

2. Peace negotiations in Africa

- Twenty-two (22) peace processes and negotiations were identified in Africa in 2018, accounting for 45% of the 49 peace processes worldwide.
- All the negotiating processes in Africa involved third parties in mediating and facilitating roles, except in four cases: Ethiopia (Oromia), Nigeria (Niger Delta), Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) and the Republic of the Congo.
- The number of interstate negotiating processes increased in 2018 due to Eritrea-Ethiopia and Djibouti-Eritrea.
- The Horn of Africa was the scene of historic agreements in 2018, such as those between Ethiopia and the insurgents of the Ogaden and Oromia regions and the agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea regarding their border dispute, which led to progress in other processes in the region.
- At the end of the year, there was tension over the results of legislative and presidential elections in the DRC, in which President Joseph Kabila did not run.
- The government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A-IO reached a new peace agreement, which envisages a coalition government involving all actors, though it was met with scepticism due to the history of previous peace initiative violations.
- Talks between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front were resumed thanks to the impetus of a new UN special envoy after remaining deadlocked since 2012.

This chapter studies the main peace processes and negotiations in Africa during 2018. Firstly, the main characteristics and general trends on the negotiation processes in the region are presented, followed by the evolution of each different context during the year, including in relation to the gender, peace and security agenda. At the start of the chapter there is a map identifying the countries in Africa that were the scenario of negotiations during 2018.

Table 2.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2018

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Burundi	Government, political and social opposition grouped in the National Council for the Respect of the Peace Agreement and the Reconciliation of Burundi and the Restoration of the Rule of Law (CNARED)	East African Community (EAC), UN
CAR	Government, armed groups belonging to the former Seleka Coalition, Antibalaka militias	The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation (AU and ECCAS, with the support of the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Rep. of the Congo and Chad), Community of Saint Egidio, ACCORD, International Support Group (UN, EU, among others), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Russia, Sudan
Djibouti – Eritrea	Government of Djibouti, Government of Eritrea	Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Somalia
DRC	Government, Alliance for the Presidential Majority, political and social opposition grouped in the Rassemblement coalition (Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), the Dynamic Opposition and the G7, among others), Union for the Congolese Nation and other political parties	Congolese Episcopal Conference (CENCO), Angola, Tanzania, Uganda, Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue on the DRC led by the AU, SADC, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), EU, UN, International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), USA
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Government of Eritrea, Government of Ethiopia	United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, USA
Ethiopia (Ogaden)	Government, ONLF military political movement	Kenya, United Arab Emirates and Sweden
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Government, OLF military political movement	--
Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram)	Government of Nigeria, Boko Haram (Abubakar Shekau faction), Boko Haram (Abu Musab al-Barnawi faction)	--
Libya	Presidential Council and Government of National Agreement (GAN), House of Representatives (CdR), National General Congress (CGN)	Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Italy, France
Mali	Government, Coordinator of Azawad Movements (CMA) – MNLA, MAA and HCUA–, Platform –GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA–	Algeria, France, ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU,
Morocco – Western Sahara	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and River of Gold (POLISARIO)	UN, Algeria and Mauritania (observers), Group of Friends of the Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Mozambique	Government, the RENAMO armed group	National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church
Nigeria (Niger Delta)	Government, Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), NIGER Delta Consultative Assembly, (NIDCA), Pan Niger Delta Peoples' Congress (PNDPC), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)	--
Rep. of the Congo	Government, Ninja militias and the National Council of the Republicans (CNR) of Frédéric Bintsamou (Pastor Ntouri)	--
Senegal (Casamance)	Government of Senegal, the armed group Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) and its different factions	The Community of Sant Egidio, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau
Somalia	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, Southwest), political-military movement Ahlu Sunna Wal-Jama'a, clan leaders and sub-clans	UN, IGAD, Turkey, among others
South Sudan	Government (SPLM), SPLM / A-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others)	IGAD Plus: IGAD (Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda); AU (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), China, Russia, Egypt, Troika (USA, United Kingdom and Norway), EU and UN; South Sudan Council of Churches
Sudan	Government of Sudan, the opposition coalition "Sudan Call" formed by national opposition parties and Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, coalition comprising the armed groups of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur)	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany
Sudan (Darfur)	Government, Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions	AU, UNAMID, Chad, Germany, Qatar, USA, United Kingdom, France
Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)	Government, SPLM-N	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Uganda
Sudan - South Sudan	Government of Sudan and Government of South Sudan	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU
Togo	Government, political and social opposition	Ghana, ECOWAS, AU, UN

The peace negotiations in bold type are described in the chapter.

-- There are not third parties or there is no public proof of their existence

2.1 Negotiations in 2018: regional trends

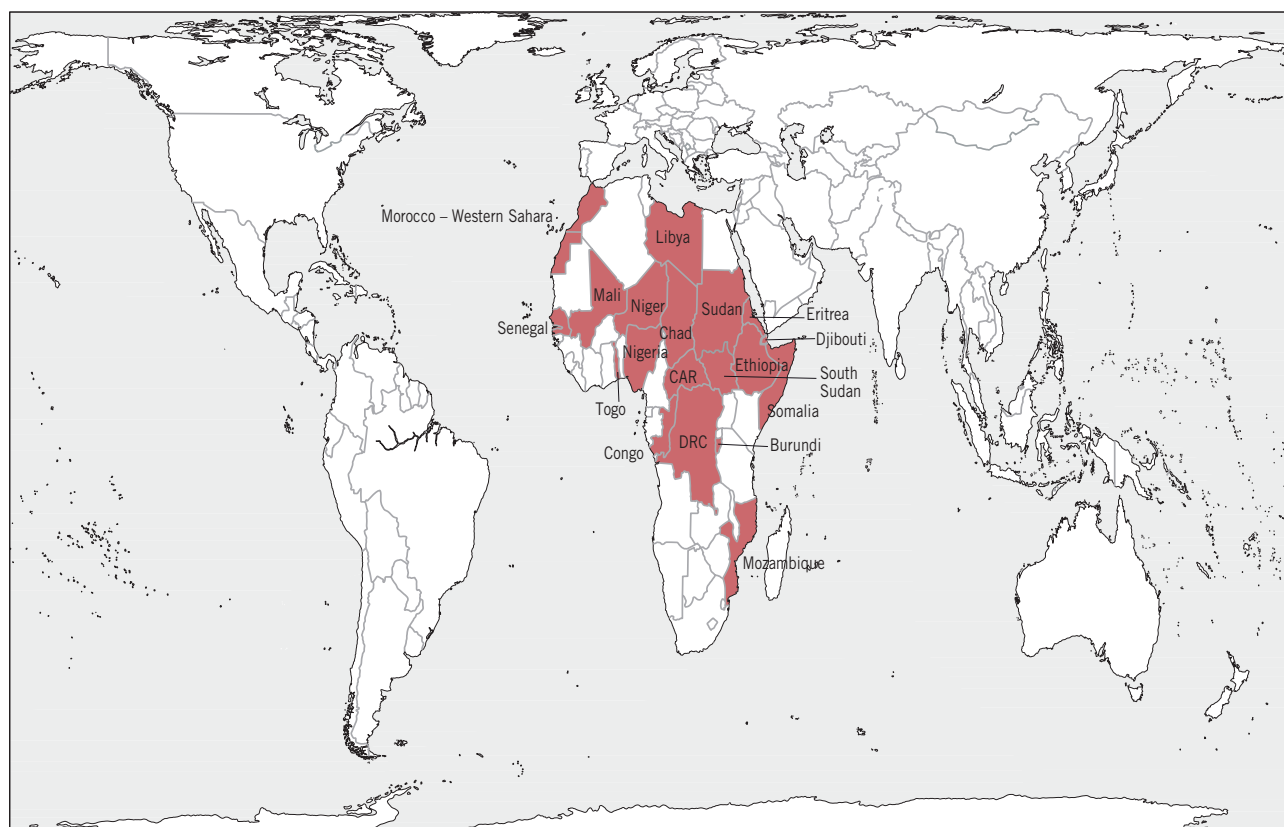
Twenty-two (22) peace processes and negotiations were identified in Africa in 2018, which accounts for practically 45% of the 49 peace processes identified worldwide. The analysis of the different contexts reflects some trends related to the processes and negotiations in Africa.

There was much continuity in the actors involved in the negotiations in 2018 compared to the year before. **In a large number of cases (nine of the 22), the negotiations exclusively involved the governments of the respective countries and armed groups or political-military movements.** This was the case in Ethiopia (Ogaden) between the Ethiopian government and the ONLF; in Ethiopia (Oromia) between the Ethiopian government and the Oromo armed group OLF; in Mozambique between the government and the armed group RENAMO; in the Central African Republic (CAR) between the government and different members of the old Séléka coalition and the anti-balaka militias; in the Republic of the Congo between the government and Pastor Ntouri's political-military movement; in Sudan (Darfur) between

the government and the insurgents in Darfur; in Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) between the government and the armed group SPLM-N; and in South Sudan between the government, the armed group SPLM/A-IO and other minor armed groups.

Other peace processes were characterised by a more complex host of actors, including governments, armed actors and the political and social opposition. This was the case in Mali (north), where the negotiating process has involved the national authorities and many political and armed actors in the northern region of Azawad in recent years; Libya, between political and military forces that control different areas of the country; Somalia, between the federal government, the leaders of the federal states and other political and military actors in the country; and Sudan, between the government, the political opposition and insurgents from different regions of the country. Other cases involved only government actors and the political and social opposition. This was true of Burundi, the DRC and Togo.

Map 2.1. Peace negotiations in Africa 2018



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2018

Other negotiating processes were conducted by the governments of neighbouring countries as part of interstate disputes. In 2018, the number of interstate negotiating processes rose. Thus, the talks between Sudan and South Sudan were joined by the negotiations between Djibouti and Eritrea and those between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2018. One case, that of Morocco-Western Sahara, involves a government (Morocco) and the political-military actor (the POLISARIO Front) of a self-proclaimed independent territory that enjoys no international recognition but is considered by the UN as a territory to be decolonised.

All the peace processes and negotiations analysed in Africa were supported by third parties, with the exception of Ethiopia (Oromia), Nigeria (Niger Delta), the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) and the Republic of the Congo. Whereas in many cases the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment are known to the public, in other contexts these tasks are carried out discreetly and behind closed doors. In all cases involving third parties, more than one actor performed mediation and facilitation tasks. The UN played a predominant role, as it was involved in cases in Burundi, Libya, Mali (North), Morocco-Western Sahara, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan (Darfur), South Sudan and Togo. Another prominent player was the African Union, which was involved in 10 processes as part of its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA):

The number of interstate negotiating processes in Africa rose in 2018

Libya, Mali (north), the CAR, the DRC, Sudan, Sudan (Darfur), Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan and Togo. African regional intergovernmental organisations also participated as third parties in negotiating processes, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali (north) and Togo; the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGRL) in the CAR and the DRC; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the CAR; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan. In addition to African intergovernmental organisations, other intergovernmental organisations participated as third parties in Africa, such as the EU (in Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC and South Sudan), the Arab League (in Libya) and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) in the CAR.

States also played a prominent role as third parties in peace processes and negotiations in Africa. In three cases, all the third-parties were state actors: Saudi Arabia, the USA and especially the United Arab Emirates mediated and facilitated the negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia; Kenya, Eritrea, the United Arab Emirates and Sweden played roles in the talks between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF; and Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and Somalia used their good offices in the

dialogue between Djibouti and Eritrea. In the rest of the processes mediated by states, many states, both from Africa and other continents, became involved as third parties in processes in which other mediating and facilitating actors also participated. Notable local and international roles were also played by third-party religious actors: the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Community of Sant'Egidio (Vatican) in the CAR; the local Catholic Church and the Community of Sant'Egidio in Mozambique; the Community of Sant'Egidio in the Senegalese region of Casamance; the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) in the DRC; and the South Sudan Council of Churches in that country.

Given the many mediating actors, third parties frequently participated in joint formats, such as so-called groups of friends and support groups. This was the case with the Group of Friends on Western Sahara (France, the United States, Spain, the United Kingdom and Russia) regarding the negotiating process between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front and the International Support Group (which includes the UN and the EU) in the talks in the CAR. Other coordination formats included the IGAD Plus, which facilitates dialogue in South Sudan and is made up of the IGAD, the five members of the African Union Ad Hoc High-Level Committee (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), the countries of the Troika (the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway), the EU, the AU and the UN. Also prominent was the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, promoted by the AU and the ECCAS, with the support of the UN, the ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and Chad, which in turn coexisted with other mediating actors in the CAR. **In some cases, the proliferation of actors and parallel processes was viewed with mistrust.** For example, the beginning of a facilitation process in South Sudan headed by Russia and Sudan, alongside the multilateral initiative led by the African Union, caused concern about risks of incoordination in 2018.

Many different subjects were tackled in the negotiations, but especially notable were ceasefires and cessations of hostilities. In Ethiopia, two armed groups, the ONLF (in Ogaden) and the OLF (in Oromia), declared unilateral ceasefires in response to steps taken by the government to build confidence, which led to cessations of hostilities under peace agreements. In the Darfur region in Sudan, the armed groups SLM-MM and JEM extended their unilateral ceasefires, while the government also extended its unilateral ceasefire in both Darfur and the regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile until the end of the year. In neighbouring **South Sudan**, the government and the SPLM/A-IO reached a ceasefire

In all negotiations with third parties in Africa, more than one actor performed mediation and facilitation tasks

The issue of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration was addressed during the year in the negotiating processes in Mozambique, Ethiopia (Oromia) and the Republic of the Congo, with positive developments in all three

as part of a framework agreement that preceded the achievement of a comprehensive peace agreement.

Another security-related issue was **disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), which was part of some peace processes**, such as in Mozambique, Ethiopia (Oromia) and the Republic of the Congo. In Mozambique, the government and RENAMO reached a DDR agreement in August, which established the steps to be followed for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of RENAMO fighters into society and into the security forces, and a disarmament programme started in October. The historic reconciliation agreement signed between the Ethiopian government and the Oromo group OLF in

August also included matters related to disarmament. The disarmament process in the Republic of the Congo began, as laid out in the peace agreement reached in 2017. The negotiations between South Sudan and the opposition SPLM/A-IO and the resulting comprehensive peace agreement in August included issues related to the quartering of all armed actors and a halt to any training and recruitment activity, alongside the creation of an expanded military unit, the Regional Protection Force (RPF).

Other items on the agenda were related to decentralisation. As part of the implementation of the peace agreement in Mozambique, a decentralisation project was approved following the ratification of some constitutional amendments that opened the door for the selection of provincial governors by the winners in local elections, instead of by presidential designation. In Mali, the approval of a new timeline for the peace process in 2018 was intended to accelerate implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, including decentralisation.

At the end of the year, some measures were adopted for the establishment of interim administrations in several regions, though its operationalisation remained deadlocked. Negotiating processes also addressed **border issues**. This was a crucial issue in the impetus for the negotiations between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018, in which Ethiopia finally accepted the 2002 ruling of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), which assigned Eritrea the disputed border village of Badme and was rejected by Ethiopia at the time. Both countries also agreed to withdraw troops from their shared border, paving the way for its demilitarisation after hundreds of thousands of soldiers had been concentrated there. In the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, both governments restarted talks on defining the border, which affects several areas, including the Abyei oil enclave.

Other processes focused on issues related to **political power-sharing and political participation**, such as in Burundi, the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan and Libya. Presidential and legislative elections were held in the DRC in December, in which President Joseph Kabila did not run in the end, fulfilling the requirement set by the Episcopal Conference of the Congo, the facilitator of the process that ended in the 2016 agreement. Seven opposition platforms agreed to a unitary candidate, but finally splintered. In South Sudan, the global agreement reached in 2018 established the mechanisms and timetable for a transitional government involving all the opposing actors, and stipulated future elections under a revised Constitution. The issue of political participation also came up often in the negotiating initiatives in Libya. However, the differences between the main political and military actors delayed key aspects of the political process, such as holding a national conference and elections.

Progress was achieved in various negotiating processes in Africa in 2018, especially in the Horn of Africa. Two historic agreements were reached in Ethiopia: a framework agreement between Ethiopia and the ONLF, an armed group operating in the Ogaden region, and a reconciliation agreement between the Ethiopian government and the OLF, another armed group active in the Oromia region. The change of leadership in the country was decisive in both instances. The resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn under social pressure and the appointment of Abiy Ahmed to the office paved the way for the government to take confidence-building steps such as removing the ONLF and the OLF from its list of terrorist groups, releasing prisoners and enacting an amnesty law for former prisoners. These and other gestures were met with unilateral ceasefires by both insurgent groups, which in turn resulted in peace agreements. Another crucial breakthrough came in the negotiating process between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which faced off in a war from 1998 to 2000 and have remained affected by an unresolved territorial dispute ever since. Also preceded by confidence-building measures due to the change of leadership in Ethiopia, this development resulted in both countries signing two agreements: the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship in July and the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation in September. The agreements concerned implementation of the EEBC border ruling, the restoration of diplomatic, economic and communications agreements, joint investment projects, the creation of implementation monitoring mechanisms and other aspects. The historic agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea also boosted positive developments in other regional disputes. For example, **Djibouti and Eritrea announced the normalisation of their relations**, even

The issue of power-sharing and political participation came up in the negotiating processes in Burundi, the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan and Libya in 2018

The Horn of Africa was the scene of historic agreements in 2018, such as the pacts between Ethiopia and the insurgents of the Ogaden and Oromia regions and the agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea on their border dispute, which swept in progress in other processes in the region

though the conflict between them, the border dispute in the Ras Doumeira area, which was occupied by Eritrea in 2008, remained unresolved. And in Somalia, where the conflict involves many different actors and Eritrea has been accused of supporting the armed group al-Shabaab, **Eritrea and Somalia improved their relations**, facilitated by a series of positive events taking place between Eritrea and Ethiopia and Eritrea and Djibouti, which could result in greater regional integration, with positive impacts on the various conflicts and processes in the region.

In the Great Lakes region, the peace process in South Sudan resulted in a global agreement between the government and the SPLM/A-IO in 2018 that established power-sharing mechanisms, a cessation of hostilities and other achievements. However, the history of breaches in previous deals prompted scepticism about its sustainability and implementation. In the Maghreb, the new UN special envoy helped to make headway in resuming the talks between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front after remaining deadlocked since 2012.

In contrast, **other processes faced many obstacles**, such as in Burundi, where regional initiatives failed to promote inclusive political dialogue amidst stiff disagreement between the government and opposition political and social sectors, as well as divisions among the opposition. The peace process in the CAR also hit snags during the year, as its lack of inclusiveness was criticised by members of civil society, MPs and other national actors. The process also risked failure by beginning a new facilitation channel that is not part of the main mediating format. Negotiations in Sudan were resumed between the Sudanese government and opposition and rebel groups under the National Dialogue and the roadmap agreed in 2016, but no significant progress was achieved. In the Maghreb, the negotiating process in Libya faced serious problems in implementing the UN's 2017 plan for restarting the political process, which delayed the whole process in 2018.

2.2. Case study analysis

Horn of Africa

Djibouti – Eritrea	
Negotiating actors	Government of Djibouti, Government of Eritrea
Third parties	Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Somalia
Relevant agreements	Agreement of Ceasefire (2010)

Summary:

The demarcation of the border between both countries has been a historical source of disagreement and tension. This border was set confusingly in 1901 by a treaty between France (the colonial power in Djibouti) and Italy (the colonial power in Eritrea). The unresolved demarcation caused both countries to face off in 1996 and 1999. This dispute was aggravated at a regional level due to strained relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, since the United States is a firm Ethiopian ally; to the war in Somalia, where Eritrea has been accused of supporting the opposition coalition while Ethiopia and the United States supported the Somali government; and to the war in the Ethiopian region of Ogaden, where Eritrea supports the insurgency fighting against the Ethiopian government. Djibouti, a neutral country in the conflict in Somalia, has hosted several peace initiatives in Somalia and other countries in the region. It enjoys a strategic position for controlling maritime traffic in the Red Sea (France, the United States, China and Japan all have military bases there, and soon Saudi Arabia will have one too) and after the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, Djibouti provides Ethiopia's only point of access to the sea. The situation escalated in 2008 with new clashes between both countries and the occupation of the area of Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island by Eritrea, which had until then been under the sovereignty of Djibouti, but without a definitive agreement on the border issue. In 2009, the UN Security Council established an arms embargo against Eritrea for its collaboration with Somali armed actors and for its refusal to withdraw from Ras Doumeira. Qatar began mediating between both countries and reached a ceasefire agreement in June 2010, establishing a contingent of 500 soldiers to monitor the situation. Despite attempts to turn the ceasefire into a peace agreement, little progress has been made. In March 2016, Qatar succeeded in getting Eritrea to release four Djibouti soldiers who had been held prisoner since 2008. In June 2017, Qatar withdrew its observation mission for various reasons, including both countries' support for Saudi Arabia's accusation that Qatar supported radical Islamism and Iran. As a result, Eritrea again occupied the area and Djibouti requested the intervention of the AU and the UN following Qatar's withdrawal.

The historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia¹ that was reached in 2018 led to breakthroughs in various regional disputes, including the border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti regarding Ras Doumeira.

Although the conflict is still pending resolution, on 7 September 2018, both countries announced the normalisation of their relations following a visit by Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh to Djibouti. Likewise, Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssof announced the start of a new era of relations between both countries. Following the meeting, Ethiopia publicly hailed the change in attitude. Osman Saleh appeared in Djibouti accompanied by his respective Somali and Ethiopian counterparts, Ahmed Isse Awad and Workneh Gebeyehu, who travelled to Djibouti to facilitate the dialogue.

These events were preceded in July by the restoration of diplomatic relations between Eritrea and Somalia. The UN Security Council had accused Eritrea of supporting the Somali armed group al-Shabaab, an allegation that it had denied despite some supporting evidence. Eritrea

needed to resolve the different disputes in which it is involved before the arms embargo and the different UN Security Council sanctions could be lifted. Ethiopia has been an important ally of Somalia in its fight against al-Shabaab, so that peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea could open the doors to improving relations with their mutual neighbour and lifting the sanctions. This normalisation of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea was also preceded in early September by a meeting in Asmara between the Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian foreign ministers. For Eritrea, resolving this dispute was the last obstacle to lifting the UN sanctions and ending its international isolation, while for Djibouti, peace with Eritrea reduces the risks of it being isolated in the region by its high dependence on Ethiopia. The port of Djibouti accounts for 95% of Ethiopia's exports and imports, so the agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia could spell isolation for Djibouti if it is not accompanied by peace with Eritrea. Indeed, peace between all three countries could lead to greater regional integration, according to several analysts. The international community hailed the beginning of the end of the territorial dispute and the improvement of relations. After these meetings, on 17 September Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki met with Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and agreed to open a new chapter in relations between both countries. Both leaders thanked Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz for all the efforts and arrangements to facilitate the situation. On 14 November, the UN Security Council lifted the sanctions imposed on Eritrea since 2009 through Resolution 2444, which was approved unanimously.

Eritrea – Ethiopia

Negotiating actors	Government of Eritrea, Government of Ethiopia
Third parties	United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, USA
Relevant agreements	Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities (Algiers, 2000), Agreement between the Government of the State of Eritrea and the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia or the December Agreement (Algiers, 2000), Decision Regarding Delimitation of the Border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, EEBC (2002), Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation (2018)

Summary:

Eritrea became independent from Ethiopia in 1993, although the border between both countries was not clearly defined, causing them to face off between 1998 and 2000 in a war that cost over 100,000 lives. In June 2000 they signed a cessation of hostilities agreement, the UN Security Council established the UNMEE mission to monitor it and they signed the Algiers peace agreement in December. This agreement established that both would submit to the ruling issued by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), which is in charge of delimiting and demarcating the border based on the relevant colonial treaties (1900, 1902 and 1908) and on international law. The EEBC announced its opinion in April 2002, assigning

1. See the summary on Eritrea-Ethiopia in this chapter.

the disputed border village of Badme (the epicentre of the war, currently administered by Ethiopia) to Eritrea, though Ethiopia rejected the decision. Frustrated by the lack of progress in implementing the EEBC's ruling due to insufficient pressure on Ethiopia to comply, Eritrea decided to restrict UNMEE operations in late 2005, forcing its withdrawal in 2008. A year earlier, the EEBC had ended its work without being able to implement its mandate due to obstructions in Ethiopia, so the situation has remained at an impasse ever since. Both countries maintained a situation characterised by a pre-war climate, with hundreds of thousands of soldiers deployed on their shared border, sporadic clashes and belligerent rhetoric. A historic agreement was reached in 2018, ending the conflict between them.

In 2018, a historic agreement was reached between Eritrea and Ethiopia that put an end to 20 years of conflict between both countries. The appointment of Abiy Ahmed as the new prime minister of Ethiopia was decisive, although according to some sources, the process began to take shape during the government of Hailemariam Desalegn. Eritrea and Ethiopia had been exchanging messages since 2017 with the support of the United States and particularly the United Arab Emirates, a country that has been the greatest backer of this process. On 15 February, former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn announced that he would resign from office and from the leadership of the ruling coalition to facilitate the implementation of reforms due to the serious crisis affecting the country. On 16 February the Ethiopian government reinstated the state of emergency, which had been in force between October 2016 and October 2017. However, in January the government had announced that it would pardon hundreds of political prisoners, and in February the attorney general decreed the release of hundreds of prisoners, though the demonstrations and tension continued. On 27 March, Abiy Ahmed was appointed president of the ruling coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Forum (EPRDF). A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward as a candidate by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the governing EPRDF coalition. He was appointed prime minister of the country on 2 April. His first acts were aimed at mitigating ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties. In his inaugural address, Abiy Ahmed promised that he would achieve peace with Eritrea. However, Eritrea dismissed the statement and again urged Addis Ababa to withdraw its troops from the border area.

On 5 June, the governing EPRDF coalition announced that it would accept the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission's (EEBC) ruling, which includes the transfer of Badme, the epicentre of the conflict, to Eritrea. At

the same time, it urged Asmara to accept its openness to dialogue without preconditions. The announcement did not establish any agenda for withdrawing troops, which was Eritrea's main concern and demand, but was unanimously welcomed by the international community nonetheless. The Eritrean opposition movement Forum for National Dialogue² urged the Ethiopian government to withdraw its troops from Eritrean soil without preconditions. However, peaceful civic demonstrations were staged days later in Badme and the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray in protest against the government's announcement. The TPLF party, a member of the ruling coalition representing the Tigray minority, also criticised the decision. On 20 June, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki revealed plans to send a delegation to hold peace talks with Ethiopia, which became effective on 26 June with a meeting in Addis Ababa between the Eritrean foreign minister and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. After the meeting, Abiy said that his country was willing to end hostilities and make sacrifices to restore peace with Eritrea if necessary. The decisive moment came on 8 July, when Abiy set out on a two-day visit to Asmara. On the same day, telephone connectivity between both countries was re-established for the first time in

A historic agreement was reached between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2018 that put an end to 20 years of conflict between both sides

20 years. **On 9 July, the leaders of both countries signed the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship**, ending 20 years of war and including agreement on implementing the border decision and on restoring diplomatic, economic and communications agreements, among other issues. Abiy asked UN Secretary-General António Guterres to lift the sanctions on Eritrea. Between 14 and 16 July, Afewerki visited Ethiopia for the first time in 20 years and reopened the Eritrean Embassy. Ethiopian Airlines resumed flights with Eritrea on 18 July and its Eritrean counterpart did the same on 4 August. On 24 July, both leaders thanked Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates for his role in promoting peace between the two countries. Abiy Ahmed made his second visit to Eritrea on 5 September and the Ethiopian Embassy opened in Asmara the next day. On 11 September, both leaders agreed to withdraw their troops from the shared border. This decision gave way to the tripartite meeting between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) that culminated in the **signing of the peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia on 16 September, known as the Agreement on Peace, Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation**, with the leaders of both countries and King Salman of Saudi Arabia, the UN Secretary-General, the chair of the AU Commission and the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates in attendance. This agreement added the creation of joint investment projects to the Joint Declaration of 9 July, including the establishment of Joint Special Economic Zones and collaboration in the

2. Opposition movement created in London in 2014 that promotes democracy and political transition in the country that includes several former senior officials of the ruling party, the EPLF, who reject the authoritarian path that the country has taken since the 1990s.

fight against terrorism and human, drug and weapons trafficking, as well as a committee and subcommittees to monitor implementation of the agreement.

Ethiopia (Ogaden)	
Negotiating actors	Government, ONLF military political movement
Third parties	Kenya, United Arab Emirates and Sweden
Relevant agreements	Framework Agreement (2018)

Summary:

The regime that has ruled Ethiopia since 1991 maintains a confrontation with a number of ethno-political armed groups that demand greater autonomy or even independence from the central Government. One of them is the ONLF, which was founded in 1984 and operates in the Ogaden region in the southeast of the country. It demands independence for the region inhabited by the Somali community. The ONLF collaborated with the opposition to overthrow Mengistu, which was successful in 1991. In 1994, the legislative body of the Ogaden region, called the Somali Regional State (SRS), passed a resolution calling for a referendum on self-determination that led to its dissolution by the Ethiopian government. The ONLF has been fighting against the Ethiopian regime ever since, asserting that the conflict will only end when it accepts the principle to exercise the right to self-determination, as established under the Ethiopian Constitution, without preconditions or restrictions. The ONLF also condemns the plundering of the region's natural resources by the government. Over the years unsuccessful sporadic contacts between the parties have taken place, against a backdrop of continual fighting, which since 2006 has been on the rise. The first round of negotiations took place in 2012. Since then, there have been sporadic and mostly confidential meetings between the parties with Kenya mediating. It was not until 2018 that the Ethiopian government and the ONLF signed a framework agreement to work together on the root causes of the conflict.

The meetings held in late 2017 bore fruit in 2018 with the signing of a historic peace agreement between the Ethiopian government and the armed group ONLF. At the end of 2017, the United Arab Emirates hosted an unofficial preparatory meeting between representatives of the Ethiopian government and the insurgents in Ogaden, region officially called the Somali Regional State, in a prelude to a second round of negotiations in early 2018. In January 2018, Kenya sent a delegation to Sweden led by the former defence minister and MP representing Garissa County (Kenya), Mohamed Yusuf Haji, to meet representatives of the ONLF to facilitate the official resumption of talks, according to local sources. On 22 January, ONLF representatives held a meeting with Somali Ogadeni communities in the United States to hear their recommendations for the peace talks. The second round of negotiations took place on 11 February 2018 in Nairobi. The governor of Garissa County, Ambassador Ali

The appointment of new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was decisive in the positive development of the situation in Ethiopia and the local and regional conflicts affecting it

Bunow Korane, who coordinated the meeting, said that some progress had been made after almost six years of pressure on the ONLF and the Ethiopian government to return to the negotiating table. No statements were issued by either the government delegation, led by Colonel Gebre Egziabher Alemseged (Colonel Gabre), the former interim head of the Office of the Facilitator for Somalia Peace and National Reconciliation, nor by Abdi Mohamud Omar (aka Abdi Iley), the president of the Somali Regional State (SRS). The ONLF delegation included its political and military wings and was composed of its chief negotiator, Abdirahman Mahdi; the commander of the military wing (ONLA), Sulub Abdi Ahmed; the chairman of the ONLF Committee, Ahmed Yasin Dirane; and the group's finance chief, Ibado Hirsi Mahad. These talks took place alongside clashes between the ONLF and the Liyu Police, a regional police force responsible for fighting against terrorism that has been accused of serious human rights violations.

Days after the meeting, the Ethiopian government released 1,500 inmates from Jail Ogaden, a prison located in the Ogaden region and the scene of serious human rights violations according to the armed group and human rights organisations. The insurgents declared that these prisoners were linked to the ONLF, although they added that there were still many other prisoners in Ethiopian prisons. However, they repeated through social networks that no agreement had been reached with the government. The appointment of new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was decisive in the positive development of the situation in the country regarding this and other conflicts affecting it.³ In February, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned before social pressure and Abiy Ahmed was nominated by the ruling EPRDF coalition on 27 March. A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward as a candidate by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the governing EPRDF coalition. His first acts were aimed at mitigating ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties. On his first trip, in April, he visited Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region, to meet with representatives of the Oromo and Somali communities.

On 30 June, the government presented a proposal to Parliament to remove three armed groups from the list of terrorist organisations (OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7), opened access to more than 200 forbidden websites, dismissed senior prison officials for failing to protect prisoners' rights and promoted the release of political prisoners. On 20 July, Parliament passed an amnesty law for former political prisoners. The escalation of interethnic tension in early August was decisive for moving forward in the situation. This escalation prompted the deployment of

3. See the summary on Eritrea-Ethiopia in this chapter.

the Ethiopian Army in Jijiga, the capital of Ogaden, following the refusal of the president of the regional state, Abdi (“The Hawk”) Iley, a member of the former administration of late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who held office from 1995 to 2012, to obey a government summons to explain how the situation in the region has developed and the demand to dismantle the Liyu Police, which he directed. Two days later he was forced to resign. Supporters of Abdi, supported by the Liyu Police, staged violent protests against the Ethiopian Army, causing dozens of fatalities (up to 90, according to some sources). On 27 August, Abdi was arrested. His replacement, the activist and humanitarian worker Mustafa Muhumed Omer, had been critical of the former regional and federal government’s management of human rights abuses and violations, which is why he was in exile. His appointment was widely celebrated and after his election, he became the vice president of the ruling party in the region, the ESPDP, of which he had not been a member prior to his appointment. Following these historic decisions, the ONLF declared a unilateral ceasefire on 12 August. **The ONLF attributed this decision to the positive steps taken by the government to facilitate and promote meetings and peace talks “to find a viable and lasting solution to the conflict in Ogaden”. Finally, the ONLF and the Ethiopian government signed a framework agreement in Asmara (Eritrea) on 21 October and agreed to establish a joint committee that will continue working to address the root causes of the conflict.** The agreement stipulates that both parties will end the hostilities and that the ONLF will continue to pursue its political objectives through peaceful means.

Gender, peace and security

In October, the Ethiopian Prime Minister approved a historic cabinet shake-up that reduced the number of ministry positions and established that half were occupied by women, including the defence ministry, which has traditionally only been occupied by men, and was entrusted to Aisha Mohammed Musa. He also created the new ministry of peace, headed by the former speaker of Parliament, Muferiat Kamil, who will oversee important organisations such as the national intelligence agency, the NISS, and other federal information, security and economic bodies and agencies. Both chambers unanimously appointed the diplomat Sahlework Zewde to be the new president of the country, a position without executive powers but of high representative value, making her the first female Ethiopian head of state and the only one currently holding that office in Africa. Sahlework had thus far served as UN Secretary-General António Guterres’s special representative to the African Union.

On 30 June, the Ethiopian government presented a proposal to Parliament to remove three armed groups from the list of terrorist organisations (OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7)

Ethiopia (Oromia)

Negotiating actors Government, OLF military political movement

Third parties –

Relevant agreements Reconciliation Agreement (2018)

Summary:

Ethiopia has experienced secessionist movements or rejection of central power since the 1970s. The Oromo OLF emerged between 1973 and 1974 and operates in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, in the centre and south of the country, against the Mengistu dictatorship and with the goal of establishing an independent State for the Oromo community. Despite differences, the political and armed nationalist movements of the Oromo participated together with other insurgent groups in the country to overthrow the Mengistu regime in 1991. However, the OLF split away in 1992 from the transitional Government led by Meles Zenawi’s TPLF party, that controls the coalition in power, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and since then it initiated an armed struggle against the central Government and against other Oromo pro-government political movements. It demands independence for the Oromo community. After the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, much of its leadership moved to Eritrea and its military wing, the OLA, began to receive training and support from Eritrea. Between 2000 and 2005, the membership of the OLF fluctuated due to government repression against Oromo student activists and general dissidence, as well as internal divisions among factions of the group, which weakened their capacity for action. Since late 2015, the region has become the epicentre of the protests against the Ethiopian regime, causing hundreds of deaths and an increase in armed actions by the Liyu Police, a governmental paramilitary body responsible for serious human rights violations that was created to take action against opposition groups in the Oromia and Ogaden regions.

The appointment of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in March 2018 was decisive for the development of the situation in the country regarding the conflict in Oromia and others affecting it.⁴ In February, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned and on 27 March Abiy Ahmed was nominated by the ruling EPRDF coalition to replace him. A member of the Oromo community, former military intelligence officer and MP, Abiy Ahmed was put forward as a candidate by the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), one of the four parties that make up the governing EPRDF coalition. His first acts were aimed at mitigating ethnic tensions in the country, promoting national unity and relaxing restrictions on civil liberties. On his first trip, in April, he visited Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region, to meet with representatives of the Oromo and Somali communities.

On 30 June, the government presented a proposal to Parliament to remove three armed groups from the list of terrorist groups (OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7), opened access to more than 200 forbidden websites, dismissed senior prison officials for failing to protect prisoners’ rights and

4. See the summary on Ethiopia (Ogaden) and on Eritrea-Ethiopia in this chapter.

promoted the release of political prisoners. **After it was removed from the list of terrorist groups, where it had been listed since 2008, the OLF declared a unilateral ceasefire in July.** On 20 July, Parliament passed an amnesty law for former political prisoners. After these historic decisions, the government and the OLF reached a reconciliation agreement to end the hostilities. Thus, on 7 August the Ethiopian government and the OLF signed a Reconciliation Agreement in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, according to the Eritrean information minister. The leader of the OLF, Dawud Ibsa, who lived in exile in Asmara, signed on behalf of the armed group. The president of the Oromia region, Lemma Megersa, signed on behalf of Ethiopia. Also present at the event was Ethiopian Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu, a member of the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO) and the EPRDF coalition since 1991, as well as a member of the executive committees of both parties since 2012 and a former transport minister. Both parties agreed to establish a joint committee to monitor implementation of the agreement. This agreement represents a new step by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to improve the country's security situation and diplomatic relations, reform its institutions and open its economy.

However, after these breakthroughs, there was an escalation of violence in the capital, Addis Ababa, and the surrounding area linked to the return of OLF members who had been in exile. On 15 September, a major demonstration was staged to commemorate their return, which ended with acts of violence committed by sympathisers of the rebellion against other communities. Other acts of violence occurred in some neighbourhoods and districts of the capital in the days that followed, in which 28 people lost their lives. Later, the government asked the OLF fighters who had not yet disarmed as established by the reconciliation agreement reached in August to proceed to disarm. Around 1,300 OLF fighters had already disarmed in compliance with the agreement. However, clashes were reported between the OLF and Ethiopian security forces in the district of Qelem de Wolega between 28 and 29 October, which were repeated at the end of the year. The OLF accused the government of not having respected the August agreement.

Gender, peace and security

In October, **the Ethiopian Prime Minister approved a historic cabinet shake-up** that reduced the number of ministry positions and **established that half were occupied by women**, including the defence ministry, which has traditionally only been occupied by men, and was entrusted to Aisha Mohammed Musa. He also created the new ministry of peace, headed by the former speaker of Parliament, Muferiat Kamil, who will oversee important organisations such as the national intelligence agency, the NISS, and other federal information, security and economic bodies and agencies. Both chambers unanimously appointed the diplomat Sahlework Zewde to be the new president of the country, a position

without executive powers but of high representative value, making her the first female Ethiopian head of state and the only one currently holding that office in Africa. Sahlework had thus far served as UN Secretary-General António Guterres's special representative to the African Union.

Somalia	
Negotiating actors	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, Southwest), political-military movement Ahlu Sunna Wal-Jama'a, clan leaders and sub-clans
Third parties	UN, IGAD, Turkey, among others
Relevant agreements	Road map to end the transition (2011), Kampala Accord (2011), Provisional Federal Constitution (2012), Mogadishu Declaration of the National Consultative Forum (2015)

Summary:

The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a coalition of opposing groups rebelled against the dictatorial power of Siad Barre and three years later managed to overthrow him. Since 1991, more than 15 peace processes with different types of proposals were attempted to establish a central authority. Of note were the Addis Ababa (1993), Arta (2000) and Mbagathi (2002-2004) processes. The centrality of the Somali state had led to a high degree of authoritarianism during Barre's rule, and the different proposals intended to establish a State that did not hold all of the power, a formula widely rejected by Somali society. However, some clans and warlords rejected the federal or decentralized model because it represented a threat to their power. The resolution of the conflict has been complicated by several issues: the power of some warlords who have turned conflict into a way of life; the issue of representation and the balance of power used to establish the future government between the different stakeholders and clans that make up the Somali social structure in conflict for years during Siad Barre's dictatorship; interference by Ethiopia and Eritrea; and the erratic stance of the international community. The rise of political Islam as a possible governing option through the Islamic courts, and the internationalization of the conflict with the arrival of foreign fighters in the armed wing of the courts, al-Shabaab, as well the Ethiopian invasion and the U.S. role in the fight against terrorism, have all contributed to making the situation more difficult. The Transitional Federal Government, which emerged from the Mbagathi peace process (2004), came to an end in 2012 and gave way to the Federal Government, which was supposed to be in charge of holding the elections in 2016. The National Consultative Forum held in 2015 laid the foundations for the different agreements to be reached on holding the elections in 2016. The elections were held in late 2016 and early 2017.

The armed groups al-Shabaab and ISIS remained active in the country during the year, while relations deteriorated between the federal states and the Federal Government of Somalia. Attempts at negotiation and mediation between the federal states and the government were unsuccessful. Finally, the leaders of five states – Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Jubaland, Puntland and South West– met in Kismayo on 8 September and announced

that they were breaking off relations with the Federal Government, arguing that there was no cooperation between it and the regions and citing the corruption and growing insecurity. According to several analysts, this break took place in a context of relations maintained by the federal states with regional actors such as the United Arab Emirates, which are opposed to relations between the Federal Government and its Qatari and Turkish allies. Following the announcement, the Federal Government called for peace talks with the regions in dispute.

Relations between Somalia and Eritrea also improved after the peace agreements were signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia and between Eritrea and Djibouti. Following Ethiopia's offer to begin demarcating the border and reach an agreement with Eritrea in June, the presidents of Somalia and Eritrea met in Asmara on 28 July and announced that they were restoring diplomatic relations and bilateral cooperation and investment. Later, on 13 August, the Eritrean foreign minister visited Mogadishu to strengthen relations. The Somali president met with his counterpart in Djibouti on 16 August to discuss Somalia's support for lifting the arms embargo and sanctions against Eritrea, which had been in force since 2009 and was also related to Eritrea's occupation of the Ras Doumeira area, disputed with Djibouti.⁵ At the end of the year, relations between the Somali government and the United Nations were strained after the former declared the UN Secretary-General's special representative in Somalia, Nicholas Haysom, to be a persona non grata and forced him to leave the country. The crisis began after the Somali police and Ethiopian contingents of the African Union mission arrested Mukhat Robow, a former spokesman for al-Shabaab who left the armed organisation in 2017 and who expressed his intention to run in regional elections that were to be held a few days after his arrest. The arrest sparked several protests and prompted a joint communiqué from the United Nations, AMISOM and several governments that questioned the legal framework in which the arrest took place, as well as the deaths that occurred during the protests against Robow's arrest.

Relations between Somalia and Eritrea normalised as a result of the peace agreement signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia and between Eritrea and Djibouti

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Burundi	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition grouped in the National Council for the Respect of the Peace Agreement and the Reconciliation of Burundi and the Restoration of the Rule of Law (CNARED)
Third parties	East African Community (EAC), UN
Relevant agreements	Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (2000), global ceasefire agreement (2006)

Summary:

The mediation efforts started by Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in 1998 and brought to a head by South African President Nelson Mandela took shape with the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in 2000, which laid the foundations for ending the conflict in Burundi that began in 1993. Although this agreement did not fully curb the violence until a few years later (with the signing of the pact between the FNL and the government, in 2006, and the beginning of its implementation in late 2008), it marked the beginning of the political and institutional transition that formally ended in 2005. The approval of a new Constitution formalising the distribution of political and military power between the two main Hutu and Tutsi communities and the elections that led to the formation of a new government laid the future foundations for overcoming the conflict and provided the best chance to put an end to the ethno-political violence that had affected the country since independence in 1962. However, the authoritarian drift of the government after the 2010 elections, denounced as fraudulent by the opposition, overshadowed the reconciliation process and sparked demonstrations by the political opposition. Different signs of how the situation is deteriorating in the country include institutional deterioration and the shrinking of political space for the opposition, Nkurunziza's controversial candidacy for a third term and his victory in a presidential election also described as fraudulent in April 2015, the subsequent escalation of political violence, the failed coup attempt in May 2015, human rights violations and the emergence of new armed groups. Since then, the EAC has unsuccessfully facilitated political talks between the government and the CNARED coalition, which groups together the political and social opposition, part of which is in exile for being considered responsible for or complicit in the coup d'état of 2015.

The peace process promoted by the East African Community (EAC) remained deadlocked and the atmosphere of violence that has characterised the situation in the country for over four years persisted. The year 2018 was marked by preparations for the referendum to reform the Constitution, held in May, and attempts to restart negotiations between the parties. In January, 23 civil society organisations launched the "Teshwa Ute" ("Stop") campaign against the referendum. In March, the opposition coalition in exile CNARED⁶ created the platform Forum Citoyen with activists and journalists to block the referendum in Belgium. On 18 March, President Pierre Nkurunziza announced the constitutional referendum for 17 May, which would open the door for him to run until 2034 and extend the term of office of the presidency from five to seven years. He won with 73% of the vote in a campaign marked by government repression and intimidation towards voters opposed to the referendum, the criminalisation of abstention (punishable by three years in prison) and the opposition coalition CNARED's call for a boycott. The day passed without incident, although the opposition coalition Amizero y'Abarundi denounced pressure and threats from security agencies and pro-government groups such as the youth wing of the

5. See the summary on Eritrea and Djibouti in this chapter.

6. The CNARED is made up of 22 parties and opposition political movements. It is led by Jean Minani, who has served as president of the National Assembly twice and leader of the FRODEBU party.

CNDD-FDD government party, the Imbonerakure. France and the United States condemned the atmosphere of repression. Days before the referendum, an attack against police families in the northwestern province of Cibitoke killed 26 people. The government blamed the attack on “terrorists from the DRC”. However, on 7 June, during the ceremony to proclaim the new Constitution approved by the referendum, Nkurunziza announced that he would not run in the 2020 elections. This news was welcomed in the United States and Belgium, which then called for better governance and for opening the political sphere.

In this context, **regional initiatives to promote an inclusive political dialogue failed**. The president postponed holding a new round of talks until after the referendum, so after the new Constitution was proclaimed in June, the EAC facilitator sent his team to consult with the government, the political parties, the external opposition coalition, civil society organisations, youth organisations, women’s groups, religious groups and the media to discuss the fifth round and its programme. The fourth round, held between 28 November and 8 December 2017, was boycotted by the opposition coalition in exile CNARED. In August 2018, the government promoted a meeting in Kayanza with the different pro-government and opposition parties to prepare the way for the 2020 elections. The opposition was divided between those who participated in the meeting but did not sign the agreement, known as the Kayanza Road Map 2018 (as the case of Sahwanya-FRODEBU and the National Alliance for Change, RANAC), and other opponents who did not attend the meeting (Amizero y’Abarundi, led by the historical leader of the FNL rebellion, Agathon Rwasa), who denigrated the event as a way to hollow out the inter-Burundian talks promoted by the EAC. On 9 August, the UN Secretary-General’s special representative in Burundi, Michel Kafando, asked the UN Security Council to pressure all parties to participate in the negotiating process promoted by the EAC. Representatives of the mediation team of the EAC met in Bujumbura with government and opposition representatives on 16-17 August. The government announced that it would participate in the fifth session promoted by the EAC, provided that it was the last. The CNDD-FDD noted that the Kayanza Road Map 2018 should serve as a basis for dialogue and called for the process to be moved to Burundi, instead of being held outside the country. The mediation team also met with Amizero y’Abarundi and other opposition political parties, which stressed that there were several unresolved issues in the proposed programme that should be discussed during the negotiations, including the reconfiguration of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the creation of an agreed road map with a hybrid mechanism for strictly monitoring its implementation.

It was agreed to hold the fifth round of dialogue in Kampala in September, then the EAC met with

the opposition coalition CNARED between 5 and 7 September in Brussels. CNARED and internal opposition representatives met in Entebbe (Uganda) between 21 and 23 September to reach common ground ahead of the fifth round that finally came to an end on 25 to 29 October. The mediating team thought that there was a basis for negotiations, although the government made some objections and excuses for postponing the start of the session. In addition to the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the death of former President Ndadaye and the mourning period that was extended for the entire month, government representatives also objected that certain preconditions had not been met, namely that the fifth session was supposed to be focused exclusively on the Kayanza Road Map 2018 (conditions surrounding the 2020 elections) and that the list of participants had to be made public prior to the session. The facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue held talks with civil society organisations, including women’s, youth, media and religious groups between 20 and 22 October. On 25 October, the facilitator formally began the fifth session of the inter-Burundian dialogue in Arusha (Tanzania). The government, the ruling party and its allied parties were absent, arguing that they would not participate in a meeting that included people responsible for the failed coup d’état in 2015. The

Regional initiatives to promote an inclusive political dialogue in Burundi failed in 2018

session, which ended on 29 October, was attended by 41 representatives of political parties and political actors from inside and outside Burundi, including two former heads of state and six women prominent in politics and civil society. The AU repeated its support for the EAC and the EU extended its sanctions against government representatives, arguing that they lacked the political will to resolve the dispute. The facilitator closed the session on 29 October. In his concluding remarks, he stressed that the time had come to re-evaluate his role and the facilitation process as a whole and announced that he would present a summary of the minimum issues of the different road maps presented in preparation for the fifth round.

At the end of the year, uncertainty regarding the peace process increased after the government issued international arrest warrants against former President Pierre Buyoya (1987-1993 and 1996-2005) and 16 of his collaborators (11 military and five civilians) for their alleged participation in the assassination of former President Melchior Ndadaye in 1993, the first democratically elected president, which led to the start of a period of violence in which some 300,000 people lost their lives. Buyoya, who currently works in the African Union, said that the arrest warrants were politically motivated and could plunge the country into a spiral of ethnic violence. The AU issued a statement urging Pierre Nzukuriza’s government not to begin political and judicial actions that could jeopardise peacebuilding efforts in the country. The government urged the AU not to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. A few days later, in December, the government announced

the closure of the United Nations Rights Office. Relations between the Burundian government and the UN had been strained by the UN's complaints about human rights violations during the crises generated by Nzukuriza's decision to stand for re-election for a third term in 2015, as well as Burundi's recent decision to withdraw from the International Criminal Court.

Gender, peace and security

Since January 2015, UN Women has supported the creation of a network of women that, together with local authorities and civil society, has helped to strengthen effective female participation in local and nationwide mediation initiatives. **This network, known as Abakanguriramahoro (Women Network for Peace and Dialogue), has 534 mediators belonging to more than 200 civil society organisations working in the 129 municipalities of the country.** This network has helped to resolve thousands of local conflicts, but since the escalation of violence in April 2015, it has started and participated in dialogue initiatives in all the provinces of the country with political parties, security agencies and civil society, making it an even more important actor.

CAR	
Negotiating actors	Government, armed groups belonging to the former Seleka Coalition, Antibalaka militias
Third parties	The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation (AU and ECCAS, with the support of the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Rep. of the Congo and Chad), Community of Sant Egidio, ACCORD, International Support Group (UN, EU, among others), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Russia, Sudan
Relevant agreements	Republican pact for peace, national reconciliation and reconstruction in the CAR (2015), Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities (June 2017)

Summary:

Since gaining independence in 1960, the situation in the Central African Republic has been characterized by ongoing political instability, leading to numerous coups d'état and military dictatorships. After the 2005 elections won by François Bozizé, which consolidated the coup d'état perpetrated previously by the latter, several insurgency groups emerged in the north of the country, which historically has been marginalized and is of Muslim majority. In December 2012 these groups forced negotiations to take place. In January 2013, in Libreville, François Bozizé's Government and the coalition of armed groups, called Séléka, agreed to a transition Government, but Séléka decided to break the agreement and took power, overthrowing Bozizé. Nevertheless, self-defence groups ('anti-balaka'), sectors in the Army and supporters of Bozizé rebelled against the Séléka Government, creating a climate of chaos and generalized impunity. In December 2014 a new offensive brought an end to the Séléka Government and a transition Government led by Catherine Samba-Panza was instated. Regional leaders, headed by the Congolese Denis Sassou-Nguesso facilitated dialogue initiatives in parallel to the configuration of a national dialogue process, which was completed in May 2015. Some of the agreements

reached were implemented, such as the holding of the elections to end the transition phase, but the disarmament and integration of guerrilla members into the security forces is still pending, and contributing to ongoing insecurity and violence. The various regional initiatives have come together in a single negotiating framework, the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation launched in late 2016, under the auspices of the AU and ECCAS with the support of the UN, which established the Libreville Roadmap in July 2017.

The situation remained marked by the persistence of violence and clashes in different parts of the country while attempts to facilitate dialogue initiatives competed with each other and did not bear fruit. In October the UN Secretary-General stated that although the African Union's Peace Initiative was the fundamental framework for peace in the country, it had been unable to resolve the causes of the conflict and the state still had serious difficulties in increasing its capacity and presence in the country, which remained in the hands of the armed groups. The implementation of the Peace Initiative took time and lacks the necessary resources, according to the UN. Despite the arms embargo and the ban established under the Kimberley Process, armed groups continued to profit from illegally exploiting natural resources, levying taxes at illegal checkpoints and trafficking weapons.

One year after the Libreville Roadmap was approved in July 2017, the facilitators of the Peace Initiative met with the 14 main armed groups. In August, a meeting was held in Bouar in which the facilitators helped to harmonise the armed groups' demands, which were then submitted to President Touadéra for examination by the government, which should serve as the basis for preparing for the talks between the government and armed groups initially planned for November 2018. The facilitators also met with two former heads of state in exile, François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia. With the support of the Peacebuilding Fund, the Community of Sant'Egidio and the South African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), in July the Peace Initiative organised training sessions to prepare the armed groups, government representatives and political and social leaders for direct negotiations. UN Women and UNDP organised workshops and seminars to promote the participation of women and youth. Nonetheless, civil society, members of Parliament and other national actors criticised the peace initiative's apparent lack of inclusiveness by limiting the negotiations to the 14 armed groups, which could influence popular support. Concern was also expressed about the inconsistency between regional, national and local initiatives and about the failure to raise the interests of civilians and victims as a central issue in the talks.

Although the UN Secretary-General himself called for all mediation initiatives to be closely coordinated with the Peace Initiative to strengthen the peace process, Russia and Sudan facilitated parallel spaces for dialogue, which may finally enter in competition with the Peace Initiative. At the end of the year, the partial arms embargo on

the country remained active, despite the Central African president's requests that it be lifted, and Russia, which is exempt from the UN Security Council's ban and may ship weapons to the country, stepped up its role. Moscow established military and economic cooperation agreements with the government and proposed to mediate between the armed groups. In late September the UN Secretary-General's special representative for the Central African Republic, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, said that the country's need to strengthen security and acquire weapons was essential and undeniable, but he also stressed that it was key that this process be conducted in a transparent and orderly manner, so he asked the different actors for diplomatic consistency (in reference to Russia, China and the United States). On 28 August, a meeting with the three main ex-Séléka factions and an anti-balaka faction was held in Khartoum with the support of Russia, in continuation of another meeting held in Khartoum previously, on 10 July. The second meeting culminated in a declaration in which the armed factions committed to support peace and dialogue under the African Union's Peace Initiative. Russia informed the Central African MPs of the conclusions of the meetings held in Khartoum. This initiative in Khartoum aroused misgivings because it opened a parallel and uncoordinated dialogue process. The special representative said that peace initiatives should be coordinated because otherwise there was a risk of generating a cacophony of messages. On 28 September, Sudan announced that the AU had adopted the Sudanese peace initiative at a meeting held outside the UN General Assembly. However, both mediation processes continued in parallel, one led by the AU and the other led by Russia and Sudan. In this context, French Foreign Minister Le Drian visited Bangui in early November and encouraged President Touadéra to get involved in the AU-led Peace Initiative instead of the Russian-Sudanese track, and pledged economic and military support to the Central African government. France voiced concern at the growing Russian presence in the country with the support of the Sudanese government. On 12 November, a coalition of political parties and civil society groups signed a memorandum requesting that the AU-led dialogue be more inclusive. The expansion of MINUSCA's mandate was delayed for a month in November due to the reservations of different UN Security Council countries, such as the United States and Russia. In mid-December, with China and Russia abstaining, the UN Security Council finally extended MINUSCA's mandate until the end of 2019. The peacekeeping force has 11,650 troops and 2,080 police officers.

Uncertainty about the future of the peace process grew in mid-December after two anti-balaka groups withdrew from the national disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration plan due to the arrest of Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona. Detained at the request of the International Criminal Court, he is accused of committing war crimes

The emergence of new mediating actors that are not coordinated with the AU-led multilateral initiative, such as the Russian-Sudanese route in the CAR peace process, may make the mediation effort fail

and crimes against humanity between September 2013 and December 2014. Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona was one of the top leaders of the anti-balaka militias and the president of the national soccer federation, as well as a former minister. His arrest, which sparked numerous protests, came shortly after the detention of Alfred Yekatom, an anti-balaka commander, who was deported to The Hague in November. Organisations like Amnesty International and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) supported these arrests because they believe that they help to end impunity, but the FIDH also urged

the International Criminal Court to act against leaders of the Séléka coalition.

DRC	
Negotiating actors	Government, Alliance for the Presidential Majority, political and social opposition grouped in the Rassemblement coalition (Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), the Dynamic Opposition and the G7, among others), Union for the Congolese Nation and other political parties
Third parties	Congolese Episcopal Conference (CENCO), Angola, Tanzania, Uganda, Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue on the DRC led by the AU, SADC, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), EU, UN, International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), USA
Relevant agreements	Sun City Agreement, Pretoria Agreement and Luanda Agreement (2002); Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition (2002); Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the DRC (2016)

Summary:

The demands for democratization in the nineties led to a succession of rebellions that culminated with the so-called "African first world war" (1998-2003). The signing of several peace agreements from 2002 to 2003 led to the withdrawal of foreign troops and the shaping of a National Transition Government (NTG) integrating the previous Government, the political opposition and the main insurgent actors, in an agreement to share political power. Since 2003, the NTG was led by President Joseph Kabila and four vice-presidents, two of whom from the former insurgency. The NTG drafted a Constitution, voted in 2005. In 2006 legislative and presidential elections were held and Kabila was elected president in a climate of tension and accusations of fraud. In the 2011 elections, which Kabila also won, there were many irregularities, contributing to fuel the instability. Since then the political discussion has focused on ending his second mandate. In today's deep crisis, there is a confluence of broken promises of democratization (Constitutional breaches and the holding of elections on the date agreed), ubiquitous poverty and chronic violence, and the Government's control is growingly dependant on security forces that are largely dysfunctional. President Kabila's attempts to hold on to power beyond the end of the second term (the last permitted by the Constitution) which should have ended on 19 December 2016, is squandering

over a decade of progress. The governmental majority hopes to retain power by delaying the presidential elections, while the opposition wants to force the start of a rapid transition that will end Kabila's mandate and lead to elections. The AU facilitated a political dialogue between the Government and the main opposition platforms and parties, although it was the Episcopal Conference (CENCO), who managed to bring the Government and the main opposition coalition, Rassemblement, to sit at the negotiating table and reach an agreement on 31 December 2016. Although the agreement stipulated that elections must be held in 2017, they were finally postponed until December 2018.

The year 2018 was focused on preparations to hold the elections in December, amidst a climate of political violence and insurgent activity in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu (east) and in the central Kasai region, as well as the tension resulting from the Ebola outbreak in the eastern province of North Kivu. The fragility of the opposition, divided by a leadership vacuum following the death in early 2017 of historical opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi, the head of the opposition party UDPS, affected the implementation of the peace agreement. Moreover, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) declared that holding the elections in 2017 would be impossible and published a new election schedule in November 2017. Though rejected by the opposition and triggering large demonstrations, in the end the UN Security Council validated this new schedule, which provided for holding national presidential and legislative and provincial elections on 23 December 2018 and for appointing the president in January 2019, more than a year after what was stipulated in the agreement of 31 December 2016. The government justified the delay in the elections due to the security situation and the logistical and technical difficulties.

The entire year was rife with disputes between the presidential majority and the opposition around the preparations for the elections. It was not until August 9, the deadline for submitting candidacies for president, that government spokesman Lambert Mende announced that Joseph Kabila would comply with the two-term limit established by the Constitution and would not run in the December elections, adding that the candidate of the ruling coalition led by Kabila would be former Interior Minister Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, thereby keeping the promise made to the Episcopal Conference (CENCO), which had facilitated the process that led to the agreement of 31 December 2016. Kabila had kept everyone in suspense about his candidacy until the last moment. Many local actors and countries and organisations of the international community welcomed Kabila's decision, but stressed the need to resolve various outstanding issues to ensure that free and transparent elections could be held. In September, the CENI published the list of candidates for the presidential election following the review of appeals by the Constitutional Court, which rejected the candidacies of important leaders such as Jean-Pierre Bemba, Adolphe Muzito, Antoine Gizenga and Moïse Katumbi, provoking

various demonstrations in protest. There was only one female candidate, Marie-Josée Ifoku, the former vice-governor of Tshuapa province, who had belonged to the Alliance of the Presidential Majority. In March, a meeting was held between the CENI and female leaders of all political persuasions in which they demanded a transparent electoral process and asked the CENI to facilitate female participation in the elections.

On 8 June, the International Criminal Court acquitted Bemba. He had been arrested in 2008 and sentenced in 2016 to 18 years in prison for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He had appealed his sentence and was acquitted by the ICC in mid-2018, arguing that he could not be held responsible for many of the crimes committed by his armed group in the CAR, clearing the way for his candidacy to be president. Bemba returned to the DRC on 1 August. In October, a delegation from the UN Security Council visited the country and met with different political and social actors who voiced concern about the growing tension around the elections. The Security Council called for agreement on the electronic voting machines and voter lists, which caused demonstrations and protests throughout the year. Several meetings took place in 2018 to try to set up a single opposition candidate. Seven opposition platforms met in South Africa to designate a candidate in late October and seven opposition candidates created the Lamuka coalition on 11 November, harshly criticising the voting machines and voter registration and agreeing that if the coalition won, they would hold elections within two years so that Moïse Katumbi and Jean-Pierre Bemba could run, two main opponents excluded from the upcoming elections. However, two days later Felix Tshisekedi and later Vital Kamerhe backed out of the agreement under pressure from their bases. They agreed to an alliance between their parties and the appointment of Tshisekedi as a candidate on 23 November, in Nairobi.

Finally the presidential, legislative and regional elections were held on 30 December, a week later than planned (23 December) because a fire destroyed around 8,000 electronic counting machines stored in a local electoral commission. After several days in which some governments and international organisations pressured the CENI to publish the results of the elections, finally on 10 February it declared Felix Tshisekedi (38.57%) the winner, followed by Martin Fayulu (34.83%) and the ruling party candidate Emanuel Ramazani Shadary (23.84%), with a turnout of 47.5%. The CENI also announced the results of the legislative and local elections, in which the parties supporting former President Kabila won an overwhelming majority. Both Tshisekedi and Kabila accepted the results, but Martin Fayulu filed a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court alleging electoral fraud and claiming that he would have received 62% of the votes and Tshisekedi 18%, according to his estimates and those of the Catholic Church. The Church, which deployed 40,000 electoral observers, publicly stated that the official

results did not coincide with their own conclusions. According to some media outlets, diplomatic sources have confirmed that most international observations, including those of the AU and SADC, would have given Faluyu the victory. Some governments also questioned the official results. Faluyu demanded from the Constitutional Court a manual recount of the votes of all three elections, which replied that there were two options: accepting the official results or cancelling the elections. The CENI said that the inauguration of the new president was scheduled for 22 January. Regarding the protests sparked by the situation that caused the death of several people, both the United Nations and the AU appealed to the parties not to commit or incite violence.

In July, the Congolese justice system lifted the arrest warrant against Pastor Ntoui, a key step for implementing the Kinkala Agreement

Rep. of the Congo	
Negotiating actors	Government, Ninja militias and the National Council of Republicans (CNR) of Frédéric Bintsamou (Ntoui pastor)
Third parties	--
Relevant agreements	Kinkala agreement (December 2017)

Summary:

Since gaining independence from France in 1960, the country has lived in a climate of political instability and violence. Denis Sassou-Nguesso governed it since 1979 – through a military coup– until 1992, during a single party regime with a Marxist-Leninist ideology. After the fall of the communist block and of the Soviet Union, and under pressure from its main ally, France, the country started a transition to democracy, establishing a multi-party system and holding elections in 1992, where Sassou-Nguesso was defeated by Pascal Lissouba. The country has been victim of several armed conflicts (1993-1994, 1997-1999). Its capital, Brazzaville, was destroyed by the war and the many militias fighting to seize power. Among these were the Ninja militias, loyal to Frédéric Bintsamou (Ntoui pastor) and to the political leader Bernard Kolélas, the Prime-Minister after the peace agreement that put an end to the conflict from 1993-1994; the Cocoyes militias, from the overthrown president Lissouba; and the Cobra militia, loyal to the coup president Nguesso. France's support to Nguesso was a key factor in this war, which ended with the invasion of Angola troops and the return of Nguesso to power, who remains in power until this day. Sassou Nguesso has repeatedly been criticized for being nepotistic and cutting back democracy and freedoms in the country and his Governments have been ripe with corruption. Reverend Ntoui's Ninjas remained active in their feud, in Pool region, and confronted Nguesso in 2002 and 2003. Nguesso's attempts to reform the Constitution to remain in power led to important mobilizations against him, under the #Sassoufit motto, created in 2014 for the mobilizations. The Government promoted a constitutional reform in 2015, opening the door to presidential elections in March 2016, which were considered fraudulent and were won by Nguesso, starting a new phase of instability. There have been several contacts to promote a peace process between pastor Ntoui and the Government, which culminated with the signing of a peace agreement in late 2017.

Implementation of the peace agreement reached in 2017 in the Republic of the Congo was slow during the year.

On 23 December 2017, representatives of the government and of Pastor Ntoui's political and military movement reached the Kinkala Agreement. According to the agreement, Ntoui was expected to facilitate the disarmament of his combatants and restore state authority in the southern Pool region, while the government was supposed to guarantee the disarmament, demobilisation and social and economic reintegration of the former combatants, as well as the resettlement of the population displaced by the violence in the area and the freedom of movement. A joint commission was created to monitor implementation of the agreement, which submitted its recommendations to the government on 22 January 22, stating that it was necessary to begin collecting weapons in the Pool region, restoring the authorities in the region and guaranteeing Ntoui's freedom, since there has been a warrant out for his arrest since 2016. In March a court was supposed to consider lifting the arrest warrant against Ntoui, though the issue was not resolved until July. On 28 July, a ruling was announced invalidating the arrest warrant for Pastor Ntoui and two of his lieutenants, Gozardio and Elie Malanda.⁷ Previously, on 26 June, the government had released 80 people linked to the Ntoui movement, most of them former combatants of the Ninjas militias, in compliance with the Kinkala Agreement. The disarmament process officially began on 7 August and Ntoui called on his followers to disarm on August 22.

South Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Government (SPLM), SPLM / A-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others)
Third parties	IGAD Plus: IGAD (Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda); AU (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), China, Russia, Egypt, Troika (USA, United Kingdom and Norway), EU and UN; South Sudan Council of Churches
Relevant agreements	Peace Agreement (2015), Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access (2017), Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) (2018)

Summary:

After years of armed conflict between the Central Government of Sudan and the south of the country, led by the SPLM/A guerrilla, South Sudan became an independent State in 2011, after holding the referendum that was planned in the 2005 peace agreement (Comprehensive Peace Agreement – CPA–) facilitated by the mediation of the IGAD. The peace agreement between Sudan and South Sudan and achieving independence, however, were not enough to end the conflict and violence. South Sudan has remained immersed in a series of internal conflicts promoted by disputes to control

7. Congo-Site, "Congo: arrêt des poursuites judiciaires contre Ntoui", *Congo-Site*, 31 July 2018.

the territory, livestock and political power, as well as by neo-patrimonial practices and corruption in the Government, all of which has impeded stability and the consolidation of peace. As part of the peace negotiations promoted in April 2013, the President offered an amnesty for six commanders of the rebel groups, but this was not successful initially. At a later date, in December 2013, tensions broke out among the factions loyal to President Salva Kiir and those loyal to the former Vice-President Riek Machar, the SPL/A-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) gave way to a new escalation of violence in several of the country's regions. In January 2014, with the mediation of the IGAD, the Government and the SPLA-IO launched peace conversations in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). Diplomatic efforts have come up against many obstacles to achieve effective ceasefire agreements, after signing nine different commitments to the cessation of hostilities and transitory measures between December 2013 and August 2015, which have been systematically violated and have rendered it impossible to lay the foundations for a political solution to the conflict. On 17 August 2015, after strong international pressure and threats of blockades and economic sanctions, the parties signed a peace agreement promoted by the IGAD Plus, although there is still much uncertainty surrounding its implementation, as well as other later agreements.

Clashes between both sides persisted throughout the year in systematic violation of the agreement reached in December 2017, while meetings were promoted mainly by the regional organisation IGAD to try to revitalise the peace process between the South Sudanese government and the different warring factions, with the threat of new sanctions on both sides for breaching the December ceasefire agreement. A new round of negotiations was held between the parties between 5 and 16 February, though no agreement was reached. In March, the IGAD planned to hold a new round on 26 April, which was postponed until May due to the parties' lack of will. On 17 May, the third round of talks was held between the signatories of the 2015 peace agreement, known as the High Level Revitalisation Forum, mediated by the South Sudan Council of Churches under the auspices of the IGAD, though no progress was made. The government of Salva Kiir and the SPLM/A-IO led by Riek Machar held several meetings facilitated by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to try to find common ground. On 27 June, a framework agreement was signed in Khartoum that included implementation of the ceasefire as of 30 June. This led to agreement on new measures on 25 July and a more comprehensive agreement was reached (first agreements concerning power-sharing within the government). These previous agreements opened the door to the signing of a global agreement in August. However, these preliminary agreements were made amidst several violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement. At the behest of the United States, on 31 May the UN Security Council agreed to extend the sanctions given the parties' history of non-compliance.

On 5 August, the main parties to the conflict, the South Sudanese government of Salva Kiir and the SPLM/A-IO led by Riek Machar, as well as a series of smaller

groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD and others), reached a peace agreement in Khartoum in a ceremony attended by the presidents of Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, the prime minister of Somalia and the deputy prime minister of Ethiopia, as well as representatives from other countries and the international community. The power-sharing agreement states that Salva Kiir will remain as president and that Riek Machar will be its first vice president, and four other vice presidents will be appointed to support them. There will also be power-sharing in the transitional government (it will have 35 ministers, 20 for Kiir's faction and nine for Machar's faction), in Parliament (with 550 MPs, 332 for Kiir's faction and 128 for Machar's faction) and at other levels of the central government. Thus, **the deal reached in August was ratified in a final agreement in September between President Salva Kiir and the rebel leader, former Vice President Riek Machar, who heads the SPLM/A-IO and the other parties to the conflict. Signed on 12 September in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, and facilitated by the IGAD, the agreement is known as the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).** Different delegates present at the signing of the agreement hailed this new step towards the reconciliation of the key stakeholders of South Sudan, such as new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, although other actors were sceptical due to both sides' history of violating the previous peace initiatives. However, the UN Secretary-General's special representative and head of UNMISS, David Shearer, called for caution, and the Troika (the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway) and the European Union expressed scepticism and announced that they would not provide new funds unless certain conditions were met, such as respect for the ceasefire agreement signed in December 2017. The R-ARCSS peace agreement establishes an eight-month pre-transition period that should take effect in May 2019, which is when the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity will be launched. This coalition government will involve all actors and have a mandate for three years, after which elections will be held under the Constitution, which will have been revised during this period.

According to several analysts, this ambitious schedule required the immediate establishment of the National Pre-Transitional Committee on 26 September and the Independent Border Commission, which will establish new state administrative divisions and borders for the states, one of the major obstacles that weakened the previous agreement. This issue was probably the most controversial issue in the peace talks, which the mediators hoped to dispel by stipulating that it would be resolved through a referendum before the new government takes office if the parties fail to reach an agreement in time.

The agreement also stipulated various measures to foster the cessation of hostilities, including the quartering of all the armed actors in locations agreed on within 30 days

The peace agreement reached in the conflict in South Sudan was accompanied by a climate of scepticism given the mistrust between the parties and the violation of previous agreements

and an immediate halt to all training and recruitment activity. The agreement also establishes a hybrid tribunal and the creation, training, financing and deployment of an expanded military unit, the Regional Protection Force (RPF). In addition, it includes the establishment of a ceasefire verification mechanism (Revitalised Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism – RCTSAMVM) and a joint monitoring and evaluation committee before the formation of the government in May. Although the IGAD insisted that all actors were involved in the agreement, Salva Kiir's former chief of staff, Paul Malong Awan, did not participate and represented a threat from the western area he controls, populated by the Dinka community of the northern state of Bahr al-Ghazal. Riek Machar, the leader of the SPLM/A-IO, said that he fully accepted the agreement, though he had some reservations regarding some issues, such as the number of states, the mechanism of constitutional review and governance-related matters. President Salva Kiir suggested that the parties return to the capital, Juba, as a mechanism for building trust, but the SPLM/A-IO spokesperson rejected the offer, saying that they would return once the RPF force was deployed, which would facilitate access to humanitarian aid and the beginning of a national reconciliation process. After the agreement in September, envoy David Shearer remarked that it was necessary to strengthen trust between the parties and the clear political will to try to put an end to the violence. In this vein, a new study by the USIP placed the total number of deaths in the conflict at 382,900, and Amnesty International said that there was evidence that war crimes had been committed. In mid-November the under-secretary-general for peacekeeping operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, stressed that the UN would support the deployment of a regional mission led by the IGAD countries as part of implementation of the peace agreement, but stressed that the current mission in the country, UNMISS, needed an extra contingent of troops to pursue its mandate. The IGAD urged the South Sudanese government to devote more resources to implementing the peace agreement and directed its special envoy to contact the parties that had not signed the September agreement. Meanwhile, clashes took place between parties that had not signed the R-ARCSS agreement, such as the National Salvation Front (NSF) and the SPLM/A-IO. The ceasefire between the parties that signed the agreement was also violated later on.

Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Government of Sudan, the opposition coalition "Sudan Call" formed by national opposition parties and Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, coalition comprising the armed groups of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur)

Third parties	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany
Relevant agreements	Roadmap Agreement (2016)

Summary:

Different armed conflicts (Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan) remain active in the country, as well as tensions between the government and the opposition. Amidst this climate of political instability, in early 2014 Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir called for a "national dialogue" to address the political and economic problems that could alleviate the poverty, war and political instability gripping the country. The government announced that this dialogue would have four priority objectives: to achieve peace, protect constitutional rights, reinvigorate the economy and revive national identity. The Sudanese government said that the initiative did not exclude any sector and that it was time to carry out reforms after 25 years under the regime. From the start, the initiative enjoyed the involvement of former South African President Thabo Mbeki and the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan (AUHIP) to promote peace negotiations and democratic transformation.

The peace negotiations conducted under the Sudanese National Dialogue and the road map agreed in March 2016 were resumed at the end of the year, though they did not make any significant progress.

On 17 October, after months without negotiations between the parties, the Sudanese government representative, Faisal Ibrahim, announced Khartoum's readiness to resume dialogue with the political opposition and the rebels, represented by the Sudan Call coalition, based on the road map signed in 2016. The announcement was possible thanks to the mediation of Thabo Mbeki, the head of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel on Sudan (AUHIP),⁸ who managed to reopen the dialogue. Thus, from 9 to 13 December, a new round of talks was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, involving the Sudanese government and representatives of the Sudan Call coalition, including delegates from the National

Umma Party (NUP), the Sudanese Congress Party (SCP) and the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi (SLM-MN) and the SPLM-N factions led by Al-Hilu and Agar. The round of talks was mediated by the AUHIP and attended by representatives of the international community, including the so-called "Troika" (the United Kingdom, Norway and the United States), as well as France, Qatar and the UN. The meeting was called for two reasons: first, to discuss returning to the 2016 road map, which had been signed by the Sudanese government, the SPLM-N, the JEM, the SLM-MM and the opposition Sudan Call, chaired by El Sadig El Mahdi; and second, to get more parties to sign it that have not already. The Sudanese government's resumption of dialogue was interpreted as a step forward in the context of US pressure to remove it from the list of states that

The peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and the country's opposition and rebel groups were resumed under the National Dialogue after two years without progress

8. See the summaries on Sudan (Darfur) and Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) in this chapter.

support terrorism. To this end, the US State Department asked the Sudanese government for progress in six areas, which included expanding its efforts in the fight against terrorism, the ceasefire with the rebels and joint efforts to restart the peace talks. However, on 13 December the round of negotiations ended without agreements. The AUHIP stated that it would meet soon with the NUP, JEM and SLM-MM, while excluding groups that had not signed the road map, including the SCP and the warring factions of the SPLM-N.

Sudan (Darfur)	
Negotiating actors	Government, Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions
Third parties	AU, UNAMID, Chad, Germany, Qatar, USA, United Kingdom, France
Relevant agreements	Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) (2006) Roadmap Agreement (2016)

Summary:

The political, economic and cultural marginalization of the Darfur region relative to Sudan as a whole is at the core of the conflict that, beginning in the 1980s, also includes growing competition for water and pastures due to drought conditions. In addition, the exploitation of religion and existing ethnic differences, as well as interference from neighbouring Chad and Libya, made the situation worse. In the midst of peace talks to resolve the historical dispute between the north and south of the country, various armed groups in Darfur, mainly the JEM and the SLA, revolted in 2003 to demand greater decentralization and regional development. Contacts between the parties were organized by Chad initially, and later by the AU, in an attempt to facilitate humanitarian access and launch peace negotiations that would bring the violence to an end. In 2006 the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), was reached in Abuja, but included only the SLA faction led by Minni Minawi. Meanwhile, the conflict continued, as well as failed attempts at dialogue that were mainly fostered by Qatar as part of the Doha peace process, with different actors gradually joining in.

Progress was made in the peace negotiations during the year and the respective unilateral cessations of hostilities signed by the government and several rebel groups were upheld, concentrating tension in the Jebel Marra region. In mid-April, the first peace talks of the year took place in Berlin under German mediation between the two main Darfuri rebel groups –the Sudan Liberation Movement, led by Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM), and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)– and the Sudanese government, though they were unable to agree on a framework for future talks. However, after various meetings and several rounds of negotiations and informal consultations that took place during the year, **a pre-negotiation agreement was signed in Berlin on 6 December to later initiate substantive negotiations in Doha between all three parties could begin.** The agreement, which paves the way for broader peace negotiations, was made possible by the mediation of the German foreign

ministry and the participation of the United Nations and the African Union through the UNAMID mission, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Norway, Qatar and the German Barkov Foundation. The agreement stipulated that future Doha negotiations between the Sudanese government and the two signatory rebel groups will be resumed on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) signed in 2006. The parties pledged to discuss all issues that the two rebel movements consider necessary to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable peace in Darfur and to establish mechanisms to facilitate implementation of the agreements.

The government and rebels also took various steps to reduce violence during the year, especially during the unilateral cessation of hostilities. Thus, on 7 May the rebel movements SLM-MM and JEM extended the unilateral ceasefire for three months. The same groups and the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC) later extended it again until the end of the year. Khartoum upheld a unilateral ceasefire during the first half of the year, then on 12 July announced that it would extend it in Darfur and regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile until the end of the year. The most critical episode during the period was due to **tension and violent clashes in the Jebel Marra region** between SLA rebel forces led by Abdel Wahid (SLA-AW) –which is not participating in peace negotiations– and government forces, mainly the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia. Faced with this situation, which remained this way throughout the year, the UN Security Council urged all parties to adhere to the unilateral cessation of hostilities and allow humanitarian access to populations at risk, due to the deterioration of the situation of security in the region.

In October, Salah al-Tayeb, the commissioner in charge of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme, reported that 3,700 combatants had demobilised in the state of West Darfur. Al-Tayeb also reported that the illicit weapons collection program will continue its work in all states. According to official data, around 30,000 weapons out of the estimated 700,000 have been collected in the five states of Darfur since the voluntary process began in August.

The Sudanese government and Darfuri rebel groups signed a preliminary agreement to begin peace talks and return to the Doha road map

Progress was made in reconfiguring the **hybrid United Nations-African Union mission in Darfur (UNAMID)** in 2018, as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (2018). It reaffirmed the agency's commitment to the transition to peace and development in Darfur, transforming its peacekeeping mission into one of peace and development. Some questioned the UN Security Council's decision to reduce the peace mission, including MPs from the United Kingdom, who demanded a clear plan to leave the mission to prevent a resurgence of

violence. The mission transferred different bases to the Sudanese government during the year, in accordance with Resolutions 2363 (2017) and 2429 (2018), while strengthening its presence in Jebel Marra due to the deteriorating security situation.

Finally, tribes native to the East Darfur region, the **Rizeigat and Maaliya**, which had clashed violently in mid-July, causing several deaths that led to the arrest and imprisonment of 22 community leaders and another 73 other members of the communities, signed a declaration of peaceful coexistence at the end of the year. They pledged to promote stability and security in East Darfur through a commitment to comprehensive peace and peaceful coexistence throughout the state. The agreement was signed at the Presidential Palace in Khartoum, in the presence of Vice President Dr. Osman Kibir and community leaders Nazir Mahmoud Madibbo (Rizeigat) and Nazir Mohamed El Safi (Maaliya).

Gender, peace and security

In late March, UNAMID's Gender Advisory Unit (GAU) hosted the Worldwide **Open Day on UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security**. The event took place in El Fasher, North Darfur, and involved around 100 women from five states of Darfur, including state government representatives, MPs, civil society organisations and internally displaced persons. Entitled "Women Count for Peace", the event addressed the implementation of UNSCR Resolution 1325 in the conflict in Darfur, analysing achievements and challenges to increasing women's participation in decision-making, reconciliation and peace process mechanisms. The participants called for the creation of a women's forum to monitor the implementation of peace agreements in their communities and Gender Consultative Units in the five states of Darfur. They also demanded approval of the national action plan to implement Resolution 1325 and laws against female genital mutilation and early marriage.

Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile)	
Negotiating actors	Government, SPLM-N
Third parties	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Uganda
Relevant agreements	Roadmap agreement (2016)
Summary: The secession of South Sudan in July 2011 and the national reconfiguration that it entailed for Sudan aggravated tensions between Khartoum and the border regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, since both regions had supported the SPLA's southern insurgency during the armed conflict in Sudan. Since South Sudan gained its independence, the SPLM-N has continued its armed struggle in both regions, demanding	

the introduction of democratic reforms and effective decentralisation that would allow the economic development of all regions in the new Sudan, as well as recognition of ethnic and political plurality. Since then, the AUHIP has mediated to seek a peaceful resolution for the parties, which revolves around three main lines in the peace negotiations: the ceasefire model, the type of humanitarian access to both areas (through the front lines or via a cross-border route) and the features and agenda of the National Dialogue.

The peace process progressed timidly through different bilateral meetings that made no significant progress in building the agenda for the negotiations. The year began with the Sudanese government's declaration of a six-month state of emergency in the state of Kassala (South Kordofan) for the purpose of supporting the disarmament campaign in the area. At the end of January, the SPLM-N faction led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (a result of the splintering of the rebels during 2017),⁹ announced a four-month extension of the unilateral ceasefire it had upheld since the previous year. This led to the resumption of peace talks between the government and the faction led by al-Hilu in Ethiopia in early February, as agreed in late 2017, thereby restarting the negotiations that had been deadlocked since October 2016. The other SPLM-N faction, led by Malik Agar, was excluded from these negotiations due to its inability to implement any possible agreements. The talks failed to secure the cessation of hostilities agreements and humanitarian access to the Two Areas (South Kordofan and Blue Nile). In relation to the first, on 12 July the Sudanese government again extended the unilateral ceasefire in the Two Areas and the state of Darfur until the end of the year. Regarding humanitarian access, in late September President Omar al-Bashir accepted the UN's proposal to deliver aid to the areas affected by the conflict.

Then, in October the SPLM-N rebels led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu and the Sudanese government were invited to a round of consultative talks mediated by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in Addis Ababa and Johannesburg. During the talks, the AUHIP and Khartoum suggested that they agree on three working documents: the draft framework agreement of 2014, the draft agreement on the cessation of hostilities on humanitarian grounds and the 2016 Road Map. The Sudanese government proposed not discussing issues included in the National Dialogue, since the SPLM-N had not participated in it. Difficulties arose when prioritising the agenda, since the rebels wanted to discuss political issues first, followed by the humanitarian issue and security and ceasefire agreements. Due to lack of agreement, AUHIP proposed that both parties continue with the bilateral consultative meetings until a minimum common ground could be reached in the negotiating agenda, so the meetings were cancelled without any significant progress. In late November, the SPLM-N faction headed by al-Hilu announced that it

9. For more details, see the summary on Sudan (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2018! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2018.

was extending its unilateral cease of hostilities until the end of the year to continue supporting the negotiations.

Gender, peace and security

Different civil society women's organisations in South Kordofan, like the Collaborative for Peace of Sudan, promoted the creation of "peace committees" during the year to facilitate mediation between the communities and ethnic groups and uphold local peace agreements. The initiative also aims to include women in peace negotiations and mediation for conflict resolution.

Sudan – South Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Government of Sudan, Government of South Sudan
Third parties	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU
Relevant agreements	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (2005); Cooperation Agreement (2012)

Summary:

The armed conflict between Sudan and its southern neighbour (South Sudan) lasted for more than 30 years and was marked by a growing complexity, the nature of which covered several dimensions relating to the culture and history of both countries, affected by two civil wars (1963-1972; and 1982-2005). The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 led to a referendum in the south of Sudan to ratify the independence of this region. The consultation happened in January 2011 and following a clear victory of those in favour of independence, in July 2011 South Sudan declared independence and became a new State. However, the separation of the two countries did not bring an end to the disagreements between Khartoum and Juba over the many unresolved issues. Among the main obstacles to stability there is a dispute over the oil-rich enclave of Abyei and the final demarcation of the border between both countries, as well as disagreement with regards to the exploitation of oil resources (with oil fields in South Sudan but pipelines for exportation to Sudan). Both countries accuse one another of supporting insurgency movements in the neighbour country and have contributed to further destabilizing the situation and threaten the peaceful coexistence of these two countries.

Relations between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan improved during the year with the reopening of bilateral meetings on border delimitations and the normalisation of relations, as well as the signing of a new peace agreement in South Sudan staged in Sudan. In March, the governments of Sudan and South Sudan resumed talks on the border demarcation still pending between the two countries, which affects Abyei, the Mile 14 area, Joudat Al-Fakhar, Jebel al-Migainais, Kaka and the enclave of Kafia Kingi. This meeting was held under the conditions established in late 2017 by the UN Security Council, which had renewed the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and extended its support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) on the

condition that the parties take specific steps before 15 March, which included holding at least one meeting to resume discussions on border demarcation. As a result of the resumption of the talks, the UN Security Council again extended its support to the JBVMM (until 15 October) and to the UNISFA (until 15 November) on the condition that both parties achieve measurable progress in delimiting the border, guarantee full freedom of movement for the UNISFA and within the so-called Safe Demilitarised Border Zone (SDBZ) from which both countries must withdraw, begin the first phase to open border crossings and reactivate the specific committee on the disputed Mile 14 area.

In the middle of the year, another gesture was made to improve the relationship between both countries with the signing of the new agreement of principles to consolidate peace in South Sudan (Khartoum Declaration of Agreement)¹⁰ between the South Sudanese government and the main opposition groups in the county. Signed in Khartoum on 27 by President Omar al-Bashir, the agreement not only contained clauses for peace in South Sudan, but also others seeking to pave the way for economic integration and normality between both countries. In addition to other issues, they agreed to resume repairing the damaged oil facilities in the Unity region (Blocks 1, 2, 4 and 5) through collaboration between both governments. As a result of the agreement, both governments agreed to reopen different border crossings to facilitate trade, resuming the agreement they had reached in March. Due to the progress in the negotiations, at the end of the year the UN Security Council again agreed to extend the UNISFA mission and its support to the JBVMM, though it continued to link its renewal in the future to real progress in continuing the measures already established.

Gender, peace and security

Regarding implementation of the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, in November the UNISFA held an internal workshop aimed at military, police and civil service personnel on gender parity in order to raise awareness about incorporating and integrating a gender perspective in all mission operations.

Maghreb – North Africa

Libya	
Negotiating actors	Presidential Council and Government of National Agreement (GAN), House of Representatives (CdR), National General Congress (CGN)
Third parties	Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Italy, France
Relevant agreements	Libyan Political Agreement or Skhirat Agreement (2015)

10. See the summary on South Sudan in this chapter.

Summary:

After the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, Libya has experienced a transition process characterized by multiple political, economic, social, institutional and security challenges and by the presence of numerous armed groups. Since 2014, the North African country has been the scene of increasing violence and political instability, which led to the formation of two major poles of power and authority. Given the developments in the country, mediation efforts led by the UN have tried to find a solution to the crisis. Negotiations have confronted several obstacles due to disputes of legitimacy, the diversity of actors involved, multiple interests at stake and the persistent climate of violence in the country, among other factors. In late 2015, the Libyan Political Agreement or the Skhirat Agreement was signed under the auspices of the UN amidst a climate of persistent divisions and scepticism due to the foreseeable problems in implementing it. In October 2017, the United Nations submitted a new plan to start the political transition and facilitate implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement.

Amidst persistent violence in Libya, **there were difficulties in implementing the plan proposed by the UN in 2017 to reactivate the political process in the North African country** throughout 2018. Similarly to what happened in previous years, the disagreements between the main political and military actors that control different areas of the country paralysed its implementation and eventually delayed the whole process. At the end of the year, in fact, a new timetable was reported that postpones some of the decisive aspects of the UN plan until 2019. Promoted by the new UN special envoy to Libya, Ghassan Salamé, and announced in October of 2017, this plan rested on three main points. The first was to facilitate a deal to make some changes to the Libyan Political Agreement, signed in 2015, which theoretically should frame the transition in the country and end the different poles of power that have arisen there after the fall of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. The second key aspect of the plan was to convene a national conference to guide the transition process. The third point was to hold elections. In addition, the UN said that it intended to strengthen Libyan institutions, involve armed groups in the process and promote local and national reconciliation. Various initiatives were promoted to try to advance this agenda during the year, but the central aspects of the plan faced major problems in implementation. **Part of the difficulties were related to internal power struggles and the positioning of some of the most significant actors in Libya.** This included General Khalifa Haftar, who earlier this year declared that Libya was not ready for democracy and that he would not hesitate to take action if the UN-driven process failed. In this context, despite the fact that meetings were held, no agreement was reached on the changes that should have been made to the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015.

During 2018, the disagreements between the main political and military actors of Libya paralysed implementation of the agreements and ended up delaying the whole process

One issue in which the differences between different Libyan actors were evident, leading to much deadlock, was the new Constitution for the country, which according to plan must be endorsed by a popular vote. As part of the Libyan Political Agreement, the body responsible for drafting the new Constitution, the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) approved a draft in July 2017, but the validity of the vote was questioned and legally challenged. In February 2018, the Libyan Supreme Court ruled in favour of the draft and removed the obstacles to holding a constitutional referendum, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, members of the House of Representatives (HoR), the legislative body located in the eastern part of the country (Tobruk), rejected the CDA's draft and argued for the creation of a committee of experts to amend the Libyan Constitution of 1951. The CDA then met with various Libyan actors to promote holding the constitutional referendum. Meanwhile, the HoR initiated discussions on the legislation necessary to hold the referendum, but did not approve it in the months that followed.

Progress was made in some technical aspects of the preparations for the elections, such as updating the voter registry, which ended in March and listed more than one million people. In May, as part of a summit on Libya promoted by France, a commitment was made to hold the legislative and presidential elections on 10 December 2018. The Paris Conference brought together four of Libya's main political and military actors –Prime Minister, Fayez al-Sarraj; the spokesman of the HoR, Agila Saleh; the president of the High State Council, Khaled al-Meshri; and General Haftar, the leader of the Libyan National Army (LNA)– who pledged to ensure a safe environment for the elections, respect the results of the vote and recognise the importance of developing a constitutional basis for the elections. Although a verbal commitment was made to develop the legal framework for the elections before the end of September, there was no significant progress in this area. Regarding the national conference, another pillar of the plan promoted by the UN, a series of preparatory meetings were held during the year and in February the UN special envoy charged the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue with coordinating the public consultation phase. In November, the organisation released a report with the main conclusions of the process, which should serve as a starting point for the national conference.¹¹ The UN also supported local reconciliation in different parts of the country throughout the year, including between tribes. These community-level initiatives led to some reconciliation agreements in the southern and western parts of the country. **There were also several ceasefire agreements between different armed actors**

11. The Libyan National Conference Process. Final Report, November 2018.

throughout the year, which developed differently, some of them facilitated by the UN. These included one signed by several armed groups in Tripoli after an escalation of violence in late August that led to the creation of a ceasefire monitoring mechanism. Still, security in the Libyan capital remained highly fragile in the months that followed.

A new high-level international conference on Libya took place in November 2018, this time driven by Italy, which tried to present itself as the main European player in the North African country. The meeting, which took place in Palermo, showed the persistent rivalries and differences between the various Libyan actors and the regional tensions projected onto the conflict. Thus, for example, Haftar hesitated to participate because he thought the Islamist and Western groups invited to the conference were overrepresented. The attendance of one of his main regional allies, the Egyptian president, was apparently decisive in ensuring his participation in the conference. Meanwhile, the Turkish representative decided to leave the conference after being excluded from a meeting. The conference in Palermo led to the first meeting between Haftar and al-Sarraj since May, where a modified road map of the UN plan was presented. According to the new timetable, the national conference would take place in early 2019, preferably on Libyan soil, while the elections would be held sometime between late March and late June. According to reports, members of the HoR close to Haftar called for the UN special envoy to be removed from office after Salamé said that parts of the HoR were resistant to holding elections and were obstructing the political process in Libya.

Gender, peace and security

The UN mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has a section (Women's Empowerment Section) that aims to promote the participation of Libyan women in the formal delegations involved in peace efforts in the country, in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 and the mandate of the mission itself. The UN's periodic reports on Libya and the activities of the UNSMIL provided information on some initiatives, such as female participation in dialogue and reconciliation activities and the creation of a forum of 14 women to review the draft Constitution from a gender perspective. However, throughout 2018, Libyan women criticised their exclusion from civic and public spaces, which has prevented integration of the narrative of female civil society activists into analysis on the root causes of the conflicts affecting the country.

Thus, for example, as part of the 39th meeting of the UN Human Rights Council, **the Libyan organisation Together We Build It drew attention to the frustrations over the effective inclusion of women in the consultation process promoted by the UN action plan for Libya** and made specific recommendations for their substantive inclusion. Likewise, a joint investigation conducted

by Cordaid, Human Security Collective and eight civil society organisations in Libya revealed the disconnect between the agenda discussed at the conference in Palermo and the Libyan population's security concerns and need for justice, especially Libyan women. Their experiences have made it possible to draw conclusions on some issues that should have a much more central place in the negotiating agenda, such as strengthening the arms embargo, withdrawing the weapons of war, demobilising combatants and reforming the security sector, which places several different Libyan actors under civilian control. They also said that the need for better infrastructure, the prevention of sexual and gender violence and the struggle against impunity for crimes against women should also be priorities.

Morocco – Western Sahara	
Negotiating actors	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front)
Third parties	UN, Algeria and Mauritania (observers), Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)
Relevant agreements	Ceasefire agreement (1991)

Summary:

The attempts to mediate and find a negotiated solution to the Western Sahara conflict led to a cease-fire agreement in 1991. Since then, and despite the existence of a formal negotiations framework under the auspices of the UN, the Western Sahara peace process has failed. The successive proposals and the many rounds of negotiations has not lead to an agreement between the parties, all of which maintain their red lines: Morocco insists on its territorial claims and is only willing to accept a status of autonomy, whereas the POLISARIO Front claims there is a need to hold a referendum that includes the option of independence. Negotiations on Western Sahara –recognised as a territory which is yet to be decolonised- have been determined by the large asymmetry between the actors in dispute, the inability of the UN to set up a consultation on the future of this territory, and regional rivalry between Morocco and Algeria –a key support for the POLISARIO front- and by the support given to Rabat by some key international actors, such as the USA or France. This, in real terms, has meant a prevalence of the Moroccan thesis when approaching the conflict.

The year 2018 ended with **relative expectations prior the reactivation of diplomatic channels to deal with the issue of Western Sahara, which at the end of the year led to talks in Geneva (Switzerland) between representatives of Morocco and the POLISARIO Front and delegations from Algeria and Mauritania as part of the process sponsored by the United Nations.** These meetings were considered the first step towards resuming the political dialogue on the future of the region after years of impasse, since the last direct talks between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front were held in March 2012, in Manhasset (USA). The actions launched to promote the negotiations took place amidst tension between the parties, which continued to trade

accusations during the year. Some of the sources of conflict were the issue of Guerguerat (the POLISARIO Front withdrew its representatives from the area in the first half of 2018) and differences in interpretation regarding implementation of the ceasefire.¹²

The direct talks in Geneva began to take shape following the appointment of Horst Köhler as the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy for Western Sahara in 2017. In October 2017, the German diplomat paid his first visit to the stakeholders and held meetings with other actors interested in resolving the dispute, such as the Group of Friends of Western Sahara. Considering that the existing atmosphere allowed him to act with "cautious optimism", in December 2017 the special envoy invited Morocco, the POLISARIO Front, Algeria and Mauritania to hold in-depth bilateral meetings. All the parties agreed to the proposal. Thus, throughout 2018 Köhler dedicated his time to furthering efforts to reactivate the negotiating process through new trips and meetings. In various statements, and also in its meetings with Köhler, Morocco insisted that the UN should be the only mediating party to the conflict and that it was opposed to the involvement of other organisations in the process, like the African Union.

In this context, the renewal of MINURSO's mandate in April gave rise to debates at the UN Security Council. **The United States promoted a modified resolution extending the mandate of the mission for only six months (and not one year, as had been regular practice), which was interpreted as a way to intensify the pressure on the parties to engage in direct negotiations** and end the persistent impasse. The decision was seen as a way to put pressure especially on Morocco, a supporter (with the support of France) of renewing the mandate for one year. Finally, the six-month suspended mandate was approved at the end of April (UN Security Council Resolution 2414) with 12 votes in favour and China, Russia and Ethiopia abstaining. MINURSO's mandate had already been shortened in the past (between 1998 and 2001, resolutions were passed that renewed its mandate for a period of between two and five months), which was also interpreted as a UN mechanism to exert pressure to the parties to resolve the conflict. However, Rabat did not want to give importance to the mission's abbreviated mandate and attributed it mainly to the United States' desire to review the costs of all the UN peacekeeping missions in the world. In fact, despite the shortening of MINURSO's mandate, some observers thought that the text of Resolution 2414 was more supportive of Moroccan interests, considering some of the terms used. The resolution demands progress towards a "realistic, viable and lasting" political solution, instead of a "fair, lasting and mutually acceptable" solution, as had been done in the past, including in the previous Resolution 2351 on Western Sahara that renewed MINURSO's mandate in April 2017. After the debates in the UN

Security Council, Köhler resumed his round of meetings with the main actors of the dispute, on his second trip to the region, between 23 June and 1 July. During this period, the senior official met in Rabouni with the secretary general of the POLISARIO Front, Brahim Ghali, and his negotiating team, who reiterated that as a gesture of good faith the organisation was permanently withdrawing its forces from Guerguerat.

Köhler also met with the Moroccan prime minister and foreign minister in Rabat, who insisted that Morocco's proposed autonomy in 2007 should be the basis for further negotiations. In respective meetings with senior officials in Algeria and Mauritania, both countries were willing to strengthen their role in the political process to seek a solution to the dispute, responding to the provisions of Resolution 2414, which calls for a greater contribution to the process by neighbouring countries. Meanwhile, Köhler held meetings with different significant actors to resolve the conflict. He then sent a formal invitation to Morocco, the POLISARIO Front, Algeria and Mauritania to discuss the steps to take for a peace process in Geneva in December. All the parties agreed to negotiations without preconditions and responded positively throughout October, a month in which a new UN Security Council Resolution (2440) was also approved, renewing MINURSO's mandate for another six months. Morocco welcomed the resolution recognising Algeria as an important actor in the process. Rabat has always sought to involve Algeria directly in the negotiations, a tendency that the POLISARIO Front has denounced as an attempt to delegitimise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). The Algerian government's position, meanwhile, has been to insist that it cannot be considered a "party" to the conflict and that it would not speak on the POLISARIO Front's behalf at the negotiating table. The king of Morocco insisted on this issue in his 9 November speech to mark the 43rd anniversary of the Green March, in which he stressed that his country was ready for direct and frank dialogue with Algeria to tackle the differences that have damaged relations between both nations in recent decades. The Algerian government reacted with relative scepticism, without giving an official response and appealing to the need to reinvigorate the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), an organisation created in 1989 and consisting of Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco that is inactive due to the tension between the last two countries. Sources from the POLISARIO Front interpreted this Algerian response as a message to Morocco that the dialogue should be channelled into a space bringing together all the countries of the Maghreb.

Finally, the talks in Geneva took place on 5 and 6 December, with Morocco and the POLISARIO Front attending and with Algeria and Mauritania as observer countries. The Moroccan delegation was headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs and International

12. For further information on the tension around Western Sahara, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2019! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

Cooperation Nasser Bourita and the POLISARIO Front was represented by Kathri Addouh. There was a woman in both delegations. Köhler stressed that the meeting was a first but important step towards reactivating the political negotiations and hailed the parties for upholding an attitude of mutual respect. No further details about what was said during the talks were disclosed. According to media reports, Köhler asked the parties for maximum discretion, since the objective in this first round of meetings was to define an action plan that would help to establish official negotiations and set up another meeting. At the end of the meetings in Geneva, the representatives of the parties made statements defending their traditional positions, but the negotiations were confirmed as ongoing and a new round of discussions was announced for the first quarter of 2019.

Gender, peace and security

Regarding the inclusion of the gender perspective in the talks, both resolutions on Western Sahara approved by the UN Security Council during 2018 (Resolutions 2414 and 2440) mentioned the need for the UN-backed negotiating process to have effective and significant female participation, calling for implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (and also the effective and significant participation of young people, in accordance with Resolution 2250 of 2015 on youth, peace and security). However, the UN Secretary-General's reports on the situation in Western Sahara in March and October 2018 made no reference to the participation of women in the resumption of political meetings. No mention was made of Resolution 1325 in these reports and references to women or gender were limited mainly to humanitarian aspects and to the possibility of increasing the proportion of women in MINURSO.

In the December talks, one woman was confirmed in both the Moroccan delegation and the POLISARIO Front's delegation. Rabat sent Fatima Adli, described by the official Moroccan press as a community representative and member of the municipal council of Smara. Meanwhile, Fatma Mehdi, secretary general of the Union of Saharawi Women (UNMS), joined the POLISARIO Front's negotiating team. In civil society, **independent Sahrawi women recalled the impacts of the conflict on women and their role as peacemakers, calling for more active participation in the talks.** In a message addressed to Köhler and supported by international women's NGOs for peace, such as WILPF, these Sahrawi women asked both the UN and the countries participating in the dialogue to take the steps necessary to guarantee female involvement in the meetings, to organise parallel meetings between Sahrawi and Moroccan women and to move forward on multiple issues that can help to establish a lasting peace, including action to eradicate all types of violence against women.

Southern Africa

Mozambique	
Negotiating actors	Government, the RENAMO armed group
Third parties	National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church
Relevant agreements	Rome peace agreement (1992)

Summary:

The coup d'état against the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 and the guerrilla warfare carried out by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) Marxist-Leninist insurgence took Mozambique to Independence in 1975. Since then, the country has been affected by a civil war between the FRELIMO Government and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) armed group, supported by the white minorities that governed in the former Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) and South Africa during the apartheid, in the context of the Cold War. In 1992 the parties reached a peace agreement that was considered an example of reconciliation. This was mediated by the Community of Sant'Egidio and ended a 16-year long war that caused one million fatalities and five million displaced persons, and gave way to a period of political stability and economic development, albeit high levels of inequality. In parallel, growing accusations of fraud and irregularities in the electoral processes that followed, some of which were confirmed by international observers, have gone hand-in-hand with a growing authoritarianism and repression of the opposition, and FRELIMO taking over the State (and the communication media and economy). In 2013, RENAMO conditioned its continuation in political life to a series of changes, mainly the reform of the national electoral commission and an equitable distribution of the country's wealth. It threatened to remove its signature from the 1992 peace agreement, and indeed this did happen, throwing the country back into armed fighting in 2013 and the subsequent launch of a new agreed peace negotiation process in August 2014. RENAMO's declaration of a truce in 2016 and the progress made in the peace process during 2017 caused a notable drop in armed actions, though sporadic clashes persist.

Sporadic activity was undertaken during the year by supporters of the ruling party, FRELIMO, and sympathisers of the main opposition party, RENAMO, as part of the campaign for the municipal elections held in October. Meanwhile, **steps continued to be taken to implement the peace agreement, despite the death of the historical leader of the rebellion, Afonso Dhlakama.** In February, President Filipe Nyusi announced that he would implement constitutional amendments allowing political parties victorious in provincial parliamentary elections to select the regional governor, for subsequent ratification by the country's president. In addition, Nyusi and Dhlakama met in mid-February 2018 in Namadjiwa to discuss the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of members of RENAMO and their incorporation into the state security forces. On 27 March, the three main parties –the ruling party (FRELIMO), the main opposition party (RENAMO), and the Democratic

Movement of Mozambique— agreed on a consensus document containing proposals for constitutional amendments to promote progress in decentralisation and other measures to underpin peace that should be discussed in Parliament. The way that governors were appointed had been a contentious issue and a subject of the negotiations. Finally, on 23 May, Parliament approved the decentralisation project, which also stipulated that parties that win local elections, and not the president, will choose the 10 provincial governors. On 3 May, Afonso Dhlakama died in his stronghold in the Gorongosa Mountains at the age of 65. Dhlakama had led the armed group since 1979, following the death of leader André Matsangaissa, and until the peace agreement was signed in 1992, when he transformed the armed group into a political party, though he did maintain part of its military wing. Several analysts said that his death could lead to a period of uncertainty in the party and affect the peace process because of his marked party leadership and influence as a unifier of the different political movements. There was also speculation that the government might back out of the process, since it had leaned towards militaristic tendencies to resolve the conflict in recent years. Former RENAMO General Ossufo Momade was elected interim leader on 5 May until the next party congress, when Dhlakama's successor would be chosen. Momade said he would remain faithful to Dhlakama's commitment to the peace process. President Nyusi made similar statements of commitment to the process. On 9 May an official ceremony was held in his memory that was attended by President Nyusi.

In June, the ruling party, FRELIMO, called on the opposition party RENAMO to commit to disarming its militants before the 10 October local elections as a precondition both for holding the October elections and the extraordinary session of Parliament to pass reforms to continue the process of decentralisation and enact electoral reforms ahead of the upcoming elections. On 11 July, President Felipe Nyusi and the leader of RENAMO, Ossufo Momade, released a joint statement announcing that RENAMO would disarm. Nyusi added that FRELIMO and RENAMO would sign a formal agreement to integrate RENAMO's fighters into the state security forces (the police and the Mozambican Armed Forces). Parliament passed the electoral reforms on 20 July, in accordance with the agreement reached on decentralisation. The disarmament agreement, known as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on security issues, reached on 6 August, establishes the steps for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants in the security forces and in society, as well as the creation of four working groups to implement the MoU: a Military Affairs Commission and three Joint Technical Groups. As a sign of how far the process has come, on 12 September the defence minister said that the DDR was progressing as planned.

The death of the historical leader of RENAMO, Afonso Dhlakama, sowed uncertainty regarding implementation of the peace agreement in Mozambique

Local elections, the cornerstone of the peace process, were finally held on 10 October. RENAMO had not participated in local elections in 10 years. The ruling party, FRELIMO, won in 44 of the 53 municipalities (having previously controlled 49) with 57% of the vote, while RENAMO won in eight municipalities with 36.5% of the vote. RENAMO claimed victory in another five municipalities. Various civil society organisations and RENAMO accused FRELIMO of buying votes and other irregularities in the recount. The US embassy announced that the elections had been “largely free and fair”, though during the campaign there were some altercations between supporters of the two main parties in Tete and the police used tear gas and rubber balls to break up a RENAMO demonstration in Zambezia province. President Nyusi launched the disarmament programme on 6 October. On 24 October, RENAMO announced that the peace talks were still active due to the alleged electoral fraud. On 14 November, the Constitutional Court validated the 10 October election results, except in one municipality, Marromeu (Sofala province), where FRELIMO won the recount on 22 November.

In mid-December, the government appointed three RENAMO generals to senior positions in the Mozambican Armed Forces and declared that measures such as these allowed progress towards a peace agreement. On the same day, the contact group for the negotiations met with the party's interim leader, Ossufo Momade, and expressed its satisfaction with the government's commitment to the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process and said it was confident that the current negotiations will lead to a final peace agreement. The EU, which is part of that contact group, expressed itself in similar terms, repeating its support for the peace process. However, at the end of the year, during the commemoration of the second anniversary of the truce declared by RENAMO's president, Alfonso Dhlakama, who began the current negotiating process, the opposition party's spokesman accused the government of hindering the peace process and of not wanting to solve the conflict that has plagued the country for decades.

West Africa

Mali	
Negotiating actors	Government, Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) –MNLA, MAA and HCUA–, Platform –GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA
Third parties	Algeria, France, ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU
Relevant agreements	Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (2015)

Summary:

The armed conflict affecting Mali since early 2012 resulted in an institutional crisis –which materialized in a military coup– and Tuareg and jihadist groups progressively taking control of the northern part of the country. Since the conflict started, several international actors, including ECOWAS, the AU and the UN, have promoted initiatives leading to re-establishing the constitutional order and recovering Mali's territorial integrity. In parallel with the militarist approaches to face the crisis, exploratory contacts were held with some armed groups (MNLA and Ansar Dine) to find a negotiated way out of the crisis. Despite the announcement of a commitment to the cessation of hostilities from these insurgent groups, at the start of 2013 an offensive by Ansar Dine precipitated an international military intervention led by France. In May 2014 a new negotiation process was started, led by Algeria, where the Mali Government negotiated on both sides with the two coalitions created by the armed groups: the Coordination of Azawad Movements (groups favourable to a federalist/secessionist formula), and the Platform (groups supporting the Government). In July 2015 the signing of a peace agreement was made possible between the Government, the CMA and the Platform, in Algiers. The jihadist groups were left aside in the negotiation table, which kept alive the hostilities from these groups in the new context of implementing the clauses present in the peace agreement.

Different initiatives were put forward to try to concretise and accelerate implementation of the 2015 peace agreement in Mali throughout 2018, but these efforts were affected by various factors, including the lack of will, reticence and divisions among actors committed to the agreement, recurring delays in the timetable, a general climate of persistent violence in the north and centre of the country and political tension linked to the upcoming presidential and legislative elections (the latter were finally postponed until 2019). Independent reports also agreed on the growing gap between the people of Mali and the parties that signed the agreement, and on the general population's insufficient appropriation of the agreement. Against this backdrop, the mechanisms established by the agreement continued to function during the year. Thus, during one of its regular sessions in January, the Agreement's Supervisory Committee approved a new timetable (agreed by the parties, with support from the UN mission in the country, MINUSMA) in order to speed up implementation of the agreement in three areas: decentralisation, defence and security and socio-economic development. This agreement led to the **adoption of a new road map in March that identified priority areas in the short and medium term for implementing the agreement and for paving the way for the presidential election in July.**

In the months that followed, some progress was made on implementing the agreement, such as the deployment of mixed military units composed of the Malian military, members of the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the Platform –the Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC)– in Kidal and Timbuktu. However,

the general climate of the country was marked by the intensification of violence in northern and central Mali, including attacks by jihadist groups and inter-community clashes on the eve of the presidential election, which took place on 29 July. Actions by armed groups blocked voting in some places (in 644 of the 23,000 polling stations, according to official data from the first round). President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita declared himself the winner of the second round, in August, though the election was marred by violence mainly in the north and centre that affected low turnout, of around 34%. After the presidential election and the formation of the new Keita administration, and at the request of the UN, in October the parties that signed the peace agreement signed a new “Pact for Peace” as a way to renew their commitment to speeding up implementation of the agreement reached in Algeria in 2015. The government signed this pact with the head of the UN mission, while the CMA and the Platform signed an addendum separately on the same day. The new pact calls for a more inclusive process, repeats that armed groups must gradually vanish and give way to reformed military forces and stipulates that international mediation efforts can make binding decisions in disputes between the parties, in accordance with Article 52 of the Algiers Agreement.

By the end of the year, some measures had been taken regarding the accelerated DDR process –1,600 combatants became part of three mixed units that will be administered by the Malian Army– and the establishment of interim administrations in the Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu regions, but no progress was made in operationalising these administrations and there were disagreements over issues such as quotas to integrate land military forces and reform administrative divisions. Thus, some analysts highlighted that some of the difficulties in moving forward on these and other issues were linked to fragmentation within the CMA and the Platform, partly due to power struggles and government co-optation strategies that have pushed some “dissident” groups to the sidelines despite their influence in on the ground.¹³ Another controversial issue in late 2018 was the Law on National Understanding provided for in the 2015 agreement. In December, more than 50 organisations denounced the government-backed law, arguing that it could favour impunity. Parliament delayed voting on the law while waiting for more information from the authorities. Previously, analysts had warned that the proposed legislation, inspired by laws passed after the Algerian Civil War, offered no guarantees for genuine reconciliation and for providing the victims of the conflict with access to justice.¹⁴

Reports issued by independent bodies offered a critical assessment of the peace process in Mali in 2018. The Carter Center, designated as an independent observer of the implementation of the peace agreement in Mali in late 2017, began working in 2018 and published two

13. Philip Kleinfeld, *New violence eclipses Mali's plans for peace*, IRIN, 26 November 2018.

14. Andrew Lebobich, *Mali, Algeria and the uneasy search for peace*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 4 October 2018.

reports, in May and October.¹⁵ The US centre identified some of the main problems in implementing the 2015 agreement, including the parties' continuous failures to respect the established schedules; the government's limited commitment and lack of consistency; the passivity and lack of initiative of the CMA and the Platform; flaws in the work of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, especially with regard to supervising and coordinating the implementation process; overlapping responsibilities between bodies linked to implementing the agreement; the lack of strategic vision in some key documents; and shortcomings when considering budgetary issues. It also identified two external challenges to the agreement affecting progress: the crisis in central Mali and the impact of criminal economic activity. Meanwhile, an independent strategic review conducted by MINUSMA concluded that three years after the agreement, no significant progress had been observed on the ground and that in some areas there had been regression, as for example with regard to the state's presence in the north of the country (20% of subprefects deployed in 2017 compared to 36% in 2016). The investigation ascribed the problems to distrust among the parties that signed the agreement, unequal political will and insufficient appropriation of the agreement among the Malian population, but found that due to the lack of a viable alternative, the 2015 agreement was still a valid framework for involving the parties in the peace process. Both reports called for greater commitment and involvement from Malian and international actors to strengthen the process. Another committee report from a UN panel of experts released in September did not identify any groups or people deliberately obstructing the 2015 agreement, but did indicate individuals who indirectly threatened the pact for their involvement in acts of violence and smuggling and human trafficking activities.¹⁶

Finally, **even though monitoring elections is not part of the MINUSMA mandate, in the months prior to the presidential election the mission used its good offices** and met with representatives of the Malian political opposition, the government, the armed groups that signed the 2015 agreement and civil society representatives to stress the importance of holding a peaceful and inclusive election. The legislative elections scheduled for October were postponed for

November and then the Constitutional Court postponed them sine die and extended the MPs' term of office until June 2019. At the year's end, this issue remained a source of political tension in the country and a cause for opposition protests repressed by the government. Likewise, intercommunal clashes, especially in central Mali, resulted in some truce agreements and unilateral cease-fire declarations during the year.

Gender, peace and security

The exclusion of Malian women from the peace process continued in 2018, despite the demands of women's groups to ensure substantive participation in the process. Malian women were involved in some of the activities promoted by MINUSMA, such as an event in July on the implementation of UN Resolution 1325, when women from all regions of the country met with government and UN officials, and the workshop held in July that brought together 45 female representatives of the parties that signed the 2015 agreement and civil society representatives, promoted by UN Women, MINUSMA and the High Representative of the President for the Peace Process, which led to the creation of an independent consultative forum led by women to oversee implementation of the agreement. During the meeting, a series of **specific recommendations were also outlined to improve female participation in the peace process, a call was made for immediate talks with the parties that signed the agreement to improve the inclusion of women at all levels and the creation of a gender strategy was suggested for the peace agreement** that could integrate women's needs in the peace process. The

participants demanded respect for both international and national commitments and recalled that since December 2015, Malian law requires that 30% of those in all political functions be women. Nevertheless, bodies as important as the Agreement Monitoring Committee were composed only of men. The strategic review on MINUSMA released in 2018 confirmed the need for a clear connection between the parties that signed the agreement and Malian society, including women, and stated that the adoption of the new "Pact for Peace" in October committed the parties that signed the 2015 agreement to a more inclusive process.

After the presidential election in Mali, the government and the armed actors that signed the Algiers Agreement of 2015 signed a "Pact for Peace" to renew their commitment to implementing the agreement

15. In November 2017, the Monitoring Committee of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali asked the Carter Center to officiate as an independent observer of the process to implement it, appealing to Article 63 of the Agreement, which provided for the creation of this figure. According to this article, the observer's mission is to evaluate implementation of the agreement, identify obstacles, detect responsibility and make recommendations. The UN Security Council confirmed the Carter Center's designation to this position in its Resolution 2391 on Mali of December 2017.

16. United Nations Security Council, Letter dated 8 August 2018 from the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) on Mali addressed to the President of the Security Council, 9 August 2018.