

2. Peace negotiations in Africa

- Throughout 2023, there were 18 peace processes and negotiations identified in Africa, which accounts for practically 40% of the 45 peace processes worldwide.
- The resumption of clashes in northern Mali between the Malian Armed Forces and the armed groups that signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk.
- In Mozambique, the disarmament and demobilisation of former RENAMO combatants provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed.
- Progress was made in the implementation of the 2022 peace agreement between Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray, although atrocities continued to be committed by Eritrean forces and the Fano militias against the civilian population.
- Amidst the violence in the Ethiopian region of Oromia, peace talks began between Ethiopia and the armed group OLA in Zanzibar (Tanzania), facilitated by Kenya.
- Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan resumed the talks on the dispute over the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), but no progress was made in the different negotiating rounds.
- The agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland over the possible future official recognition of Somaliland threatened to destabilise the Horn of Africa and frustrated the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland.
- The escalation of the offensive by the Congolese armed group M23 in October, supported by Rwanda, caused a spike in tension between the DRC and Rwanda, while regional initiatives for a negotiated solution failed.
- The start of a new armed conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) broke off the negotiations aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in the country.

This chapter analyses the peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023. 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 2023.

Table 2.1. Summary of peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023

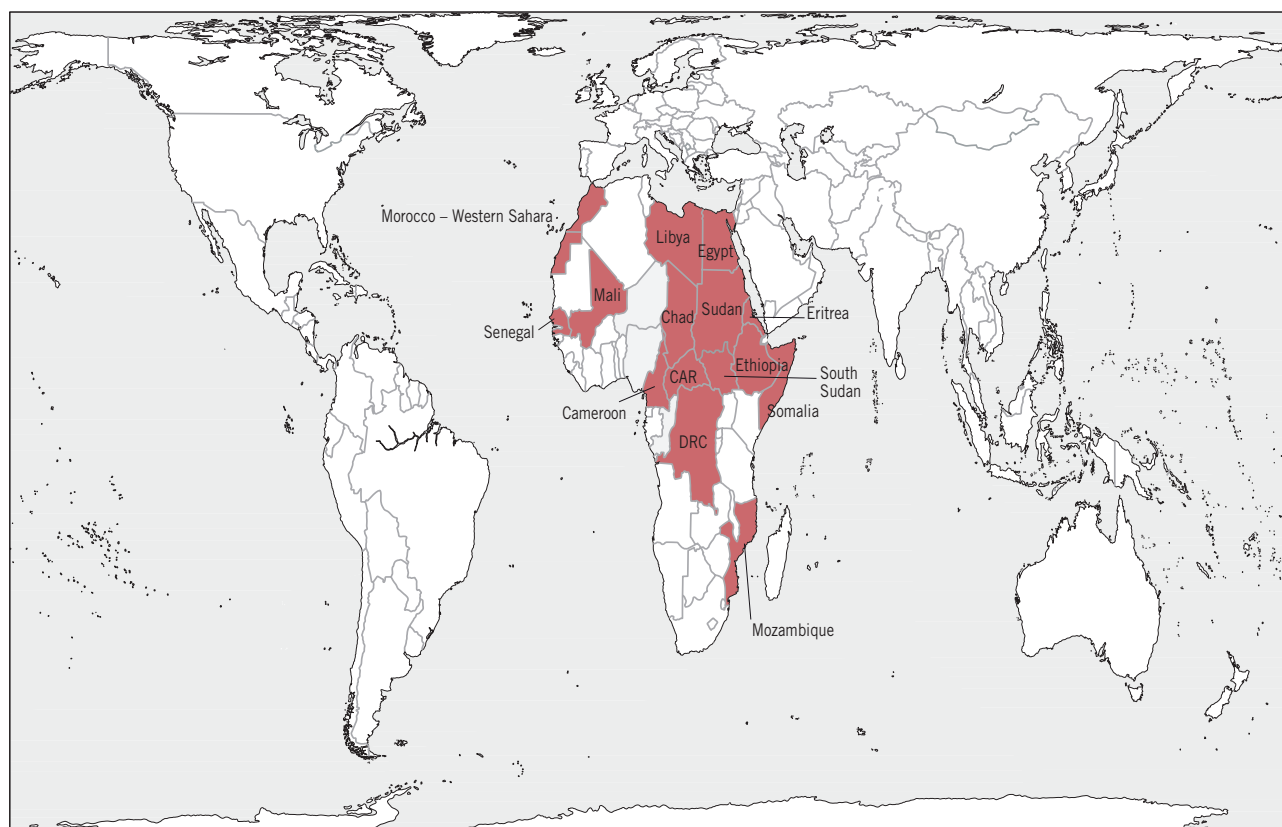
Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)	Government of Cameroon; four interim governments (IGs) proclaiming themselves representative of the people of Ambazonia: IG Sisiku (Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, first President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, and Vice President Dabney Yerima); the other three IGs are derived from IG Sisiku, each created after the previous IG refused to give up power: IG Sako (Samuel Sako); IG Marianta (Iya Marianta Njomia); IG Chris Anu (ally of Leke Olivier Fongunueh's Red Dragons armed group). The Ambazonia Governing Council coalition (AGovC, led by Cho Ayaba, armed wing Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF). Other political, military and social movements, and religious groups: Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT), which includes APLM/SOCADEF, FSCW, MoRISC, SCARM, SCAPO, SCNC (North America faction) and RoAN. Southern Cameroons Stakeholder Platform (SCSP), which includes political movements, civil society, armed groups, religious groups: IG Sisiku, SCNC (except the North America faction), Consortium, Global Takumbeng, SCAWOL, SCEW, SNWOT, SCCOP, AIPC, AYC, SCYC, SCCAF, WCA, DAC, CHRDA, CHRI, Reach Out, prisoners organisations, displaced population and refugee organisations, traditional leaders and others.	Church, civil society organisations, USIP, Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN), Vatican, Canada, USA
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

Peace processes and negotiations	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Chad	Doha process: Transitional Military Council, 52 armed groups, including the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCSMR), the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) and the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) DNIS: Transitional Military Council, civil society organisations, 34 of the 52 armed groups that signed the Doha process The 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement formed the Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), including the FACT and the CCSMR	Qatar; AU and UN, among others; Community of Sant'Egidio, ECCAS
DRC	Government of the DRC, government of Rwanda, armed group M23, armed groups from the eastern part of the country, political opposition and civil society	AU, SADC, ICGLR, EAC, EU, UN, OIF, USA, Angola, Qatar
Eritrea – Ethiopia	Eritrea and Ethiopia	United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, USA
Ethiopia (Oromia)	Federal government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)	IGAD, Kenya, Norway and Tanzania
Ethiopia (Tigray)	Federal Government, political and military authorities of the Ethiopian region of Tigray (Tigray People's Liberation Front)	AU, USA, IGAD
Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan	Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan	AU, World Bank (WB), UAE, EU and USA
Libya	Government of National Unity (GNU), Government of National Stability (GNS), Presidential Council, High State Council (HSC), House of Representatives (HoR), LNA/ALAF	UN; Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Germany, France, Italy, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Türkiye, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia (Berlin Process)
Mali	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) that brings together Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) –MNL, MAA and HCUA–, Platform –GATIA, CMFPR, CPA, faction of the MAA	Algeria, France, ECOWAS, AU, UN, EU, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, civil society organisations, Mauritania, Carter Center (Independent Observer of the Peace Agreement)
Morocco – Western Sahara	Morocco, Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO Front)	UN, Algeria and Mauritania, Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)
Mozambique	Government, RENAMO, RENAMO military junta	AU, National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant'Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church, UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Senegal (Casamance)	Government, factions of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)	ECOWAS, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPACE)
Somalia	Federal Government, leaders of the federal and emerging states (Puntland, HirShabelle, Galmudug, Jubaland, South-west), political military movement Ahlu Sunna WaJama'a, clan and sub-clan leaders, Somaliland	UN, IGAD, Türkiye, AU
Somalia – Somaliland	Federal Government of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland	Türkiye, Norway
South Sudan	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): Government (SPLM), SPLM/A-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others), two independent factions of the SPLM-IO: the Kitwang faction led by Simon Gatwech Dual and the faction headed by General Johnson Olony. Peace talks in Rome: Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSSOG, previously SSOMA): National Salvation Front (NAS), South Sudan United Front (SSUF), the Real SPLM, South Sudan People's Patriotic Movement (SSPPM).	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): IGAD Plus (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, Rome negotiations: Community of Sant'Egidio
Sudan¹	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government of 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 National crisis peace negotiations: Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF)	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, IGAD, UNITAMS National crisis peace negotiations: Trilateral mechanism (UNITAMS, AU and IGAD (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda)); Quad (USA, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Egypt
Sudan – South Sudan	Government of Sudan, Government of South Sudan, Ethnic communities of the Abyei region	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU, UNISFA, UN

*Those in bold are analysed in the chapter.

1 In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Map 2.1. Peace negotiations in Africa in 2023



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in Africa in 2023

2.1 Negotiations in 2023: regional trends

Throughout 2023, there were **18 peace processes and negotiations in Africa**, accounting for 40% of the 45 peace processes identified worldwide. These are more than in previous years (15 peace processes and negotiations in 2022, 12 peace processes in 2021 and 13 in 2020), though fewer than those reported in 2019 (19) and 2018 (22). Nine negotiations were located in the Horn of Africa (Sudan, South Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Somalia and Somalia-Somaliland), three in Central Africa (Chad, the CAR and the DRC), another five in North Africa and West Africa (Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Libya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara and Senegal (Casamance)) and the remaining one in southern Africa (Mozambique). The increase in 2023 compared to 2022 is due to the addition of three new peace processes to the analysis during the year: the negotiating process initiated between the federal government of Ethiopia and representatives of the armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) in Tanzania; the resumption of talks between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan to reach an agreement on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD); and the relaunch of international meetings and initiatives to promote a dialogue and negotiating process to achieve reconciliation between Somalia and Somaliland.

Ten of these 18 peace negotiations were linked to armed conflicts: Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Libya, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The remaining eight negotiating processes took place in contexts of socio-political crisis, which in some cases had also suffered episodes of war: Chad, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique, Senegal (Casamance), Somalia-Somaliland and Sudan-South Sudan. Some of the peace processes corresponded to conflicts that began in the last decade –Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest, 2018), Libya (2011) and Mali (2012)–, while others date back to the previous decade, like the CAR (2006), Sudan (2003), South Sudan (2009) and Sudan-South Sudan. Still other conflicts and crisis situations date back to the 1990s, such as the cases of the DRC and Somalia, so the initiatives and peace negotiations linked to these conflicts have evolved profoundly since their origin in terms of the actors involved and the causes of the disputes. The last cycle of violence in Mozambique began in 2013, though it dates back to the limited application of the 1992 peace agreement that put an end to the conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO that began in 1974. The conflict in the Senegalese region of Casamance, which began in 1982, achieved its first peace agreement in 2004. Low-intensity clashes continued afterwards, led by factions that rejected the agreement.

The longest-running peace process studied in Africa, which suffers from structural paralysis, is the one between Morocco and Western Sahara, which began after the 1991 ceasefire agreement. Since the fall of Siad Barre in Somalia in 1991 and the self-proclamation of Somaliland as an independent republic that same year, though it was not recognised by the international community, different initiatives have failed to promote reconciliation between both administrations and to reintegrate Somaliland into Somalia.

In relation to the actors participating in the negotiations, in 2023 only **five cases exclusively involved the governments of the respective countries and armed groups or political and military movements in the negotiations**. They were the cases of Ethiopia, with the implementation of the agreement between the Ethiopian federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region, as well as between the Ethiopian federal government and the OLA armed group; Mozambique, between the government and the opposition group RENAMO; the CAR, between the government and the armed groups that did not abandon the peace process in December 2020; and Senegal, between the government and a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC). **Eight of the other 18 peace processes were characterised by a more complex scenario of actors, with governments, armed groups and political and social opposition actors**. This was confirmed in negotiating processes such as those in **Cameroon** (Ambazonia/North West and South West), where exploratory contacts in Canada involved different actors from the political and military secessionist spectrum; **Mali**, where the negotiating process has involved national authorities in recent years and many political and armed actors in the Azawad region (north); **Libya**, between political and military actors that control different areas of the country; **Somalia**, between the federal government, the leadership of the federal states and other political and military actors in the country; **Sudan**, between the government, the political opposition, the RSF paramilitary group and insurgent actors from various regions of the country; **South Sudan**, between the government, the armed group SPLM/A-IO and other smaller groups, both from the political opposition and armed opposition; and the **DRC**, where the negotiations involved the Congolese government and the Rwandan government, as well as the Congolese government and different armed groups in the eastern part of the country. **Other negotiating processes were carried out by the governments of neighbouring countries or regional organisations as part of interstate disputes**. Examples of included the negotiating process between **Sudan and South Sudan**, the stalled process between **Eritrea and Ethiopia**

All the peace processes and negotiations studied had third-party support, whether taking the form of international organisations, regional organisations, states and religious organisations specialised in mediation and facilitation

and the talks between **Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan** on managing the waters of the Nile River. The Morocco-Western Sahara negotiating process, which has been at a standstill in recent years, involves the Moroccan government and the POLISARIO Front, which proclaimed the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976. It is considered an international dispute because it is a territory considered pending decolonisation by the UN.

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Although there are many cases where the actors involved in mediation, facilitation and accompaniment are publicly known, in other contexts this work is carried out discreetly and away from the public eye. In all cases there was more than one actor doing mediation and facilitation work, with the UN playing the most prominent role, as it was involved in 11 of the 18 cases in Africa: the CAR, Chad, the DRC, Libya, Mali, Morocco-Western Sahara, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan South Sudan, and Sudan-South Sudan. Another notable actor was the AU, which participated in 12 cases: the CAR, Chad, the DRC, Ethiopia (Tigray), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan. In Chad, both organisations played the role of observers, since the mediation was done by Qatar.

African regional intergovernmental organisations participated as third parties, like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali and in Senegal (Casamance); the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in the CAR and DRC negotiating processes; the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) in the CAR; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in Mozambique; and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Ethiopia (Oromia), Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan; and the East African Community (EAC) in the DRC. In addition to African intergovernmental organisations, other intergovernmental organisations participated as third parties in Africa, such as the EU (in Libya, Mali, Mozambique, the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan and between Sudan and South Sudan).

States also continued to play a leading role as third parties in peace processes and negotiations in Africa. All the peace processes studied had states leading or supporting initiatives of dialogue and negotiation. Local and international religious actors also played roles as third parties, especially the Community of Sant'Egidio

(Vatican) in Cameroon, Mozambique, the CAR and South Sudan; the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the CAR; local religious institutions in Mozambique, the DRC and South Sudan; ecumenical formats such as the Anglophone General Conference (AGC), made up of Catholic, Protestant and Muslim leaders in Cameroon; and the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). Organisations specialised in mediation and facilitation also played prominent roles, especially the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Cameroon, Libya, Mali, the CAR and Senegal; the Carter Center in Mali; and the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN) in Cameroon, among others.

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 Swiss Contact Group and the Friends of the Swiss Contact Group (EU, USA, Canada, Belgium, Germany and the UK) in the conflict in Cameroon; the Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia) in the negotiating process between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front; the international monitoring committee in Libya, in which the Libyan Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU and EU) participate, as well as a dozen countries; the International Support Group (which includes the UN and the EU) and 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; the states of the Troika (the USA, United Kingdom and Norway); African Union High Level on Sudan (AUHIP) in the case of Sudan; 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). In Sudan, the outbreak of a new armed conflict in April put an end to the progress achieved thanks to the existing double mediation process: the trilateral mechanism (made up of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the AU and the IGAD) and the one known as the Quad (which includes the US, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the UAE).

Regarding **the agendas** of the negotiations, there were **cessations of hostilities and ceasefire agreements** in different contexts, like in the Ethiopian regions of Oromia and Tigray, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan or the DRC, in relation to the armed groups in the east of the country and especially M23. **Security sector reform** was also a recurrent issue, especially the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants and the reform or creation of new security forces in peace agreements with various types and names, such as mixed units, joint forces or

unified national armies. These were found in most of the cases analysed, such as Chad, Ethiopia (Tigray), Mozambique, Mali, the CAR, the DRC, Senegal (Casamance), Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. Issues related to **governance** were also discussed in the ongoing negotiations in various contexts, such as in Chad, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Libya. **Degrees of self-government and levels of administrative decentralisation, including independence** for some areas, were discussed in Cameroon, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia (Tigray), Mali, Senegal (Casamance), South Sudan, and Morocco-Western Sahara. Though it was particular, the negotiating process between Somalia and Somaliland would be part of this group. Finally, with regard to the **management of resources and territory**, unfinished border demarcations were another subject of negotiations in Africa, as in the disputes between Eritrea and Ethiopia and between Sudan and South Sudan, as was the dispute over the management of the waters of the Nile River between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan.

The gender, peace and security agenda in the negotiating processes in Africa continued to be characterised by the low level of women's participation in the negotiating teams in the ongoing processes, as well as by the absence of architectures to integrate the gender perspective. in these processes. However, the cases of Somalia and Somaliland, Mozambique and the CAR are worthy of mention. The former minister of Somaliland, Edna Adan Ismail, was appointed Somaliland's envoy for the talks between **Somalia and Somaliland**. In **Mozambique**, Peace Process Support – The Secretariat (PPS) had a staff of 50% women and 63% of them held senior positions. The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, which culminated in 2023, attempted to integrate the gender perspective into its design and implementation. Demobilisation activities were carried out in accommodation centres designed to include gender-sensitive services, including separate accommodation and hygiene facilities for women. The UN highlighted the involvement of women in local peace and reconciliation committees in the **CAR**, which had increased since the 2019 political agreement had been signed and stood at 35% in October. The situation deteriorated in **Mali** and little progress was made in **South Sudan**. The peace process in **Mali**, one of the few that involved women in the mechanisms to monitor the 2015 Algiers peace agreement, was endangered by the resumption of fighting in the northern part of the country between the signatory parties. Although the peace agreement in **South Sudan** included a 35% quota for women in all executive and transitional institutions and processes, this provision was not met in most cases, in most of the commissions created to implement the agreement or in the current government or Parliament. In the bodies created during 2023, the agreed quota of women's representation was only respected in the Council of Political Parties (40%), but not in the National Constitutional Review Commission

(32%) or in the National Electoral Commission (22%). Positive news in South Sudan included the ratification of the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (known as the Maputo Protocol) and the approval of the second national action plan on the women, peace and security agenda (2023-2027).

Remarkably, in most contexts many women's movements and organisations continued to demand active participation in peace processes and various local peacebuilding initiatives were led by civil society, especially by women's organisations. In this sense, we highlight the cases of **Cameroon, Somaliland and Sudan**. The tireless work that Cameroonian civil society women's organisations have carried out in recent years led the German Africa Foundation (DAS)² to give the German Africa Prize 2023 to the umbrella of 80 organisations of women mediators and activists that organised the 1st National Convention of Women for Peace in Cameroon in 2021,³ which brought together over 1,500 female civil society representatives working for peace in the country. In **Somaliland**, special envoy Edna Adan received the Templeton Prize in June 2023 for her work in peacebuilding and her fight against female genital mutilation in the Horn of Africa out of the hospital that bears her name in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland. This prize highlighted the traditional role of Somali women's organisations in promoting peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives. Since the outbreak of armed clashes between the SAF and the RSF in **Sudan**, different initiatives led by women emerged that called for a ceasefire, highlighted humanitarian needs and condemned sexual violence related to the conflict. They also demanded the participation of women in the ceasefire negotiations and any future political process and denounced the failure to include women in these spaces. For example, on 13 July, 75 civil society organisations, including political forces, women's rights groups, youth networks, resistance committees, civil society groups and academics issued a Declaration of Principles of Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan.

However, reality continued to be extremely serious. There were setbacks in terms of gender violence and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as evidenced by the serious situation of women in **Tigray (Ethiopia)**, the **CAR** (where Mohamed Ag Ayoya, the UN Secretary-General's deputy special representative in the country and humanitarian coordinator of MINUSCA, said that the serious crisis

gripping the country should be classified not only as a humanitarian crisis, but also as a "protection and gender crisis"), the **DRC** (where the departure of MONUSCO during 2024 could further aggravate the situation) and **Somalia** (where the executive director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, revealed a devastating situation). Nevertheless, regional organisations and UN Women continued to conduct many activities to promote women's empowerment and participation in peace-building initiatives in Africa, as in Sudan, in electoral processes, as in the DRC, and in activities linked to transitional justice, as in Ethiopia, with the aim of guaranteeing women's participation in developing an inclusive and gender-sensitive transitional justice policy.

Despite the persistent absence of women in formal negotiating processes in Africa, their active participation in peacebuilding was evident in many contexts

Most peace negotiations in Africa followed a downward trend in 2023. No new peace agreement was signed between opposing parties during the year, except for the agreement reached in Senegal (Casamance) between the government and a faction of the MFDC and some intercommunity agreements, such as several in the region of Abyei, in the dispute between Sudan and South Sudan. On the contrary, advanced processes like those in Mali and Sudan suffered major setbacks due to the resumption of fighting.

Furthermore, hopeful initiatives conceived during months of discreet effort for the cases of Cameroon and Somalia-Somaliland failed a few days after their announcement. Chad and the CAR held controversial constitutional referendums as part of the implementation of previous agreements that undermined the democratic governance of both countries and rolled back the independence of the branches of power of the state by strengthening the presidential powers, according to various analysts. In **Cameroon**, secret contacts between representatives of the Cameroonian government and various English-speaking separatist groups between October and December 2022, facilitated by Canada as part of a new initiative to promote a peace process, were confirmed on 20 January 2023 with Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly's announcement that Canada had a mandate to facilitate peace talks between the conflicting parties in the country. However, three days after the announcement, the government of Cameroon denied that it had asked a "foreign party" to mediate a resolution to the conflict. In **Mali**, the parties that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, the government and Arab and Tuareg armed groups that had joined the Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP) coalition resumed fighting during the year, jeopardising the peace agreement. One of reasons that the war resumed between the signatory parties is related to

2 DAS press release, "German Africa Award 2023 goes to the Cameroonian women's peace platform '1st National Women's Convention for Peace in Cameroon'", DAS, 30 November 2023.

3 See Cameroon in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2021: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

the withdrawal of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the country (MINUSMA), which took effect between July and December, though tensions between the transitional authorities and armed movements had started to rise since the military junta came to power following the coup d'état in May 2021. In **Somalia**, the federal government continued with its policy of rapprochement with the member states of the federation. Several meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC), a body that brings together the federal government and the member states, were held during the year and some progress was made in sharing power within the federation. However, Puntland decided to suspend relations with Mogadishu and announced that it would operate as an autonomous administration until the interim Constitution was finalised. At the end of 2022, international contacts and initiatives were relaunched to promote dialogue between **Somalia and Somaliland**, which culminated in a meeting between both presidents in December 2023 in Djibouti. However, this historic meeting was overshadowed by Ethiopia and Somaliland's announcement on 1 January that they were signing a memorandum of understanding, which triggered a serious diplomatic crisis between Somaliland, Somalia and Ethiopia since it would include Ethiopia's possible recognition of Somaliland as an independent state, among other issues. In **Chad**, the signing of the Doha Peace Agreement in 2022, which left out 18 of the 52 armed groups, and the holding of the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS), also in 2022, which was described as a farce by opposition groups and civil society actors, helped to extend the mandate of the Transitional Military Council (CMT) for 24 months. A constitutional referendum was held on 17 December 2023, which the opposition boycotted, arguing that it strengthened presidential powers in the country and thereby helped to bolster coup plotter Mahamat Déby because it would allow him to run in future elections. The **CAR** continued with the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement with the armed groups that had not abandoned the negotiating framework. On 30 July, a constitutional referendum was held that was boycotted by the political and social opposition and various armed actors. Among other issues, the referendum eliminated presidential term limits, dissolved the Senate and withdrew parliamentary control over the signing of mining contracts, which henceforth would be in the president's hands. Though the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) noted that the conditions of the referendum had been satisfactory, other actors in the international community questioned the results. Finally, the negotiations promoted by the military junta of **Sudan** and part of the Sudanese political opposition

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aimed at achieving a political transition and establishing a civilian government in Sudan during 2022, in which a framework agreement had been reached to create a transitional civilian government with elections in two years, fell apart after a new armed conflict broke out in the country on 15 April between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF).⁴

The rest of the peace processes (Eritrea-Ethiopia, Ethiopia (Oromia), Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Libya, Morocco-Western Sahara, the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan-South Sudan) did not yield any progress. On the contrary, they were beset by many difficulties, impasse and crises.

Five years after the historic peace agreement was signed by **Eritrea and Ethiopia**, the war between Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray between 2020 and 2022 helped the erstwhile enemies to ally to fight against the TPLF, but old grievances and new disputes could threaten to revive the conflict, according to various analysts. The fact that neither the Amhara militias nor the Eritrean militias participated in the South Africa agreement of November 2022 between Ethiopia and the TPLF, and that both had wanted to eliminate TPLF resistance instead of reaching an agreement, among other issues, increased tension between the two.⁵ The 2018 agreement led to the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, the resumption of flights and the reopening of their borders. The initial optimism waned after a few months when the border was closed again and many issues remained unresolved. During the year, troop movements on the shared border and the lack of meetings between the parties, in addition to possible Eritrean support for the Amhara Faro militias, which are fighting with Ethiopian security forces, raised alarms.⁶ In the **Ethiopian region of Oromia**, intense fighting went on between the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and federal forces. However, peace talks began in Zanzibar (Tanzania) in April, facilitated by Kenya on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and by Norway, and although no concrete agreements were reached, both parties expressed their commitment to seeking a solution to the conflict. A second round of negotiations was held in Tanzania in late October, mediated by the IGAD. Anonymous diplomatic sources said they were optimistic about the progress of the negotiating process. During the year, **Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan** agreed to resume talks to reach an agreement on the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), though no progress was made in the different rounds of negotiations held.

4 The negotiations to achieve a transitional government were promoted through an intra-Sudanese peace initiative known as the trilateral mechanism, sponsored by UNITAMS, the AU and the IGAD, as well as through informal conversations between the military junta and the Central Council of Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC-CC), in what was known as the Quad mediation bloc, which included the US, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as third parties.

5 Kheir Omer, Mohammed, "How Eritrea Could Derail the Ethiopian Peace Deal", *Foreign Policy*, 10 November 2022.

6 Kheir Omer, Mohammed, "Are Ethiopia and Eritrea on the Path to War?", *Foreign Policy*, 7 November 2023.

Negotiations involving different local and international actors continued in **Libya**, but no definitive political agreement was reached for holding elections in the country, which were initially scheduled for December 2021, and the political process was beset by difficulties until the end of the year. The peace negotiations in the **DRC** remained at a standstill while the M23 escalated violence and pressure rose on Rwanda to cease its support for the armed group and its direct participation in attacks on Congolese soil. There was not even any progress made in the Luanda process, the talks between the DRC and Rwanda regarding its support for the M23, which had paved the way for the 2022 Luanda agreement and a ceasefire by the M23, which was not respected, nor in the Nairobi process, consisting of inter-Congolese dialogue initiatives between the government, civil society and armed groups, including the M23. On the contrary, the threat of an escalation of violence pitting the DRC against Rwanda became more tangible. Meanwhile, the negotiating process between **Sudan and South Sudan** was affected by the outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan, which made it difficult to make progress in the negotiations between both countries, especially with regard to the dispute over the Abyei region, though some headway was made in resolving intercommunity disputes. In **South Sudan**, some progress was made in implementing the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) during the year and the presidential election was confirmed for December 2024. The original three-year transition period set out in the R-ARCSS ended on 22 February and the extended 24-month transition period began, which will end on 22 February 2025, as agreed by the parties according to the road map. Early in the year, the Transitional Government reported new progress linked to the implementation of the R-ARCSS, although in the second and third quarters of the year, there was new tension between the parties that had signed the R-ARCSS that threatened the unity of the Transitional Government and splinter groups broke off from the SPLA-IO, weakening it. Moreover, coinciding with Pope Francis' visit to South Sudan, President Kiir lifted the suspension of the Rome peace talks with the groups that had not signed the R-ARCSS. The talks will move to Kenya in 2024. Finally, the search for a political solution to the conflict in **Western Sahara** continued to revolve mainly around the diplomatic activity of the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy, Staffan de Mistura, appointed in late 2021, although his efforts did not manage to restart the negotiations during the year. De Mistura attempted to encourage the resumption of dialogue amidst continuing low-intensity hostilities between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front after the breakdown of the 1991 ceasefire, though with lower levels of violence compared to 2022, and regional tension between Morocco and Algeria.

However, there were some **positive developments in Mozambique, as in recent years, as well as in Senegal and Ethiopia, the latter in relation to implementation of the agreement in Tigray**. In **Mozambique**, the disarmament and demobilisation of the 5,221 RENAMO combatants and the closure of its 16 military bases was completed. This definitively ended the implementation of the Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation signed in 2019 between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO, which emerged to end the armed conflict that had restarted in the country in 2012. In **Senegal (Casamance)**, in line with the peace agreement reached in 2022, around 250 separatist rebels from the southern region of Casamance, members of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC) faction calling itself the Provisional Committee of the Unified Political and Combatant Wings of the MFDC, led by Cesar Atoute Badiate, handed over their weapons in a ceremony that took place at the movement's former base in the town of Mangone in the Bignona area, in southern Senegal. In May, a peace agreement was signed with another MFDC faction, called the Diakaye faction, which was made possible due to the mediation of civil society organisations based in Ziguinchor devoted to peacebuilding in the Senegambia region under the Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC). This agreement provides for the disarmament and reintegration of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the delivery of birth certificates to people who did not have access to them due to the instability and measures to ensure the peaceful return of all refugees. Finally, despite the climate of violence surrounding the last Eritrean forces and the Amhara Fano militias and the serious humanitarian situation suffered by the **Ethiopian region of Tigray**, progress was made in implementing the November 2022 peace agreement between the federal government of Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray. In late 2022, the regional government that emerged from the 2020 elections, which was never recognised by the federal government and led to war, was dissolved. Moreover, the restoration of public services began, the distribution of humanitarian aid resumed, although it was interrupted during the year due to the discovery of cases of corruption, and the AU observation mission (AU-MVCM) was launched. Nearly all armed groups and Eritrean forces completely withdrew during 2023 and the effective disarmament of Tigray fighters began in July 2023. In February, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with TPLF leaders for the first time since 2020 and the TPLF agreed on the composition of the interim administration. However, these steps forward were overshadowed by their consequences in the neighbouring region of Amhara due to the escalation of violence by the Fano militias, former allies of the federal government that turned against it due to its plans to dismantle the illegal Amhara administration that straddles territories disputed between both regions.

2.2. Case study analysis

Great Lakes and Central Africa

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. However, in December 2020, representatives of six of the country's most powerful armed groups, including the main groups that signed the 2019 peace agreement (the anti-balaka factions led by Mokom and Ngaïssona, the 3R, a faction of the FPRC, the MPC and the UPC), denounced its breach by the government, withdrew from the process and created the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), after which hostilities resumed throughout the country, which has been made more complex by the emergence of the Russian private security company Wagner.

The implementation of the 2019 political agreement with the armed groups that had not abandoned the negotiating framework continued slowly during the year.

Clashes continued in the country, especially in the east, where weak government security forces and the Russian private security company Wagner engaged in persistent operations against the main armed groups affiliated with the primary rebel coalition, known as the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), forcibly displacing thousands of people and leading to serious human rights violations by all actors involved in the conflict.

The political situation was dominated by the constitutional referendum that was held on 30 July. The seventh republic was formally established in the Central African Republic when the new Constitution was promulgated on 30 August. The government declared that the constitutional changes reflected popular demand and would allow national development. The political opposition and various civil society organisations, religious associations and various groups have criticised the new Constitution, some of whose provisions continued to cause controversy, such as those relating to the requirements to run for election. Some armed groups and opposition groups, such as the armed coalition CPC, called on the country's population to boycott the referendum. The opposition civil coalition Republican Bloc for the Defence of the Constitution, some civil society organisations and several armed groups that did not sign the 2019 political agreement challenged the results. In his speech to the nation on 31 August, President Touadera repeated his desire to carry out the peace process and the political transformation in the country, basing it on the new Constitution that had been promulgated the day before, and expressly invited the armed groups to rejoin the peace process. An observation mission from the regional organisation ECCAS noted that the conditions for the referendum had been satisfactory.

The new Constitution, which gives more power to the presidency and makes changes that could be interpreted as setbacks for independence between the powers of the state, extended the terms of office of the president and Parliament from five to seven years, eliminated the limitation of successive terms and withdrew parliamentary control from the signing of mining contracts. This prerogative is now in the hands of the president. The Constitution also limited the Senate, which had been established by the 2015 Constitution but had never been created. It also established the creation of a chamber of traditional leaders, among other issues. MINUSCA continued to support the government's local mediation and reconciliation initiatives, including by facilitating meetings of the prefectural monitoring mechanisms of the political agreement reached in 2019. The DDR process continued to move forward very slowly, with around 1,000 combatants completing it between July 2022 and September 2023. As of 1

October, six armed groups and two factions of other groups that signed the 2019 political agreement had been disbanded and fully disarmed and demobilised.

Gender, peace and security

Women accounted for 35% of the members of local peace and reconciliation committees in October, an increase since the signing of the political agreement in 2019, according to the UN. MINUSCA promoted greater female participation in the peace process. For example, on 20 June, it brought together more than 60 women leaders of civil society in Bangui to develop a targeted action plan, among other things, to improve interaction with political authorities and leaders of armed groups. In November, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security stated that Mohamed Ag Ayoya, the UN Secretary-General's deputy special representative in the country and humanitarian coordinator of MINUSCA, had indicated in September that the crisis gripping the country, involving serious human rights violations that included different forms of gender violence, climate change, forced displacement and food insecurity for more than half of the population, should be classified not only as a humanitarian crisis, but a "protection and gender crisis". Gender-based violence and sexual violence increased, exacerbated by conflict and the climate crisis, committed not only by armed actors but also by family members on a massive scale. Moreover, the constitutional referendum of July 2023 approved a series of changes that implied the elimination of the Constitutional Court's requirement to be composed of an equal number of men and women, with the consequences that arise in terms of the application of gender-sensitive justice.

Chad	
Negotiating actors	Doha process: Transitional Military Council, 52 armed groups, including the Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT), the Military Command Council for the Salvation of the Republic (CCSMR), the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD) and the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) DNIS: Transitional Military Council, civil society organisations, 34 of the 52 armed groups that signed the Doha process The 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement formed the Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), including the FACT and the CCSMR
Third parties	Qatar; AU and UN, among others; Community of Sant'Egidio, ECCAS
Relevant agreements	Doha Peace Agreement and the Participation of the Politico-Military Movements in the Chadian National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (2022), National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (2022)

Summary:

Frequently classified as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, Chad has faced a wide, complex and interrelated range of challenges and sources of fragility and instability in recent decades, and has also been the scene of attempts at dialogue and political negotiation. The unstable atmosphere worsened with the death of President Idriss Déby in April 2021 and the subsequent coup d'état by a military council that installed his son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, as the new president, suspended the Constitution and replaced it with a transition charter and the promise of free elections in 18 months following the holding of a national dialogue. The Transitional Military Council (CMT) promised to promote a national dialogue in December 2021, in which the different insurgent groups active in the country were intended to participate. In 2022, a peace process was held in Doha (Qatar) under Qatari mediation and an agreement was reached on 7 August with 34 of the 52 insurgent groups, which finally gave way to the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS) between 20 August and 8 October. Different actors participated in the DNIS, including the groups that signed the Doha agreement. The Doha peace process and the DNIS ended with the CMT's mandate being extended for another 24 months under the image of a new government, described as of one national unity, and the continued presidency of Mahamat Déby, who may run in the 2024 election, which has only prolonged the break from the Chadian Constitution that began in April 2021. At the end of the transition (which had been extended by the DNIS), historic demonstrations in October 2022 were heavily repressed, causing many fatalities. The crackdown demonstrated the authoritarian drift of the government and the silencing of the political and social opposition.

The Doha Peace Agreement and the Participation of Political-Military Movements in the national dialogue signed in August 2022 and the subsequent National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS) of 2022 led to the extension of the mandate of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) for a period of 24 months. Reshuffled in October 2022 under the tutelage of President Mahamat Déby, who will be able to run in the elections scheduled for November 2024, the transitional government continued to take action to consolidate power, according to various analysts. The government launched an organising committee for the constitutional referendum, one of the recommendations resulting from the dialogue. The transitional government continued in 2023 with preparations for holding the referendum and on 7 November it announced that the referendum would be held on 17 December. The referendum was boycotted by several opposition and civil society figures, including the leader of the opposition Republican Platform coalition, former Minister Sidick Abdelkereim Haggar, who complained that the draft Constitution focused on a unitary state at the expense of a federal one. They also criticised the lack of participation of the main political actors and the speed in preparing the census, which did not cover the entire electorate, especially in the southern provinces. A group of 15 opposition parties denounced the census preparation process in September.

Various analysts also indicated that Déby had failed to launch the committee that was supposed to follow

up on the resolutions of the Doha peace talks and was not implementing the recommendations of the national dialogue. This was repeated by one of the main signatories of the Doha agreement, the co-leader of the armed group UFR, Timan Erdimi. His brother, Tom Erdimi, was included as a minister in the transitional government. Timan Erdimi argued that the international community had to witness the non-implementation of the agreements. In June and July, Déby retired a hundred generals and promoted a similar number of young officers close to him to the rank of general (around 500 generals in the country, one of the highest figures worldwide in proportion to the size of the army). Meanwhile, the chair of the AU Commission, Chadian politician Moussa Faki, repeated that Chadian military men should not be able to run in the 2024 elections and should hand over power to civilians. In early July, the transitional government established the National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission, in line with the Doha Agreement, as well as another commission on national reconciliation and social cohesion. On 16 October, the transitional authorities declared that the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process had begun, as noted by the UN in November.

The transitional government gave out various pardons and decreed an amnesty for those responsible for the anti-government protests of 20 October 2022 and for various political-military actors in different phases. In December 2022, the country's prosecutor's office had convicted 262 people arrested during the protests and ordered the release of another 139 people in a trial that lacked procedural guarantees, according to international standards. The trial of around 400 FACT members captured in April 2021 during the fighting that led to the death of President Idriss Déby took place in February 2023. The defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment. President Mahamat Déby pardoned 380 of them, as well as another 259 activists imprisoned for their participation in the October 2022 protests. FACT leader Mahamat Mahdi Ali, sentenced along with others in absentia, did not receive a pardon. In July, another 110 people were pardoned for their participation in the protests of 20 October 2022.

On 3 November, the authorities allowed Succès Masra, the leader of the opposition party Les Transformateurs, to return to Chad after a year in exile, where he had lived since October 2022 following the crackdown on civil protests that caused dozens of fatalities (hundreds, according to the opposition). The agreement for his return, facilitated by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), includes an amnesty for all military and civilian actors involved in the violent acts of 20 October 2022, and Masra's commitment to support the transition process. On 5 November, the authorities released 72 members of Les Transformateurs who had been detained since 2022. On 19 November, Masra addressed hundreds of his followers in the capital, N'Djamena, and urged reconciliation with the military

rulers. The civil opposition platform movement Wakit Tama refused to recognise the amnesty and the leader of the Les Démocrates party rejected the agreement and urged justice for the victims of the 2022 police crackdown. **Despite the amnesties and pardons, many government opponents remained imprisoned as a result of the October 2022 protests.**

Members of the opposition coalition Cadre Permanent de Concertation et de Réflexion (CPCR), made up of the 18 armed groups that did not sign the Doha agreement (including FACT), met in Rome under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio between 6 and 9 March 2023 to discuss the political and security situation in Chad. They expressed their willingness to commit to negotiations with the transitional authorities with the support of neutral and impartial mediation, though they did not receive any response from the transitional government. In March, an ECCAS delegation visited the country, meeting with representatives of the opposition and civil society as part of its facilitation of the transition, though the CPCR disdained its mediating role due to its support for the conclusions of the DNIS, described as a farce by civil society and the political-military opposition.

Meanwhile, the armed group FACT broke the unilateral ceasefire that it had upheld since April 2021 as a result of the offensive launched by the Libyan National Army and the Chadian Armed Forces in the Tibesti region (north) in August. Although the government had not agreed to any ceasefire with the group, it had released hundreds of its members to facilitate their participation in the Doha process, as well as after the sentencing in March. This offensive weakened the armed group to the point that FACT Secretary-General Mahamat Barh Béchir Kendji surrendered to the Chadian authorities in early November along with hundreds of combatants. On 9 November, the FACT accused Kendji of treason.

Gender, peace and security

With regard to women's participation and the inclusion of the gender perspective, women made up just under 30% of the new transitional government formed in October 2022. There was only one woman representative of the actors in the Doha peace process, according to the United Nations. Women and youth organisations participated in the National, Inclusive and Sovereign Dialogue (DNIS), but their positions were not present in the conclusions of the DNIS and it is unknown if there were any women on the organising committee for the referendum. At the beginning of the year, the government presented its National Action Plan to promote the women, peace and security agenda, the preparation of which had the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Swiss and Spanish cooperation. Chad's Minister of Women, Protection of Early Childhood and National Solidarity

Amina Priscille Longoh explained that the process of preparing the 1325 NAP began in 2019 with a mapping of priorities and local and sectoral consultations before work began to draft the document, its budget and its technical and political sections. The minister thanked the partners for their support, as well as the inter-ministerial committee responsible for drafting the document, which was presented by the coordinator of the committee and the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Gender, Family and Solidarity Apolline Moudalbaye. As part of the EU-funded “Supporting Democratic Transition in Chad” programme, International IDEA Chad organised a national training workshop in October on strengthening women’s leadership with a view to encouraging women to run as candidates in the 2024 elections. It was attended by 50 women from political parties that support the transition, opposition political parties, civil society organisations and female executives from the Ministry of Women, Protection of Early Childhood and National Solidarity and the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Social Cohesion.

DRC	
Negotiating actors	Government of the DRC, government of Rwanda, armed group M23, armed groups from the eastern part of the country, political opposition and civil society
Third parties	AU, SADC, International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), EAC, EU, UN, OIF, USA, Angola, Qatar
Relevant agreements	Sun City Agreement, Pretoria Agreement and Luanda Agreement (2002); Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the DRC (2002); Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (2013), Comprehensive, Inclusive Peace Accord in the DRC (2016), Luanda Agreement (2022)

Summary:

The demands for democratization in the nineties led to a succession of rebellions that culminated with the coup d’état carried out by Laurent Desiré Kabila between 1996 and 1997 against Mobutu Sese Seko. Later, what is sometimes called the First African World War (1998-2003), broke out what is sometimes called the First African World War (1998-2003) broke out because of the participation of a dozen countries in the region and numerous armed groups. The signing of a ceasefire in 1999, and of several peace agreements between 2002 and 2003, led to the withdrawal of foreign troops, the setting up of a transitional government and later an elected government, in 2006. However, did not mean the end of violence in this country, due to the role played by Rwanda and the presence of factions of non-demobilised groups and of the FDLR, responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The breach of the 2009

peace accords led to the 2012 desertion of soldiers of the former armed group CNDP, forming part of the Congolese army, citing threats against and the marginalisation of their community and organised a new rebellion called the 23 March Movement (M23), promoted by Rwanda in 2012. In December 2013, the rebellion was defeated and some of its members fled to Rwanda and Uganda. Nevertheless, the violent and unstable atmosphere persisted and the M23 resumed its attacks in late 2021. In 2022, the EAC activated two processes to promote peace in the region: a dialogue process with armed groups in the eastern DRC in Nairobi and the Luanda process, between DRC and Rwanda. It also sent a military mission against groups that did not accept the Nairobi process, such as the M23.

During the year, international pressure remained on Rwanda to discontinue its support for the armed group March 23 Movement (M23) and regional and international initiatives continued to be carried out to promote a dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda. In October, fighting intensified in the eastern DRC, mainly involving the M23. The violence and escalating fighting took place amidst the electoral campaign, which was seriously affected by a climate of political violence. Félix Tshisekedi won the election on 20 December 2023, which was plagued by irregularities and accusations of fraud.⁷ However, the Luanda process, the dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda for its support for the group M23, as part of which the Luanda agreement was reached in 2022 and a ceasefire by the M23 was achieved but was not respected, remained at a standstill in 2023. The Nairobi process, consisting of initiatives for inter-Congolese dialogue between the government, civil society and armed groups, including the M23, was also deadlocked throughout the year.⁸ In January 2023, Qatar tried to give continuity and support to Angola’s efforts to promote a political dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, but the direct meeting between the presidents of both countries, scheduled for 23 January, was postponed due to Congolese absence. The EAC summits on 4 and 17 February failed in their attempts to reach a ceasefire. It was not until March that a fragile ceasefire was achieved, led by Angolan President João Lorenço.

In early March, Lorenço announced a ceasefire between the M23 and the FARDC, which would come into force from 7 March, coinciding with the deployment of the EAC’s regional military presence (without a mandate to use force), composed of Burundian, Ugandan and South Sudanese forces. The ceasefire failed a few days later,⁹ although the M23 carried out a strategic withdrawal and reduced its activities as the deployment of the EAC force was completed, which ended in April. Between April and October, clashes between the government and the M23 decreased, although it continued to fight

7 See the summary on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.
 8 See the summary on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2022: report on trends and scenarios*; Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.
 9 Asmahan Qarjouly, “Violence in DRC intensifies as Qatar takes steps to mediate”, *Doha News*, 20 March 2023.

against local pro-government armed groups for control of territory in North Kivu province.

Different regional initiatives were held to try to relaunch the peace negotiations during this period and international pressure on Rwanda increased, though the Luanda and Nairobi processes that began in 2022 remained at an impasse. An extraordinary ICGLR summit was held on 3 June in Luanda to discuss the DRC and Sudan, with Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi and Rwandan Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente taking part in place of President Paul Kagame. A quadripartite summit of the ICGLR, SADC, EAC and ECCAS was also held in Angola on 27 June under the auspices of the AU, in which the participants promised to improve coordination of all peace efforts and initiatives for the eastern DRC. International pressure increased following the UN Group of Experts' ratification of Rwanda's support for the M23 in June.¹⁰ The EU and the US imposed sanctions on senior Rwandan and Congolese military officials and members of armed groups. The US also restricted military cooperation with Rwanda. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, openly condemned Rwanda's support for the M23 and the Rwandan Army's presence in the DRC on 7 July, while US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken held talks with Rwandan President Paul Kagame to try to ease tensions and seek a diplomatic solution.

In September, the M23 cast off the low profile that had characterised it for much of the year. On 18 September, it announced that it had taken over the town of Kiwanja, which was nominally under the control of the EAC regional mission. In September, the mandate of the regional mission was extended by three months until December, though its role on the ground remained symbolic. In October, the M23's offensive resumed after six months of tense calm in North Kivu province (east). The de facto ceasefire collapsed and both the M23 and the Wazalendo pro-government coalition of armed groups resumed their armed activity in different locations. The reopening of hostilities increased the hostile rhetoric between Kigali and Kinshasa, leading the UN special envoy for the Great Lakes region, Huang Xia, to warn of the real risk of a direct conflict between Rwanda and the DRC, citing the mobilisation of troops that both countries had undertaken, the absence of a direct high-level dialogue between them and the persistence of hate speech. President Tshisekedi and other candidates during the Congolese election campaign used the conflict to mobilise the population of the eastern part of

the country, promising an offensive against Rwanda in the event of electoral victory.

On 6 October, following the quadripartite summit on 27 June, the chiefs of defence staff of the EAC, ECCAS, ICGLR and SADC met in Addis Abeba under the auspices of the AU and with the participation of the UN to coordinate and harmonise the peace initiatives in the eastern DRC. The participants agreed to ensure harmonisation of the withdrawal schedule for existing field missions and planned force deployments, maintain dialogue in the political track of the Nairobi and Luanda processes, accelerate efforts to establish humanitarian corridors and return to meet before the end of the year. As a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the discredited EAC mission, which had been unable to stop the actions of the M23, the DRC said that its mandate would end in December as established. On 21 December, it **completed its withdrawal from the country amid accusations that Burundian troops were collaborating with the Congolese Armed Forces** instead of respecting the mission's mandate.

Composed of troops from Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and South Sudan, the mission was supposed to regain the positions previously occupied by the M23 rebels after they had defeated the FARDC soldiers and establish a security zone to avoid new clashes between the M23 and the FARDC. Meanwhile, the DRC maintained contacts so that the SADC could deploy a military mission in the eastern part of the country.

As part of the Congolese electoral campaign, the US has been facilitating contacts between the DRC and Rwanda since mid-November. **The US attempted to promote a ceasefire during the elections, which was used by the M23 to reinforce its positions around Sake, with support from Rwanda.**¹¹

Gender, peace and security

Local and international civil society representatives addressed the UN Security Council in December to press the need for the ongoing Luanda and Nairobi political negotiating processes to be more inclusive and be led by local peacebuilders and members of civil society, especially women and young people. In this armed conflict, women and girls have been seriously affected since sexual and gender violence has remained high and has even been increasing. The speakers added that armed groups continued to kidnap and recruit minors. The armed violence in the region continued to

10. UN Security Council, *Informe final del Grupo de Expertos, presentado de conformidad con lo dispuesto en el párrafo 9 de la resolución 2641 (2022)*, 13 June 2023.

11. Reuters, "Exclusive: Eastern Congo ceasefire extended for two weeks, US official says", *Reuters*, 15 December 2023.

intensify in an already hyper-militarised context where permanent flows of weapons and a persisting state of siege only exacerbated the situation. The civil society representatives said that the country's civil society needs international support, especially given the escalation of violence and the announced withdrawal of MONUSCO from the country during 2024, which could cause a potential security vacuum. A follow-up meeting was held on 19 October between a hundred female candidates, officials and experts from civil society and MONUSCO, following a first discussion in September between the special representative and 20 female political candidates on the challenges faced by the women in the electoral context. Despite the zero tolerance policy pursued by the United Nations, during the year MONUSCO reported new complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse due to events that occurred between 2011 and 2023 that involved members of the military and civilian components of the mission.

South Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): Government (SPLM), SPLM/A-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), and several minor groups (SSOA, SPLM-FD, among others), two independent factions of the SPLM-IO: the Kitgwang faction led by Simon Gatwech Dual and the faction headed by General Johnson Olony. Peace talks in Rome: Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups (NSSOG, previously SSOMA): National Salvation Front (NAS), South Sudan United Front (SSUF), the Real SPLM, South Sudan People's Patriotic Movement (SSPPM).
Third parties	Revitalised Peace Agreement (2018): IGAD Plus (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, Rome negotiations: 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 neopatrimonial practices and corruption in the Government, 42 Peace Talks in Focus 2021 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. However, 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-inOpposition (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 SPLAIO 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. Since 2019, the government has held peace talks in Rome with the groups that did not sign the R-ARCSS.

Some progress was made in implementing the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) during the year and the presidential election was confirmed for December 2024. The original three-year transition period set out in the R-ARCSS ended on 22 February and the extended 24-month transition period began, which will end on 22 February 2025, as agreed by the parties according to the road map. Early in the year, the Transitional Government reported new progress linked to the implementation of the R-ARCSS, including President Salva Kiir's signing of 10 important bills on 1 January, such as the Constitution Making Process Bill and the Law on Political Parties. However, it was not until 6 June that the High-Level Standing Committee on the Road Map, composed of the parties that had signed the R-ARCSS, held the inaugural consultative meeting to form the Reconstituted National Constitutional Review Commission, six months after it was first announced. On 4 July 4, President Kiir confirmed that presidential election would be held in December 2024 and said that he would run for president. His announcement raised significant doubts among national and international actors about the country's ability to hold free, fair and credible elections due to delays in the implementation of some clauses of the peace agreement. Nicholas Haysom, the head of the United Nations mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), said that to meet the conditions to hold the elections with guarantees, the

country had to make headway in the new constitutional framework, detail the registration of voters (including a mechanism to guarantee the participation of refugees), develop an electoral security plan, make progress in constituting the Unified Armed Forces and produce a mechanism for resolving disputes about the results.¹² Later, on 18 September, the Revitalised Transitional National Legislative Assembly passed the National Election Act, creating controversy due to some unilateral clauses inserted by Kiir. The opposition condemned the vote and the SPLA-IO headed by Vice President Riek Machar boycotted it. On 3 November, the National Electoral Commission, the National Constitutional Review Commission and the Council of Political Parties were reconstituted. The latter institution was the only one that respected the quota of 35% of women in its composition, as agreed in the R-ARCSS.

The second and third quarters of the year were marked by new tensions between the main parties that had signed the R-ARCSS: the SPLM led by President Kiir and the SPLA-IO led by Vice President Machar, which threatened the unity of the transitional government. The crisis broke out in early March when Kiir dismissed Minister of Defence and Veterans Affairs Angelina Teny and Minister of the Interior Mahmoud Solomon, both appointed by the SPLA-IO. The SPLA-IO complained that this was a violation of the peace agreement and it produced significant political tensions between the parties during the year. The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission also determined that the dismissals and the withdrawal of the ministries from the SPLA-IO was a violation of the R-ARCSS. Finally, on 27 September, Kiir appointed Angelina Teny as Minister of the Interior, ending the crisis.

Meanwhile, the SPLA-IO continued to suffer major internal fragmentation that weakened it. On 7 June, President Kiir and Johnson Olony, the leader of the Shilluk Agwalek militia, a splinter group of the SPLA-IO and the Kitgwang faction,¹³ agreed to officially integrate Agwalek fighters into the South Sudanese Armed Forces. In October, two other important defectors from the SPLA-IO went on to support the government faction led by Kiir: Simon Maguek Gai, the commander of Unity State, and Michael Wal Nyak, the commander of Jonglei State, which drastically reduced the military capacity of the SPLA-IO in both states. Tensions between Machar's forces and Gai's forces led to fighting in Unity State for the rest of the year, pushing the SPLA-IO out of all its military positions except Panyijiar County, its last stronghold in Unity.

Coinciding with Pope Francis' visit to South Sudan, on 3 February President Kiir formally lifted the suspension of the peace talks in Rome that the South Sudanese government has held since 2019 under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio with the groups that did not sign the R-ARCSS, represented by the Non-Signatory South Sudan Opposition Groups coalition (NSSSOG). Suspended since late November 2022, they resumed between 21 and 23 March, though no agreement on their agenda was reached. They were suspended again and no significant progress was reported for the rest of the year.

Gender, peace and security

In March, South Sudan finalised the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (better known as the Maputo Protocol).¹⁴ The ratification, a decade after it was signed by the South Sudanese government in January 2013, mandates a commitment to gender equality and urges the country's authorities to adopt effective policies and strategies to ensure that the protocol makes a difference in people's lives. Also in March, South Sudan's Ministry of Gender, Children and Welfare approved the second national action plan on the women, peace and security agenda (2023-2027). Though the first plan (2015-2020) was approved in 2015, the resurgence of the conflict a year later slowed down its implementation. The new action plan calls on the government to fund its implementation, rather than relying on donors, and foresees its development at the state and local levels so that its activities focus more on the real situations faced by local communities.

In mid-December, members of the UN Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security visited the country and met with government officials, representatives of civil society and women's associations, UNMISS, UN Women and other UN agencies in South Sudan. The purpose of the visit was to learn about the situation of women and girls in the current political context and the implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement (R-ARCSS) related to gender.¹⁵ Although the agreement includes a 35% quota for women in all executive and transition institutions and processes, it has not been fulfilled in most of the commissions created to implement the peace agreement, the current government or Parliament. In the bodies created during 2023, the agreed quota of women's representation was only met in the Council of Political Parties (40%), but not in the

12 UN News, "South Sudan: No basis for free and fair 2024 elections, warns Haysom", 14 December 2023.

13 On 9 August 2022, General Gatwech Dual, the leader of the Kitgwang faction, a SPLA-IO splinter group, removed General Johnson Olony as his deputy, motivating the formation of a new Kitgwang faction.

14 Nyagoah Tut Pur, "South Sudan Ratifies Crucial African Women's Rights Treaty", *Human Rights Watch*, 8 June 2023.

15 UN Women Africa, "Members of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security visit South Sudan", 15 December 2023.

National Constitutional Review Commission (32%) or in the National Electoral Commission (22%). This was also not true in the election of state governors, where only one of South Sudan's 10 governors is a woman.

Sudan ¹⁶	
Negotiating actors	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: Government of 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 National crisis peace negotiations: Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF)
Third parties	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), Troika (USA, United Kingdom, Norway), Germany, AU, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, IGAD, UNITAMS National crisis peace negotiations: Trilateral mechanism (UNITAMS, AU and IGAD (Ethiopia, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda)); Quad (USA, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Egypt
Relevant agreements	Peace negotiations in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile: 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, achieving the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement in October 2020. However, several armed groups, including the SPLM-N alHilu (Two Areas) and the SLM/A-AW (Darfur), refused to sign the peace agreement, holding the talks separately. In 2022, due to the governance crisis in the country provoked by the military junta's rise to power, talks began between the junta and political and military actors to achieve the political transition, which incorporated a review of the Juba Agreement for Peace. In 2023, the negotiations broke down with the outbreak of a new armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF), giving rise to new mediation initiatives.

The negotiations promoted with the military junta and part of the Sudanese political opposition aimed at achieving the political transition and establishing a civilian government in Sudan fell apart after the outbreak of a new armed conflict in the country on 15 April that pitted the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) against the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In late 2022, after a year of negotiations sponsored by different actors in different formats,¹⁷ a framework agreement had been reached to create a transitional civilian government with elections in two years. This agreement gave rise to a second phase of negotiations that began on 9 January 2023 and was focused on five issues that had been pending: transitional justice, security sector reform, the Juba Agreement for Peace, the dismantling of the previous regime of Omar al-Bashir and the crisis in eastern Sudan. Hard-won progress was made in the pending negotiations during the first quarter of the year and tensions gradually increased between the parties, especially between the military leaders, the chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and head of

16 In 2019, the three peace and negotiating processes that had been taking place in Sudan in the previous year were reduced to one due to the end of the national dialogue between the government and the opposition following the formation of a transitional government, as well as the merger of the cases of Darfur and the "Two Areas" (South Kordofan and Blue Nile) into a single peace process. In 2023, the negotiations were focused on resolving the national armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

17 The negotiations to achieve a transitional government were promoted through an intra-Sudanese peace initiative known as the trilateral mechanism, sponsored by UNITAMS, the AU and the IGAD, as well as through informal conversations between the military junta and the Central Council of Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC-CC), in what was known as the Quad mediation bloc, which included the US, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as third parties.

the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the deputy chairman of the Council and leader of the RSF, Lieutenant General Mohammed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo.

One of the main reasons for the rise in tensions was the disagreements between the military parties in reforming the security sector, especially regarding the deadlines for integrating the RSF into the unified national army and the establishment of the command structure. In early April, rumours spread about the mobilisation of military personnel from both sides in Khartoum and Darfur. These rumours caused different national and international actors to intensify contacts with the military parties to de-escalate the tension. They included different leaders of armed movements that had signed the peace agreement, such as Gibril Ibrahim, the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and current minister of finance; Malik Agar, the leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)-Malik Agar faction and member of the Transitional Sovereignty Council; and Minni Minawi, the governor of the Darfur region and leader of the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi faction (SLA-MM), who formed a national mediation committee. On 13 April, Germany, France, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union issued a joint statement calling on Sudanese military and civilian leaders to take steps to reduce tensions and to work together to resolve issues related to reforming the security sector.¹⁸ However, despite the different initiatives, armed clashes broke out between the SAF led by al-Burhan and the RSF commanded by Dagalo on 15 April. Initially the hostilities were concentrated in the capital, Khartoum, but during the year they intensified and spread throughout almost the entire country.¹⁹

The outbreak of fighting prompted different actors to undertake different mediation efforts and initiatives to end the hostilities and resume peace negotiations. These attempts continued throughout the year, but they did not stop the war. Though the warring parties agreed to different ceasefires during the year (24 and 27-30 April; 4-11 and 22-31 May; 20 and 26-27 June, among others), most lasted a maximum of 72 hours and in no case did the violence end permanently, as violations by both parties continued. There were also different attempts to impose humanitarian truces, though they yielded few results.

The outbreak of armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) sank negotiations on the political transition and the establishment of a civilian government in Sudan

Despite the AU's initial attempts to guarantee a coordinated mediation process, different negotiating tracks were launched that conflicted at times. For example, the US and Saudi Arabia promoted “pre-negotiation talks” between the parties in the city of Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on 6 May. These talks led to the signing of the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan on 11 May. However, in early June the co-facilitators temporarily suspended the talks due to “repeated serious violations” committed by both sides and the US announced that it was imposing sanctions on four companies affiliated with the warring parties.

In the meantime, on 16 April the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched a high-level initiative to mediate between the parties made up of the presidents of Kenya, South Sudan and Djibouti, which would later also be expanded to Ethiopia. The AU and its Peace and Security Council (PSC) also positioned themselves as mediating actors. On 16 April, the PSC decided to undertake a field mission to establish contacts with interested parties. On 27 May, it approved a road map to resolve the conflict in six parts: the establishment of a coordination mechanism to harmonise mediation efforts, a cease-fire, an effective humanitarian response, the protection of civilians and civil infrastructure, the strategic role of neighbouring countries and the region and the resumption of a credible and inclusive political transition. Later, on 12 June, the IGAD Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government also adopted a road map to resolve the conflict, appointing Kenyan President William Ruto to lead it. The Sudanese Army rejected the road map, as it opposed making the Kenyan president the head of the initiative.

In mid-July, Egypt also announced its own mediation initiative, receiving leaders from Sudan’s neighbouring countries on 13 July. On 29 August, al-Burhan, who days before managed to break the RSF siege on the headquarters where he had been holed up for months, travelled to Egypt to hold talks with his counterpart. Days earlier, on 27 August, the RSF said it was willing to engage in peace talks, presenting a 10-point plan for a “lasting peace” that al-Burhan rejected.

The second round of peace talks took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 26 October to 7 November, with the IGAD, the AU, the US and Saudi Arabia acting as co-facilitators, though no progress was achieved. A face-to-face meeting in Djibouti between SAF and RSF

18. Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Situation in the Sudan and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan*, S/2023/355, 16 May 2023.

19. See the summary on Sudan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

leaders was announced at the end of the year, but it was postponed for “technical reasons”. This meeting would have been the first time that al-Burhan and Dagalo had met since the start of the war. Finally, at the end of the year, Dagalo toured the region to gather support and was received by the leaders of Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and South Africa, which al-Burhan described as “acts of hostility”. On 2 January 2024, the RSF met in Addis Abeba with the Sudanese civil coalition led by former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, head of the Coordination of Democratic Civil Forces, also known as Taqaddum, and signed the Addis Abeba Declaration, which included commitments to return millions of displaced people to their homes, create safe corridors and include civilians in peace talks. After the agreement was signed, which is intended to serve as a basis for future negotiations and achieve a political agreement, the paramilitary group announced that it was open to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to enter into talks with the SAF.²⁰

As mediation efforts failed, the conflict between the SAF and RSF intensified and the fighting involved other armed groups in regions such as South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Darfur, which witnessed the worst violence since the civil war. Though several armed groups that had signed the Juba Agreement for Peace, including those led by Minni Minawi, Gibril Ibrahim and Malik Agar, declared their opposition to the war and their neutrality when the fighting first broke out, as the months passed they took part in the hostilities. In November, following the advance of the RSF in the Darfur region, the Darfuri groups that had signed the Juba Agreement for Peace renounced neutrality and joined the SAF, expanding the conflict.

Gender, peace and security

Since the start of the armed clashes between the SAF and the RSF, different initiatives led by women emerged that called for a ceasefire, highlighted humanitarian needs and condemned sexual violence related to the conflict. They also demanded the participation of women in the ceasefire negotiations and any future political process and denounced the failure to include women in these spaces. For example, on 13 July, 75 civil society organisations, including political forces, women’s rights groups, youth networks, resistance committees, civil society groups and academics issued a Declaration of Principles of Civil Actors for Ending the War and Restoring Democracy in Sudan. In late October, UN Women partnered with the IGAD, the AU and the Women’s International Peace Centre to organise a conference with Sudanese women peacebuilders in Kampala (Uganda) that involved over 400 women from 14 Sudanese states. The conference aimed to build bridges between women in Sudan and other countries in the region and highlighted the leadership role that

Sudanese women and girls are playing in the peace movement.²¹

Meanwhile, the Sudanese Ministry of Social Affairs’ Violence Against Women Unit reported an increase in acts of gender violence allegedly perpetrated by the RSF and related combatants in Khartoum, South Darfur and Western Darfur. Human rights organisations also estimated that the number of people who needed gender violence prevention and response services in 2023 increased by more than one million as a result of the conflict, placing the figure at 4.2 million people across the country. They also reported that the growth of insecurity throughout the country and attacks on hospitals drastically reduced the ability to provide services to survivors.

Sudan – South Sudan	
Negotiating actors	Government of Sudan, Government of South Sudan, ethnic communities of the Abyei region
Third parties	IGAD, African Union Border Programme (AUBP), Egypt, Libya, USA, EU, UNISFA, UN
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 outbreak of the armed conflict in Sudan made it difficult to make progress in the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, especially linked to the resolution of the dispute over the Abyei region, though headway was made in resolving intercommunity disputes. According to the UN Secretary-General’s 2023 reports of the situation in Abyei, while the first period, from 4 October 2022 to 18 April 2023, was

20 Reuters, “Sudan’s RSF open to talks on immediate ceasefire with army”, 3 January 2024.

21 UN Women Africa, “Sudanese women advocate for peace at conference in Uganda”, 22 December 2023.

characterised by high-level contacts between Sudan and South Sudan aimed at enhancing cooperation regarding Abyei and border issues and paving the way for deliberations on its final status, the second period, from 19 April to 3 October 2023, was notable for the impasse in the Abyei political process due to the outbreak of fighting on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, which continued throughout the year.²²

These clashes intensified just days after the second round of the Sudan-South Sudan High-Level Committee talks on Abyei, held on 9 and 10 April in Khartoum. The meeting was led by the deputy chairman of the Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council and head of the RSF and by the presidential national security advisor of South Sudan and was attended by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, the UN Mission in Abyei (UNISFA), the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). During the meeting, the parties repeated their commitment to constructive collaboration and agreed that the issue of Abyei's final status would be examined in upcoming rounds of talks, which were interrupted by the violence. Previously, on 12 January 2023, the president of South Sudan and the chairman of Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council had discussed the situation in Abyei and some measures that could be taken to improve border cooperation during a bilateral meeting in Juba, including the formation of a joint security force along the border between both countries. However, rather than progressing, the 2011 Agreement on the Transitional Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area was reportedly violated during the year. The agreement provides for demilitarised and weapons-free status for Abyei. Both sides positioned troops and security personnel in the southern and northern part of Abyei.

Some progress was observed in resolving cross-border intracommunity disputes and tension between Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities, and between Miseriya and Dinka Ngok communities, all of which caused clashes to decrease considerably. After months of tension between members of the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities affecting the southern part of the Abyei area and the northern part of Warrap State (South Sudan), which began over a land dispute in February 2022, several peace initiatives were developed during the year. On 20 March, the president

Progress was made in resolving disputes and tensions between Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities, and between the Miseriya and Dinka Ngok communities in border areas of Sudan and South Sudan

of South Sudan summoned the governors of Warrap and Lakes states, the Juba-appointed chief administrator of Abyei and the traditional leaders of the Dinka Ngok and Dinka Twic communities to discuss their disputes. The latter committed to ending hostilities and agreed to deploy security forces in the disputed areas to create a buffer zone. Subsequently, due to the persisting tensions, a peace conference was held between 3 and 6 April in Wau (South Sudan), where the parties once again agreed to cease hostilities. Finally, between 7 and 9 August, reconciliation talks were held again between both communities in Wau, where a ceasefire and freedom of movement between the areas affected by tensions were agreed, among other points.

Between 20 and 23 March, a peace conference was held between the Dinka Ngok and Miseriya communities in Todach (Abyei area) that resulted in the signing of an agreement that included a cessation of hostilities, freedom of movement, the need to reactivate the joint community peace committee and continuation of the peace talks. Later, between 7 and 9 June, UNISFA, Concordis International and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) jointly organised a transhumance corridor conference between the Miseriya and Dinka Ngok communities in which representatives of both communities agreed on concrete measures to guarantee peaceful transhumance.

Gender, peace and security

In relation to progress made in implementing the women, peace and security agenda, UNISFA reported that traditional and local authorities, women's networks and civil society were encouraged to get involved in issues related to women and peace and security in the region during the year, prioritising the promotion of women's participation in conflict management structures and defending the inclusion of women in local administrations. For example, two of the eight ministerial positions in the new cabinet of the Abyei administration appointed by South Sudan were assigned to women. UNISFA also held nine meetings with 117 women from various sectors between April and August and facilitated three monthly meetings of the joint women's peace committee. Finally, 87 women joined the community protection committees established in northern Abyei to resolve intercommunity disputes during the year, representing 25% of their members.

²² See the summary on Sudan in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia (Oromia)	
Negotiating actors	Federal government, armed group Oromo Liberation Army (OLA)
Third parties	IGAD, Kenya, Norway and Tanzania
Relevant agreements	Peace agreement between the federal government and the OLF (2018)

Summary:

Attempts to accommodate the Oromo community within the Ethiopian federal state after the extensive demonstrations that began in 2014 led to the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a member of the Oromo community, and the political reforms he pushed to promote national unity and reconciliation. This resulted in a peace agreement in 2018 with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a rebel group that emerged in 1973, which facilitated the return of its members from exile.²³ However, this did not lead to greater autonomy for the region, as Oromo nationalists hoped. Abiy Ahmed centralised the government further, instead of deepening ethnic federalism. Furthermore, although the OLF became a political party, its military wing, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), rejected the agreement and started a new rebellion, leading the government to list it as a terrorist group in May 2021. Since then, violence has been on the rise. Supported by the Amhara Fano militias, the federal government launched a military operation to dismantle the OLA in April 2022. The escalating clashes during the second half of 2022 coincided with negotiations that culminated in the peace agreement in November 2022 between the federal government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region. Since then, there have been contacts between the government and the OLA to promote a peace agreement.

After the peace agreement was signed between the Ethiopian government and the political and military authorities of Tigray on 2 November 2022 and its implementation began, the federal authorities escalated the war against the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), the military wing of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had previously reached a peace agreement with Addis Abeba in 2018. Local government pressure on the region of Oromia, as well as the interest of the OLA and the federal authorities in reaching some kind of truce, led to several indirect exploratory contacts between both parties, which expressed their interest in a cessation of hostilities in February 2023. In the midst of the climate of violence, in March Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed his commitment to exploring a negotiating process with the OLA. On 25 April, peace talks began in Zanzibar (Tanzania), facilitated by Kenya (the OLA had demanded third-party mediation)²⁴ on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Norway.²⁵ Although this first round ended without progress in early May, both parties were committed to seeking a solution to the conflict.²⁶ Since then, clashes have persisted with serious consequences for the civilian population.

However, a second negotiating round that began in Tanzania in late October under the mediation of the IGAD was made public in November.²⁷ Anonymous diplomatic sources were optimistic about progress in the negotiating process.

Gender, peace and security

In partnership with the Ministry of Justice through the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJ-WGE) and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the UN Women office in Ethiopia organised a high-level national consultation with women from diverse backgrounds to discuss policy options on transitional justice to ensure women's participation in the development of an inclusive and gender-sensitive transitional justice policy for Ethiopia. The event was held from 9 to 10 June 2023, in Bishoftu, Oromia and was attended by 60 female participants, including members of female-led civil society organisations, women's rights organisations, women's advocacy groups and feminist groups, women influencers, university professors, human rights defenders, media professionals, service providers for survivors of violence, community representatives and members of UN agencies.

Ethiopia (Tigray)	
Negotiating actors	Federal Government, political-military authorities of the Ethiopian region of Tigray (Tigray People's Liberation Front)
Third parties	AU, USA, IGAD
Relevant agreements	Agreement for a Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (Pretoria, 2022), Executive Declaration on the Modalities of Implementation of the Agreement for a Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities (Nairobi, 2022)

Summary:

The region of Tigray (a state in northern Ethiopia, bordering Ethiopia and with a Tigray -majority population) has been the scene of an armed conflict and attempts at dialogue initiatives since 2020. The inauguration of Abiy Ahmed as the new prime minister of Ethiopia in early 2018 brought about important and positive changes internally and regionally in Ethiopia. However, since his rise to power, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) party and the leadership of the Tigray community, once the solid core of the ruling coalition (EPRDF), have seen their government decision-making powers evaporate. Furthermore, the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia between 1998 and 2000 had its origin in border disputes between the two countries. As a border state where decisions related to the agreement

23 Al-Jazeera, "Ethiopia signs deal with Oromo rebels to end hostilities", *Al-Jazeera*, 7 August 2018.

24 OLA Command, "Regarding Peace Negotiations", OLF-OLA Press Release, 23 April 2023.

25 Kombe, Charles, "Peace Talks Between Ethiopian Government, OLA Continue in Tanzania", *VOA*, 27 April 2023.

26 Paravicini, Giulia, "First round of peace talks between Ethiopia and Oromo rebels ends without deal", *Reuters*, 3 May 2023.

27 Africanews, "Second round of talks between Ethiopian government and Oromo rebels", *Africanews*, 9 November 2023.

between Eritrea and Ethiopia must be implemented, such as the border demarcation and status of the town of Badme, Tigray was marginalised from the peace process between both governments. Added to this was the gradual marginalisation of the TPLF from central power, contributing to growing tension that culminated in the outbreak of an armed conflict between the Ethiopian security forces and the security forces of the Tigray region. The crisis took on regional dimensions due to the involvement of Eritrea, as well as militias and security forces from the neighbouring Ethiopian region of Amhara. Since the beginning of the armed conflict in November 2020, the international community, and especially the AU, have tried to promote peace negotiations between the parties, which the Federal Government of Ethiopia rejected. Between March and August 2022, a humanitarian truce was in force, after which there was a new escalation of violence. In late October 2022, peace negotiations were formalised in Pretoria (South Africa) under the auspices of the AU, which led to the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement in November. The peace agreement has been implemented since then, though not without difficulties.

Despite the beginning of the implementation of the peace agreement reached on 2 November 2022 between the Ethiopian government and the political and military authorities of the Tigray region, atrocities against the civilian population continued, including sexual violence against women and girls committed by Eritrean forces and by the Amhara Fano paramilitary militias, according to the UN. The federal government of Ethiopia took a transitional justice approach towards a conflict that has caused around 110,000 deaths since 2020, according to the UCDP, making it one of the most serious conflicts today. After the agreement was signed, there were some initial violations of the ceasefire in late 2022 by the Ethiopian and Eritrean security forces and the militias of the Amhara community against the TPLF and against the civilian population, revealing the difficulties in implementing this agreement and the fragility of the situation.

Despite the climate of violence and the serious humanitarian situation, the political and military leaders of Tigray agreed to the effective disarmament of its combatants and began to do so, though their demobilisation did not start to become effective until July 2023. At the end of 2022, they dissolved the regional government that emerged from the 2020 elections (not recognised by the federal government and which led to war) and the World Food Programme (WFP) began to distribute humanitarian aid. On 12 November 2022, the parties signed the Executive Declaration on the Modalities for the Implementation of the Agreement in Nairobi, which provided for the delivery of heavy weapons and the demobilisation of combatants, the reestablishment of public services in

Progress was made in implementing the peace agreement between the federal government of Ethiopia and the political and military authorities of Tigray, though Eritrean forces and the Fano militias continued to commit atrocities against the civilian population

Tigray, the reactivation of humanitarian aid and the withdrawal of all armed groups and foreign forces, in reference to Eritrea, which fought alongside the federal Ethiopian Army. By late December 2022, the AU observation mission (AU-MVCM) had been agreed upon and launched. Eritrea gradually withdrew from most cities in Tigray and by February 2023 its forces had practically abandoned the region and only some minor units remained in strategic positions in border areas, according to TPLF lead negotiator Getachew Reda. This withdrawal occurred as the political and military authorities of Tigray were handing over heavy weapons in the presence of the AU mission. Between December 2022 and January 2023, humanitarian access to the region improved significantly, according to United Nations sources. Communications and commercial flights were reestablished. On 3 February, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed met with TPLF leaders for the first time since 2020. The TPLF established a committee to form a transitional government and in early March Tigray leaders agreed at a conference on the composition of this transitional government, called the Interim Regional Administration (IRA), though it was boycotted by three Tigray opposition parties that accused the TPLF of monopolising power. On 17 March, the TPLF chose former minister Getachew Reda to preside over the IRA. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ratified his appointment. Days later, the federal Parliament removed the TPLF from the list of terrorist groups and the federal government dropped the charges against its political and military leaders, an essential requirement for forming the IRA. Getachew Reda appointed the members of the IRA on 5 April.

In late July 2023, the chief commander of Tigray, Tadesse Worede, announced the demobilisation of 50,000 TPLF militiamen and urged the federal government to guarantee the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces, though this had not yet been completed effectively by the end of the year. In September, acting President Getachew Reda said that the federal government had agreed to dismantle the illegal Amhara administration in the disputed areas of Western and Southern Tigray despite ongoing unrest in the Amhara region, partly motivated by fear that the government would return the disputed territories to Tigray, which are currently under partial control of the Amhara regional authorities. In August, the federal defence minister had announced government plans to dismantle the illegal Amhara administration in these areas. Disputed between the Tigray and Amhara regions, these areas suffered from ethnic cleansing committed by the Fano militias during the 2020-2022 war, which have been designated crimes against humanity. A year after the cessation of hostilities agreement was signed, the status of the two regions and the Tigrayan

population displaced from them remained in limbo. In June, Human Rights Watch reported persistent serious human rights violations and acts of ethnic cleansing by the Fano militias. Finally, the AU-MVCM mission was extended until December 2023.

Other decisions and events revealed the fragile development of the process. In March, the WFP and the US suspended the delivery of humanitarian aid to Tigray after discovering a strategy to divert humanitarian aid, a decision that was extended to the rest of Ethiopia in early June, affecting 20 million people, one sixth of the country. In August, the WFP resumed the delivery of humanitarian aid. Meanwhile, the AU International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, which had a UN mandate, published a report in September warning that Eritrean troops and the Fano militias continued to commit serious atrocities in Tigray. Specifically, the report stated that despite the ceasefire between the government and the TPLF, Eritrean troops and the Amhara militia remained in the Tigray region and continued to commit atrocities against civilians, including rape and sexual violence against women and girls. Since its initial visit in 2022, the Commission has not been granted access to Ethiopia. Following this report and the denial of access to the Commission, the UN Human Rights Council suspended the Commission's mandate in October, meaning that there is no longer any independent mechanism investigating atrocities in Ethiopia.

Gender, peace and security

Although the 2022 peace agreement included issues relating to gender-based violence committed over the course of the conflict and urged the parties to condemn any acts of sexual violence and gender-based violence, atrocities and acts of sexual violence continued to be committed by Eritrean forces and Fano militias, as detailed by the AU International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, whose mandate was suspended by the Human Rights Council.

In partnership with the Ministry of Justice through the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts (TJ-WGE) and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the UN Women office in Ethiopia organised a high-level national consultation with women from diverse backgrounds to discuss policy options on transitional justice to ensure women's participation in the development of an inclusive and gender-sensitive transitional justice policy for Ethiopia. The event was held from 9 to 10 June 2023, in Bishoftu, Oromia and was attended by 60 female participants, including members of women-led civil society organisations, women's rights organisations, women's advocacy groups and feminist groups, women influencers, university professors, human rights

defenders, media professionals, service providers for survivors of violence, community representatives and members of UN agencies.

Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan ²⁸	
Negotiating actors	Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan
Third parties	AU, WB, UAE, EU and USA
Relevant agreements	Anglo-Egyptian Treaty (1929) and its amended version, the Agreement between the Republic of Sudan and the United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria) for the utilisation of the Nile waters (Cairo, 8 November 1959); Nile Basin Initiative that opens the Cooperative Framework Agreement process (1999, signed by seven countries and ratified by four of them, as of December 2023); Cooperative Framework Agreement (Entebbe, 14 May 2010); Khartoum Declaration (also called the Nile Agreement; Khartoum, 23 March 2015)

Summary:

The Nile, the longest river in Africa and the second longest in the world, has been at the centre of disputes for decades. At the heart of the conflict are Egypt and Ethiopia, the two main regional actors. The construction since 2011 of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by Ethiopia on the Blue Nile, a tributary of the Nile in Ethiopian soil, has exacerbated tensions between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Egypt depends on the Nile for virtually its entire water supply, so its control is strategic. Its main tributary, the Blue Nile, runs from Lake Tana in Ethiopia and joins the White Nile in Sudan, where it provides around 85% of the water of the main Nile. Thirty-two per cent of Ethiopia's territory is located in the Nile basin, where about 40% of Ethiopia's population resides. The Nile runs throughout Sudan from south to north and provides around 77% of the country's fresh water. The agreements of the colonial period, which favoured Egypt and Sudan, ignored the needs of the rest of the coastal countries, including Ethiopia. There have been constant attempts to build a multilateral management framework and in 1999 the 11 countries of the basin created the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), whose objective was to establish a multilateral treaty. Egypt and Sudan participated in the process, but they rejected the agreement. In the last decade, different initiatives have been promoted, such as in 2015, when the three countries signed the GERD Declaration of Principles, though it has yielded no results to date. In 2019, the World Bank promoted meetings with US observers and between 2020 and 2021 it facilitated EU-supported tripartite talks, which stalled. The reservoir then began to get filled, precipitating the escalation of militarised tension. Cairo announced that the GERD posed a threat to its security and warned that a conflict could break out if the UN did not intervene to prevent it. The UAE facilitated peace talks in Abu Dhabi in August 2022, though they were not met with success.

28 See "The Nile basin: cooperation or conflict?" in chapter 5 (Risk scenarios) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2021! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2021.

During the year, **Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan agreed to resume talks to reach an agreement on the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)**. However, no progress was made in the different rounds of negotiations. In recent years, initiatives have proliferated to ease tension between the three countries, but the tripartite talks facilitated by the AU remained deadlocked since 2021 and the Abu Dhabi initiative of 2022 also failed. The tension escalated again in 2022 when Ethiopia announced that it had unilaterally completed the third phase of filling the reservoir and started hydropower production through the dam's second turbine, which provoked reactions from Sudan and Egypt. The latter threatened Ethiopia that it would take all available action to stop this process and protested Ethiopia's decision before the UN Security Council in February and July 2023, holding Ethiopia responsible for any impact that the situation could have in Egypt. However, after months of impasse, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi met on 13 July for the first time since the 2019 Sochi summit. Their meeting came during the Summit of Neighbouring States of Sudan held in Cairo on 12-13 July, aimed at helping to promote peace in relation to the instability affecting Sudan. They issued a joint statement agreeing to restart talks on the GERD to reach a final agreement on filling and managing the dam in four months.²⁹ This agreement came after Ethiopia promised to ensure that Egypt and Sudan would receive sufficient water flow during the fourth annual filling, which could last until September. However, in the four negotiating rounds held since then (27-28 August in Cairo; 23-24 September in Addis Ababa; 23-24 October in Cairo; 17-19 December in Addis Ababa), the parties failed without making progress in the talks. In September, two weeks after the first round, the Ethiopian prime minister announced that he had carried out the fourth and final filling of the reservoir, which Egypt condemned and described as unilateral and illegal.

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	UN, IGAD, Türkiye, 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), Electoral Agreement on Somalia (27 May 2021)

Summary:

The armed conflict and the absence of effective central authority in the country have their origins in 1988, when a

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

There were no contacts between the federal government and the armed group al-Shabaab as the military offensive continued against al-Shabaab and the serious drought and famine continued to have consequences for many parts of the country. The federal government continued to insist on its policy of rapprochement with the member states of the federation and several meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC) were held during the year, a body that brings together the federal government and the member states. Some progress was also made in power sharing within the federation, alongside the strengthening of military operations against al-Shabaab. In January, however, Puntland decided to suspend relations with Mogadishu, announcing that it would operate as an autonomous administration until the interim Constitution was finalised and would only collaborate with Mogadishu on humanitarian issues. At the same time, serious tensions and clashes broke out in South West state in December over the extension of the term of office of regional President Lafta-Gareen. The president of the lower house of the federal Parliament, Adan Madobe, organised a peace conference between the regional president and opposition leaders in Baidoa in January. It was joined by Somali President Hassan Sheikh

²⁹ Joint Statement on Ethiopia – Egypt Relation, “Ethiopia, Egypt agree to finalize GERD filling, rules of operations agreement in four months”, *Addis Standard*, 13 July 2023.

Mohamud and ended on a high note in February with the opposition accepting a one-year extension of the term of regional President Lafta-Gareen and the promise to hold elections in the region in January 2024. In subsequent meetings of the NCC, all member states agreed to extend their respective presidential terms by one year and the upper and lower houses of the federal Parliament pledged to study a constitutional amendment to extend the mandate of the MPs and the president for one year, which the opposition opposed.

Gender, peace and security

The situation in Somalia remained critical and there were setbacks in terms of gender violence and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as explained by UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous at the UN Security Council meeting held in February, which revealed a devastating situation. The rise in violence in the country and the current drought, which resulted in forced displacement and food insecurity for the population, exposed the country to a greater risk of famine and exacerbated gender violence. The last famine in Somalia, in 2011, killed one quarter of a million people.

Bahous indicated that the 30% quota for women in elections and government was not met in Somalia, women's representation had decreased, sexual violence had increased and Parliament had not yet passed the sex crimes bill adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers five years before. Instead, opponents of the law pushed for alternative legislation that would legalise child marriage, bypass the age of consent, reduce the types of admissible evidence and eliminate survivors' rights. Bahous said that the Somali women invited to report to the Council of Ministers had warned of this situation, but no appropriate measures were taken. In contrast, rates of sexual violence had increased alarmingly since 2020. They doubled compared to 2019 and continued to rise, as the worst drought in many decades had a devastating impact on all Somalis, with women and girls suffering a disproportionate impact. Impunity remained widespread and armed groups, especially al-Shabaab, continued to kidnap women and girls, force families to give them their daughters to marry and occupy hospitals and maternity wards, while also silencing and threatening individuals that denounced the situation locally. This was the case of the killings of young MP Amina Mohamed Abdi and of Hibaq Abukar, the advisor on women's affairs to the prime minister's office, among other women activists and women who work in local and national politics and civil society.

Somalia-Somaliland

Negotiating actors Federal government of Somalia, Republic of Somaliland

Third parties Türkiye, Norway

Relevant agreements

Summary:

The territory of the current self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland received its name when the British Empire took control of the Egyptian administration in 1884. After signing successive treaties with the ruling Somali sultans in the region, it established a protectorate called British Somaliland. In 1960, when the protectorate became independent from Britain, it was called the State of Somaliland. Four days later, on 1 July 1960, Somaliland joined Italian Somalia, forming the State of Somalia. In the mid-1980s, resistance movements supported by Ethiopia emerged throughout the country. Notable among these was the Somali National Movement (SNM), which rose up in Somaliland, leading to the Somaliland War of Independence, which toppled the Siad Barre regime and started the Somali Civil War in 1991, which continues to this day. On 18 May 1991, the northern clans proclaimed the independence of the Republic of Somaliland, comprising the administrative regions of Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag and Sool. Somaliland is not internationally recognised, but it has its own Constitution (2001), currency and government, as well as greater political stability than Somalia, helped by the influence of the dominant Isaaq clan (80% of the population). The multiparty elections of 2005 were internationally observed and represented a push for international recognition as a sovereign state, though it remains limited. Somaliland's independence has not been officially recognised by any UN member state or international organisation, ceding leadership to the AU in the decision. The AU has been considering Somaliland's application for membership in the bloc and its approach as an "exceptional case", although the AU itself has expressed fear that formal recognition of Somaliland would encourage other secessionist movements in Africa. Over 15 peace processes have been held in Somalia, including the Somaliland dispute. At the 2012 London International Conference, actors from the international community proposed to hold negotiations to resolve the dispute between Somalia and Somaliland. Since then, six rounds of negotiations have been held (in London, Dubai, Ankara, Djibouti and twice in Istanbul). The seventh (Istanbul III) failed in January 2015 and the process was interrupted. Türkiye has been encouraging attempts at rapprochement between the sides since then.

After Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was inaugurated in May 2022, he said he was willing to help the different federated states to reconcile and, above all, to reopen a political negotiating process that would lead to reconciliation between Somalia and the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland and its incorporation into the federation. After more than three decades of deadlock and many failed initiatives to bring the parties closer together, the last process had been interrupted in 2015. **In late 2022, international contacts and initiatives were relaunched, culminating in a meeting between both presidents in Djibouti in December 2023.**

In December 2022, a delegation from Türkiye and Norway had met with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and later with Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi to resume talks between Somalia and Somaliland and promote reconciliation between both administrations. President Mohamud told the delegation that he was willing to launch the process. Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi also told the Turkish-Norwegian delegation that he was also willing to launch the process, but added that some conditions had to be met first, primarily the fulfilment of previous agreements and the existence of an international media team. Muse Bihi noted the need to establish an independent secretariat to coordinate mediation efforts. He added that the teams representing each government should clearly set the items on the agenda in the presence of this independent secretariat. The delegation that met with President Mohamud consisted of Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Yilmaz, Norwegian Embassy Officer Haakon Svane, Turkish Special Representative Aykut Kumbarolu and Norwegian Special Representative Heidi Johansen.

Later, on 1 April 2023, the president of Somalia appointed the former president of Galmudug state and federal minister of the interior, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, to be the special envoy for Somaliland to “guarantee the unity and solidarity of the Somali people”. On 18 April, Somaliland's President Muse Bihi reciprocated by appointing former Somaliland Minister Edna Adan Ismail as envoy for the talks between Somaliland and Somalia. From June to October, the federal government's special envoy for dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, held a series of consultative meetings with different political and social actors. The different initiatives and exploratory contacts culminated in a meeting between the presidents of Somalia and Somaliland on 28 and 29 December in Djibouti. The Somaliland delegation consisted of President Bihi and Minister of Economic Development Saad Ali Shire, Minister of Planning Ahmed Mohamed Diriye, Minister of the Interior Mohamed Kahin Ahmed and Minister of Education Ahmed Adan Buxane, as well as Somaliland's special envoy for the peace talks, Edna Adan. The Somali delegation was composed of President Mohamud and Minister of the Interior Ahmed Moalim Fiqi, Minister of Commerce Jabril Abdirashid and the special envoy for the negotiations with Somaliland, Abdikarim Hussein Guled. President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti was also present, representing the host country. He has made many attempts to use his good offices and facilitate dialogue between the parties in the last two decades. The parties discussed a wide variety of issues

at the meeting, including debt relief, national project management, resource allocation, crises and recent tensions in the Red Sea, and they agreed to resume peace talks between both administrations.

However, this historic meeting was overshadowed by Ethiopia and Somaliland's announcement on 1 January that they were signing a memorandum of understanding,³⁰ which triggered a serious diplomatic crisis between both administrations and Somalia. This agreement would give landlocked Ethiopia the opportunity to obtain a

The agreement between Somaliland and Ethiopia on the recognition of Somaliland's independence in exchange for sea access to Ethiopia set off a serious diplomatic crisis and frustrated the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland

permanent naval base and commercial maritime service in the Gulf of Aden by leasing a 20-kilometre stretch of coastline for a period of 50 years, as detailed by the Ethiopian and Somaliland governments. In exchange, according to Somaliland's President Muse Bihi Abdi, Ethiopia would internationally recognise the region as an independent country. Addis Abeba clarified that it still had to evaluate the request and promised “an in-depth evaluation to adopt a position regarding Somaliland's efforts to win official recognition”.³¹ The deal revolves around the port of Berbera, which was recently expanded by UAE-based port logistics company DP World. Ethiopia has historically sought to diversify its access to the sea, as 95% of its trade

is conducted through Djibouti. The deal also included leasing land in Somaliland to build a naval base. In exchange, Somaliland would receive the equivalent value of shares in Ethiopian Airlines. In a statement made public on X (formerly Twitter), the Ethiopian Prime Minister's Office welcomed the agreement but made no mention of recognition of Somaliland's independence, only a commitment to advance mutual interests on the basis of reciprocity. This announcement triggered a new diplomatic crisis between Somalia, Somaliland and Ethiopia that took on regional dimensions due to the regional alliances of Ethiopia and Somalia.

Somalia declared the agreement void and even threatened Ethiopia with war if necessary to preserve its national sovereignty, as Somalia continues to view Somaliland as part of Somalia, despite its de facto independence in 1991, which lacks international recognition. Demonstrations were called in Somalia and in Somaliland itself the agreement was met with protests and the resignation of the defence minister. The US, EU, AU, IGAD and Arab League called for dialogue and a reduction in tensions. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) urgently convened an extraordinary meeting on 18 January to address diplomatic tensions, but Ethiopia announced that it would not be able to attend due to overlap with another summit. The meeting convened by Djibouti, which holds

30 Ali, Faisal, “Ethiopia and Somaliland reach agreement over access to ports”, *The Guardian*, 1 January 2024.

31 Ehl, David, “Polémico acuerdo: salida al mar a cambio de reconocimiento”, *DW*, 4 January 2024.

the rotating presidency of the IGAD, coincided with the 19th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). According to various analysts,³² even though a confrontation between both countries is unlikely due to Ethiopia's greater military power, the agreement could seriously damage relations between them. It could also have consequences in the war against the Somali Islamist group al-Shabaab, since Somalia's criticism of Ethiopia could lead to pressure on the Ethiopian troops in the AU mission in the country (ATMIS) and end with their withdrawal. Ethiopia is one of the main troop-contributing countries to the AU mission in Somalia.

Gender, peace and security

The delegation that met with President Mohamud in December 2022 consisted of Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Yilmaz, Norwegian Embassy Officer Haakon Svane, Turkish Special Representative Aykut Kumbarolu and Norwegian Special Representative Heidi Johansen. The appointment of Somaliland's former Minister of Health and Foreign Affairs Edna Adan as Somaliland's envoy to the process may boost it significantly. Edna Adan was the wife of Prime Minister Mohamed Ibrahim Egal during the Siad Barre regime. Egal was later the president of Somaliland between 1993 and 2002. Edna Adan is considered a symbol in the fight for women's rights in Somalia and she has been the president of the UNPO, the organisation of stateless nations of the world, since 2022. Edna Adan has received many awards, including the Templeton Prize in June 2023 for her work in peacebuilding and her fight against female genital mutilation in the Horn of Africa out of the hospital that bears her name in Hargeysa, the capital of Somaliland. This prize highlighted the traditional role of Somali women's organisations in promoting peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives in attempts to overcome the divisions in the conflict in Somalia.

Maghreb – North Africa

Libya	
Negotiating actors	Government of National Unity (GNU), Government of National Stability (GNS), Presidential Council, High State Council (HSC), House of Representatives (HoR), LNA/ALAF
Third parties	UN; Quartet (UN, Arab League, AU, EU), Germany, France, Italy, UK, USA, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Türkiye, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia (Berlin Process)
Relevant agreements	Libyan Political Agreement or Skhirat Agreement (2015), Ceasefire agreement (2020)

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 and the intervention and projection of the interests of different foreign actors. 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. As part of the Berlin Process (which began in 2019 with the participation of a dozen countries, in addition to the UN, the Arab League, the EU and the AU), intra Libyan negotiations were launched around three components in 2020: security issues (the responsibility of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission), political affairs (managed by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, or LPDF) and economic aspects. An International Monitoring Committee was also activated. In late 2020, a permanent ceasefire agreement was made official, and a roadmap was announced that led to the formation of a unity government and provided for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in December 2021. The elections were not held in a context of divisions and power struggles that led to the reformation of two parallel governments, opening a new stage of uncertainty in the country.

Negotiations involving different local and international actors continued during 2023, but no definitive political agreement was achieved for holding elections in the country, which were initially scheduled for December 2021. Therefore, the impasse persisted and in early 2022 it had led to the configuration of two rival governments, one based in Tripoli (the Government of National Unity (GNU), recognised by the UN and headed by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibeh) and another established in eastern Libya (the Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Fathi Bashagha (until March) and then by Osama Hamad) and aligned with the House of Representatives (Tobruk) and General Khalifa Haftar's LNA (or ALAF) armed group. The prolonged political deadlock continued to contribute to economic and security instability in Libya, though the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and low-intensity levels of violence generally remained in force throughout the year. The fragility of the situation in the North African country was also exposed in 2023 by the disastrous consequences of Storm Daniel, which in September led to the destruction of two dams and the death and disappearance of thousands of people in Derna (east).

32 Weldemariam, Alemayehu, "Ethiopia's deal with Somaliland upends regional dynamics, 'risking strife across the Horn of Africa'", *The Conversation*, 13 January 2024.

At the beginning of the year, the UN special representative in Libya and head of the mission in the country (UNSMIL), Abdoulaye Bathily, focused his efforts on supporting the design of a new road map so that elections could be held in late 2023. In February, he announced his intention to establish a high-level panel for the elections, made up of politicians, tribal leaders, security actors and representatives of civil society, youth and women. This panel would be in charge of facilitating the adoption of the legal framework and the date for the vote. Meanwhile, the legislative bodies of the two rival governments were involved in talks promoted by the UN in 2022 to try to outline the constitutional framework for the elections. Thus, reforms to the 2011 Constitutional Declaration were approved to define the roles of the president, prime minister and Parliament, the subject of some criticism from Bathily and other observers for not resolving some controversial issues, and a road map of its own was announced for the elections. In early March, the two legislative bodies, the House of Representatives and the High Council of State (established as an advisory body, but which performs legislative functions of the GNU) announced the formation of a 6+6 Joint Committee to draft the electoral laws. Bathily acknowledged that this body was primarily responsible for defining the rules for the elections and that the panel he had proposed could play an auxiliary role.

In June, after several days of meetings in Morocco, the 6+6 Committee, made up of six representatives from each legislative body, announced that it had reached an agreement on the electoral laws. However, several political factions raised objections and demanded a revision of the text. The 6+6 Commission presented a revised version, which was approved by the House of Representatives in October, but not by the High Council of State, which had approved the previous version and rejected the changes that allowed members of the military to run for office. UNSMIL conducted a “technical review” of the electoral laws and identified a number of provisions that were amended, but several controversial issues of a more political nature remained unresolved. Until the end of the year, dissent persisted regarding the mandatory nature of a second round in the presidential election despite the fact that one of the candidates got more than 50% of the votes, the parliamentary elections would be held depending on the success of the presidential election, there were guarantees of a more inclusive process with other Libyan actors (including women) and an interim unity government in charge of organising the elections would be formed. This last point remained the most controversial. The UN had initially been reluctant to the idea of a new unity government, believing that it could discourage the parties from fulfilling their electoral commitments and reinforce the status quo. Libyan

The disagreements between some of the dominant political actors in Libya prevented the presidential and parliamentary elections from being held for another year

groups and Western governments were also in favour of holding the vote first and forming a new government later. However, in August, in what analysts described as a change of position, Bathily defended the approach of the 6+6 Committee before the UN Security Council and argued that a unified government, agreed upon by the main actors, was essential to hold elections in the country. The United States, which had also expressed scepticism about the configuration of a new government in Libya, was also willing to support a technocratic executive with the sole task of organising the elections. Some analysts then said that although it was not an ideal option, it was the most realistic way to reunify the country and argued that the UN was not in a position to impose a different solution.

In November, Bathily formally invited representatives of five institutions (the Presidential Council, the House of Representatives, the High Council of State, the Government of National Unity and the LNA) to try to reactivate the dialogue and reach a consensus on the political process. The initiative was supported by various international actors, including the governments of Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, which issued a joint statement appealing to the parties to take advantage of the opportunity to build long-term stability for Libya. The UN special envoy asked each of these Libyan actors to designate three representatives to participate in a preparatory meeting to define the terms and agenda of the main meeting. The various actors did not reject the invitation, but they did raise some conditions. For example, Khalifa Haftar demanded the inclusion of the designated government in the east of the country or, alternatively, the exclusion of both governments. The House of Representatives also complained that the Government of National Stability (GNS), not officially recognised by the UN or by any government, was not invited to this meeting and rejected the participation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Meanwhile, Dbeibah, the GNU prime minister, agreed to discuss issues related to electoral laws, but declined any discussion regarding a new government. Given this scenario, at the end of the year the UN special representative warned that the main actors needed to make a political commitment to avoid a new drift of violence in the country. Bathily also said that in his meetings with other actors in Libyan society to try to ensure a more inclusive process, he had noted the clamour for elections as soon as possible and extreme fatigue and disappointment with some political actors’ delaying tactics. Aware of the importance of regional and international support to promote the political process in Libya, the UN special representative made trips and maintained contacts with various actors throughout 2023, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Qatar, Türkiye, the UAE, China, Russia and the EU.

The security work of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission continued throughout the year, which held meetings in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. This mechanism, which Bathily described as a “key UNSMIL ally committed to Libyan unity”, examined the implementation and provisions of the ceasefire agreement, such as the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from the country, which was compromised by the political impasse and the deterioration of the situation in the Sahel and the Sudan. Nevertheless, some security-related initiatives were reported in 2023, such as the joint work of Libyan and international ceasefire monitors in Sirte; the meetings called to address the security challenges of future elections; preliminary talks on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration issues; and the establishment of coordination mechanisms between Libya, Sudan and Niger to facilitate the complete withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries. The mercenary withdrawal mechanisms were officially launched in March alongside a meeting of the Security Working Group of the Berlin Process International Follow-up Committee on Libya. This committee remained the main framework for the involvement of international actors in the Libyan negotiating process, with different working groups: the security group, co-led by France, Italy, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the AU; the political group, co-led by the UN, Algeria, Germany and the Arab League; the IHL and human rights group, co-led by the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UN; and the economic group, co-led by Egypt, the US, the EU and the UN.

In August, an economic agreement was announced for the reunification of the Central Bank and the activation of technical committees to implement the process. There were also calls for rival governments to commit to a unified and transparent response after the tragedy caused by Storm Daniel amidst the launch of parallel initiatives and struggles for control of reconstruction funds. During 2023, initiatives were also reported to foster a reconciliation process in the country, promoted by the Libyan Presidential Council with the support of the African Union. In July, a meeting of the preparatory committee was held in Brazzaville (Congo).

Gender, peace and security

One of the main topics during the year was women’s participation in the political and electoral process. In consultations with the UN special representative, various Libyan groups, including women, aspired to a more inclusive process and were frustrated by the persistent deadlock. In this context, the high-level panel for elections organised a regional conference in Tripoli in May on strengthening women’s participation in elections, attended by representatives from 12 Arab countries. Speakers at the conference stressed the need to guarantee the inclusion of women in all phases of

the elections. Preliminary results were also released from a platform called eMonitorplus that monitors violence against women in electoral contexts. **Women’s groups from the different regions of Libya maintained contacts with political actors and members of the 6+6 committee to express their hope that electoral rules would guarantee significant representation of women in the future National Assembly.** Despite these initiatives, the electoral laws approved in the second half of the year established a quota of only six seats for women in the Senate out of a total of 90 (6.6%), a percentage very far from the 20% defined in the constitutional reform.

Also in 2023, UNSMIL and different UN agencies continued to support training and capacity-building initiatives on electoral issues with a gender perspective (50 women from all regions of Libya, in September); leadership, decision-making and communication skills (a one-year programme involving 30 young Libyan women); governance; and responses to sexual violence. Restrictive and discriminatory regulations for women were also denounced, such as the one in April that approved procedures against women who travel without male companions in the western part of the country.

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, Group of Friends of Western Sahara (France, USA, Spain, United Kingdom and Russia)
Relevant agreements	Ceasefire agreement (1991)

Summary:

The attempts to mediate and find a negotiated solution to the Western Sahara conflict led to a cease-fire agreement in 1991. Since then, and despite the existence of a formal negotiations framework under the auspices of the UN, the Western Sahara peace process has failed. The successive proposals and the many rounds of negotiations has not lead to an agreement between the parties, all of which maintain their red lines: Morocco insists on its territorial claims and is only willing to accept a status of autonomy, whereas the POLISARIO Front claims there is a need to hold a referendum that includes the option of independence. Negotiations on Western Sahara –recognised as a territory which is yet to be decolonised- have been determined by the large asymmetry between the actors in dispute, the inability of the UN to set up a consultation on the future of this territory, and regional rivalry between Morocco and Algeria –a key support for the POLISARIO front– and by the support given to Rabat by some key international actors, such as the USA or France. This, in real terms, has meant a prevalence of the Moroccan thesis when approaching the conflict. In late 2020, following incidents with Morocco in the area of Guerguerat, the POLISARIO Front terminated the ceasefire agreement.

Throughout 2023, **the search for a political solution to the Western Sahara issue continued to revolve mainly**

around the diplomatic activity of the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy, Staffan de Mistura, though his efforts failed to reactivate the negotiations. De Mistura's attempts to encourage the resumption of dialogue took place in a context in which low-intensity hostilities persisted between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front after the 1991 ceasefire was broken, although with lower levels of violence compared to 2022, and the regional tension between Morocco and Algeria.

In line with the strategy observed the previous year, the UN special envoy held a series of meetings and contacts with various actors. Between 27 and 30 March, he summoned representatives from Morocco, the POLISARIO Front, Algeria, Mauritania and the countries that make up the Group of Friends of Western Sahara (the US, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Russia) to a series of informal meetings at the United Nations headquarters in New York. During these meetings, the UN representative insisted on the approach, explicit in UNSC Resolution 2654 of October 2022, that calls on all parties involved to expand on their previous positions to facilitate a solution. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss lessons learned from the political process, examine each other's positions in depth and explore mutually acceptable formulas. De Mistura also made a series of visits to the region in which he met with authorities and diplomatic representatives of various countries, like the foreign minister of Morocco in Rabat, the foreign minister of Algeria in Algiers and the president of Mauritania in Nouakchott in September. That same month, he met with the top leader of the POLISARIO Front, Brahim Ghali, in New York. Throughout the year, the UN special envoy also addressed the issue of Western Sahara in meetings with senior officials from Belgium, the UAE, the US, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and EU diplomats.

In one of the most significant events of 2023, **the UN special envoy visited the Moroccan-controlled territory of Western Sahara for the first time.** Two years after his appointment to the position, De Mistura travelled to Laayoune and Dakhla in early September and met with various actors. Until that date, the diplomat had refused to accept the conditions of access imposed by Morocco, which did not allow him to meet with certain groups in society, including women's organisations. During his visit, De Mistura held meetings with Moroccan officials and locally elected representatives in favour of Rabat's autonomy policies and proposals. He also met with civil society organisations, journalists and Sahrawi activists such as Aminetou Haidar, Hamd Hammad, Ali Salem Tamek and El Mami Amar Salem, who complained that the Sahrawi population does not enjoy the same rights

as the Moroccan population and warned of human rights violations, the situation of political prisoners and arrests of people critical of Morocco. They also requested independent mechanisms to monitor respect for human rights and access for journalists and observers.³³ In Dakhla, De Mistura participated in an activity organised by the Moroccan authorities that was also attended by consular delegates from various countries that have recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and have opened diplomatic delegations in the territory. The UN stressed that this meeting should not be interpreted as a precedent or as a position taken by the organisation on the consular delegations established in Dakhla and Laayoune.

The different actors' positions remained mostly unchanged. Morocco insisted that the autonomy proposal it presented almost two decades ago, in 2007, is the only viable result of the political process. Rabat assumes that the specific characteristics of the autonomy proposal would be defined as part of the negotiations, recognises that other actors would like to propose other starting points for the negotiations and argues that the best way to reactivate the talks is with a round table format, such as the round table talks held with the previous UN special envoy, Horst Kohler. Meanwhile, the POLISARIO Front repeated that the self-determination of the Sahrawi people must be the basis for any discussion. In his meeting with De Mistura in New York, Ghali stressed the need for a process of decolonisation of the territory and gave the special envoy a document that sets out the bases for relaunching the peace process under UN leadership. He also said that the POLISARIO Front should be Morocco's main counterpart in any peace process. Algeria, the main supporter of the POLISARIO Front, expressed itself along similar lines, saying that its role is that of an observer. Algiers once again rejected any reactivation of the round table format, claiming that its involvement in the same mechanism of dialogue in 2018 and 2019 had been "instrumentalised". Mauritania maintained its declared role of "positive neutrality". In his annual report on Western Sahara, the UN Secretary-General repeated the need to reestablish the ceasefire, to address a conflict that has lasted almost five decades and get the parties to abandon preconditions to engage in a negotiating process.

Meanwhile, Rabat continued its policy of seeking international recognition of its de facto rule over Western Sahara. Following the "normalisation" agreement announced in December 2022, in July 2023 Israel recognised Morocco's sovereignty over the territory and declared its intention to open a consulate in Dakhla. Ghali participated in the BRICS-Africa summit in

The UN envoy made his first visit to Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara after Rabat withdrew objections to his meetings with civil society actors, including women's groups

33 Muñoz, Miguel, "La visita de la ONU al Sáhara Occidental y el papel de EEUU reavivan la vía política para solucionar el conflicto", *Público*, 8 September 2023.

South Africa, which issued a statement on the need for a “mutually acceptable solution” to the conflict in Western Sahara. In January 2023, the POLISARIO Front held elections to renew its leadership, in which Brahim Ghali was re-elected with 69% of the votes. Bashir Mustafa Sayyed also participated in the elections as an alternative candidate, with a proposal that sought to intensify the military confrontation with Morocco. Analysts said that the vote had shown internal disputes within the organisation about the strategy to follow and the influence of some groups that advocate a more aggressive military path and diplomatic commitment, a position with special support from young people frustrated with the deadlock in the situation.³⁴

Some pointed out the main obstacles for resuming negotiations on Western Sahara, including the gulf in the parties’ positions, the lack of a firm mandate from the UN special envoy in a context in which the UN Security Council faces deep divisions and the lack of international interest in the dispute. De Mistura has also come under criticism for maintaining a low-profile approach. In this scenario, some identified the US as the country best placed to give a boost to the UN-led diplomatic process, considering the relative deterioration of relations between Morocco and France due to the rapprochement between Paris and Algiers; the change in Spain’s position, which aligned itself with Rabat’s proposal in 2022; and Russia’s close relationship with Algeria and the POLISARIO Front. Washington exerted greater diplomatic effort in this area in 2023, which raised some expectations about reactivating the political track. According to reports, in April, practically at the same time as the bilateral meetings with the UN special envoy, US officials told the representatives of Morocco, the POLISARIO Front and Algeria that it was time to reactivate the process. Support for De Mistura’s efforts was also emphasised in conversations between Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and the Moroccan foreign minister in May and between Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and the foreign minister of Algeria in June. In September and December, Undersecretary of State for North African Affairs Joshua Harris travelled to Morocco and Algeria and met Ghali in Tindouf in September. The Trump administration recognised Morocco’s sovereignty over Western Sahara in 2020 and the Biden administration has not revoked the motion. According to some sources, the US could use this against Algeria, given its closer ties with Russia.³⁵ Despite this activity, some analysts think that Washington is not willing to dedicate significant political capital to the issue of Western Sahara, which is not among its priorities. **Looking to the future, new questions were anticipated, such as the possible impact of the war in Gaza** and its repercussions on the entire region and on international priorities, as well as the effects of Algeria’s presence in the new UN Security

Council as a member state elected in January 2024 for a period of two years.

Gender, peace and security

The UN Secretary-General’s personal envoy paid a visit to Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara in September 2023 after Rabat withdrew its objections to his meetings with civil society actors, including women’s groups. De Mistura had previously refused to travel to the area because he was forbidden from meeting with these actors, in line with the principles of the UN and consistent with the commitments made to women’s participation in promoting peace and security, an implicit allusion to the women, peace and security agenda. The UN mission in the territory, MINURSO, also reported that the mission team was made up of 51 women (23% of the total), a drop from 33% in 2022, though above the 19% defined as the target in the UN mission parity strategy for the period 2018-28.

Southern Africa

Mozambique	
Negotiating actors	Government, RENAMO, RENAMO military junta
Third parties	AU, National mediation team, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, United Kingdom, EU, Community of Sant Egidio (Vatican), Catholic Church, UN, Southern African Development Community (SADC)
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

34 Fabiani, Riccardo, “Paving the Way to Talks on Western Sahara”, *International Crisis Group*, Commentary / Middle East & North Africa, 20 July 2023.
 35 The New Arab, “US diplomat in Morocco for Western Sahara autonomy talks after Algeria visit”, *The New Arab*, 18 December 2023.

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 with the dissident faction of RENAMO calling itself the RENAMO Military Junta.

The Mozambican National Resistance's (RENAMO) disarmament and demobilisation process provided for in the 2019 peace agreement was completed in 2023.

On 15 June, the process was formally completed with the disarmament and demobilisation of the last group of 347 former RENAMO combatants, including 100 women. The group's last military base and headquarters in Vunduzi, Sofala province, were also closed. In total, since the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process had begun in 2019, 5,221 RENAMO ex-combatants were demobilised and its 16 military bases were closed. At the ceremony, attended by Mozambican President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi and RENAMO leader Ossufo Momade, Nyusi expressed hope that the closure of the last military base would end a bloody chapter that has mainly affected the central provinces of Mozambique. Nyusi also pledged to continue with the DDR process, the next step of which will be focused on the reintegration of former combatants into Mozambican society.

AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat issued a statement congratulating the country and saying that the final closure of the last RENAMO base made an "important contribution to silencing the guns in Africa". Mirko Manzoni, the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy for Mozambique and chair of the Contact Group for Mozambique peace talks, praised Mozambique's DDR process for its "people-centred approach" and commended the country for demonstrating how to forge and promote peace.³⁶

This step definitively closes the implementation of the Maputo Accord for Peace and National Reconciliation (Maputo Accord) signed in 2019 between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO, which emerged to end the armed conflict that had restarted in the country in 2012.

Gender, peace and security

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of 5,221 RENAMO combatants concluded with the demobilisation of a total of 257 women and 4,964 men, as agreed in the peace agreement, according to Peace Process Support – The Secretariat (PPS), whose staff

is 50% female, with 63% of them occupying senior positions. According to PPS data, 63 female DDR beneficiaries were linked to reintegration opportunities (24% of the total number of women) and another 41 women and family members were integrated into the police forces as part of the combatant reintegration process. Demobilisation activities were carried out in accommodation centres designed to include gender-sensitive services, including separate accommodation and hygiene facilities for women.³⁷

West Africa

Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West)

Negotiating actors	Government of Cameroon; four interim governments (IGs) proclaiming themselves representative of the people of Ambazonia: IG Sisiku (Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, first President of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, and Vice President Dabney Yerima); the other three IGs are derived from IG Sisiku, each created after the previous IG refused to give up power: IG Sako (Samuel Sako); IG Marianta (Iya Marianta Njomia); IG Chris Anu (ally of Leke Olivier Fongunueh's Red Dragons armed group). The Ambazonia Governing Council coalition (AGovC, led by Cho Ayaba, armed wing Ambazonia Defence Forces, ADF). Other political, military and social movements, and religious groups: Ambazonia Coalition Team (ACT), which includes APLM/SOCADEF, FSCW, MoRISC, SCARM, SCAPO, SCNC (North America faction) and RoAN. Southern Cameroons Stakeholder Platform (SCSP), which includes political movements, civil society, armed groups, religious groups: IG Sisiku, SCNC (except the North America faction), Consortium, Global Takumbeng, SCAWOL, SCEW, SNWOT, SCCOP, AIPC, AYC, SCYC, SCAAF, WCA, DAC, CHRDA, CHRI, Reach Out, prisoners organisations, displaced population and refugee organisations, traditional leaders and others.
Third parties	Church, civil society organisations, USIP, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiation (CDN), Vatican, Canada
Relevant agreements	Buea Declaration (1993, AAC1), ACC2 Declaration (1994), 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 of British Cameroon (a region currently corresponding to the

36 United Nations, "Declaração do Enviado Pessoal do Secretário-Geral das Nações Unidas para Moçambique", 6 August 2023.

37 Secretariado para o Processo da paz, "Integração da dimensão de género", undated.

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, with 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. Attempts at negotiation have been affected by divisions in the government and by the complexity and fragmentation of the secessionist movement, whose political leaders are imprisoned, such as the first president of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, as well as in the diaspora, which reduces its influence on armed groups on the ground. Meanwhile, the proliferation of armed groups, which in some cases do not respond to political leadership, makes resolving the conflict even more difficult. None of the initiatives to date, notably the All Anglophone Conference (AAC3) pending since 2018, the HD-facilitated Swiss track³⁸ that began in 2019 and the Grand National Dialogue promoted by Paul Biya's government in 2019 have achieved substantive progress. In 2022, Cameroon certified the completion of the Swiss track and contacts began with Canadian facilitation.

Secret contacts between representatives of the Cameroonian government and various English-speaking separatist groups, facilitated by Canada between October and December 2022 as part of a new initiative to promote a peace process, were confirmed and crystallised on 20 January 2023. The confirmation came with Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly's announcement that **Canada had a mandate to facilitate peace talks between the warring parties in Cameroon**. On 21 January, the separatist movement expressed its commitment to the process facilitated by Canada and many religious, civil society and women's organisation leaders in English-speaking regions hailed the announcement. However, three days after the announcement, **the government of Cameroon denied that it had asked a "foreign party" to mediate**

any resolution to the conflict. This denial revealed deep divisions among senior Cameroonian officials and came as a surprise, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) in February,³⁹ given Yaoundé's participation in previous Canadian-led talks. The rejection dealt a heavy blow to the peacebuilding efforts that Ottawa had led in the previous months. Described as previous secret talks, these contacts had apparently helped both sides to overcome key hurdles to starting a formal dialogue. Shortly after Joly's announcement, Anglophone leaders issued a joint statement affirming their commitment to participating in the negotiations with Canadian facilitation. Since then, there has been no progress. According to the ICG, building on previous Swiss facilitation efforts, Canada had managed to bring together various separatist groups that had expressed their willingness to participate in the negotiations. In the past, separatist groups had remained divided and unable to reach a consensus among themselves. This time, their unity offered the Cameroonian government a counterpart in the negotiations. In March, the five main separatist movements (SOCADEF, AGovC, IG, ACT and the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, also known as the Consortium) announced they were holding the All Ambazonia Conference (AAC) in July, also known as the Southern Cameroons People's Conference (SCPC) 2023,⁴⁰ with the aim of unifying the positions of the separatist movement. The first meeting held in Canada from 5-8 October 2023 with groups and community representatives including delegates from Cameroon; groups in the SCSP were joined by other groups such as SCAPO, T-SISC, women's groups from Cameroon, Southern Cameroonian communities from Germany, Switzerland, Canada, South Africa, USA and UAE. Resolutions were taken, one of which was to create a secretariat, SCPS (Southern Cameroons People's Secretariat). The political and military group IG Chris Anu opened an office in Washington on 11 December after hiring a US company to exert pressure in support of the referendum in September.

Gender, peace and security

Cameroonian civil society, and especially women's civil society organisations, remained active. Following Canada's announcement, they hailed the initiative as a great opportunity to resolve the conflict. The Cameroonian women's organisations have worked tirelessly in recent years to build avenues of dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation, leading the German Africa Foundation (DAS)⁴¹ to award the German Africa Prize 2023 to the umbrella of 80 organisations of women mediators and activists that organised the 1st

38 The Swiss track was an initiative promoted by Switzerland with the support and facilitation of the organisation HD. Established in 2019, its activities were certified as finalised by the government of Cameroon in 2022. It had the support of the Friends of the Swiss Contact Group (European Union, United States, Canada, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom).

39 International Crisis Group, "Canada Initiative Offers Opportunity for Cameroon Peace Process", *International Crisis Group*, 9 February 2023.

40 Southern Cameroons People's Conference 2023, accessible at <https://www.scpconference.com/>.

41 DAS press release, "German Africa Award 2023 goes to the Cameroonian women's peace platform '1st National Women's Convention for Peace in Cameroon'", *DAS*, 30 November 2023.

National Convention of Women for Peace in Cameroon in 2021,⁴² which brought together more than 1,500 female civil society representatives working for peace in the country. This foundation is supported by all political parties in the Bundestag and promotes the implementation of the Federal Government of Germany's African policy and relations between the government and Africa. Another German foundation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, held a round table talk in December to discuss the role of Cameroonian women in peacebuilding that involved representatives of the 1st National Convention of 2021 after the prize was awarded.

Mali	
Negotiating actors	Government, Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) that brings together 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, civil society organisations, Mauritania, Carter Center (Independent Observer of the Peace Agreement)
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. After the coup d'état in May 2021, the CMA and Platform, which had been rival groups thus far, joined together in the Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP-PSD) coalition.

During the year, the parties that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, the Malian government

and the Arab and Tuareg armed groups organised in the Permanent Strategic Framework coalition (CSP) resumed fighting, jeopardising the peace agreement.

One of the triggers for the resumption of the war between the signatory parties is related to the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA), though tensions between the transitional authorities and the armed movements had begun since the military junta came to power following the coup d'état in May 2021. Thus, the year began with new tensions after the armed groups that had signed the Algiers Agreement pulled out of it in late December 2022. In January, Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop travelled to Algeria and met with his counterpart, Ramtane Lamamra, and Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune to discuss issues related to the peace agreement, rejecting Algeria's proposal to host a meeting between the parties "on neutral ground", as the armed groups had requested. Later, on 1 February, the Permanent Strategic Framework (CSP), which brings together CMA and Platform, groups that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, met with the international mediation mechanism of the agreement (led by Algeria) and warned that they would take action if the government continued to block implementation of the agreement. In March, tensions rose due to the mobilisation of around 400 vehicles belonging to armed groups that had signed the agreement near the town of Anefis, in the Kidal region. This prompted the Malian government to send a letter to Algeria denouncing "flagrant violations" of the peace agreement by the signatory armed groups, particularly the CMA, accusing them of collaborating with jihadist groups. In an effort to restart the peace process, the agreement's international mediation mechanism proposed a meeting between the parties on 24 April, which was again rejected by Bamako. On 27 April, Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf visited Bamako and held talks with the interim President Colonel Goïta. They issued a joint statement of commitment to the 2015 agreement. This led to an easing of tensions between the parties, and on 12 May Malian Minister of National Reconciliation Colonel Ismaël Wagué met with representatives of the CMA and Platform in Kidal to restore confidence and resume work of the supervision mechanisms, reiterating the government's commitment to the agreement. However, the reshuffling of the government cabinet carried out by President Goïta on 1 July once again strained the negotiations when he added 13 new ministers into the executive branch, with the signatory groups losing two of the four ministries assigned to them in the peace agreement.

In this atmosphere, the Malian government revoked consent for the UN peacekeeping mission in the country (MINUSMA) and announced its decision to close it down. On 30 June, the UN Security Council agreed to end MINUSMA's mandate, cease its operations, transfer tasks and withdraw personnel by 31 December. On

42. See Cameroon in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2021: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2022.

21 June, the CSP said that the departure of the UN mission “without a credible alternative” would deal a “fatal blow” to the peace agreement. In July, MINUSMA began to turn over its 12 military bases to the Malian government, in accordance with the UN mandate. On 1 August, the CSP warned of “serious imminent risks” associated with the handover to the Malian Army of MINUSMA mission camps in areas controlled by armed groups that had signed the peace agreement. In fact, in the following days, for the first time since the peace agreement was signed, major clashes broke out between the CMA and the Malian Army, aided by members of the Wagner Group (Russia) in several northern regions (Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao). The fighting lasted until the end of the year. This led the CMA to announce that it considered itself “at war” with Bamako on 11 September. The withdrawal of MINUSMA prompted a dispute over control of the bases that the UN mission had been using, leading to different armed clashes between the parties. The most notable fighting was for control of the city of Anefis (Kidal) and the MINUSMA bases in Ber (Timbuktu), Aguelhok, Tessalit and Kidal (Kidal). In November, the Malian Army announced its seizure of the strategic city of Kidal, the base of the CSP, which complained that the Malian Army’s presence in the region violated the peace agreement that grants them control there.

The outbreak of violence caused divisions within the CSP. In late September, the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA) announced that it was leaving the coalition due to the bellicose stance of the CMA, claiming that the conflict only benefited jihadist actors. Other CSP members also expressed their commitment to peace. Given the danger faced by the peace agreement in the country, in early October the Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Bamako. Some analysts suggested that the visit could involve talks to identify a new mediator between the parties that could serve as guarantor and achieve and guarantee compliance with the ceasefire. The possibility of delaying MINUSMA’s departure for several months to support the negotiations was also considered, especially since some MINUSMA troops were from Guinea and Chad, countries that maintain friendly relations with Mali. There was also talk about the AU possibly assuming the mandate or assisting in mediation efforts.⁴³ However, in December MINUSMA officially ended its deployment after a decade in the country.

Meanwhile, the Carter Center, which acts as an Independent Observer of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali resulting from the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement, did not publish any monitoring report during the year on the progress made in its implementation.

The resumption of armed clashes in northern Mali Armed Forces and the armed groups that had signed the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement put its continuity at risk

Senegal (Casamance)	
Negotiating actors	Government, factions of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)
Third parties	ECOWAS, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sub-regional Coordinator for Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Casamance (COSPAC)
Relevant agreements	General Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Senegal and the MFDC (Ziguinchor Agreement) (2004)

Summary:

Casamance is a southern Senegalese region geographically separated from the rest of the country by the Gambia River, which is surrounded by the nation of The Gambia. The Casamance region has a distinct culture and language because it was under Portuguese administration during part of the colonial period. Since 1982, the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) has demanded its independence. Clashes between the Senegalese Armed Forces and the MFDC became most violent during the 1990s, concluding in 2004 with the signing of peace agreements by the MFDC’s top leader, Diamacoune Senghor. Following Senghor’s death in January 2007, the MFDC split into three main armed factions, led by Salif Sadio, César Badiate and Mamadou Niantang Diatta, respectively. Since then, low-intensity fighting has continued between the different factions that do not recognise the agreement reached with the government and are vying to increase their control over the territory. In the meantime, efforts are under way to conduct peace negotiations with these actors to put an end to the violence.

On 14 May, at least 250 pro-independence rebels from the southern region of Casamance, members of the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance

(MFDC) faction calling itself the Provisional Committee of the Unified Political and Combatant Wings of the MFDC, led by Cesar Atoute Badiate, handed over their weapons in a ceremony that took place at the movement’s former base in the town of Mangone in the Bignona area, in southern Senegal. Various actors, facilitators of the process, local elected representatives and development organisations participated in the ceremony. Ziguinchor Governor Guédj Diouf announced that the handover ends a negotiating process between the government of Senegal and the MFDC-

Sadio faction that has lasted almost three years and called on the other factions of the MFDC to achieve a definitive peace to the conflict that began in 1982.⁴⁴ Marc Tisani, the European Union’s representative in the country, described the event to hand over the weapons as a “historic and important” one for the stability of the region and promised to continue supporting the country to resolve the conflict that he described as the “oldest

43 International Crisis Group, “Northern Mali: A Conflict with No Victors”, *International Crisis Group*, 13 October 2023

44 Swissinfo, “Entregan las armas al menos 250 rebeldes independentistas del sur de Senegal”, *Swissinfo*, 14 May 2023.

of the continent". This event is related to the peace agreement reached on 4 August 2022 between the MFDC faction and the Senegalese government, signed in the capital of Guinea-Bissau.

In May, **a peace agreement was reportedly signed with another MFDC faction.** The agreement provides for the disarmament of combatants, the implementation of development projects in the Casamance region, the reintegration of rebels and action to guarantee the peaceful return of all refugees. In this sense, progress had been made in the return of some of the approximately 60,000 displaced people in 2022, though the conditions of return were being made difficult due to land mines in the region. In 2023, Senegal's National Mine Action

Centre reported that between 49 and 170 hectares of land were mined, predominantly in the Ziguinchor region, documenting at least 453 mine-related civilian injuries and 157 deaths since the start of the conflict.

Meanwhile, in May local media outlets reported the death of Salif Sadio, the leader of Atika, the armed wing of the main faction of the MFDC that remains active. Though no information was provided about the circumstances of his death, Salif had reportedly been ill for years and had lost the ability to walk. However, as on other occasions when his death had been declared, Salif reappeared in August in a video during an interview with an emissary sent by Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embaló.

