

2. Peace negotiations in Africa

- Thirteen peace processes and negotiations were identified in Africa throughout 2020, accounting for 32.5% of the 40 peace processes worldwide.
- The chronic deadlock and paralysis in diplomatic channels to address the Western Sahara issue favoured an escalation of tension at the end of the year.
- At the end of 2020, the parties to the conflict in Libya signed a ceasefire agreement and the political negotiations tried to establish a transitional government, but doubts remained about the general evolution of the process.
- In Mozambique, the Government and RENAMO made progress in implementing the DDR program envisaged in the 2019 peace agreement.
- The first direct talks were held between the government of Cameroon and a part of the secessionist movement led by the historical leader Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe to try to reach a ceasefire agreement.
- In Sudan, the government and the rebel coalition SRF and the SLM/A-MM signed a historic peace agreement that was not endorsed by other rebel groups such as the SPLM-N al-Hilu and the SLM/A-AW.
- In South Sudan, the transitional government was formed and peace talks were held with the armed groups that had not signed the 2018 peace agreement.

This chapter analyses the peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2020. First, it examines the general characteristics and trends of peace processes in the region, then it delves into the evolution of each of the cases throughout the year, including references to the gender, peace and security agenda. At the beginning of the chapter, a map is included that identifies the African countries that were the scene of negotiations during 2020.

Table 2.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2020

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Burundi¹	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)	--
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	Government, political-military secessionist movement formed by the opposition coalition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako) and Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku)	Church, civil society organisations, Switzerland, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
CAR	Government, armed groups belonging to the former Séléka coalition, anti-balaka 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 Sant'Egidio, ACCORD, OIC, International Support Group (UN, EU, among others), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, China, Russia, Sudan
DRC	Government led by Cap pour le Changement (coalition led by Félix Tshisekedi), in coalition with Front Commun pour le Congo (coalition led by Joseph Kabila, successor to the Alliance for the Presidential Majority), political and social opposition, armed groups from the East of the country	Congolese Episcopal Conference (CENCO), Church of Christ in the Congo, 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), AU, EU, UN, OIF and USA
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Government of Eritrea and government of Ethiopia	United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, USA
Libya	Presidential Council and Government of National Accord (GNA), House of Representatives (HoR), National General Congress (NGC), LNA or ALAF	Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, The Netherlands, Switzerland, among other countries; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Mali	Government, Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), MNLA, MAA and HCUA, Platform, GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA	Algeria, France, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), AU, UN, EU, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, The Carter Center, civil society organisations, Mauritania
Morocco – Western Sahara	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO)	UN, Algeria and Mauritania, Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)

1. The East African Community (EAC) finalised its facilitation in 2019.

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Mozambique	Government, RENAMO	National mediation team, Community of Sant'Egidio, Catholic Church, UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC), AU, EU, Botswana, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom
Somalia	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, Southwest), political military movement Ahlu Sunna WaJama'a, clan and sub-clan leaders, Somaliland	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) and SSOMA (NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC)	"IGAD Plus": the IGAD, which includes 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, UN, South Sudan Council of Churches, Community of Sant'Egidio
Sudan	Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF, coalition comprising the armed groups of South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur), Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Malik Agar and Abdelaziz al-Hilu factions	African Union High Level Panel on Sudan (AUHIP), Troika (EEUU, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, UNAMID, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda
Sudan – South Sudan	Government of Sudan and Government of South Sudan	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU

2.1 Negotiations in 2020: regional trends

Throughout the year 2020, **there were 13 peace processes and negotiations in Africa**, which accounts for 32,5% of the 40 peace processes identified worldwide. This figure is lower than in 2019, when there were 19 peace processes, and in 2018, when there were 22. The decrease in 2020 compared to 2019 is due to further implementation of some previously reached peace agreements, which have stopped being analysed in the yearbook, such as in the Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia (Ogaden) and Ethiopia (Oromia). In other cases, no active peace negotiations were identified: Nigeria (Niger Delta), the Lake Chad region (Boko Haram) and Senegal (Casamance).

Nine of these 13 peace negotiations were linked to armed conflicts. This was the case in Burundi, Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), CAR, DRC, Libya, Mali, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The remaining four processes were related to socio-political crises: Eritrea-Ethiopia, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique and Sudan-South Sudan. Armed conflicts in Africa continued to severely affect the civilian population despite the appeal of UN Secretary-General António Guterres in March, and peacekeeping missions and humanitarian responses were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted in an OECD report.² In fact, the virus created significant obstacles

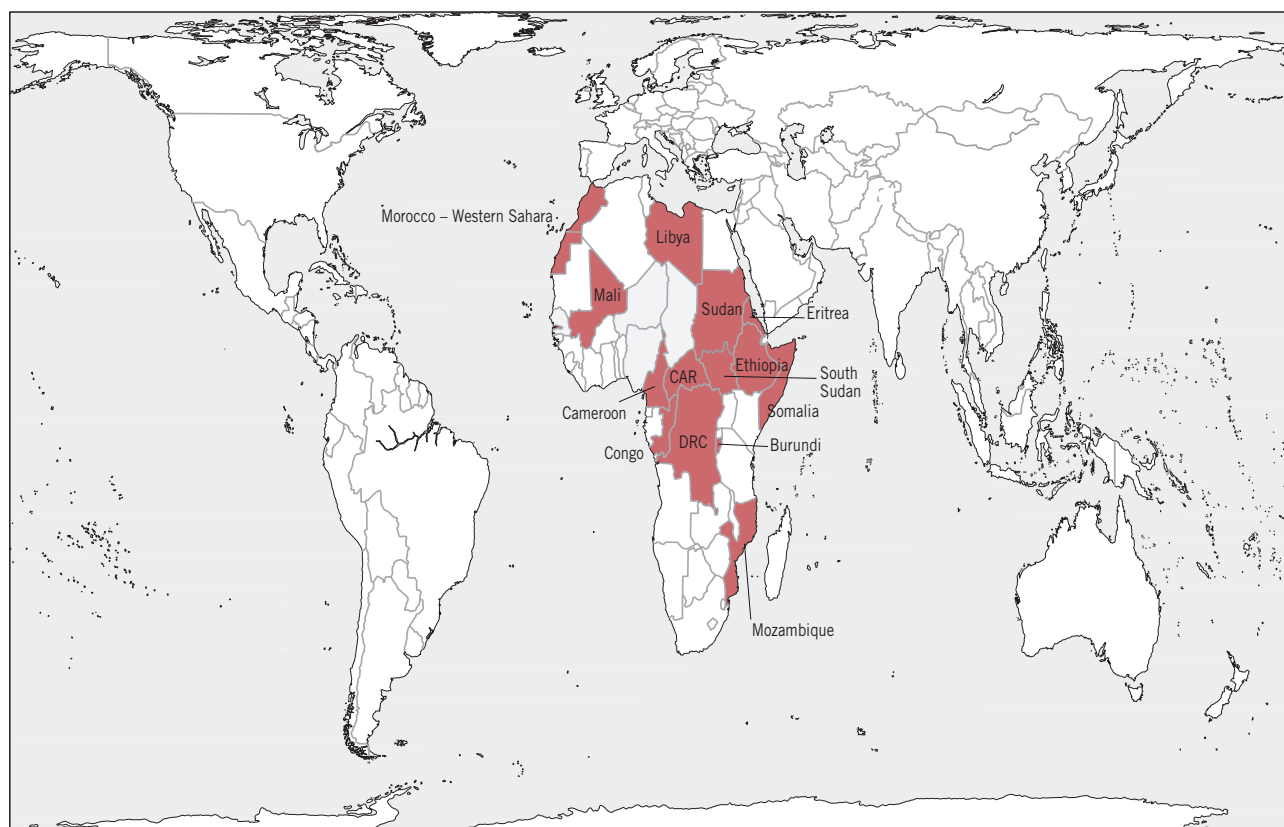
for peacemakers, as diplomatic missions were reduced to their essential staff, UN special envoys interrupted their travels and mediation efforts stopped in response to COVID-19, as highlighted by the organisation. For actors linked to diplomacy in conflicts in Africa, the spread of the virus represented a fundamental challenge regarding access.³ As a result, as highlighted by AU Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui, COVID-19 clearly contributed to delays in the implementation of critical peace accords.⁴

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected peace processes in Africa

Regarding the actors involved in the negotiations, in 2020 **only two cases exclusively involved the governments of the respective countries and armed groups or political-military movements in the negotiations.** These were the peace processes in Mozambique, between the government and the opposition group RENAMO, and in the Central African Republic (CAR), between the government and the different member groups of the former Séléka coalition and anti-balaka militias. **Meanwhile seven of the 13 peace processes were characterised by a more complex map of actors, with governments, armed groups and political and social opposition groups.** This was true in processes in Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), where the meetings involved political actors linked to insurgencies; Mali where the

2. OCDE, *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19), COVID-19, crises and fragility*, Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 29 April 2020.
3. Mutazilite, K., "From Bad to Worse? The impact(s) of Covid-19 on conflict dynamics," Institute for Security Studies, Conflict Series Brief 13, 11 June 2020.
4. Chergui, S., "Op-ed: Peace and Security amidst COVID-19", AU, 17 April 2020.

Map 2.1. Peace negotiations in Africa in 2020



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2020

negotiating process has involved national authorities and many political actors in recent years and armed forces from the Azawad region (north); Libya, between political and military actors controlling 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; Sudan, between the government, the political opposition and insurgents from various parts of the country; South Sudan, between the government, the armed group SPLM/A-IO and other smaller political opposition and armed groups; and the DRC, where the negotiations involved the government and opposition parties and coalitions on the one hand, and government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country on the other. **In other cases, however, governmental and political and social opposition actors participated.** This was the case in Burundi, where the meetings involved the government and parts of the CNARED. **Other negotiating processes were led by the governments of neighbouring countries as part of inter-state disputes.** Examples were the peace process between Sudan and South Sudan and the negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia. One case, that of Morocco-Western Sahara, involves the Moroccan government and the POLISARIO Front, which proclaimed the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976 and is considered an international dispute because it is a territory described by the UN as pending decolonisation.

All the peace processes and negotiations analysed had the support of third parties, with the exception of Burundi,

since the official facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, announced that he was resigning from his role in February 2019. Since then, the talks have been direct between the government and parts of the CNARED. Although there are many cases where the actors performing mediation, facilitation and accompaniment tasks are publicly known, in other contexts this work is carried out discreetly and behind closed doors. In all cases with third parties, there was more than one actor performing mediation and facilitation tasks. The most prominent actor in this regard was the UN, which was involved in nine of the 13 peace processes in Africa: Libya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. Another notable actor was the AU, as part of its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which is participating in eight processes: Libya, Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan.

African regional intergovernmental organisations also participated as third parties, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali; the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in the CAR and the DRC; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the CAR; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Mozambique; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan. In addition to African intergovernmental organisations, other intergovernmental organisations also participated as

third parties in African peace processes, such as the EU in Mozambique, Mali, the CAR, DRC, South Sudan and between Sudan and South Sudan, and the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) in the CAR.

States also played a prominent role as third parties in the peace processes and negotiations in Africa. One peace process had only states involved as third parties: the negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia were mediated and facilitated by Saudi Arabia, the United States and especially the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the rest of the cases with state mediating actors, many national governments in Africa and elsewhere became involved in processes in which other mediating and facilitating actors also participated. At the same time, religious, local and international actors also played roles as third parties. Examples include 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 Church of Christ in the Congo in the DRC; the Anglophone General Conference (AGC), made up of Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders in Cameroon; and the South Sudan Council of Churches in South Sudan. Specialised organisations also performed mediation and facilitation roles, such as the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which was active in Cameroon, Libya, Mali and the CAR.

As part of this proliferation of mediators, **the participation of third parties in joint formats continued to be frequent, as in previous years**, such as groups of friends and support groups. This was the case with the Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, the United Kingdom and Russia) in 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 which consists of the IGAD, the five members of the African Union High-Level Ad Hoc Committee (Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Chad and Algeria), the states of the Troika (the USA, United Kingdom and Norway), the EU, the AU and the UN. Also notable was the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, which was involved in the CAR and promoted by the AU and the CEEAC, with support from the UN, ICGLR, Angola, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and Chad, and coexisted with other mediators in the CAR. At the same time, competition between third parties continued, as exemplified by the peace process in Libya, where Russia and Egypt support actors opposed to other actors backed by Turkey.

The topics of the negotiations were diverse in nature and included **ceasefires and cessations of hostilities**. Several **ceasefire agreements that were signed were violated**, highlighting the fragility of this aspect of the peace processes and the lack of political will to keep the promises made. Various ceasefires were broken systematically in Libya and the weapons embargo was

persistently violated by many regional and international actors supporting one side or another. Despite the beginning of the implementation of the agreement reached in February 2019 between the Central African government and the 14 armed groups, the ceasefire violations were constant in the CAR.

Another security-related aspect was the issue of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants (DDR) in some processes, such as in Mali, South Sudan, Mozambique and others. In **Mozambique**, after the signing of the **peace agreement in 2019 between the government and RENAMO, during 2020 implementation began on the DDR programme** for RENAMO's approximately 5,000 combatants and the dismantling of the 17 military bases in the centre of the country. Although progress was made in demobilisation during the year, the impact associated with the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the goals from being achieved, as was the case in many other peace processes.

Regarding the **gender, peace and security agenda**, there was an absence of women in the negotiating processes and a lack of gender issues in the different peace agreements reached in 2020, with the exception of Mali, though in most contexts, various women's movements and organisations demanded active participation in peace processes. In **Mali**, according to the Carter Center, both the Agreement Monitoring Committee (CSA) and various international partners actively promoted the participation of women in the bodies monitoring the peace agreement. During the CFA sessions in June and November, nine women participated (three for each signatory party), which represents real progress over the composition of previous CFA sessions. However, the Carter Center pointed out that women have yet to be included in the four subcommittees and the other executive bodies and that women's observatories have not yet been created in the northern regions. The political negotiations in **Libya**, known as the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), were held from 9 to 15 November in Tunis. The 16 Libyan women (out of a total of 75 participants) in the LPDF or political track issued a joint statement in mid-November stressing the importance of female involvement in the peace process, dialogue, rebuilding of the state and reconciliation in the country.

There were also some interesting initiatives in different countries. Civil society groups led by women in **Cameroon** have been at the forefront of developing innovative approaches to address the rise in violence and promoting peace with gender equality. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) of Cameroon worked with civil society organisations to advocate for women's full and meaningful political participation, address the impact of gender in growing security challenges linked to conflict and take advantage of the women, peace and security agenda (WPS). In other contexts, such as in **Somalia, Burundi and the CAR**, though absent from formal negotiations, women demanded to participate in ongoing electoral processes

and managed to reach deals and agreements with the support of UN Women and women's organizations in order to guarantee and strengthen their political participation in upcoming political events. The UN Security Council continued to support efforts to increase women's participation in conflict prevention and mediation activities in the Horn of Africa, and particularly through the **Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation**. UN Women continued to support the network, which included the deployment of network members in South Sudan, Sudan and Ethiopia.

There was a persistent lack of women in negotiating processes and in gender issues in the different peace agreements in Africa

On the eve of the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (UNSCR 1325), Pravina Makan-Lakha, the General Manager and Advisor on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) of the South African think tank ACCORD, participated the virtual dialogue entitled "Twenty years of African women's participation in the women, peace and security agenda: civil society perspectives". The meeting took place on 23 October 2020 at a crucial moment for the WPS agenda, as stakeholders around the world seized the opportunity to take stock of progress and address gaps in the agenda over the past 20 years. The event was jointly organised by 11 civil society organisations in Africa, including: Human Sciences Research Council; Africa Institute of South Africa; Women's International Peace Centre; Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS); South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID); West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP); African Women in Dialogue (AWID); African Leadership Centre; Institute for Security Studies (ISS); Training for Peace (TfP); ACCORD; and finally, the South Africa Department of Science and Innovation. The objectives of the meeting were to listen to women's voices and perspectives on progress and challenges since the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325 and to chart new paths for women in Africa in the field of peace and security. The meeting focused on four themes: prevention and protection, mediation, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

During the discussion, Pravina Makan-Lakha talked about the mixed results. For example, in southern Africa, even though there is growing female representation in parliaments, this progress is not reflected in realities in the community as the countries continue to receive poor rankings in the Gender Inequality Index. To illustrate, in January 2019, 46.8% of South Africa's MPs were women, yet the country ranked 97th on the Gender Inequality Index. Moreover, **out of the 16 peace agreements signed between 1992 to 2011, only two included women as signatories and only three included women as lead mediators**. Pravina Makan-Lakha added that more recently, women from Libya, the CAR, Sudan and South Sudan have faced many obstacles, as well as outright resistance, to their demands to participate in peace processes. She concluded by saying although the numbers are not a cause for celebration, success

in establishing, promoting and strengthening female conflict prevention and mediation networks must be acknowledged. However, one of the main conclusions was that, as the data show, there is still a long way to go before we can say that the objectives have been achieved.

Regarding the evolution of the peace negotiations, during 2020 we continued to witness progress in Mozambique,

Sudan, between Sudan and South Sudan and in South Sudan. Implementation of the 2019 peace agreement in **Mozambique** began in 2020 with the launch of the DDR programme, although the planned objective of dismantling all RENAMO military bases (17) by August 2020 was not achieved. In mid-June, the UN special envoy for Mozambique, Mirko Manzon, announced the demobilisation of around 300 combatants and the dismantling of the first military base in Savane, Dondo District, Sofala Province. This was welcomed as an important step in building trust between both parties, paving the way and fulfilling expectations for the rest of the combatants, as well as for the gradual closing of 16 RENAMO military bases. During the third quarter of the year, it was reported that approximately 500 former combatants had demobilised, which represents 10% of the 5,000 planned. The initial disagreements between the parties, as well as the start of the global health crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic and the containment restrictions in the country, made it difficult to implement the clauses of the peace agreement. According to ACCORD, the levels and characteristics of community transmission of COVID-19 in the country required implementation of major containment restrictions by the government, which affected the demilitarisation process in different ways.

In another example of progress, after a year of peace negotiations held in the South Sudanese capital, Juba, **the Sudanese government and the rebel coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Sudan Liberation Movement faction led by Minni Minnawi (SLM/A-MM) signed a historic peace agreement on 31 August**. Although the agreement represents a fundamental step to achieving peace in the country, not all the armed actors signed it. The faction of the rebel group North Sudan People's Liberation Movement headed by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLM-N) and the faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement headed by Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLM/A-AW) refused to ratify the agreement. However, the government is holding separate talks with the groups that did not sign it, inviting them to do so. Similarly, in neighbouring **South Sudan**, progress was also made during the year in implementing some of the clauses established in the 2018 South Sudan Peace Agreement (R-ARCSS), as well as in relation to peace negotiations with actors that had not signed the agreement. Developments in the R-ARCSS included the **formation of the long-awaited unity government and the agreement on administrative-territorial distribution**,

points that posed the greatest obstacle to implementing the agreement. Meanwhile, a new negotiating process was begun with the armed groups that had not signed the peace agreement, articulated through the **South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA)**, though internal tensions in the alliance made the negotiations more complex. Finally, the dynamics of rapprochement between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan that began in 2019 after the formation of the new Sudanese government were maintained during the year, achieving progress in diplomatic relations and border delimitations between both countries. Highlights of the year included the mediation role played by the South Sudanese authorities in the Sudanese peace negotiation process, which led to the signing of the peace agreement in Juba in August 2020. Also significant was the agreement reached between both countries in September to form a joint technical committee with the aim of resuming oil production in Unity State and other key oil fields. In late October, the governments of both countries signed a joint military and defence cooperation agreement.

In contrast, **other processes faced many obstacles and problems during the year** (Burundi, Cameroon, Mali, Libya, the CAR, the DRC and Somalia). In **Burundi**, the failure of regional initiatives to promote inclusive political dialogue and divisions within the Burundian opposition coalition led to a series of meetings between government representatives and some opposition leaders that ended with their return to the country. This agreement had no consequences on the ground, however, since the violence, insecurity and repression of the political opposition continued ahead of the elections held in May. In **Cameroon**, the first talks were held between the government and a part of the separatist movement led by the historical leader Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe on 2 July, three years after the start of the armed conflict, in an attempt to reach a ceasefire agreement. Although many local and international actors and important members of Cameroonian civil society participated in the meeting, the talks were rejected by other separatists in Cameroon and abroad, since the secessionist movement is fragmented into various factions, and divisions were also observed within the government over the peace initiative. In **Mali**, very little progress was made during the year in the implementation of the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement due to the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the socio-political crisis in the country that led to a coup d'état and the establishment of a transitional government. Attempts to promote a negotiated solution to the conflict in **Libya** was dogged by problems throughout 2020, partly as a result of the growing involvement of regional and international actors that tried to influence the negotiations while they continued supplying arms to one side or the other in open defiance of the weapons embargo imposed by the UN. It was not until the second half of the year that some progress was made, although at the end of

***The headway made
in the negotiations
in Sudan contributed
to progress in the
negotiations between
Sudan and South
Sudan***

2020 there were many doubts about how the process was developing. In the **CAR**, the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation of 2019 was problematic, as several armed groups continued to violate the agreement and obstruct the restoration of government authority, which hampered preparations for the 27 December general elections. In addition, there was a resurgence of violence in the country. In the **DRC**, the coalition government led by Félix Tshisekedi that emerged from the controversial 2018 elections was affected by many crises and obstacles that led to its breakdown in late 2020. In **Somalia**, various people called for dialogue between the federal government and al-Shabaab, although no meetings were disclosed. In addition, tension between the federal government and the federated states over holding the parliamentary and presidential elections between December 2020 and February 2021 increased during the year, though an agreement was reached in September in order to move forward in the electoral process, breaking the deadlock that threatened to delay them beyond the constitutional limits of the current government, which would have added more uncertainty and tension to the situation.

Some peace processes were completely stalled during the year, such as the negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia and Morocco and Western Sahara. Two years after the historic peace agreement was signed between **Eritrea and Ethiopia**, the process of implementing the agreement remained at a standstill as a result of the escalating tension and start of the armed conflict between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray region. Although progress had been made in some areas, others remained completely paralysed as a result of tensions and the war that started in the Tigray region in November, compounded by unresolved animosity between Tigray and Eritrean leaders. The conflict over **Western Sahara** continued to be characterised by chronic impasse and paralysis of the diplomatic channel to address and resolve the dispute, a situation that favoured an escalation of tension towards the end of the year.

A final significant aspect to highlight was the **openness** of some state actors in different armed conflicts to **explore spaces for dialogue with jihadist armed actors.** Even though the government of **Mozambique** headed by Filipe Nyusi, had ruled out starting talks with the rebels in the Cabo Delgado region in January, it later announced its willingness to start peace talks. Similarly, the government of **Mali** opened the door to starting peace negotiations with some jihadist groups that have not signed the the Algiers Peace Agreement, especially with the leaders Amadou Kouffa (Macina Liberation Front) and Iyad ag Ghaly (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, or GSIM). This subsequently allowed for an agreement between the GSIM and the government for a prisoner exchange, which was hailed by African Union Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui and by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who

also expressed their openness to dialogue with jihadist militants in the Sahel. Reluctant to start negotiations with these actors, the French government opened the possibility of dialogue with a counterpart that was “representative and legitimate” at the end of the year, a description interpreted as an allusion to the GSIM. There were similar developments in **Somalia**, where officers of the Kenyan Armed Forces who have participated in AMISOM indicated that a change of strategy was necessary in the war in the neighbouring country, since the military activity was proving ineffective. Various analysts argued that the securitisation strategy of the United States and that of the international community as a whole, backed by the Somali government, has been revealed as a failure because it has not reduced the impact of al-Shabaab’s activities and has killed many civilians. As such, various people have demanded an approach to al-Shabaab to promote a negotiating process similar to the one in Afghanistan between the US and the Taliban. However, experts remain divided over the effective possibility that a negotiating process could be pursued today. The change in position of the different actors involved in these armed conflicts reflected the need to involve all armed actors in dialogue to stop the violence, regardless of their ideological beliefs.

2.2. Case study analysis

Great Lakes and Central Africa

Burundi	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and social opposition grouped under the Conseil National pour le respect de l’Accord d’Arusha pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Burundi et la Restauration d’un Etat de Droit (CNARED)
Third parties	--
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.

In Burundi, the talks between the government and the opposition had been completely deadlocked since 2019 and various events led to their cancellation in 2020.

The meetings held during 2019 between representatives of the government and the Conseil National pour le respect de l’Accord d’Arusha pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Burundi et la Restauration d’un Etat de Droit (CNARED) to study the conditions of the return of exiled leaders were the prelude to the CNARED’s announcement in December 2019 that it was willing to participate in the general elections in May 2020. The announcement took many by surprise. On 11 December 2019, the executive secretary of the coalition, Anicet Niyonkuru, arrived in the capital, Bujumbura, from Brussels, along with 15 other opposition politicians who have lived in exile for the last four years. Upon his arrival, Niyonkuru affirmed that the elections were the only way to improve the situation in the country, which has been immersed in a serious political crisis and a warlike atmosphere since the 2015 elections in which Pierre Nkurunziza ran for a third presidential term that many described as unconstitutional. Nkurunziza was declared the winner amidst a climate of political violence and accusations of fraud and irregularities, in addition to a boycott by the opposition. Niyonkuru claimed that his party, the CDP, and the CNARED coalition, would not repeat the same mistakes made in 2010 and 2015 when they boycotted the elections, paving the way for an easy victory for the CNDD-FDD, and that they would participate whether or not the political situation improved. The decision drew both criticism and praise from other political organisations. Some politicians argued that the decision was a capitulation of the alliance’s initial tough stance on the president’s third term, which critics still consider unconstitutional.

The CNARED’s position has evolved since 2015. At the start of the crisis, the CNARED announced that it would not hold talks with the Nkurunziza government until it resigned and accepted a transitional government. The CNARED later agreed to participate in the dialogue in Burundi under the auspices of regional mediator and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and international facilitator and former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa. The inter-Burundian dialogue ended in failure three years later, when Mkapa announced that he was

resigning from his role as facilitator on 9 February 2019. During 2019, the CNARED's leaders travelled between Belgium and Uganda to explore their chances of returning to Burundi. In this sense, the divisions within the CNARED were revealed in January 2019, with the withdrawal from the coalition of four opposition parties and former Vice President Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira, all of them reluctant to return without firm commitments to real change by the government, as well as the various meetings held between representatives of the government and the CNARED during 2019, such as those held on 28 August and 2 September in Nairobi with the ombudsman, former Interior Minister Edouard Nduwimana (an ally of Nkurunziza). In early October 2019, Anicet Niyonkuru visited Burundi and met with Deputy Interior Minister Tharcisse Niyongabo to discuss the return of exiled CNARED members.

To some extent, the coalition leaned toward a rollback because of the harsh reality of the political situation, analysts say. On 7 December 2019, days before the return of Niyonkuru and the rest of the leaders in exile, the East African Court of Justice ruled that President Nkurunziza did not violate the Constitution of Burundi or the laws of the East African Community (EAC). The decision is in line with that taken by the Constitutional Court of Burundi just after the opposition challenged Nkurunziza's third term.

The months leading up to the May elections were characterised by reports of human rights violations, including forced disappearances and arbitrary arrests, as well as acts of violence such as clashes between members of rival political parties. In mid-February, the government refused to extend visas to allow six politicians in exile in Uganda to travel to Burundi, thereby de facto banning them from returning to the country. Consequently, the CNARED's decision had little influence on the government and the CNDD-FDD's opening of the political space, according to various analysts. In addition, the incoming government formed by the new President Evariste Ndayishimiye was dominated by representatives of the regime's hardline wing, and even international sanctions were considered against new Prime Minister Alain Guillaume Bunyoni and Interior Minister Gervais Ndirakobuca for their involvement in repression and violence against civilians since 2015. Opposition sectors in exile denounced the lack of representation of the Tutsi minority in the new government and among regional governors, with only one minister and three governors.

Gender, peace and security

Women have been excluded from the different peace initiatives since the signing of the Arusha accords. Although the constitutional quota of 30% representation in the National Assembly (36.4%) and the Senate (47%) was reached and exceeded in 2015, the representation of women in decision-making at the local level remains low.

They represent 17% at the colline council level (2015 elections), 32.7% of the heads of townships and 6.4% of the colline chiefs. This is why the UN Women office in Burundi and the National Women's Forum signed a partnership agreement in July aimed at strengthening the political participation of women in upcoming political events. The project aims to increase the participation of female candidates from the collines, thereby reaching at least a proportion of 20% female candidates in the four most populated provinces of the country, Gitega, Karusi, Makamba and Ngozi. This project was also expected to allow elected female leaders to promote the common agenda of women during the new legislature.

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), Khartoum Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation (Bangui, 6 February 2019)

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 and that it contributed to reaching the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation of February 2019, in the implementation phase, despite the difficulties.

The implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was problematic, as various armed groups continued to violate the agreement and obstruct the restoration of government authority, hindering preparations for the general elections on 27 December. There was also a resurgence of violence in the country. The UN Security Council extended MINUSCA's mandate until 15 November 2021 and extended the sanctions, including the arms embargo, until 31 July 2021.

The return of the government's authority to the interior of the country was cosmetic due to the insecurity and the lack of human and material resources. The same was true of the scarce deployment of the Central African Armed Forces, which suffers from an insufficient logistical endowment and is dependent on MINUSCA, according to the International Crisis Group in December.⁵ Former President Michel Djotodia returned from a six-year exile on 10 January and the next day, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra gave him an audience to congratulate him on his return. On 21 January, former President Bozizé, who had secretly returned from in December exile and was subject to a search and arrest warrant, also met with Touadéra. On 12 May, President Touadéra deployed the first battalion of the special mixed security units (USMS). Stipulated in the 2019 agreement and made up of soldiers and members of demobilised armed groups, the USMS was deployed in the town of Bouar, in the prefecture by Nana-Mambéré. In May, the national defence and security forces and administrative authorities were deployed to the Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture for the first time since 2013. The prefects of Nana-Grébizi and Ouaka launched security committees in Ippy and Mbrès on 9 and on August 17, respectively. On 16 June, the executive committee to monitor the Political Agreement held a session to discuss the violence in Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture). It was agreed to give priority to transitional justice in resolving the conflict between the Gula and Runga ethnic groups. National initiatives were complemented by local mediation initiatives. However, the progress made in establishing the USMS as envisaged in the agreement was limited. As of 1 October, a total of 216 unit members had been deployed to Bouar from Paoua, while 346 remained in Bouar. However, they had not yet started their operations. On 18 August, the strategic committee of the USMS selected Birao, Bria, Ndélé and Kaga Bandoro as locations for future deployments.

However, in January the armed groups FPRC, UPC and MPC jointly denounced the delays in the implementation of the peace agreement and called for new peace talks. Subsequently, some armed groups abandoned the 2019 agreement, and the government was in constant contact with these groups and those that had threatened to do the same. On 25 April, seven armed groups that had signed the February 2019 peace agreement announced that they were ending their participation in the government and

in the implementation mechanisms of the 2019 peace agreement, accusing the government of failing to fulfil its commitments. Days earlier, President Touadéra and Prime Minister Firmin Ngrébada had met, respectively, with UPC leader Ali Darassa and FPRC leader Abdoulaye Hissène in Bangui, to explore the possibility of achieving a compromise in reducing the violence ahead of the elections, since both groups signed the communiqué. The meetings were not successful, however. On 20 April, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions (travel ban and freezing of assets) on FDPC leader Abdoulaye Miskine, accused of recruiting fighters, and on 5 August it imposed sanctions on the leader of the 3R, Sidiki Abbas, on charges of being involved in arms trafficking and in killing civilians. On 30 July, the prime minister met in Bangui with UPC leader Ali Darassa. According to the minutes of the government meeting, which Ali Darassa himself signed, he promised to respect the reassertion of government authority, to participate in disarmament and demobilisation operations and to allow the free movement of election workers and officials, in exchange for him to be authorised to re-establish himself in Bambari with a direct line of communication with the prime minister. In a statement dated 1 August, Ali Darassa rejected this version of events and indicated that he had signed the minutes of the meeting under duress, so he did not commit to the agreement. On 21 August, the African Union led a delegation made up of representatives from the government, CEEAC and MINUSCA that met with MPC leader Mahamat Al-Khatim in Kaga Bandoro to encourage the group to implement the Political Agreement. In this regard, on 2 September, some armed groups that had signed the Political Agreement issued a joint statement complaining about shortcomings in its implementation. They asked ECCAS President Ali Bongo Ondimba to organise an arbitration meeting among the heads of state of the region, as provided in Article 34 of the Political Agreement. Between 3 and 5 October, representatives of the government and MINUSCA and guarantors of the peace agreement met with 3R leader Sidiki Abbas in Kouï, in the prefecture of Ouham-Pendé, to discuss preparations for the elections, at which Abbas vowed not to block the voter registration process in the northwest and released three police officers kidnapped in the same prefecture in September. However, violence and attacks between armed groups continued in the northwest. Finally, the interreligious platform celebrated a national day of prayer, fasting and forgiveness on 8 August. Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga and Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, leaders of the platform, travelled to Bossangoa, in Ouham prefecture, on 2-3 September to promote reconciliation and social cohesion between the Christian and Muslim communities.

Gender, peace and security

Women were absent from decision-making spaces and from political negotiation initiatives and processes.

5. ICG, "Réduire les tensions électorales en République Centrafricaine", International Crisis Group no. 296, 10 December 2020.

According to the UN Secretary-General's report on the country, in view of the December elections, MINUSCA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women all undertook initiatives to encourage women to participate as voters and as female candidates. Eleven women's situation chambers were created in Bangui and the prefectures in order to strengthen women's roles in monitoring the elections. The different security forces in the country gradually incorporated women into their ranks: as of 1 October, the national forces had a total strength of 8,651 soldiers, of which 660 were women; 1,464 police officers (344 women) and 2,164 gendarmes (228 women) deployed in all prefectures except Bas Kotto. On 28 August and 1 September, 1,350 police officers and gendarmes graduated, including 395 women. In addition, on 9 July, President Touadéra appointed 21 judges, including four women, in the first expansion of the judicial staff in four years.

DRC	
Negotiating actors	Government led by Cap pour le Changement (coalition led by Félix Tshisekedi), in coalition with Front Commun pour le Congo (coalition led by Joseph Kabila, successor to the Alliance for the Presidential Majority), political and social opposition, armed groups from the eastern part of the country
Third parties	Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), Church of Christ in the Congo, Angola, Tanzania, Uganda, Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue in the DRC led by the AU, SADC, International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), AU, EU, UN, OIF and USA
Relevant agreements	Sun City Agreement, Pretoria Agreement and Luanda Agreement (2002); Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the DRC (2002); Comprehensive, Inclusive Peace Accord 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. Meanwhile, the actions of various armed groups persisted in the eastern part of the country, some of which negotiated the cessation of their activities with the political and military authorities.

In the DRC, the coalition government led by Félix Tshisekedi that emerged from the controversial 2018 elections was affected by much tension and many obstacles that led to the breakdown at the end of 2020. Furthermore, the political and military authorities continued in their attempts to end the activities of armed groups, either through military pressure or dialogue and negotiation, and were supported in their efforts by MONUSCO. The different initiatives include the political process that began in 2018, which resulted in a peace agreement between the government and the armed group Front pour la Résistance Patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI). On 28 February 2020, the government and the FRPI signed a peace agreement. In its September report, the UN stated that continued progress in the implementation of the peace agreement between the government and FRPI had had a positive effect on the security situation in southern Ituri (Ituri province). The process will ultimately lead to the demobilisation of around 1,100 FRPI combatants and their reintegration into their communities of origin. However, the demobilisation process had not yet started due to challenges related to COVID-19 and persistent disagreements over the FRPI's demand for the release of its members, as well as amnesty and integration of some of its leaders into the FARDC.

Moreover, in relation to the violence in South Kivu, in May a local Mai-Mai militia decided to surrender to the military authorities in the territory of Walungu, in South Kivu province. In July, President Félix Tshisekedi sent a delegation of former warlords from the Lendu community to negotiate a demobilisation agreement with different factions of the armed group Cooperative pour le Développement du Congo (CODECO) in the territory of Djugu, in Ituri province. The CODECO faction in the town of Kambutso expressed its willingness to initiate a peace process that would lead to the group's disarmament. However, other factions refused to join the process. On 17 August, the commander of a faction of the Nduma Défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) surrendered to the Congolese Army together with his 485 combatants in the town of Kashuga, in the territory of Masisi, in North Kivu province.

However, a highlight of the year in terms of peace-building in the region was the announcement that took place on 16 September when **around 70 armed groups active in South Kivu pledged to end the hostilities in the areas under their control**, according to local media reports collected by Anadolu Agency on 17 September.⁶ The announcement was made on 16 September at the end of a two-day dialogue that took place in Muresa, near the city of Bukavu, under the auspices of the Interprovincial Commission to Support the Awareness, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Community Reintegration Process (CIAP-DDRC). The CIAP-DDRC is a Congolese government initiative for the stabilisation of the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, affected by various armed conflicts. This body formed after President Félix Tshisekedi visited Bukavu in October 2019. The disarmament initiative is also supported by MONUSCO.

Gender, peace and security

MONUSCO continued to promote the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda through specific partnerships with national, provincial and local authorities, in addition to promoting greater female representation, especially in decision-making processes related to COVID-19. MONUSCO also stepped up its efforts to support community-based structures for conflict prevention and reconciliation led by women, helping to deliver a gender-inclusive response to protection issues, including new risk patterns in the context of COVID-19. Moreover, in relation to criminal violence, after persistent attacks by assailants in Ituri province, the network of women's organisations in Ituri issued a joint statement urging all the actors involved to take concrete steps to end violence, tackle insecurity in the province and promote a protective environment for women and girls.

In April, a meeting was organised by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), with the support of the NAMA Women Advancement Establishment. It was the first time that women involved in the GNWP Young Women Leaders for Peace (YWL) programme from DRC, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and South Sudan came together to share and discuss peace and security issues and solutions amid the pandemic and despite network connectivity problems. Furthermore, in the second half of the year, in accordance with the principles of the Peacekeeping Action aimed at promoting political solutions for the conflict with national involvement, MONUSCO provided support to the Ituri provincial authorities with a view to holding a series of meetings that led to the signing of a peace deal in the territory of Mahagi by 42 traditional chiefs and leaders from the Lendu community, including eight women, as well as the adoption of a road map by 60 local leaders, including nine women from the Alur community.

South Sudan

Negotiating actors	Government (SPLM), SPLM / A-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others) and SSOMA (NAS, SSUF/A, Real-SPLM, NDM-PF, UDRM/A, NDM-PF, SSNMC)
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, UN, South Sudan Council of Churches, Community of Sant'Egidio
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 between Sudan and South Sudan and achieving independence was not achieved, 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 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, leader of the SPL/A-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO), which 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 were found 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 were 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. Subsequently, new agreements were reached between the parties, such as the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access (2017) and the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) (2018), which open new paths to try to end the violence.

Progress was made on implementing some clauses established in the 2018 South Sudan Peace Agreement (R-ARCSS) during the year, including the

6. Anadolu Agency, "70 armed groups agree to end hostilities in DR Congo", 17 September 2020.

formation of the unity government and the agreement on administrative-territorial distribution, and a new peace negotiating process was also launched with the armed groups that had not signed the peace agreement. Talks related to the implementation of the peace agreement of September 2018 were held throughout the year and mediated by former South African President David Mabuza, with the main obstacles being the **formation of the unity government** and, above all, aspects related to the formula of territorial-administrative division for the country. Although early in the year there were many misgivings about the parties' ability to form a unity government on the date established (22 February), the agreement was finally fulfilled and the transitional government was formed between Salva Kiir's party, the SPLA-IO and the SSOA, due in part to heavy internal and external pressure. The new government, called the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU), appointed the five vice presidents established in the agreement, including Riek Machar, the leader of the SPLA-IO, as the first vice president. In early March, the new government cabinet was presented, composed of 35 ministers and 10 vice ministers with the following representation: 20 ministers elected by Kiir's party, nine by the SPLA-IO, three by the SSOA, two by the FD and one by other parties.

A unity government was formed in South Sudan in February, but tensions remained for much of the year over the country's administrative and territorial divisions

Alongside the formation of the government, the negotiations remained deadlocked over the number and borders of the states, as well as over **security measures** related to the unification of government troops and rebel forces in the national South Sudanese Army. Although in this last respect the SPLA-IO troops began to move to the billeting sites in the states of Jonglei, Torit and Wau at the beginning of the year, the training programme of the new South Sudanese Army, which will consist of 85,000 soldiers, was suspended on 27 March as part of the COVID-19 containment measures put in place by the government. In June, with no significant progress made, the official body that supervises the unification of the armed groups warned that the training and cantonment sites were "on the verge of collapse" due to a lack of resources and logistical support. Moreover, in relation to the **administrative and border division of the country**, the formation of the unity government led to the dismissal of all state governors and the return to the administrative formula of the 10 states that existed before the armed conflict, plus three administrative areas with special status: Pibor, Ruweng and Abyei. The agreement on the appointment of new state governors was delayed until June due to a lack of consensus between the

parties. On 29 June, the government announced the appointment of eight of the 10 governors and it was agreed that the SPLA-IO would designate the governor of the state of Upper Nile and the SSOA would name the governor of the state of Jonglei. The SPLA-IO nominated General Johnson Olony to be the governor of Upper Nile, but he was rejected by Kiir's government due to his refusal to billet his troops as stipulated in the peace agreement. After a period of deadlock and flaring tension between the signatory parties, which included the breakdown of the ceasefire between 18 and 19 July in Wau, President Kiir's party, the SPLA-IO, the SSOA and other political parties signed an agreement on power sharing at the state and local (county) level on 10 August. This agreement which complemented the June agreement on the appointment of state governors, also stipulated the allocation of seats for each party in state cabinets and parliaments, as well as in county commissions and councils. This agreement led to new negotiations on the assignment of offices at the state and local levels. In mid-November, Kiir accepted the SPLA-IO's nomination of Johnson Olony to be the governor of the state of Upper Nile, putting an end to the dispute over the last governor to be appointed.

Meanwhile, between 2 and 15 November, a **national dialogue** was summoned by the president in Juba, but the main opposition forces did not participate. Kiir stated that his various solutions would be incorporated into the country's permanent Constitution, as they reflect the views of the South Sudanese. These include the limitation of presidential terms to two, lasting five years each. However, the SPLM-IO and the NDM did not participate in the conference, arguing that the revitalised peace agreement supersedes any other process and instead called for its comprehensive implementation.

Peace talks were held with groups that had not signed the R-ARCSS during the year, organised through the South Sudan Opposition Movements' Alliance (SSOMA), which includes different groups: the National Salvation Front (NAS), the South Sudan United Front (SSUF), the South Sudan National Movement for Change (SSNMC), the Real Sudan People's Liberation Movement (R-SPLM), the National Democratic Movement Patriotic Front (NDM/PF) and the United Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (UDRA). The negotiations were held at the end of the year in Rome (Italy), facilitated by the Community of Sant'Egidio and mediated by the IGAD. The first major progress was achieved on 12 January with the signing of the **"Rome Declaration on the Peace Process in South Sudan"**, in which the

7. "Rome Declaration On The Peace Process In South Sudan" 12/01/2020.

8. See the summary on South Sudan in the chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2021.

parties committed to upholding a ceasefire, ensuring access and maintaining continuous dialogue under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio and regional organisations.⁷ The deal prompted the government to grant amnesty to all SSOMA factions on 29 January. The second round of talks took place in mid-February, reaching a resolution on implementation of the truce negotiated in January. However, the negotiations stalled and the military truce was broken, leading to fighting in the Central Equatoria region between government forces and the NAS.⁸ After months of inactivity in the peace negotiations due to the new government's inability to appoint new delegates and to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the negotiations were resumed on 9 October. At that time, the SSOMA rebel coalition split into two groups due to disagreements between the leaders after it emerged that secret talks had been held between the SSUF/A, led by Paul Malong, and the government. Thomas Cirillo, the leader of the NAS and the South Sudan National Democratic Alliance (SSNDA), an armed coalition that is a member of the SSOMA, withdrew the SSUF/A from the SSOMA, which was followed by the departure of the Real-SPLM led by Pagan Amum. This created divisions within the coalition, which sought out different negotiating processes, while the SSUF/A and the Real-SPLM were left out of the peace talks. After this split, the talks in Rome continued with a new commitment to the ceasefire by the SSOMA-Cirillo faction, which included the NAS, SSNMC, NDM/PF and UDR. On 16 November, both factions of the SSOMA factions agreed to adhere to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism in South Sudan (CTSAMVM), aimed at maintaining the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in the country.

Gender, peace and security

With regard to female participation in the executive and legislative branches, Rebecca Nyandeng de Mabior was appointed the fourth vice president of the unity government. Twenty-six of the 35 ministries created in the new government were occupied by men and nine by women, including Defence Minister Angelina Teny, the first woman in that office, and Foreign Minister Beatrice Khamis. The other ministries given to women were of Parliamentary Affairs; Agriculture and Food Security; the Environment and Forests; Education and Instruction; Health, Gender and Social Affairs; and Culture, Museums and National Heritage. The UN Security Council continued to support efforts to increase female participation in conflict prevention and mediation activities throughout the year, particularly through the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation. UN Women continued to support the network, which deployed members in South Sudan, Sudan and Ethiopia.

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), Movement for Justice and Equity (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movements, SLA-MM and SLA-AW factions, Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) Malik Agar and Abdelaziz al-Hilu factions.
Third parties	African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, UNAMID, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda
Relevant agreements	Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) (2006), Road map Agreement (2016), the Juba Declaration for Confidence-Building Procedures and the Preparation for Negotiation (2019), Juba Peace Agreement (2020)

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 which have led to different peace negotiations and a de-escalation of violence. In Darfur, amidst peace talks to resolve the historical dispute between the north and south of the country, which ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, various armed groups, mainly the JEM and the SLA, rebelled in 2003 around demands for greater decentralisation and development in the region. The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was reached in 2006, which included only one SLA faction, led by Minni Minnawi, while the conflict persisted amidst frustrated attempts at dialogue, mainly promoted by Qatar as part of the Doha peace process, in which the different parties were involved. Furthermore, in the Two Areas (South Kordofan and Blue Nile), the secession of South Sudan in July 2011 and the resulting national reconfiguration of Sudan aggravated tensions between those border regions and the Sudanese government, since both regions had supported the southern SPLA insurgency during the Sudanese armed conflict. The African Union High Level Panel on Sudan (AUHIP) has mediated to seek a peaceful resolution between the parties (government and SPLM/N rebellion) that revolve around three main lines in the peace negotiations: the ceasefire model, the type of humanitarian access to the Two Areas and the characteristics and agenda of the National Dialogue. In early 2014, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir asked all armed actors and opposition groups to join the National Dialogue. From the outset, the proposal involved former South African President Thabo Mbeki and the AUHIP to promote peace negotiations and a democratic transformation. After the fall of the al-Bashir regime in April 2019, the different peace processes and scenarios between the new transitional government and the different rebel groups in the Two Areas and Darfur have merged.

After a year of peace negotiations in the capital of South Sudan, Juba, the government and the rebel coalition Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minnawi (SLM/A-MM) signed a historic peace agreement on 31 August. However, the agreement was not signed by the faction of the rebel group North Sudan People's Liberation Movement headed by Abdelaziz al-Hilu (SPLM-N), which withdrew from the peace talks on 20 August, or by the faction of the Sudan Liberation

Movement headed by Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLM/A-AW), which refused to participate. Based on the peace negotiations that began in September 2019, with the road map for peace called the Juba Declaration of Confidence-Building Measures and Preparation for Negotiation, signed by the government and the armed groups SRF, SLM-MM and SPLM-N led by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, mediated by the government of South Sudan and backed by regional leaders such as Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the parties resumed peace negotiations at the beginning of the year. In January, talks were held between the government and the SRF, though without the participation of the SPLM-N led by al-Hilu, which did not end in the signing of a comprehensive agreement by the agreed deadline of 14 February. Subsequently, on 21 February, the government and the SRF reached an agreement that established administrative status for the eastern states of the country and created a reconstruction fund. The talks between the government and the SRF again failed to meet the self-imposed deadline of 7 March to reach a comprehensive peace agreement, so they were postponed for a few days due to the death of Sudanese Defence Minister Jamal Omer from a heart attack. After months of negotiations that failed to meet the deadlines imposed on several occasions due to internal disagreements within the SRF rebel coalition, the SLM/A-MM faction and the JEM faction led by Bakheet Abdelkarim separated from the coalition in mid-May, establishing new peace negotiations with the government. Finally after a year of negotiations, the rebel coalition of the SRF,⁹ the SLM/A-MM faction and the government of Sudan **signed a peace agreement in Juba on 31 August**, which was not ratified by al-Hilu's SPLM-N or by al-Nur's SLM/A-AW. The agreement was later formalised on 3 October, approved by the Sovereign Council and the cabinet on 12 October and incorporated into the constitutional declaration on 18 October. On 12 November, the chairman of the Sovereign Council, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, signed the **decree granting a general amnesty to the leaders of the armed movements that had signed the agreement, as well as to the military and paramilitary forces involved in the armed conflicts.** The decree allowed SRF leaders and Minnawi to arrive in the capital, Khartoum, on 15 November to begin implementing the agreement. Some of the clauses established in the text establish the beginning of a three-year transitional period; the integration of former rebel leaders into the Sovereign Council (three positions), the ministerial cabinet (five portfolios, equivalent to 25% of the Council of Ministers) and the Transitional Legislative Council (25%, which is equivalent to 75 of the 300 seats); the establishment of

The Sudanese government and the SRF and SLM/A-MM rebel groups signed a peace agreement after a year of negotiations to end the armed conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile

a federal regional government system in Sudan; and the formation of a joint security force in Darfur with 12,000 initial members, half of them from the state security forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and the other half consisting of former rebel fighters. In addition, according to the agreement, Darfur is considered a single region where power will be shared. The Two Areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, plus West Kordofan, will have autonomy, where power will be divided as follows: the SPLM-N Agar will hold the position of governor in the state of Blue Nile and deputy governor in South and West Kordofan, entitled to 30% of the executive and legislative bodies in the state of Blue Nile and South and West Kordofan. Sudanese Finance Minister Heba Mohamed Ali Ahmed reported that the implementation of the peace agreement will cost 7.5 billion dollars over the next 10 years, of which 1.3 billion will be allocated to the reconstruction of Darfur.

Meanwhile, alongside the peace negotiations with the SRF and the SLM/A-MM, the government held **separate talks with the SPLM-N factions led by Malik Agar and Abdelaziz al-Hilu.** On 24 January, a preliminary agreement was signed between the government and the Agar faction in which special status was granted to South Kordofan and Blue Nile, paving the way for the militants to integrate into the Sudanese Army. On 19 April, the parties entered into talks on wealth-sharing in the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, reaching an agreement on 21 April that would also apply to the state of West Kordofan. Regarding the development of the peace negotiations with the SPLM-N faction headed by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, the year began with the extension of the unilateral ceasefire in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, which was subsequently extended until January 2021. The al-Hilu faction had abandoned the peace negotiations that the government was conducting with the SRF and had signed a Declaration of Principles with Khartoum in 2019, establishing a different roadmap on the peace process in South Kordofan to study the movement's demands for self-determination and a secular state. After months without establishing spaces for dialogue between the parties, on 17 June the peace talks resumed, then stalled again in August. Between 2 and 5 September, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and al-Hilu met in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, agreeing to hold informal talks to discuss contentious issues, such as the separation of religion and the state and the right to self-determination with a view to resuming formal peace talks. On 29 October, talks between the parties resumed and continued until the end of the year. Finally, although the **Sudan Liberation Movement led by Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLM/A-AW)** announced the end

9. When the Peace Agreement was signed, the SRF coalition was made up of the faction of the Sudan-North People's Liberation Movement in the state of Blue Nile led by Malik Agar (SPLM-N Agar) and various rebel groups from Darfur: a faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the SLM Transitional Council, the Sudan Liberation Forces Group and the Sudanese Alliance, which includes 15 smaller rebel factions.

of violence in Darfur on 30 March, responding to the international appeal made by the UN Secretary-General to achieve a ceasefire allowing the application of health measures and prevent the spread of COVID-19, it also repeated its refusal to join the peace process, asking the United Nations to provide humanitarian support to civilians affected by the war in Darfur and to maintain UNAMID.

Finally, in early February, the UN Secretary-General agreed to the Sudanese government's request to establish a political mission in the country to support peacebuilding and development. In June 2020, the UN Security Council decided in UNSC Resolution 2524 (2020) to establish the **United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)**. The new political mission will complement the work of United Nations agencies and programmes in Sudan and will work closely with the transitional government and the people of Sudan in support of the transition, among other things, to promote gender equality and women's rights. In turn, UNITAMS will work closely together with the peacekeeping mission deployed in Darfur, UNAMID, focusing on the Juba peace process, peacebuilding and the protection of civilians, especially in Darfur. The UN Security Council intends for the mission to be deployed in the country on 1 January 2021.

Gender, peace and security

The UN Security Council continued to support efforts to increase female participation in conflict prevention and mediation activities throughout the year, particularly through the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation. UN Women continued to support the network, which included the deployment of network members to Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan. Furthermore, the Kampala-based women's organisation Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) reported that cases of sexual violence in Darfur, mainly in camps for internally displaced persons in the north, had increased by 50% between March and June since the application of the decreed anti-COVID-19 measures. The organisation called on the transitional government to establish mechanisms for prevention, justice and the protection of civilians, especially women.

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), Joint Boundary Demarcation Agreement (2019)

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.

The rapprochement between the governments of South Sudan and Sudan that began in 2019 after the formation of the new Sudanese government continued, with progress made on diplomatic relations and border delimitations between both countries. The highlights of the year included the mediation role played by the South Sudanese authorities in the Sudan peace process, which led to the signing of the peace agreement in Juba, South Sudan in August 2020 between the transitional government of Sudan and two armed groups, the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and the Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Minnawi (SLA-MM). Also significant was the agreement reached between both countries in September to form a joint technical committee with the aim of resuming oil production in the state of Unity and other key oil fields. In late October, the governments of both countries signed a joint military and defence cooperation agreement. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by South Sudanese Defence Minister Angelina Teny and her Sudanese counterpart, Ibrahim Yassin. The agreement includes “training, the exchange of experiences, the promotion of peace, disaster support and management and the fight against cross-border crimes, smuggling, human trafficking and activities that endanger peace”. The agreement was an important step in the normalisation of relations between the two countries after years of confrontation and mutual accusations of supporting and covering for rebel groups on both sides. The text also paved the way to resolve the situation of the disputed Abyei region, as well as the border demarcation issues pending resolution between both countries. Regarding this last aspect, **both parties agreed to open 10 border points, as well as to actively cooperate in oil production.** In October and November, the Sudan and South Sudan Boundary Demarcation Commission held a new round of negotiations. It is charged with defining the borders of five disputed areas under the auspices of the African Union.

The political process regarding the **final status of Abyei** and other border areas was relaunched during the year. A significant development was both sides' appointment of their respective administrators of the Abyei Special Administrative Zone, Lieutenant General Kuol Diem Kuol by Sudan and Gumaa Dawood Musa Hamdan by South Sudan. This was the first time that Abyei had two main administrators. In its report S/2020/1019 on the situation in Abyei, issued on 15 October 2020, the UN Security Council reported that bilateral relations were improving between Sudan and South Sudan. On 12 November, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until May 2021, maintaining the maximum authorised deployment of 3,550 soldiers and 640 policemen.

The **negative events** of the year included the increase in instability in the Abyei region during the first half of the year due to armed clashes between members of Misseriya communities and Dinka herders. An attack by members of Misseriya communities in Abyei was reported in January that left 32 people dead. This generated tension and prompted both countries to sign an arms control protocol at the respective border checkpoints on 19 February. In April, clashes between nomadic Dinka herders and Misseriya were again reported, leaving at least six dead. Due to the deteriorating security situation in Abyei, the governments of Sudan and South Sudan agreed to cooperate to end the violence on 30 April. Subsequently, on 24 June, UNISFA reported an attack on a mission vehicle by unidentified armed agents, violating the ceasefire. At least four attacks on UNISFA personnel were reported in 2020. At different times of the year, the UN Mission held meetings with Dinka and Misseriya authorities, as well as with the authorities of the region, to try to promote a peace process at the local level. However, discrepancies between both sides, the continuation of sporadic violent episodes and measures to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 all hampered the resumption of the dialogue.

Gender, peace and security

UNISFA reported several positive developments during the year in regard to the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. For example, it highlighted the call for female participation in peace processes made by the co-chair appointed by South Sudan of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee in April. Furthermore, UNISFA heeded the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire on 12 May in cooperation with the Abyei Women's Association. A part of the Dinka community, the association issued a press release urging all armed groups to hold a ceasefire.

Sudan and South Sudan made progress in the normalisation of diplomatic relations and border delimitation issues between them

Horn of Africa

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 on December Agreement (Algiers, 2000), Decision on 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 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.

Two years after the signing of the historic peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia, **the process to implement the agreement remained at a standstill as a result of the escalating tension and start of the armed conflict between the Ethiopian government and the government of the Tigray region.** Although progress has been made in some areas, others have remained completely paralysed as a result of tension and the war that started in November between the federal government of Ethiopia and the region of Tigray, to which was added the unresolved animosity between Tigray and Eritrean leaders. In this last aspect, although the epicentre of the dispute is the border town of Badme, which is claimed by both countries, the causes run deeper, as indicated by the South African ISS in September.¹⁰ These include

10. Tadesse Demissie, S. (2020), "The Eritrea-Ethiopia peace deal is yet to show dividends", *Institute for Security Studies*, 11 September.

historical rivalries, political and economic differences and hegemonic competition between the ruling elites of both countries, specifically between Eritrean leaders and the ruling party in Ethiopia's Tigray region, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Ethiopia's dominant political party until Abiy Ahmed came to power.

While the 2018 peace accord and the first steps in its implementation raised high expectations, two years later this potential waned due to the tensions generated in Badme. The region of Tigray and Eritrea share the contested border. Badme is also under Tigray's administration, so TPLF leaders in the region share responsibility for implementing the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC). However, the peace process started in Addis Ababa and there was no proper consultation or consensus building among stakeholders like the TPLF, as the ISS has pointed out. This exclusion, along with other political differences related to the TPLF's loss of power,¹¹ aggravated the division between the government of Abiy Ahmed and the TPLF government in Tigray. One point of contention is how to interact with Eritrea. In his inaugural speech in April 2018, Abiy announced his administration's unconditional acceptance of the stalled Algiers agreement signed in 2000 and aimed at ending the border war. In February 2020, Debretsion Gebremichael, the president of the Tigray region and leader of the TPLF, said that a structured peace process was needed that included all relevant parties, not just the two national leaders. The 2018 peace agreement requires the participation of the main political actors from both countries, including from the Tigray region. Added to this is hostility between the ruling elites of Eritrea and those of the Tigray region, which also hampers progress. Consequently, as the ISS stressed, rebuilding trust between the TPLF, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki is imperative for the implementation of the agreement to move ahead.

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, Somaliland
Third parties	ONU, IGAD, Turquía, entre otros, 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 as 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. Questioned for its ineffectiveness and corruption, this government managed to hold elections between 2016 and 2017, achieved progress and agreements in implementing the electoral process and the process of building the federation between the different Somali states and organised the elections between 2020 and 2021.

The actions of the armed group al-Shabaab persisted during the year, as did operations launched by AMISOM and the United States against the armed group, causing hundreds of fatalities.¹² Some called for dialogue between the federal government and al-Shabaab, although no meetings were disclosed. Meanwhile, tensions rose throughout the year between the federal government and the federated states regarding the holding of the parliamentary and presidential elections between December 2020 and February 2021, although in September an agreement was reached to make progress in the electoral process, breaking the impasse that threatened to delay the date beyond the constitutional limit for the current government, which would have added more uncertainty and tension to the situation.

The consultations between the federal government and the leaders of all the federated member states,

11. See the summary on Ethiopia (Tigray) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

12. See the summary on Somalia in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

which began with a series of meetings in Dhusamareb in July, concluded in Mogadishu on 17 September with an agreement on the electoral model. On 22 June, President Mohamed Abdullahi “Farmajo” Mohamed had held a virtual meeting with the leaders of the federated member states and the governor of the Banaadir region. **It was the first time that all federal and state leaders met in a decision-making forum since June 2018**, marking an important step toward resuming dialogue and cooperation. The leaders agreed to hold a face-to-face summit in July.

In early September, President Farmajo met with the presidents of the member states of Puntland and Jubaland after they distanced themselves from the agreement in August. The heads of the five federal member states (the previous two plus Galmudug, Hirshabelle and South West) met on 13-17 September and agreed on an indirect framework for the 2020-2021 elections. In July, the Federal Parliament's Lower House passed a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Khairi, with 170 votes in favour and eight against. In introducing the motion, Speaker of Parliament Mohamed Sheikh Mursal Abdirahman accused the prime minister of not having prepared a clear plan to hold elections based on the principle of one person, one vote; completing federalism; deciding on the status of Mogadishu; finalising the review of the Constitution and holding a referendum on the issue; and establishing the political party system. President Farmajo announced that he accepted the decision and on 19 October the Lower House approved a new cabinet led by the new Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who in turn had been appointed by Farmajo on 17 September. The 188 MPs voted in favour of the new cabinet, much of which was shaken up, while other ministers continued in their positions.

The model agreed in September was similar to the 2016 electoral model, as the electoral MP selection and clan-based constituencies were maintained. The electoral process will be carried out by newly established federal and state electoral committees rather than by the National Independent Electoral Commission. Compared to 2016, the new model increases the number of MPs for each member of Parliament in the Lower House from 51 to 101. MPs will be selected by traditional elders, state governments and civil society representatives. Voting will take place in Mogadishu and in two population centres in each federated member state, whereas only one site per state was enabled in 2016. Under the agreement, a 30% quota was also guaranteed for female representation in Parliament. The legislative bodies of the federated member states will select the members of the Upper House and the vote of the MPs representing “Somaliland” will take place in

Mogadishu. However, delays in preparations in 2020 sowed doubts about the process, as accelerating it could be detrimental to its transparency and legitimacy, which is why the International Crisis Group proposed delaying it for a few months.¹³

A new political party called Justice and Security was registered, notable due to the implications it entails, as it is led by the former vice-commander of al-Shabaab and a spokesperson for the group, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow Ali, also known as Abu Mansur. Robow was under house arrest in Mogadishu and had left al-Shabaab in 2017 over disagreements with the group's leadership. Since then, he has suffered various attacks by al-Shabaab, and in December 2018 he was arrested after being prohibited from running for the president of South West state, which triggered protests and riots by young people in the region, including some that become very popular. Although the upcoming elections will not be based on a multi-party system, party registration means that Robow will attempt to run in future national elections, which must be multi-party. It should be recalled that the former UN Special Representative in Somalia Nicholas Haysom was expelled by the government at the end of 2018 on charges of meddling in the internal affairs of Somalia, as Haysom had questioned the arrest of Mukhtar Robow. Haysom was replaced in May 2019 by the American diplomat James Swan as the new UN envoy for Somalia.

Kenyan military officers who have participated in AMISOM pointed out that a change in strategy was necessary in the war in Somalia, as the military activity was proving ineffective against a group whose strength is based on faith in Islam. Various analysts have highlighted that the security strategy of the United States and the international community as a whole, which is backed by the Somali government, has been revealed to be a failure because it has not reduced the impact of al-Shabaab's activities and has killed many civilians. As such, various people have demanded a negotiating process with al-Shabaab similar to the one held in Afghanistan between the US and the Taliban. However, experts on the issue are divided on whether negotiations are actually possible today.

In June, direct talks were held between the federal government and Somaliland, the first since 2014. The last attempt at dialogue took place in 2015 at the initiative of Turkey and failed before it started. Thus, at the initiative of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Djiboutian President Ismaël Omar Guelleh, a direct meeting was held between the presidents of the federal government, Farmajo and of Somaliland, Muse Bihi Abdi. This meeting took place in Djibouti on 14 June in order to help to resume the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland. The meeting had

13. International Crisis Group, Staving off Violence around Somalia's Elections, Briefing 163 / Africa, International Crisis Group, 10 November 2020.

the support of the US and the EU. The two parties agreed to form a joint committee that met in Djibouti on 15-17 June, mediated by the Djiboutian foreign minister and facilitators from the US and the EU. The committee deliberated on the way forward for the talks, established three technical subcommittees on aid coordination, airspace management and security cooperation, and agreed to resume its work in Djibouti within 45 days.

Gender, peace and security

The federal government assigned specific seats for the election in order to ensure the 30% quota of women foreseen in the agreed electoral model. On 3 September and 19 October, UNSOM consulted with women leaders on the steps necessary to reach the 30% quota and improve female political participation beyond the elections. Meanwhile, on 27 September, the Somaliland House of Representatives voted to remove a 22% quota for women's representation from the Somaliland election law.

In preparation for the upcoming elections, with financial assistance from a multi-partner trust fund, UN Women, the ministry of women's affairs and civil society organisations organised a training course for 200 female leaders and aspirants to hold political office in Gaalkacyo, Baidoa, Garoowe and Hargeysa. In addition, following a recent assessment of violence against women during elections in Somalia, UN Women facilitated the training of 100 representatives of civil society organisations on monitoring and reporting election-related violence in two courses that were held in Hargeysa and Garoowe on 30 September and 4 October, respectively. On 21-22 October, the Somali Women's Leadership Initiative held a forum on the political empowerment of women. The forum was attended by around 150 participants, including MPs, the chairman of the National Independent Electoral Commission and prominent female leaders from the federated member states, the Banaadir region and Mogadishu, who discussed and debated options for ensuring the 30% representation quota for women. The female leaders issued a statement urging Somali leaders and international partners to support and reach the 30% quota for women in the 2020-21 elections and to support female goodwill ambassadors, who had played a key role during the 2016 electoral process. Finally, on 14 June, female leaders from the city of Xuddur met with the president of South West state, Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed, aka "Laftagareen", to discuss the lack of representation of women in the current district council. The president assured them that the upcoming elections in Xuddur would follow a model implemented in the Diinsoor district, whereby 47% female representation had been achieved.

Maghreb – North Africa

Libya	
Negotiating actors	Presidential Council and Government of National Agreement (GAN), House of Representatives (CdR), National General Congress (CGN), LNA or ALAF
Third parties	Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU); Italy, France, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, The Netherlands, Switzerland, among other countries; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Relevant agreements	Libyan Political Agreement or Skhirat Agreement (2015)
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.	

In this scenario, **the Berlin Conference on Libya was held on 19 January, which had been postponed several times** previously. The meetings of the "Berlin process" had been activated in the previous semester and were part of the three-step initiative proposed by UN Special Envoy for Libya Ghassan Salamé in mid-2019. This included a ceasefire, an international meeting of the third countries involved in the Libyan crisis to guarantee an effective arms embargo and an intra-Libyan dialogue in three military, political and economic "tracks". The summit in Berlin brought together 12 countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, Russia, Italy, Germany, Turkey, Egypt, the UAE, Algeria and the Republic of the Congo), as well as representatives of the UN, the EU, the Arab League and the African Union, but not the Libyan parties directly involved in the conflict. The conference, which by its composition and underlying dynamics encouraged comparisons with the meeting that decided the partition of Africa in 1885,¹⁴ included a 55-point statement calling for a ceasefire, urging renewed commitment to the arms embargo and explicitly supporting a mediation process led by the UN and the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015 as a frame of reference.¹⁵ The military component, known as the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, made up of five

14. Ruth Ferrero, "La Cumbre de Berlín o la escenificación de un nuevo orden westfaliano", El Periódico, 21 January 2020.

15. UNSMIL, Berlin International Conference on Libya: Conference outcomes, Operational Paper, 19 January 2020.

representatives from each of the Libyan sides, held its first meeting in Geneva in early February. The political component began its meetings on 26 February, also in the Swiss capital, while the economic one held its first meeting in Tunis. The Berlin Conference also led to the establishment of an International Committee to monitor the process, with specific commissions following the evolution of different topics (including one on human rights and international humanitarian law).

Although UN Security Council Resolution 2510, approved on 12 February, ratified the results of the Berlin Conference, the process continued to face several obstacles in the following months, in which violations of the embargo and foreign support for the parties continued. In fact, **the hostilities did not stop, but intensified, despite the spread of COVID-19 and the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire** that would allow efforts to be focused on responding to the pandemic.¹⁶ In this context, the UN special envoy for Libya, Ghassam Salamé, resigned. Evidencing his frustration, the Lebanese diplomat attributed his resignation to the hypocrisy of certain members of the UN Security Council who he accused of torpedoing his mediation efforts. The US diplomat Stephanie Williams remained as special envoy and the “acting” head of the UNSMIL, given the differences within the UN Security Council to designate a successor to Salamé. Nickolay Mladenov a Bulgarian diplomat and former special envoy for the Middle East was appointed to the post in December, but he declined days later and the position remained vacant at the end of the year.

In late April, Haftar announced in a televised statement that he accepted the “popular mandate” to abandon the political agreement promoted by the UN in 2015 and that his forces would assume control of the country's institutions. The movement generated divisions on his own side and accusations of coup by his adversaries. It was also interpreted as manoeuvring to block possible negotiations between the Tripoli government and the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and its leader Aghela Saleh, allied but not always fully aligned with Haftar's positions.¹⁷ In the months that followed, some initiatives tried to prevent a further escalation of violence in the central part of the country given the evolution of the conflict, Haftar's withdrawal from the Libyan capital, the advance of the GNA forces and the oscillation of hostilities from Tripoli towards Sirte. In June, Turkey and Russia again issued a proposal that did not lead to a ceasefire. At the same time, Egypt, another key supporter of Haftar, which warned that Sirte

constituted a red line, outlined a road map for political negotiations that was rejected by the GNA and Turkey. It was not until two months later that movements began to be observed that led to a reduction in the fighting. On 21 August, the GNA announced a unilateral ceasefire and called for elections to be held in 2021. There was no direct response from Haftar, but one of his allies, the leader of the Tobruk-based House of Representatives, Aquila Saleh, also announced a truce. The coordinated declaration by the rival sides was interpreted as an attempt to outline a new scenario.

At the end of the year, the parties to the conflict in Libya signed a ceasefire agreement and there were political negotiations to attempt to establish a transitional government, while doubts persisted about how the process was generally developing

On 23 October, the parties formalised a permanent ceasefire agreement. The deal became official after several days of meetings in Geneva (in the fourth round, but the first in person) of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission. All 10 delegates of the Libyan groups were men, but the acting UN special envoy was a woman. Analysts said that two previous meetings of representatives of the rival sides in late September were key to the signing of the truce: one meeting held in Sochi, Russia, to end the oil blockade, and another between senior military officials in the Egyptian resort of Hurgada, facilitated by the UNSMIL.¹⁸ The ceasefire agreement provides that all military units and armed groups must withdraw from the battle lines

to their bases within a maximum period of three months and that all mercenaries and foreign combatants must leave Libyan territory, airspace and maritime space. Likewise, military training programmes are planned to be suspended until a new government is formed. The beginning of the demobilisation of armed groups and some confidence-building measures are also planned. In early November, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission held its first meeting in Libya in the western town of Ghadames. Some analysts said at the time that the ambiguous wording of the agreement and the lack of specificity on some points could favour disparate interpretations and make implementation difficult. Others pointed out that foreign powers would hardly withdraw without obtaining dividends from their military involvement.

At the same time, political negotiations known as the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) held their key sessions between 9 and 15 November in Tunisia. In it, a road map was designed that plans for the parliamentary and presidential elections to be held on 24 December 2021, the 70th anniversary of the Libyan Republic. This forum was preceded by other attempts at dialogue, including a meeting of key Libyan actors in Montreux (Switzerland) facilitated by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and attended by the UNSMIL in September. Morocco also promoted spaces for intra-Libyan

16. See the summary on Libya in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Libya, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

17. International Crisis Group, *Interpreting Haftar's Gambit in Libya*, Middle East & North Africa, 4 May 2020.

18. International Crisis Group, *Fleshing Out the Libya Ceasefire Agreement*, Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing No.80, 4 November 2020.

dialogue, including a meeting of delegations from the House of Representatives and the High Council of State in Bouznika, in October; and a meeting of more than 120 Libyan MPs in Tangiers in late November, where after five days of debate they pledged to put an end to the hate speech undermining Libyan institutions.

At the end of the year, however, doubts and scepticism about the process in general persisted. The acting special representative for Libya announced that the LPDF had failed to agree on the mechanism to designate a transitional government to lead the country until the elections, despite the holding of six virtual rounds since the November appointment in Tunis. According to her, differences persisted on how to choose the three members of the Presidential Council and the prime minister. Despite this, the UN also decided to activate a committee in December to define the legal framework for the 2021 elections. In the economic sphere, the most complex controversies revolved around how to channel the income from oil sales. Amid cross accusations of violations of the truce agreement and complaints about the military reinforcement of both sides, at the end of the year (29 December), the UN Secretary-General proposed to establish an international monitoring group to support compliance with the ceasefire. Some analysts suggested that despite the negative signs, the powers involved in the conflict did not seem to have the will to resume hostilities and that some regional dynamics, such as the détente between Qatar and other Arab countries, could shrink Libya's prospects as a theatre of indirect confrontation for these actors.¹⁹

Gender, peace and security

The 17 Libyan women of the total of 75 participants in the LPDF political dialogue or political “track” issued a joint statement in mid-November in which they underlined the importance of the involvement of women in the peace process, dialogue, the reconstruction of the state and reconciliation in the country. Raising UNSC Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and the results of prior meetings facilitated by the UNSMIL, the participants expressed their adherence to a set of principles and made recommendations for the process. They included guarantees of effective female representation in making up the executive branch of government (not less than 30%); pledges to respect the rights of women and their participation in political life; demands that one of the two deputy prime minister posts be a woman; action to combat discrimination against women, including survivors of violence related to the conflict; special protection for female politicians and activists; and the promotion of fair representation of all components of society, including at least 20% of them young people.²⁰

The road map approved by the LPDF included a commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and to gender equality. Some key principles for sustainable peace developed by representatives of civil society were also “appended” to the road map. These principles were identified in two sessions in October and November that were facilitated by the international monitoring committee in charge of human rights and IHL issues (coordinated by the Netherlands, Switzerland and UNSMIL). They included guarantees of equal rights for women, of equitable and meaningful female participation in all spaces conducive to peace and of the consideration of specific gender impacts in any peace agreement before its adoption, as well as a gender analysis during implementation. In December UN Women warned about threats to the women participating at LPDF and demanded protection and security guarantees to the female participants and women involved in other activities at the political sphere.

Meanwhile, Libyan women's organisations such as Together We Build It stressed the importance of more specific references to women's participation and the promotion of gender equality in the UN resolutions on Libya and of promoting accountability mechanisms. Activists from the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace (LWPP) also warned of a lack of confidence among political actors in women's abilities and stressed that the empowerment of women must go hand-in-hand with the disempowerment of men of war. Women's groups criticised the persistence of violence against women despite the ceasefire agreement, especially after the murder of anti-corruption activist and human rights promoter Hanan Elbarassi.

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	

19. International Crisis Group, Foreign Actors Drive Military Build-up amid Deadlocked Political Talks, Crisis Group Libya Update #2, 24 December 2020.

20. UNSMIL, Statement of the Libyan Women Participating in the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, 15 November 2020.

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 Western Sahara issue continued to be characterised by chronic deadlock and paralysis of the diplomatic channel to address and resolve the dispute, a situation that fuelled an escalation of tension towards the end of the year.²¹ Morocco persisted in defending that its autonomy plan was the only viable way to move towards a solution to the conflict. Meanwhile, the POLISARIO Front blasted the inability of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to fulfil its mandate, which includes holding a referendum, as the name suggests, and warned that it was reconsidering its participation in the UN peace process. In this sense, it should be noted that **the office of the personal envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Western Sahara remained vacant throughout 2020 and in his annual report on Western Sahara in September, António Guterres acknowledged that there was a “pause” in the political process resulting from the resignation of Horst Köhler in May 2019.** At the time, the former German president managed to activate a timid round table process between Morocco, the POLISARIO Front, Algeria and Mauritania that held two rounds (in December 2018 and March 2019). The process was completely paralysed after Köhler’s resignation attributed to health reasons.

The UN Secretary-General’s annual report on Western Sahara also warned of increasing violations of the provisions relating to the ceasefire in force since 1991, particularly east of the berm, in the period between October 2019 and August 2020. Guterres expressed his concern about the distancing of the parties, the persistent lack of trust between them and the multiplication of gestures that could undermine the ceasefire and be a source of tension, to the detriment of a negotiated solution. Thus, he called on Morocco and the POLISARIO Front to participate in the political process in good faith and without conditions as soon as he appointed a personal envoy and emphasised the need to find a “fair, lasting and mutually acceptable solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara”. In October, shortly before the renewal of the MINURSO mandate, the head of the mission again warned the UN Security Council about an increase in violations of military agreement number 1, which regulates the truce.

This scenario gave rise to an escalation of tension. The epicentre was Guerguerat, an area that had already been the subject of disputes in recent years and that was the scene of Sahrawi demonstrations and barricades throughout 2020. The POLISARIO Front has repeatedly denounced Guerguerat as an illicit passage or illegal breach. On 21 October, around 50 Sahrawis blocked traffic in this area, located between Mauritania and the part of Western Sahara occupied by Morocco, and they demonstrated to ask that the UN Security Council –which at that time was discussing the renewal of the MINURSO mandate-, to fulfil the task of holding a referendum on self-determination. In line with what happened in recent years, Resolution 2548 was approved on 30 October with wording supportive of the Moroccan position: with no explicit mention of the referendum and emphasising the need for a “realistic, practicable and lasting political solution” to the question of Western Sahara. The Sahrawi protests in Guerguerat persisted and on 13 November, Moroccan forces entered theoretically demilitarised area (buffer zone) to break them up and re-establish commercial traffic. Faced with the incursion, the POLISARIO Front ended the ceasefire and declared a state of war. Morocco avoided using the term “war” and assured that it remained committed to the ceasefire, but warned of a forceful response in the event of a threat to its security.

Various analysts said that with this approach, the POLISARIO Front intended to shake up the status quo, respond to the frustration of generations of young people in refugee camps who have been waiting for decades for a political solution and challenge the Moroccan strategy of silencing and covering up the conflict. The UN Secretary-General lamented the failure of his organisation’s efforts to prevent escalation, expressed his concern, called to maintain the integrity of the ceasefire and underlined his determination to remove obstacles to reactivate the political process. Despite its responsibilities as the administering power of Western Sahara, Spain maintained a discreet position, formally limited to supporting the UN initiatives to guarantee the truce.

Since mid-November, the POLISARIO Front mobilised its forces, carried out periodic attacks on Moroccan bases and announced casualties on the enemy side, though these were not confirmed by Rabat, though it did not report any casualties among its own ranks. Other sources reported exchanges of low-intensity fire at points along the 2,700-kilometre barrier built by Morocco. At the same time, there was an increase in harassment and repression in the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara, including raids, arrests, attacks, increased surveillance and suppression of demonstrations in towns such as

21. See the summary on Morocco-Western Sahara in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

Laayoune, Smara, Dakhla and Boujdour. The general situation was complex to assess due to the lack of access by independent observers. Organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch stressed that although no civilian victims had been reported in the hostilities, the events reinforced the need for an effective mechanism to monitor the human rights situation, including competences in this area by MINURSO, which Rabat has continuously rejected.

In this context, on 10 December, the **United States issued a declaration “proclaiming” Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, a position that the Trump administration adopted in exchange for Rabat “normalising” diplomatic relations with Israel** and breaking with Washington’s traditional position on the matter. In fact, while other countries have been in favour of Western Sahara’s future status as an autonomous territory within Morocco, Trump’s decision made the US the first country to recognise Morocco’s unilateral annexation of the territory. The US described its support for the Moroccan autonomy plan as the sole basis for a “serious, credible, realistic and lasting” solution to the dispute, but added that the US “recognizes Moroccan sovereignty over the entire territory of Western Sahara” and underlined that “an independent Sahrawi state is not a realistic option to resolve the conflict”.²² The POLISARIO Front condemned the announcement, claiming that it violated the legitimacy of international resolutions and obstructed efforts to reach a solution. Washington announced that it would open a consulate in Laayoune. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which also signed an agreement with Israel in August at the request of the United States, opened a diplomatic office in the same city in November and media outlets reported that Bahrain and Jordan, two other allies of Washington in the region, would follow this path. Previously, throughout the year, various African countries (Burundi, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, CAR and São Tomé and Príncipe) also decided to inaugurate “general consultants” in Laayoune and Dakhla, which was criticised by the POLISARIO Front for threatening the non-autonomous territorial status of Western Sahara.

Although Trump’s deal with Morocco was presented as a success and strengthened Rabat’s position, no changes were foreseen in the approach of the UN, the African Union or the European Union and the position that the new US administration starting in 2021 would take in this regard was unclear. In late 2020, at Germany’s request, a closed-doors videoconference was held with the members of the UN Security Council to analyse the evolution of the most recent events. According to reports, the videoconference was attended by Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita and the special representative and head of MINURSO, Colin Stewart. Council members were expected to insist on the swift appointment of a new personal envoy to prevent a deterioration of the situation and to strengthen UN mediation efforts.

Gender, peace and security

Faced with the developments in 2020, some Sahrawi groups, including Sahrawi feminists and pacifists, asked the Spanish authorities to assume their responsibility in the decolonisation process of Western Sahara and to show greater political initiative at the recent crossroads. Likewise, they stressed the need for a non-violent solution and called on the POLISARIO Front to de-escalate due to the serious consequences that resuming the armed conflict may have for the Saharawi population. At the same time, Sahrawi activists continued their protests and denunciations of Moroccan repression in the part of Western Sahara controlled by Rabat.

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), Maputo Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (2019)
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 insurgency 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, achieving the signing of a new peace agreement in August 2019, though sporadic clashes persist.	

22. White House, *Proclamation on Recognizing the Sovereignty Of The Kingdom Of Morocco Over The Western Sahara*, 10 December 2020.

The implementation of the 2019 peace agreement began in 2020 with the launch of the combatant disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme, although the planned objective of dismantling all RENAMO military bases by August 2020 was not achieved.

One of the fundamental points of the peace agreement signed in August 2019 between the Mozambican government and RENAMO, known as the Maputo Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, concerns the DDR programme for around 5,000 RENAMO combatants and the dismantling of the 17 military bases in the centre of the country. The programme started with a significant delay, and it was not until April that the President Filipe Nyusi and RENAMO leader Ossufo Momade announced that the programme would resume. In mid-June, the UN special envoy for Mozambique, Mirko Manzonni, announced the demobilisation of around 300 combatants and the dismantling of the first military base in Savane, Dondo District, Sofala Province. This was welcomed as an important step in building trust between the parties, paving the way and fulfilling expectations for the rest of the combatants, as well as for the gradual closing of 16 RENAMO military bases. During the third quarter of the year, it was reported that approximately 500 former combatants had demobilised, which represents 10% of the 5,000 planned. The initial disagreements between the parties, as well as the start of the global health crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic and the containment restrictions in the country, made it difficult to implement the clauses of the peace agreement. According to the African NGO ACCORD, the levels and characteristics of community transmission of COVID-19 in the country required implementation of major containment restrictions by the government, which affected the demilitarisation process in different ways: by reducing the mobility of the technical team members in charge of implementing the DDR process; by preventing large sessions from being held due to social distancing and the prohibition of holding meetings of more than 20 people; and by inhibiting some social practices, such as how the community welcomes former combatants, which makes reintegration difficult. This reality created an extension of the planned schedule, with an impact on the increase in the logistical costs of the programme, since, for example, RENAMO combatants will have to spend more time at the billeting bases, which will require new funds from the government and the international community.

Meanwhile, the dissident splinter group of RENAMO, calling itself RENAMO's Military Junta (JMR), which refused to recognise the August 2019 peace agreement, continued with its armed actions in the central part of the country, which meant new complications for the implementation of peace. On 19 March, Mariano Nhongo, the leader of the dissidents, threatened to increase armed activity if the government refused to comply with his demands. On 5 June, US Special Envoy

Mirko Manzonni announced his intention to meet with Nhongo to start peace talks. However, days later, on 19 June, he reported that attempts to negotiate had failed. Subsequently, on 24 October, the government announced a week-long unilateral ceasefire in the provinces of Sofala and Manica, the areas affected by the violence, in an attempt to boost peace talks. Nhongo declared that he was willing to negotiate with Nyusi but not with RENAMO leader Ossufo Momade. However, this negotiation attempt also failed. Nhongo denounced violations of the ceasefire and harassment of his combatants by government forces. At the end of the year, the attacks in the central area resulted in at least 30 people killed, mainly due to ambushes carried out on the roads in the area. RENAMO distanced itself from the violent actions of the dissident group, reaffirming its commitment to the peace agreement. On 23 December, Nhongo announced a unilateral ceasefire on behalf of JMR, promising to negotiate with the government.

At the same time, in relation to the violence in the northern province of Cabo Delgado,²³ Nyusi's government had ruled out starting talks with the rebels in January. However, on 12 February, it announced that it was willing to initiate peace talks. Although there is no evidence that these occurred during the year, in August the government announced that the solution to the armed conflict in Cabo Delgado was not solely military, reporting the creation of a new economic development agency for the northern province, the Integrated Northern Development Agency (ADIN). According to the government, its main functions included providing humanitarian aid and promoting economic development and youth employment in order to avoid their recruitment by the armed groups operating in the region.

West Africa

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	
Negotiating actors	Government, political-military secessionist movement formed by the opposition coalition Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT, including IG Sako) and Ambazonia Governing Council (AGovC, including IG Sisiku)
Third parties	Catholic Church, civil society organisations, Switzerland, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
Relevant agreements	Buea Declaration (1993, AAC1), National Dialogue (30th September-4th October, 2019)
Summary: After Germany's defeat in the First World War, Cameroon came under the mandate of the League of Nations and was divided between French Cameroon and British Cameroon. In 1961, the two territories that made up British Cameroon held a referendum limiting their self-determination to union with the already independent Republic of Cameroon (formerly French Cameroon) or union with Nigeria. The southern part	

23. See the summary on Mozambique (north) in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2021.

of British Cameroon (a region currently corresponding to the provinces of North West and South West) decided to join the Republic of Cameroon, whereas the north preferred to join Nigeria. A poorly conducted re-unification in the 1960s based on centralisation and assimilation has led the English-speaking minority of what was once southern British Cameroon (20% of the country's population) to feel politically and economically marginalised by state institutions, which are controlled by the French-speaking majority. These movements demand a return to the federal model that existed between 1961 and 1972. In 1972, a referendum was held in which a new Constitution was adopted that replaced the federal state with a unitary one and granted more powers to the president, so the southern part of British Cameroon (known as Southern Cameroons) lost its autonomy and was transformed into the two current provinces of North West and South West. In 1993, representatives of the English-speaking groups held the All Anglophone Conference (AAC1) in Buea, which resulted in the Buea Declaration (which demanded constitutional amendments to restore the federation of 1961). The AAC2 was held in Bamenda in 1994, which concluded that if the federal state were not restored, Southern Cameroons would declare independence. Begun over sectoral issues in 2016, the conflict worsened in late 2017. The government arrested the main figures of the federalist movement in 2017, which gave a boost to groups that supported armed struggle to gain independence. Following the declaration of independence on 1 October 2017 and the subsequent government repression to quell the secessionist movement, there was an escalation of insurgent activity. Government repression of the demands of a majority of the population of the region, which demanded a new federal political status without ruling out secession, has led to an escalation of violence and the demand for negotiated solutions to the conflict. In July 2018, the religious leaders of the Anglophone community (Muslims, Protestants and Catholics) announced a plan to hold an Anglophone general conference (which would be the AAC3) but it has not yet taken place. In June 2019 a part of the separatist opposition, led by the ACT coalition, met with government representatives in Switzerland under the auspices of HD, with the rejection of the main political-military movement, the AGovC. In October 2019, Paul Biya's government carried out the National Dialogue without the secessionist movement present. None of the initiatives to date has made substantial progress.

After three years of a high climate of violence and serious human rights violations as a result of the armed conflict affecting the two regions with an English-speaking majority in Cameroon, on 2 July the first talks were held between the government and part of the separatist movement led by the historical leader Sisiku Julius Ayuk Tabe to try to reach a ceasefire agreement. Many local and international actors participated in the meeting, along with important members of Cameroonian civil society. Ayuk Tabe participated in the talks along with nine other separatist leaders in response to the call made by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in March for a global ceasefire during the course of the coronavirus pandemic. The government delegation was led by the head of the Cameroonian intelligence services, Léopold Maxime Eko Eko, and consisted of officials from

the presidency and the office of Prime Minister Joseph Ngute. However, other separatist groups in Cameroon and abroad rejected the talks, since the secessionist movement is fragmented into various factions, some of which do not recognise Ayuk Tabe's leadership, and argued that he did not have a mandate to negotiate. The government made no statements about the meeting later and Secretary of the Presidency Ferdinand Ngoh denied information reported by the secessionist movement regarding tension within the government regarding the peace initiative.

The secessionist forces number between 2,000 and 4,000 combatants and are divided into two rival interim governments known as the Interim Government (IG). One is led by Ayuk Tabe, who is currently serving a sentence of life in prison for terrorism, and the second is led by Samuel Ikome Sako, a pastor based in Maryland in the United States. IG Sisiku is locally considered the stronger of the two groups.²⁴ The split came after Ayuk Tabe's arrest in Nigeria along with other senior officials known as the Nera 10 (after the hotel where they were detained) and their subsequent extradition to Cameroon in January 2018. Ayuk Tabe was the president of the IG, but after his arrest, Sako was chosen to be the new president of the IG. This step was criticised by many groups and described as lacking transparency. In 2019, peace talks took place in Switzerland between the government and separatist leaders in exile linked to Sako's group, but the talks were dismissed by Ayuk Tabe and had no tangible results on the ground.²⁵ Friction between both groups, mostly based on the diaspora, is shifting to Cameroon, and one of the important issues was what real control the diaspora leadership had over its combatants on the ground. After the national dialogue held in October 2019, the government announced a new special status for English-speaking regions in January, which led to the creation of more regional legislative bodies, but this did not involve any substantial changes either and had no consequences on the ground, so the clashes and the security forces' counterinsurgency activity continued.

The three rounds of talks between the government and Ayuk Tabe's group, the last of which was publicised on 2 July, were held outside Kondengui central prison, where Ayuk Tabe is being held, and were considered confidence-building measures. The first secret meeting took place in Ghana between Eko Eko and secessionist diaspora figures such as Ebenezer Akwanga and Herbert Boh. The second meeting took place on 13 April in the episcopal centre of Mvolyé, in Yaoundé. It was facilitated by the Catholic Church, which is seen as neutral, and Ayuk Tabe participated in it.²⁶ The third round took place in Mvolyé. The demands raised included the demilitarisation of the Anglophone regions (such as the concentration of the Cameroonian Armed Forces in their barracks, so that

24. Bone, R. Maxwell, "Ahead of peace talks, a who's who of Cameroon's separatist movements", *The New Humanitarian*, 8 July 2020.

25. See Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace Talks in Focus 2020: Report on Trends and Scenarios*. Barcelona: Icaria, January 2020.

26. Jeune Afrique, *Cameroon's Anglophone crisis: Rivalries hamper peace talks*, 11 August 2020.

the police and the gendarmerie would have absolute responsibility for the security of the two regions), the release of prisoners and an amnesty to allow leaders in exile to return. Ayaba, the head of the AGovC, indicated that he would comply with a ceasefire if the government accepted it. According to analysts, the talks could reflect the population's fatigue after three years of conflict, as well as pressure from the international community, which has pushed the secessionist movement and the government to the talks. In a statement addressed to the insurgency, the secessionist political leaders said that "no war has been won only on the battlefield and that real and sustainable peace and independence are the product of the negotiating table". However, the peace talks stalled due to a power struggle between Prime Minister Ngute and Secretary of the Presidency Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh.²⁷ Ngute reportedly excluded Ngoh Ngoh from the talks, despite having been the one who had led the meetings in the Swiss track. After the Mvolyé meeting, Ngoh Ngoh denied that these talks were real and reactivated the Swiss track. On 2 August, a Swiss delegation led by the diplomat and former Swiss ambassador to Georgia, Günter Bächler, met in Yaoundé with political actors linked to the separatist movement and other supporters of federalist and decentralisation options. On 4 August, they met with Cardinal Ntumi in Buea and later with the lawyer Felix Agbor Balla and other English-speaking figures. Thus, the government was divided into two camps: those who advocate a negotiated solution to the conflict, led by Ngute, and those who oppose the talks, led by Ngoh Ngoh. The division does not follow along linguistic lines and could hide a struggle to replace Paul Biya as head of the government, according to analysts.²⁸ If the hard line prevails and the Mvolyé track fails, the consequences for the country could be serious. Events on the ground in the latter part of the year seemed to strengthen the groups most reticent to participating in the talks.

Gender, peace and security

Civil society efforts led by women in Cameroon have been at the forefront of developing innovative approaches to address the rise in violence and promote gender-equal peace. The Cameroonian branch of the Women's International League for Peace (WILPF Cameroon) worked with civil society organisations to advocate for women's full and meaningful political participation, address the gender impact of growing security challenges linked to conflict and harness the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda for action. As part of its mission to build sustainable peace with women as key strategic actors, WILPF Cameroon has established partnerships with media companies to raise awareness of the WPS agenda and raise awareness among communities for change. WILPF Cameroon also published a report in

October analysing the gender dimension of conflicts in Cameroon.²⁹ The study had been conducted between 2019 and March 2020 in order to better understand the current divisions producing conflict and instability in Cameroon. This analysis specifically captures the lived experiences and grievances of women and girls from different parts of Cameroonian society on their own terms and seeks to create a space to support women's efforts in prevention, mediation and participation in conflict resolution, despite the significant and persistent obstacles to effective female participation in peace and security processes.

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, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Carter Center, civil society organisations, Mauritania
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.

Very little progress was made during the year in implementing the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2015 due to the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the socio-political crisis in Mali that led to a coup d'état and to the establishment of a transitional government. Regarding the headway made in implementing the peace agreement, the year began with talks on security

27. Op. Cit.

28. Bone, R. Maxwell, "Political Infighting Could Obstruct a Nascent Peace Process in Cameroon", WPR, 22 September 2020.

29. WILPF, Gender Conflict Analysis in Cameroon, 29 October 2020.

and pacification in the north of the country held by the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and Platform in Ménaka, between 7 and 8 January. During the talks, the parties that had signed the peace agreement signed an accord on security arrangements to avoid confrontation between their respective local factions, committing to join forces in the Ménaka region. An important step in the implementation of the peace agreement came in mid-February, when the reconstituted Malian Army, a mixed force made up of national troops and integrated forces of armed groups that signed the 2015 agreement, began to deploy in the northern regions, with the first mixed military unit reaching Kidal on 13 February, a milestone that returned the Malian Armed Forces to the city after six years of absence. In its first follow-up report of the year, dated April 2020,³⁰ the Carter Center, designated in 2017 as an independent observer centre for the implementation of the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, highlighted two major challenges to it: (1) the recurring problem of the redistribution of administrative and electoral districts, which led to the under-representation of the northern regions in the legislative elections of March and April 2020; and (2) the persistent inconsistencies and disagreements between the groups that signed it, which could undermine the deployment of the reconstituted Malian Army. Regarding the second point, the Carter Center stressed the disagreements between the signatory parties in the application of DDR and the reform of the defence and security sector, which are linked to inconsistencies and problems in the process of reintegrating combatants due to delays in the programme and the attrition of soldiers who were already integrated; disagreements over redeployment locations, their plan and the number of soldiers deployed; problems related to a lack of government resources; and obstacles to redeployment of the reconstituted Malian Army due to a lack of clarity about the role and responsibilities of units, struggles over the command structure and the ambiguity surrounding the future of the Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC). The Carter Center concluded that although the greatest efforts are being made to promote the Technical Security Committee (CTS), with a focus on security issues, the problems demonstrated the fragility of the process related to the deployment of integrated troops in the north and their possible future obstacles. Thus, the report argued that the enormous importance of the implementation of security sector reform is neglecting progress in other political aspects that were fundamental to the 2012 rebellion, as represented by the breach of the commitments of political decentralisation, threatening

The government of Mali and other domestic and foreign actors opened the possibility of exploring ways to negotiate peace with jihadist groups

to undermine sustainable peace in Mali. In the second report, dated 16 December, the Carter Center indicated the little progress made in the implementation of the agreement in 2020 due to the country's socio-political crisis, which resulted in the fall of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's government in August to a military coup. The coup opened a new transition process led by the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), which declared that all past agreements will be respected, which included the Algiers Peace Agreement, support for MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane, the G5 Sahel force and the European special forces of the Takuba initiative.³¹ Later, after a few months of negotiations and internal and external pressure on the Military Junta, **a civilian and military transitional government was formed in October in which the armed groups that had signed the Algiers Peace Agreement agreed to participate and were awarded some ministerial portfolios such as the ministry of agriculture and fishing and the ministry of youth and sport.** This meant that representatives of all the movements that signed the agreement were members of the government for the first time. According

to the Carter Center assessment, five years after the agreement was signed, even though all the intermediate steps have been completed, the challenge lies in acting on the central provisions of the agreement, which include improving representation the northern population in national institutions and decentralising governance; completing the DDR process; reforming the security sector, including the training and effective redeployment of the reconstituted Malian Army; implementing economic development projects in the northern regions as established in chapter 4; promoting the reform of the judicial system; and taking key steps in transitional justice, with a view to enhancing national reconciliation.³²

In other developments during the year, the Malian government opened the door to beginning **peace negotiations with some jihadist groups that had not signed the Algiers Peace Agreement.** On 10 February, President Keita announced his support for talks between the government and the jihadist leaders Amadou Kouffa (Macina Liberation Front) and Iyad Ag Ghaly (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, or GSIM) for the first time. The appeal prompted the GSIM to announce its willingness to enter into talks on 8 March, on the condition that the French forces of Operation Barkhane and the UN mission in the country (MINUSMA) withdraw from Mali. In turn, according to media reports, the GSIM's position disillusioned members opposed to negotiations with the government, leading to desertions

30. The Carter Center, "Report of the Independent Observer. Observations on the Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, Resulting from the Algiers Process", April 2020.

31. See the summary on Mali in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

32. The Carter Center, "Report of the Independent Observer. Observations on the Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, Resulting from the Algiers Process", December 2020.

from the organisation as they joined the ranks of Islamic State in the West Africa Province (ISWAP or ISGS). The GSIM's decision also started an open war against ISWAP. Subsequently, on 3 June, French forces announced the death of AQIM leader Abdelmalik Droukdal in an operation in Kidal. His death gave GSIM leader Iyad Ag Ghaly more room to manoeuvre. Later, **the GSIM and the government agreed to a prisoner exchange, which was welcomed by African Union Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui and UN Secretary-General António Guterres, expressing their openness to dialogue with jihadist militants in the Sahel.** The change in these actors' position reflected the need to involve all armed groups in dialogue to stop the violence, regardless of their ideological beliefs. However, while the prime minister of the Malian transitional government, Moctar Ouane, also said that the Malian people were ready to enter into dialogue, France publicly rejected any talks with jihadist groups. However, at the end of the year,

the French position became more nuanced in this regard, opening up the possibility of dialogue with a representative and legitimate counterpart.

Gender, peace and security

According to the Carter Center's December report, the Agreement Monitoring Committee (CSA) and various international partners have actively promoted female participation in peace agreement monitoring bodies. During the CSA sessions in June and November, nine women participated (three for each signatory party), which represents real progress over the composition of previous CSAs. However, the Carter Center indicated that the inclusion of women in the four subcommittees and the other executive bodies is still pending, as well as the creation of the women's observatories in the northern regions.