeted threats and harassment against human rights activists and killings of prominent figures among the Masalit community. Outside the main cities in Darfur, the cycle of violence expanded, with increasing ethnic undertones. In Kutum and Tawila (North Darfur) and Murnei and Masteri (West Darfur), violence and attacks against civilians resulted in the killing of at least 200 civilians and injury to many others during the reporting period. The continued disruption in telecommunication services across Darfur presented substantial challenges to the investigation of alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

28. As reported by the Unit for Combating Violence Against Women Unit, part of the Ministry of Social Development of the Sudan, the period following the outbreak of the conflict saw a marked increase in gender-based violence in Khartoum, South Darfur and West Darfur, allegedly perpetrated by the Rapid Support Forces and affiliated fighters. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office received 32 credible reports of conflict-related sexual violence, involving at least 73 victims. This

included 5 incidents in April, 17 in May, 7 in June, 2 in July and 1 in August. Eleven of the incidents occurred in Khartoum state, 16 in Darfur, 3 in Kordofan, 1 on the Khartoum-Medani western road and 1 on the road between El Geneina and Chad. Actual numbers are likely severely underreported because of stigma or fear of reprisal. Reportedly, members of the Rapid Support Forces or men in Rapid Support Forces uniforms were identified as the suspected perpetrators in 24 incidents, armed men or men in other uniforms in 6 incidents, and an armed Arab militia member in one incident. Protection partners estimated that, due to the conflict, the number of people in need of gender-based violence prevention and response services in 2023 had increased by more than 1 million, bringing the figure to 4.2 million people across the country. Prevailing insecurity and attacks on hospitals have drastically reduced the ability to provide services to survivors.

29. The cases of conflict-related sexual violence indicated a lack of safe havens and means for women and children to escape violence. Women and girls were at risk of sexual violence when armed men raided their homes and looted their possessions. Women and girls in internally displaced persons camps and travelling to safer places also experienced heightened risks. Worrying reports pointed to an increase in abductions of women and girls, with serious concerns that they were being sexually assaulted or forced into slavery.

30. The fighting has severely affected the safety and well-being of children, resulting in an almost ten-fold increase in grave violations, killings and maiming of children. The United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict verified 311 violations against 261 children (127 boys, 91 girls, 43 sex unknown) in Darfur, Khartoum and North Kordofan, compared with 13 violations in the previous reporting period. These violations were reportedly attributed to clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (197), unidentified perpetrators (62), the Rapid Support Forces (47) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (4). The task force verified 238 instances of killing and maiming of children (including 114 boys, 81 girls, 43 sex unknown) aged between 1 and 17, mainly in Darfur states and North Kordofan. The recruitment of 13 boys aged between 14 and 17 by the Rapid Support Forces in Khartoum and South Darfur states was also verified. Ten cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence involving 10 girls aged between 12 and 17 were verified and have been attributed to the Rapid Support Forces.

31. Since the mass release of prisoners at the start of the conflict, the situation in prisons has remained relatively stable. On 16 June, the Rapid Support Forces attacked Al-Dibibat, north of Kadugli, releasing all detainees. Attacks on justice infrastructure continued, with reports of courts targeted mostly by unknown perpetrators in Omdurman, El Fula, Central Darfur and Nyala.

32. On 11 August, the Prosecutor's Office in Kassala State cancelled the arrests warrants issued in Kassala on 3 August against five former senior National Congress Party officials, including Ali Osman Taha and Ahmed Haroun, citing lack of legal basis for opening a criminal case.

33. Reflecting the gravity of the situation, on 13 July, the Chief Prosecutor of ICC, Karim A. A. Khan KC, confirmed to the Security Council that the Office of the Prosecutor had commenced investigations in relation to incidents occurring in the context of the present hostilities in the Sudan.

D. Socioeconomic situation

34. Economic activity has been severely disrupted by the ongoing conflict. Using remote sensing tools, an analysis of tropospheric nitrogen dioxide emissions in

Khartoum as a proxy for economic activity showed a decrease of between 33 and 42 per cent in the first three weeks after the conflict started.¹ The productive capacities of the Sudan have been heavily compromised. Damage, looting and destruction of critical infrastructure, the financial sector, private property, food manufacturing facilities and markets have brought production and economic activities to a halt. This has led to mass unemployment, with people in desperate need of financial support in the short term and of livelihood opportunities in the medium term. The burden has been particularly heavy on women-led households, where livelihoods are typically secured through manufacturing or informal service jobs. Public institutions, including the Khartoum branch of the Central Bank of Sudan, were looted or destroyed. Attacks on commercial bank branches and the looting of banks led to substantial financial losses, as well as eroded trust in the banking sector.

35. Reports indicated critical food shortages and surging prices, making it increasingly difficult for residents to afford basic necessities. The price of bread and flour has reportedly doubled, while sugar and cooking oil have increased by more than 50 per cent. Imported goods such as wheat flour, medical drugs and cooking oil remained in short supply. The burden of increasing prices disproportionately affected the poorest Sudanese, many of whom were unable to flee.

E. Humanitarian situation

36. The impact of the conflict on the humanitarian situation in the Sudan is catastrophic. Humanitarian activities have been interrupted due to widespread insecurity, compounded by large-scale looting of humanitarian assets, supplies, office equipment and vehicles. A record 15.8 million people needed humanitarian assistance prior to the outbreak of conflict, one third of the population. The number rose to 24.7 million in May, representing a 57 per cent increase. The funding requirements for the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan have increased by 47 per cent, reaching \$2.6 billion, of which only 25.7 per cent had been received as at 20 August.

37. Over 4.3 million people have been displaced due to the conflict, including over 3.4 million internally displaced people and about 922,000 refugees in the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, as at 17 August. This figure includes over 211,000 refugee returnees, the majority of whom have returned to South Sudan, and over 691,000 Sudanese refugees. Over 366,400 people crossed into Chad due to fighting in Darfur, in particular West Darfur. The vast majority of internally displaced people fled Khartoum State (74 per cent, 2.6 million), followed by North Darfur (8.1 per cent), South Darfur (7.4 per cent), West Darfur (4.8 per cent), Central Darfur (4.28 per cent), North Kordofan (0.51 per cent), South Kordofan (0.48 per cent) and Al-Gazira (0.01 per cent). Most displaced people stayed with host communities, while a small percentage took refuge in camps or shelters, adding pressure on available services. The states hosting the highest number of displaced people included River Nile (14.6 per cent), Northern (10.6 per cent), Sennar (8.2 per cent), White Nile (8.15 per cent) and North Darfur (8 per cent).

38. In addition, reports showed that an estimated 26,200 people have been displaced either internally or to Ethiopia due to the fighting between the SPLM-N al-Hilu faction and the Sudanese Armed Forces in the Blue Nile State in late June. In South Kordofan, an estimated 5,200 people have been internally displaced due to conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the SPLM-N al-Hilu faction and between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, while about 50,700 people

¹ See Hala Abushama and others, *Monitoring indicators of economic activity in Sudan amidst ongoing conflict using satellite data*, Sudan Strategy Support Program Working Paper 7 (Washington, D.C., 2023).

were displaced in West Kordofan. Between 15 and 17 August, 6,704 people were internally displaced in the town of Kadugli owing to conflict between SPLM-N al-Hilu and the Sudanese Armed Forces. About 148,700 people fled fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, taking refuge in areas controlled by SPLM-N in South Kordofan State.

39. The conflict deprived millions of people of access to food, water, shelter, electricity and basic services, including nutrition, health care and education. The extensive urban combat in densely populated areas and around vital infrastructure significantly disrupted the health system. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported an increase in the number of attacks and the occupation of health facilities by the warring parties. WHO verified 53 attacks on health-care facilities, resulting in 11 deaths and 38 injuries between 15 April and 20 August. More than 80 per cent of hospitals in the country have been out of service, including maternity hospitals. Outbreaks of diseases, including malaria, measles, dengue and acute watery diarrhoea, that had been under control before the conflict increased due to the disruption of public health services. Limited mobility and prevailing insecurity posed challenges for women's access to health care, including reproductive care. There has been a lack of medical resources for treating survivors of gender-based violence. Among the 11 million people in the Sudan in need of urgent health assistance, 2.64 million were women and girls of reproductive age, including over 260,000 pregnant women.

40. Many community-based aid groups, such as the emergency response rooms composed of resistance committees, provided agile and critical humanitarian assistance in hard-hit areas by supporting hospitals, securing food and water supplies and helping women and children in distress. United Nations agencies and partners are seeking to enhance engagement with these local initiatives to respond to the overwhelming needs in conflict-affected areas.

III. Role of the United Nations in the Sudan and implementation of resolution 2636 (2022)

A. Objective 1: assist in the political transition, progress towards democratic governance, the protection and promotion of human rights and sustainable peace

41. UNITAMS continued to implement its good offices functions in support of efforts to end the conflict and prepare for an eventual return to an inclusive political transition process. The Mission maintained contact with the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to urge them to cease fighting and ensure unhindered humanitarian access. It also engaged with armed movements and regional authorities in Darfur and the Two Areas to undertake conflict prevention efforts. The Mission engaged with representatives of Sudanese civilian-led initiatives aimed at ending the war and resuming the transition process, to listen to and amplify their voices on the way forward. This included engaging with political coalitions, civil society and resistance committees. UNITAMS held over a dozen virtual consultations with women's groups and women's rights activists to hear and document their perspectives on ending the war, the participation of women in ceasefire negotiations, the distinct humanitarian needs of women, reports of sexual and gender-based violence, and the role of women in a future political process and transition. The Mission also continued to monitor and report on human rights violations and abuses, while maintaining strategic engagement and advocacy with key stakeholders.

42. UNITAMS continued to encourage efforts to ensure the coherence of international and regional mediation initiatives. It supported efforts to advance the African Union and IGAD initiatives, as well as the Jeddah talks, and remained supportive of other initiatives, including those convened in Egypt and Togo. It represented the United Nations in the African Union core group of the expanded mechanism with a view to harmonizing regional and international initiatives. The Special Representative for the Sudan engaged closely with the African Union, IGAD and the League of Arab States, including during visits to Addis Ababa from 7 to 9 June and 3 to 5 July. He also continued to coordinate with other Member States and regional actors, including with European Union officials during his visit to Brussels on 11 and 12 July.

B. Objective 2: support peace processes and the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement and future peace agreements

43. Following the outbreak of fighting, the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee, which is chaired by UNITAMS, engaged with armed group signatories of the Juba Peace Agreement and urged them to remain neutral. On 17 and 23 May, the Committee supported State authorities and local community leaders remotely in negotiating and implementing a community-based ceasefire agreement in North and South Darfur that was in effect until late May. This helped to decrease violence and facilitated efforts for the protection of civilians. Similar efforts to achieve temporary de-escalation were launched in the other three states of Darfur. However, these efforts faced challenges due to the security situation and poor connectivity. Furthermore, the Committee supported dialogue efforts between local Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces commanders to ease tensions across Darfur. Following the evacuation of international United Nations personnel, the Committee has maintained regular contact with its national members on the ground to monitor the security situation, report on ceasefire violations and urge de-escalation in the fighting.

C. Objective 3: assist in peacebuilding, civilian protection and the rule of law, in particular in Darfur and the Two Areas

44. Despite significant challenges due to the ongoing fighting, UNITAMS continued to support the promotion of human rights and the protection of civilians. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office received and documented reports of alleged human rights violations and abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence. Recognizing the significant collapse of the rule of law, UNITAMS strengthened its capacity to monitor and document alleged violations and abuses and engaged with other United Nations entities and local and international partners to compile evidence for possible criminal prosecutions.

45. The Mission continuously consulted Sudanese civil society groups and human rights defenders inside and outside the country, with many sharing numerous concerns and early warning alerts. Consultations continued regarding possible capacity-building assistance to civil society groups and human rights defenders aimed at strengthening the monitoring and documentation of human rights and international humanitarian law violations. UNITAMS continued to engage with the warring parties in relation to allegations of violations and abuses, reminding them of their international obligations. It also engaged with victim communities in Port Sudan to learn about their concerns and protection needs.

46. United Nations agencies continued to reach survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and partner agencies

provided gender-based violence case management and sexual and reproductive critical care, including clinical management of rape. The Organization also supported safe spaces for women and girls, distributing dignity kits, training service providers and expanding remote services where physical access had been disrupted. The United Nations also intensified joint advocacy. On 5 July, agency chiefs from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OHCHR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNFPA, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WHO jointly called for an immediate end to the violence in the Sudan, including sexual violence as a tactic of war to terrorize people.

47. The Mine Action Service engaged with national actors and mine action partners in responding to the conflict. It broadcast explosive ordnance risk education messages on social media, television and radio. To address the growing threat from unexploded ordnances in major urban areas, the Mine Action Service scaled up explosive ordnance risk education activities and established a reporting hotline. The Service delivered explosive ordnance safety briefings to 66 people engaged in humanitarian assistance (18 women and 48 men), representing nine United Nations entities and 16 non-governmental organizations, in Port Sudan and El Damazin. The Service also began mapping and developing a database of explosive contamination and liaising with humanitarian partners to provide support to emergency response activities.

D. Objective 4: support the mobilization of economic and development assistance and the coordination of humanitarian and peacebuilding assistance

48. Numerous challenges, including insecurity, funding shortfalls, bureaucratic access impediments and looting of humanitarian premises and warehouses, hampered the delivery of assistance. Humanitarian supplies could not be delivered to areas outside the state capitals due to insecurity. Nonetheless, humanitarians continued to deliver assistance where possible. Close to 3 million people have been reached with assistance since April. This included over 1.3 million people reached with cash or in-kind food assistance, over 713,000 people with integrated health services, and over 957,000 people with access to basic water services.

49. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Clementine Awu Nkweta-Salami, took up her position on 15 May and deployed to Port Sudan on 8 June. The United Nations country team initiated a dialogue with development partners to prepare a resilience and recovery response. The United Nations' pooled financing architecture in the Sudan, including the Peacebuilding Fund and the Sudan multi-partner trust fund, provided possible entry points for discussion with donors on area-based stabilization support. The United Nations country team explored reprogramming existing funds and expanding new development assistance in more stable areas of the Sudan.

50. On 19 June, the United Nations, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Egypt, Qatar and the European Union convened a high-level pledging event, resulting in \$1.5 billion in funding announced for relief efforts in the Sudan and neighbouring countries hosting refugees.

E. Mission operational and planning issues

51. In view of the continued fighting in the Sudan and the security risks in Khartoum and other Mission locations, the United Nations decided to temporarily reconfigure the Mission's presence and establish a temporary UNITAMS office in Nairobi. The

Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator led the presence of UNITAMS in the Sudan from Port Sudan, supported by a limited number of personnel, while the Special Representative operated from Nairobi. A small liaison team was hosted by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa in Addis Ababa.

52. A total of 91 staff, including 41 international and 50 national staff, were assigned to Port Sudan and two political liaison officers deployed to Addis Ababa. The remaining international staff were assigned to Nairobi and the evacuation status of all UNITAMS international staff was lifted on 27 July. The staff based in these three locations continued their work through meetings both online and in person with Sudanese stakeholders and regional and international partners. The effectiveness of this model partially depends on the timely deployment of the international staff assigned to Port Sudan and the ability of other staff to enter the Sudan for short deployments based on operational needs on a rotational basis. The residential and multi-entry visas of most UNITAMS international staff expired at the end of June and are pending renewal by the Government of the Sudan. This process has been very slow due to the limited operational capacity of government institutions.

53. The Mission paused all recruitment and onboarding processes except those considered critical. The Mission also undertook the administrative separation of individual police officers assigned to the Police Advisory Unit and did not extend the appointments of military liaison officers assigned to the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee. As at 20 August, Mission staffing stood at 250 civilian staff, 2 police personnel and 13 military observers.

IV. Observations

54. The deadly conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces has entered its fifth month, inflicting unimaginable suffering on the Sudanese people and causing a nationwide humanitarian catastrophe. The toll this conflict has exacted is unacceptable. Every day increases the number of people injured, killed and displaced. The call of the Sudanese people for peace must be heeded now.

55. Despite proclaimed commitments to several ceasefires, both sides continue to pursue a military victory. The longer the conflict drags on, the more difficult it will be to stop it. The growing ethnic mobilization and the increase in ethnically motivated attacks could spark a full-blown civil war, with potentially an even more devastating impact on the Sudanese people, the region and beyond. The unity and preservation of the Sudanese State and the stability of the region are at stake. It is high time that the leaders of both sides lay down their weapons and spare the Sudanese people further pain and suffering.

56. I welcome mediation efforts led by the African Union and IGAD to end the conflict. The United Nations remains committed to strengthening its support to these processes. I also commend the critical efforts of Saudi Arabia and the United States to facilitate ceasefires, which enabled the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance, and I welcome the important communiqué of the summit of the neighbouring States of the Sudan held in Cairo. The common thread among these initiatives is the call for a permanent cessation of hostilities, the facilitation of humanitarian access and engagement with civilian stakeholders in an inclusive political process. I urge the parties to return to the Jeddah talks in good faith to reach a comprehensive ceasefire agreement as soon as possible and lay the foundation for the recovery of the Sudan.

57. I urge international and regional actors to ensure the coherence of mediation efforts to compel the parties to cease hostilities and engage in peaceful dialogue to resolve the conflict. UNITAMS will continue to explore ways to provide good offices in support of peace efforts. I stand ready to discuss further measures with global leaders to enhance international coordination in support of peace and stability in the Sudan.

58. There are serious concerns that the ongoing fighting is eroding the political space for civilians and undermining the prospect of a credible civilian-led transition. It is critical that civilian voices are not drowned out by the sound of bullets, and that the promise of the transitional period – a fully civilian, credible, democratic Government – is upheld. Supporting the evolving civilian political scene, including political forces, women's rights groups, youth and resistance committees, and amplifying their voices is essential. At the same time, I urge Sudanese political leaders to put aside their differences and work together to lead the Sudan out of this profound crisis.

59. Women's groups continue to mobilize against the war. Women's rights activists of all ages are at the forefront of civic efforts to pressure parties to halt violence, abide by their commitments under international law and cease all forms of violence against women. Yet they remain on the sidelines of current ceasefire negotiations and mediation efforts. I urge all parties to heed their call for inclusion in ceasefire negotiations and any future dialogue process. UNITAMS will continue to support women's groups and the amplification of their voices.

60. The ongoing hostilities have led to a breakdown of the rule of law and the protection of civilians. I am deeply concerned by targeted attacks and killings of civilians, including women and children. I strongly condemn ethnically motivated attacks in Darfur and the heinous murder of the Wali of West Darfur and countless other Sudanese. Perpetrators must be brought to justice. The prevailing impunity and the lawlessness that has emerged during the conflict continue to expose civilian vulnerabilities, destabilize communities and institutions, and increase ethnic polarization. I call on the warring parties and non-state armed actors to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law to refrain from attacks against civilians and civilian objects and to respect the right to life. I am encouraged that in some areas, local communities and state authorities have taken proactive measures to mediate and help de-escalate the situation.

61. I am appalled by the increased reports of gender-based violence in the Sudan and echo the joint call by United Nations agencies for an immediate end to the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. The warring parties are responsible for preventing and punishing sexual violence committed by forces under their command. I call on the parties to engage with my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict on measures to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, such as declaring zero tolerance for sexual violence, establishing accountability procedures and granting unimpeded access for monitoring and the provision of services. I call on all mediators to help secure firm commitments from the warring parties to cease all acts of conflict-related sexual violence and ensure that this issue is anchored in ongoing peace processes.

62. The significant increase in needs requires increased humanitarian operations and response activities, which must be backed by significant financial and human resources. I thank donor countries for pledging funding for life-saving relief efforts in the Sudan. However, more help is needed as the Humanitarian Response Plan for the Sudan remains severely underfunded. Immediate additional funding and donor flexibility are needed to ensure the rapid scaling up of operations and allow for the ongoing delivery of essential life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people

in need. I also urge the Sudanese authorities to facilitate all humanitarian efforts in order to ease the suffering of the Sudanese people.

63. I thank the neighbouring countries of the Sudan for continuing to host Sudanese refugees and for providing logistical support for humanitarian operations, including cross-border humanitarian operations. I urge the international community to enhance support to the countries hosting Sudanese refugees. I also extend my appreciation to the Member States currently hosting the temporary presence of the United Nations country team for the Sudan and UNITAMS, including the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan and Kenya. Without their support, the United Nations would not have been able to continue its operations in the Sudan.

64. I am appalled by the continued destruction of the economic prospects of the Sudan at a time when the country already faced unfavourable economic headwinds. The exodus of businesses will have a long-lasting effect on the prospects for recovery and reconstruction once the warring parties decide to silence their guns. The hostilities will also have a negative impact on the coming agricultural season in parts of the country, which will worsen food security and result in a further increase of food prices.

65. I regret the decision by the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to declare my Special Representative persona non grata and recall that the doctrine of persona non grata is not applicable to United Nations personnel. I reaffirm my call to the Government of the Sudan to abide by the legal frameworks applicable to the United Nations, including the status-of-mission agreement for UNITAMS. I also urge the Government of the Sudan to ensure timely entry and unhindered movement of United Nations personnel and partners in the country to deliver much needed support. This includes ensuring the timely clearance of pending visa applications and the easing of travel permits and customs clearances.

66. I thank my Special Representative, Volker Perthes, my Deputy Special Representative, Clementine Awu Nkweta-Salami, and all United Nations personnel for their continued dedication and efforts in support of the Sudan and its people. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the Sudanese people.
