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United Nations Support Mission in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2486 \(2019\)](#) and [2510 \(2020\)](#), covers political, security-related and economic developments in Libya, provides an overview of the human rights and humanitarian situation and includes an outline of the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) since the issuance of my previous report on 5 May 2020 ([S/2020/360](#)).

II. Political and security-related and economic developments

2. During the reporting period, the front lines of the conflict shifted from western to central Libya, with both Libyan parties reaching a stalemate over the control of Sirte. Negotiations were ongoing to prevent further military escalation and mitigate risks associated with regional confrontation as UNSMIL continued to engage with Libyan stakeholders and their international supporters in pursuit of a lasting ceasefire and the resumption of political talks.

3. After the successful bid to retake six cities along the coast west of Tripoli in April, Government of National Accord forces gradually pushed back the Libyan National Army forces of General Khalifa Haftar from their positions in southern Tripoli. The Government of National Accord forces did not reciprocate the unilaterally declared cessation of military activities announced by the Libyan National Army on 29 April on the occasion of Ramadan, arguing that a ceasefire would permit the Libyan National Army to regroup and rearm.

4. Supported by multiple drone air strikes, Government of National Accord forces gained control of the strategic Watiya airbase in north-western Libya on 18 May. They continued to capture additional areas further to the south-east and entered Tarhunah on 5 June, effectively ending the Libyan National Army offensive on Tripoli, launched in April 2019.

5. Military mobilization and build-up continued, however, which increased the risk of confrontation around Sirte and Jufrah. That included the uninterrupted delivery of increasingly sophisticated and lethal weapons to both parties in violation of the United Nations arms embargo. Both parties also continued to recruit mercenaries. Amid growing polarization between pro-Government of National Accord and



pro-Libyan National Army communities, UNSMIL recorded an alarming increase in retaliatory acts in areas previously controlled by or perceived to be supportive of the Libyan National Army in western Libya, including in Tarhunah, Asabi'ah and Rujban.

6. Until Libyan National Army forces withdrew from southern Tripoli, 2 million residents of the capital experienced persistent bombardment and frequent water and electricity cuts owing to the conflict, a situation that was later compounded by restrictions on movement related to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) measures. UNSMIL recorded various incidents in which landmines, booby traps and improvised explosive devices were found in areas previously controlled by the Libyan National Army.

7. Political actors in western Libya, notably the High State Council and members of the House of Representatives, expressed support for the military campaign of the Government of National Accord to regain control of areas previously held by Libyan National Army forces. They requested the Presidency Council to redouble military efforts and increase coordination with international allies, including through the implementation of bilateral agreements. They also rejected any talks that would recognize General Haftar as a key partner in the country's political future.

8. Commenting on recent political initiatives on 5 May, the Prime Minister, Faiez Mustafa Serraj, welcomed any initiatives towards a peaceful solution to the crisis. He called for the holding of elections and for reaching an agreement on a constitutional framework. He called upon Libyan National Army fighters to submit to the legal and legitimate authorities and for all parties to resume negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. He also called upon elites across the country to reject militarization and violence. On 6 May, the head of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly, Abdulsalam Erhouma, reaffirmed support for peaceful initiatives and emphasized that the constitutional process should be concluded through a national referendum on the constitutional proposal of 29 July 2017. On 9 June, the High National Elections Commission stated its readiness to organize elections followed by a constitutional referendum at any time.

9. Since calling for a resumption of political dialogue on 23 April, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Agila Saleh, has increased his local and international engagements. On 23 May, he reiterated his call, while emphasizing support for the efforts of the Libyan National Army to fight terrorism and dismantle militias in Tripoli. After meeting on 27 May with a high-level delegation representing General Haftar, Mr. Saleh travelled to Egypt, where he met with government officials. On 30 May, 44 members of the House of Representatives called for a ceasefire and the resumption of political dialogue for the restructuring of the executive authority. Mr. Saleh held talks with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in Moscow on 3 July and with officials from Egypt and the United States of America in Cairo from 10 August. On 21 August, Mr. Serraj and Mr. Saleh, in separate statements, called for a ceasefire across the country, the demilitarization of Sirte and the resumption of oil production and exports.

Implementation of the United Nations three-step initiative and political process

10. UNSMIL continued to urge the Libyan parties to agree on a ceasefire, resume political talks and continue progress in the economic dialogue within the framework of the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya. On 21 August, I welcomed calls for a ceasefire by Mr. Serraj and Mr. Saleh.

11. In June and July, within the framework of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, UNSMIL resumed separate talks with the Libyan National Army and Government of National Accord delegations. Building on the previous talks in February and the initial comments on the draft ceasefire agreement presented by UNSMIL in Geneva on

23 February, both parties presented additional preconditions for a ceasefire. The Government of National Accord insisted that the Libyan National Army withdraw from the oil crescent region to positions held prior to the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement in December 2015. The Libyan National Army demanded full compliance with the arms embargo and the departure of foreign fighters from Libya.

12. The political positions of the Libyan parties continued to be determined by military developments and the control of oil resources. However, there was an increased awareness that there could be no military solution to the conflict. Proposals put forward by the parties were not incompatible, as they called for a political solution through a new transitional period with the restructuring of the Presidency Council, or the holding of elections along with an agreement on a constitutional framework.

13. On the economic track of the intra-Libyan dialogue, the three working groups composed of representatives of Libyan economic institutions and experts continued efforts towards establishing a Libyan economic expert commission. They developed policy recommendations that informed the discussions of the economic working group of the international follow-up committee to the Berlin Conference.

International follow-up committee to the Berlin Conference on Libya

14. The international follow-up committee met online on 13 May, 22 June and 23 July. The situation in and around Sirte featured prominently at the meeting on 22 June, with all participants expressing their grave concern. In a joint statement, the Co-Chairs, namely the League of Arab States and UNSMIL, stressed the need for all members of the Berlin process to strictly adhere to the entirety of their commitments and obligations, as set out in the Conference conclusions. On 23 July, the participants unanimously agreed to support a comprehensive, durable and peaceful Libyan-led resolution of the conflict under the auspices of the United Nations.

15. Virtual discussions progressed within the four thematic working groups established under the committee – on security, political, economic, and international humanitarian law and human rights issues. The groups continued to form a critical tool to support UNSMIL and the Berlin Conference participants in the implementation of the Conference conclusions.

16. Meeting 11 times since 9 April, the security working group (co-chaired by France, Italy, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the African Union) has actively contributed to securing and maintaining the commitment of the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army to the 5+5 Joint Military Commission talks. The Co-Chairs have also provided valuable input to the development of ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism proposals.

17. The political working group (co-chaired by Algeria, Germany and the League of Arab States) met four times to provide support for a political solution to the Libyan conflict through a resumption of the intra-Libyan dialogue.

18. The economic working group (co-chaired by Egypt, the United States and the European Union) has met four times since 27 April to consolidate the policy recommendations emanating from the intra-Libyan economic track talks.

19. The international humanitarian law and human rights working group (co-chaired by the Netherlands and Switzerland) has convened two meetings since 8 May to agree on key priorities to advance human rights and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law, including steps towards a ceasefire.

International and regional engagement

20. International engagement to end the conflict and resume political talks continued amid regional tensions. On 6 June, the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, in the presence of General Haftar and Mr. Saleh, issued the Cairo Declaration, calling for a ceasefire in Libya to take effect on 8 June and the resumption of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission talks, “taking into account the importance of efforts by the United Nations and the international community to urge all foreign actors to withdraw foreign mercenaries from Libyan territory.”

21. In a joint statement issued on 9 June, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union urged all Libyan and international parties to stop all military operations in Libya, and to engage constructively in the security-track talks under the auspices of the United Nations to swiftly reach a ceasefire agreement, including on the withdrawal of all foreign forces, mercenaries and military equipment.

22. On 20 June, during a visit to a military base in north-western Egypt, the President of Egypt stated that the Government of National Accord forces advancing on Sirte could provoke “direct” Egyptian intervention, according to local media reports. On 20 July, the Egyptian parliament granted him the authority to deploy Egyptian armed forces abroad to fight “criminal militias” and “foreign terrorist groups” on its “western front”.

23. Visiting Libya on 4 July, the Minister of Defence of Turkey, Hulusi Akar, stated that Turkey was ready to continue to support Libya, adding that Turkish forces in Libya were providing military training, cooperation and advisory functions.

24. In a joint statement on 18 July, France, Germany and Italy announced that they were “ready to consider the possible use of sanctions should breaches to the embargo at sea, on land or in the air continue” in Libya. They also encouraged the United Nations “to explore all options for de-escalating tensions, including the options of an expanded disengagement of forces and potential demilitarization of certain areas”.

25. On 22 July, the Russian Federation and Turkey released a joint statement in which they reaffirmed their “unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Libya”, the United Nations-facilitated political process and the need to combat terrorism. They expressed their determination to “continue joint efforts, including influencing the Libyan parties, in order to create conditions for a lasting and sustainable ceasefire”.

26. Regional organizations also remained closely engaged with the United Nations in support of Libya. On 19 May, my Special Representative to the African Union, Hanna Tetteh, briefed the Contact Group of the Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya of the African Union on the latest developments and United Nations efforts. In a statement on 8 June, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, called upon the “warring parties to ensure strict compliance with international humanitarian law” and reiterated his 27 March “invitation for all warring parties to immediately stop fighting and engage in a lasting ceasefire negotiation.” He called “upon the Security Council to apply sanctions as provided for in various resolutions on the arms embargo”.

27. On 23 June, the League of Arab States held an extraordinary ministerial meeting on the situation in Libya at the request of Egypt. In a resolution, the League called for a political solution to the conflict within the framework of the Libyan Political Agreement and the conclusions of the Berlin Conference. The Government of National Accord rejected provisions of the resolution calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces present on Libyan territory and in Libyan territorial waters. It stressed that, in the text of the resolution, foreign military personnel whose presence in Libya

was based on a legal agreement with the Government of Libya should not be equated with foreign forces that were present illegally.

28. During the reporting period, the European Union military operation in the Mediterranean continued to contribute to the enforcement of the United Nations arms embargo through the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets for the inspection of vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that were suspected to be carrying arms or related materiel to or from Libya. The inspections were carried out in accordance with Security Council resolution [2292 \(2016\)](#) and other relevant resolutions.

Situation in the western region

29. In early May, fighting intensified in Tripoli, with indiscriminate shelling and artillery exchanges. On 9 May, the Libyan National Army targeted Mitiga Airport with indirect fire, damaging a civilian aircraft and airport infrastructure. Both parties concentrated their presence, especially in the central region, near Tripoli and Bani Walid. Government of National Accord forces targeted Libyan National Army supply lines and the Watiya airbase using precision air strikes launched from uncrewed aerial vehicles. They seized the airbase on 18 May.

30. Government of National Accord forces continued to advance south and on 21 May gained control of Asabi'a and subsequently of areas near Mizdah and Nasamah, thus blocking road access for the Libyan National Army forces in Tarhunah and Tripoli. They then began to advance on Libyan National Army positions in Tarhunah. Anticipating retaliatory acts against local Libyan National Army-allied forces and the perceived supportive population in Tarhunah, UNSMIL issued a statement on 22 May in which it reminded all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law and warned against acts of retribution.

31. Pressured by the Government of National Accord, Libyan National Army forces continued to retreat southward from Tripoli in late May. Following their withdrawal, it was discovered that parts of Tripoli neighbourhoods (Ayn Zarah, Salah al-Din, Airport Road and Khallat al-Farjan) had been sown with victim-operated explosive devices, many of which were designed to be difficult to locate and render safe.

32. Unknown cargo flights and vessels continued to be observed delivering advanced weapon systems, including air defence systems, and assets to both sides in central and eastern Libya. On 22 May, the Government of National Accord claimed that fighter aircraft had arrived from the Humaymim airbase in the Syrian Arab Republic to eastern Libya to support the Libyan National Army.

33. Between 30 May and 3 June, Libyan National Army forces targeted Mitiga Airport, Banana Project and Tajura' Naval Base areas to hinder the use of uncrewed aerial vehicles and artillery by the Government of National Accord. Libyan National Army air defence coverage initially facilitated the relocation of forces. Unknown fighter aircraft reportedly also provided support to the Libyan National Army in securing the western road to Tarhunah. On 5 June, however, Libyan National Army forces quickly withdrew from Tarhunah, and forces affiliated to the Government of National Accord entered the city without resistance, based on a negotiated understanding that enabled Libyan National Army forces and affiliated foreign fighters to depart east to Jufrah and Qardabiyah via Bani Walid. UNSMIL subsequently verified the discovery of mass graves in the area and numerous bodies at Tarhunah hospital.

34. Since March, there has been increased mobilization of forces, air strikes by uncrewed aerial vehicles and fighter aircraft, and exchanges of indirect fire along the front lines near Abu Qurayn and Washkah, south of Misratah and west of Sirte. On 5 June, the Government of National Accord launched a military operation to gain

control of Sirte and Jufrah. The forces sustained significant losses in a surprise attack on 6 June by uncrewed aerial vehicles and a fighter aircraft, leading them to withdraw and establish their front line 25 km west of Sirte. Following another unsuccessful attempt to advance on Sirte and the Qardabiyah airbase on 7 June, they halted ground operations. Relying on local air superiority facilitated by aircraft operating from the Jufrah and Khadim airbases, Libyan National Army forces maintained positions outside Sirte to secure the coastal road leading towards the oil crescent region. On 21 June, the Libyan National Army announced a no-fly zone covering the Sirte area.

35. Both sides have been mobilizing forces and positioning advanced military equipment in and around Sirte, including battle tanks and combat vehicles. There are accusations from both sides that Government of National Accord forces were supported by Syrian mercenaries, while Libyan National Army forces received support from Sudanese mercenaries and Wagner Group personnel.

Situation in the eastern region

36. In eastern Libya, the security situation remained relatively calm, despite reports of criminal activity and incidents related to explosive remnants of war. On 2 June, in an incident highlighting continued risks to civilians and United Nations operations, security forces discovered a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device in Benghazi.

37. Amid Libyan National Army military setbacks in western Libya, members of the House of Representatives, the High State Council, municipal councils and tribal representatives increased their calls for a negotiated resolution to the conflict, in support of Mr. Saleh's political initiative.

38. On 29 June, the Supreme Council of Libyan Sheikhs and Eminent Persons called for an end to the block on oil exports from four eastern ports, in place since 18 January, stating that the Libyan National Army was authorized to negotiate with UNSMIL to ensure that revenues generated from petroleum exports did not benefit armed groups. On 10 July, the Libyan National Oil Corporation began transferring oil to a vessel in the port of Sidrah. The next day, the Libyan National Army ordered the shutdown of production, and announced conditions for resumption, including the deposit of oil revenues in a bank account outside of Libya and the transparent and equitable redistribution among Libyan regions, guaranteed by the international community. The Libyan National Army also requested an audit of the accounts of the Central Bank of Libya in Tripoli. On 18 August, the Libyan National Army announced the resumption of partial operations at eastern oil ports to export petroleum condensate to address electricity shortages in eastern Libya.

Situation in the southern region

39. In southern Libya, the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army competed for control over political affiliations and institutions. Several groups that had nominally switched allegiance to the Libyan National Army in 2019 began to realign themselves with the Government of National Accord from April 2020. Those changes enabled the National Oil Corporation to temporarily resume operations at the Shararah oilfield on 10 June, before they were suspended again by the Libyan National Army and its affiliated forces.

40. Local administrations have been affected by the national conflict, and in many cases forces affiliated to the Libyan National Army are in control of security and the Government of National Accord is in control of public financing. In Sabha, the Government of National Accord suspended and replaced the municipal council after the newly elected council and mayor voiced support for the Libyan National Army on 25 April. The elected council challenged the decision in court.

41. In continued attacks that threaten water security in north-western Libya, 16 wells of the Great Man-Made River project were destroyed on 25 May, bringing the total number of destroyed wells in the past two years to 130. Those acts of destruction are exacerbated by repeated attempts by local groups to interrupt the flow of the Great Man-Made River to obtain concessions from authorities in Tripoli. As a result, the livelihoods of millions of people are threatened, and damage is being caused to the national water infrastructure. UNSMIL continued to work on projects to incentivize communities to protect the vital infrastructure and improve water use efficiency.

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Libya

42. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da'esh, remains a threat in Libya. ISIL is mostly active in southern Libya, exploiting inter-ethnic tensions for recruitment and raising funds through extortion and kidnapping for ransom. It may also be retaining dormant cells in coastal cities. In May, ISIL claimed responsibility for several attacks against local security forces in the Fezzan region. Reportedly using rockets and improvised explosive devices, it targeted Libyan National Army forces and affiliates, and businesses in Sabha, Taraghin and Umm al-Aranib.

Economic situation

43. The Libyan economy continues to suffer from the impact of the block on oil exports, the armed conflict and COVID-19. The block has cost the country over \$7.5 billion in oil sales. It has caused significant damage to oil infrastructure, which may be further damaged as warring parties vie for control.

44. Libya may experience a high budget deficit exceeding 50 per cent in 2020. While the limits on access to foreign exchange imposed by the Central Bank, particularly during Ramadan, helped to mitigate the deficit, the measure also resulted in commodity shortages and higher prices. As tension between the need for austerity measures, and the Government's responsibility for satisfying demand despite COVID-19-induced economic shocks, my acting Special Representative mediated between the Central Bank and the Government to facilitate a mutually agreeable solution.

45. In eastern Libya, the ability of the parallel eastern branch of the Central Bank to extend credit lines to commercial banks to offset their lack of access to revenue began to reach its limits. The Central Bank in Bayda' announced in March that it was unable to continue to finance the parallel "interim government" and would pay for salaries only until June. Although efforts are ongoing to find additional methods to extend the credit line, the dynamic is increasing pressure on local commercial banks, several of which have lost access to foreign exchange.

46. The authorities in eastern Libya, including the Libyan National Army Military Investment Authority, have attempted to address the lack of public revenue by exporting petroleum products in violation of the Security Council measures aimed at preventing illicit exports. On 22 May, the Gabonese-flagged vessel, *Jal Laxmi*, arriving off Tubruq, attempted to transporting heavy fuel oil and marine gas oil, but was hindered through the intervention of the United Nations and Member States. With international support, the National Oil Corporation continues to provide fuel throughout the country despite the challenges.

47. UNSMIL continued to support the international audit review of the Central Bank, including in eastern Libya, as requested by Mr. Serraj. The National Audit Bureau, which had blocked payment for the review, confirmed on 15 July that the payment had been made, allowing the audit to begin. The audit is expected to facilitate

substantive talks on the unification of the Central Bank, revenue distribution and accountability.

III. Other activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya

A. Electoral support

48. On 9 June, Mr. Serraj met with the Chairperson of the High National Elections Commission and pledged to create a conducive environment for elections and to provide the full budget for electoral operations. In a letter to the Ministry of Finance, he requested the release of funds to cover the Commission's running costs for 2020. At the time of reporting, the Commission had yet to receive those funds. Meeting with my acting Special Representative on 24 June, the Commission expressed readiness to organize future national elections.

49. The Central Committee for Municipal Council Elections continued preparations to resume municipal council elections despite the challenging context, with 38 local elections planned for 2020. The Central Committee continued to coordinate closely with other relevant authorities to integrate special measures to provide a safe environment for voting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Committee is awaiting the receipt of budget funds to complete preparations. The municipal election in Ghat was held on 18 August. Upcoming elections are expected in Sharqiyah, Misratah, Qatrun and Taraghin.

50. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) electoral assistance project was extended until December 2021 in order to preserve the progress made since the project's launch in December 2017 and to promote democratic processes in Libya.

B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law

51. Between 1 April and 30 June, UNSMIL recorded at least 106 civilian deaths and 252 civilian injuries, including 25 women and 34 children, representing a 173 per cent increase in civilian casualties compared with the first quarter of 2020. The leading cause of casualties was ground fighting, including indirect fire, and explosive remnants of war, with 80 per cent attributed to forces affiliated to the Libyan National Army and 11 per cent to forces affiliated to the Government of National Accord. Thus far in 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has documented at least 25 attacks on medical facilities, ambulances and medical personnel.

52. After Government of National Accord forces regained control of Tarhunah on 5 June, UNSMIL verified the discovery of multiple mass graves in the area and numerous bodies at the hospital. In response, I called for a prompt, impartial investigation by the authorities into all alleged cases of unlawful killing. UNSMIL responded to an official request from the Government of National Accord seeking technical assistance, including participation in the investigation into the mass graves, and the identification, demarcation and collection of evidence from all mass graves in conformity with international standards. On 22 June, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court stated that she would not hesitate to extend her investigations to cover new instances of crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the Court. Pursuant to the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, and the referral of Libya by the Security Council to the

Court, UNSMIL continues to cooperate closely with the Court to enable it to investigate crimes potentially falling within its jurisdiction.

53. On 22 June, the Human Rights Council adopted its resolution [43/39](#) to establish an international fact-finding mission to Libya, mandated to establish the facts and circumstances of the situation of human rights throughout the country and to document alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties in Libya since the beginning of 2016. On 19 August, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights appointed the members of the fact-finding mission.

Unlawful deprivation of liberty, detention and torture

54. Around 8,000 people, of whom an estimated 60 per cent were in pretrial detention, continued to be held in 27 official prisons, nominally under the Ministry of Justice. In total, 478 women, including 244 foreign nationals, and 70 children were held in prisons or in judicial police custody. Thousands of others were held in facilities nominally under the control of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence, as well as in facilities directly operated by armed groups.

55. UNSMIL continued to receive reports of arbitrary or unlawful detention, torture, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, denial of visits and deprivation of access to justice. It welcomed reports by national authorities on the release of prisoners to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in prisons and continued to call upon the authorities to release additional prisoners. Between 10 and 15 June, the Ministry of Justice reported that 400 inmates were transferred from Mitiga prison to a newly renovated wing of Judaydah prison in Tripoli.

Groups in vulnerable situations

Migrants and refugees

56. Migrants and refugees in Libya continue to be routinely subjected to discrimination, arbitrary detention and torture. The public health system is overstretched, which has had a negative impact on the provision of health services to migrants and refugees, including in detention centres.

57. In a reversal of recent trends, the number of migrants and refugees held in State-run migrant detention centres increased from 1,445 on 1 May to 2,347 on 14 August. The unknown number of remaining illegal sites at which smugglers and traffickers hold migrants also remained a serious concern. On 27 May, at one such site in Mizdah, 30 migrants were killed and 11 injured by affiliates of smugglers. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in partnership with local stakeholders, began visiting detention centres located across the country and plans to provide psychological support and aid.

58. Migrants and refugees continued to attempt to cross into Europe. As at 25 July, around 6,500 refugees and migrants had been intercepted or rescued at sea in 2020 and returned to Libya, mostly by the Libyan Coast Guard, which systematically returned them to arbitrary detention, while others disappeared. As at 29 July, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had recorded 281 deaths on the central Mediterranean route, including 165 people lost at sea. UNSMIL repeatedly emphasized that Libya was not a safe port of return for migrants and asylum seekers. UNSMIL also received reports of vessels failing to assist and pushing back migrant boats in the central Mediterranean.

59. In coordination with Libyan authorities, IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants upon disembarkation and in detention, including through

COVID-19 awareness campaigns and preventive measures. IOM supported the Libyan Coast Guard and the Department to Combat Illegal Migration by providing protective equipment and testing devices.

Women and girls and human rights defenders

60. On 25 June, my acting Special Representative stated that the public space for Libyan women to voice their opinions and participate in political life and post-conflict reconstruction was rapidly shrinking, as some women had been subjected to physical threats and attacks that were apparently linked to their public roles. She reiterated that the full and effective participation of women in public life, including all political processes and peacebuilding initiatives, remained essential and a core priority for UNSMIL. On 17 July, one year had elapsed since a member of the House of Representatives, Siham Sergewa, was abducted from her home in Benghazi. Human rights defenders and media professionals continued to be subjected to threats and arbitrary detention.

Reconciliation and transitional justice

61. Following my call on 23 March for a global ceasefire in support of the larger battle against COVID-19, the UNSMIL national reconciliation project, implemented with UNDP, facilitated an initiative to call for a humanitarian pause to the conflict. The project's network of mediators recorded messages in support of peace and unified efforts to fight the pandemic. By early May, the online campaign had reached more than 3 million people and generated over 8 million post engagements. An online training platform was launched together with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in June to enable continued interaction amid COVID-19-related restrictions. The project also provided additional conflict analysis capacity in support of UNSMIL efforts to incentivize communities to protect the Great Man-Made River infrastructure in southern Libya.

Rule of law capacity-building

62. UNSMIL continued to provide technical support to the Supreme Judicial Council related to court hearings, strengthening the role of the justice system in combating violence against women and children and the reopening of all courts and public prosecution offices. The Council conducted 11 court hearings at the Judaydah prison, and public prosecutors conducted investigations. On 15 June, the Council announced the gradual reopening of courts starting on 1 July, after 105 days of closure, with full operations planned to resume in October. Through the Policing and Security Joint Programme, UNSMIL and UNDP advised the judicial police on best practices for controlling prison disturbances related to COVID-19.

63. On 2 and 3 June, the Libyan Bar Association successfully conducted the first elections for its internal committees. For the first time, a female lawyer was elected to chair the disciplinary board for lawyers.

Human rights due diligence policy

64. The United Nations system in Libya continued to implement the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces (see [A/67/775-S/2013/110](#), annex), with a view to preventing and mitigating the identified risks of grave violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law or refugee law.

C. Security sector

Support for Libyan planning for interim security arrangements and the unification of security forces

65. UNSMIL and UNDP continued to build the capacity of staff in the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice through the Policing and Security Joint Programme, with special attention given to promoting a gender-sensitive approach in the security sector. The Programme provided advice, including to the crisis committee established in the Ministry of the Interior, on protection measures, policing guidelines and remote working modalities in the context of COVID-19. Progress continued on the Model Police Station project, including construction of the new model police station in Tripoli.

Arms and ammunition management

66. UNSMIL continued to assist Libyan communities and authorities in addressing the increasing threat of explosive ordnance and the proliferation of weapons and ammunition through technical assistance from the Mine Action Service, focusing on clearance and on risk education. The Service cleared more than 280 explosive remnants of war in southern Tripoli and Misratah to facilitate the safe return of the population. In Misratah, in response to several large explosions at an ammunition storage area on 6 May, the Service and partners conducted emergency response activities, including battle area clearance and explosive ordnance disposal.

67. To increase awareness and protection, the United Nations launched an explosive ordnance risk education campaign on traditional and social media. The initiative also provides hotline numbers to report the presence of explosive ordnance. The United Nations Children's Fund, in collaboration with national partners, combined explosive ordnance risk education messaging with COVID-19 information, resulting in an increase in the number of reports of explosive ordnance.

Advancing a possible ceasefire

68. Despite the differences between the parties on a ceasefire agreement, UNSMIL remains optimistic that the resumption of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission talks can achieve progress, as demonstrated by the reduction in fighting since June. In addition, the resumption facilitated progress on the terms of reference for the five proposed subcommittees.

69. The Secretariat is considering options for an independent monitoring of a ceasefire. As inputs from the parties will be essential for plans to be realistic and implementable on the ground, they are currently being sought within the framework of the Joint Military Commission.

D. Women's empowerment

70. UNSMIL continued efforts to mainstream gender and ensure the meaningful participation of women and young people throughout the intra-Libyan three-track dialogue. On 4 June, three Libyan Political Forum participants, including a woman, shared lessons from the Forum session of 26 February with the political working group of the international follow-up committee, and discussed possible steps to rejuvenate political dialogue. The Libyan participants reflected on discussions held online after February and on the challenges facing the Forum.

71. Libyan women's networks continued to take the lead in calling for peaceful solutions to the political divisions and the restoration of peace through a ceasefire.

On Eid al-Fitr, Libyan women's networks and other civil society organizations from the Arab States region expressed support for my call for a global ceasefire.

72. The United Nations welcomed an announcement by the Supreme Judicial Council on 8 June on the establishment of two dedicated courts in Benghazi and Tripoli to address violence against women, men and children, which were expected to contribute to the elimination of violence against women in Libya. On 19 June, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNFPA hosted a webinar to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict and to raise awareness of violence against women. My acting Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator participated in a panel discussion with the Deputy Chairperson of the Women's Empowerment and Support Unit in the Libyan Prime Minister's Office and a prominent female Libyan civil society activist. The topics of discussion included gender-based violence work in the time of COVID-19.

E. Young people, peace and security

73. UNFPA and a Libyan partner organization established the Youth against COVID-19 Fund to support youth-led initiatives to raise community awareness in Benghazi, Sabha and Ghat. In July, UNFPA and UN-Women continued round-table discussions with young women peace activists throughout the country to produce policy recommendations on young women's engagement in political processes, gender-sensitive prevention of violent extremism and the creation of gender-inclusive livelihood opportunities.

F. Coordination of international assistance

74. The humanitarian response continued to be coordinated by area coordination groups and the Inter-Sector Coordination Group, under the leadership of the humanitarian country team and the Humanitarian Coordinator.

75. An annual review of the humanitarian coordination structure to improve the efficacy and efficiency of coordination is under way and is expected to be completed by November. WHO, supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, led coordination and response to the COVID-19 pandemic in close cooperation with Libyan national and local health authorities. The support is guided by the humanitarian health sector COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, designed to steer coordinated efforts in support of the Government of Libya, complemented by the 2020 Libya Humanitarian Response Plan.

76. Based on a review in June 2020 of humanitarian needs outlined in the 2020 Libya Humanitarian Response Plan, the estimated number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased from 893,000 to 1 million people. The change reflected increased displacement and the initial impact of COVID-19, particularly regarding food security and loss of livelihoods that has disproportionately affected internally displaced persons and migrants. Humanitarian partners are targeting 345,000 of the 1 million people in need. The plan requires a total of \$130 million to provide humanitarian assistance, including the provision of protection services, food, shelter and basic health and education assistance.

G. Humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance

77. Military developments resulted in new population displacement from Tripoli, Tarhunah and Sirte, with almost 30,000 people forced to flee their homes. Areas hosting the largest groups of newly displaced include Ajdabiya (6,050 persons), Bani Walid (4,750 persons) and Benghazi (6,550 persons). Most internally displaced persons stayed with relatives and host families or in collective shelters established by local authorities. United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners reached about 34,000 people displaced in June with food, hygiene kits and other non-food items.

78. Many displaced persons began returning to southern Tripoli despite the significant risk from explosive ordnance. According to the Libyan Mine Action Centre, 57 people have been killed and 111 injured since mid-May in Sirte and southern Tripoli, of whom 101 were civilians, including 7 children and 67 clearance operators.

79. In June, the Ministry of Defence began convening weekly joint committee meetings to coordinate the mine action response. In Sirte, new or legacy contamination resulted in seven civilian casualties, including children. However, the scale of contamination in the Sirte area cannot be quantified until surveys can be safely conducted.

80. IOM estimates that there are over 600,000 migrants and refugees in Libya from more than 46 countries, who have limited access to humanitarian and other assistance as a result of the military hostilities. On account of border closures in response to COVID-19, the voluntary humanitarian return of migrants and the evacuation and resettlement of refugees were temporarily suspended in March. On 20 August, the first IOM voluntary return flight in five months helped 118 Ghanaian migrants to return home from Libya.

81. Confirmed COVID-19 cases have increased significantly nationwide. As at 10 August, there have been 9,463 confirmed cases, including 169 deaths. Cities with high numbers of confirmed cases included Sabha, Tripoli and Misratah in the south and west. Cases also increased in eastern and central cities, including in Benghazi, Sirte and Ajdabiya. Southern Libya had a high concentration of confirmed cases, despite representing only 8 per cent of the population. On 24 June, 28 migrants rescued at sea after embarking from Libya tested positive for COVID-19.

82. Given the low level of testing capacity, the actual scale of the pandemic in Libya is likely to be higher than reported. While response capacity has slowly increased, the ability of the health authorities to adequately test, trace and provide treatment remains weak. There is a lack of critical medical supplies and equipment, including an increasing gap in testing capabilities. The available tests are concentrated mostly in Tripoli and Benghazi. Several public health-care facilities have reportedly closed owing to a lack of personal protective equipment.

83. Fragmented governance is another serious obstacle to the COVID-19 response. A national preparedness and response plan is yet to be endorsed. In the absence of a coordinated national response, many municipalities issued separate directives and introduced local measures. Complicating efforts are a weak disease surveillance system and a lack of reporting to the disease early warning and response network.

84. While national immunization campaigns have restarted, shortages of relevant vaccines are putting the lives of many young children at risk. Measles outbreaks, which periodically occur in Libya, present a significant risk amid the armed conflict, disrupted regular health-care services and regular cuts to electricity and safe water supplies.

85. Across the country, the conflict and the negative socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 are stretching the coping capacities and resilience of many, including the 1 million people estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance. By the end of May, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that the number of food-insecure people in the country had increased to 683,000, compared with 336,000 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Insecurity, bureaucratic impediments and pandemic-related restrictions continued to hamper humanitarian access. In June, humanitarian agencies reported 979 incidents of access constraints, a 4 per cent increase from May. Almost 75 per cent were directly or indirectly related to COVID-19 precautionary measures.

86. Despite those challenges, the United Nations continued to engage with the authorities, enabling humanitarian personnel and supplies to reach those in need. In 2020, humanitarian organizations have reached more than 243,000 people with assistance, including 66,000 internally displaced persons, 119,000 vulnerable conflict-affected Libyans and returnees and 58,000 migrants and refugees. That also includes 98,000 people who were assisted by activities that contributed to the COVID-19 preparedness and response plan. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, which enables humanitarian personnel to travel to and from Libya, resumed flights at the end of June, after the Libyan air operator had earlier terminated the contract.

87. Responding to COVID-19, humanitarian partners supported efforts to increase awareness in communities through the dissemination of communication material. Communication activities were targeted to internally displaced persons, migrants and other vulnerable groups in at-risk locations. Partners supported capacity for testing, tracing and treatment by training and deploying health teams working at isolation sites, health centres and points of entry and providing essential supplies. Assistance including disinfection and waste management were provided in collective shelters for internally displaced persons, migrant detention centres, health facilities and schools. Hygiene kits were provided to vulnerable households.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and security arrangements

88. The United Nations maintained an international civilian staff presence in Tripoli of about 60 persons on a rotational basis. That number was continuously reviewed on the basis of the security situation, the requirements for humanitarian assistance and measures to protect staff from contracting or spreading COVID-19. UNSMIL conducted a select few missions outside Tripoli to monitor the conflict and human rights violations and abuses. All international staff in Tripoli continued to be accommodated at the Oea compound, which was protected by the United Nations Guard Unit. During periods of heightened conflict, national staff were advised to work from home or, in some cases, to move away from conflict-affected areas. UNSMIL maintained a small international staff presence at the Benghazi hub.

89. On the basis of decisions by the crisis management team, which was advised by WHO and by UNSMIL medical staff, the Mission continued to implement a comprehensive set of measures to ensure the best possible protection of personnel from contracting or spreading COVID-19. The authorities in Libya and Tunisia maintained and revised movement restrictions as part of their preventive measures. Amid rapidly increasing COVID-19 cases, the Libyan authorities kept the country's borders closed and maintained strict testing and quarantine measures for those arriving in the country, including United Nations personnel. Following the partial resumption of operations at Mitiga Airport in Tripoli, UNSMIL resumed flights on 25 June. At the end of June, Tunisia reopened its borders and is regularly adjusting

preventive measures for individuals arriving from specific countries. Despite the COVID-19-related restrictions, United Nations efforts to proceed with the rotation of the United Nations Guard Unit in Tripoli continued, which is expected to begin as soon as conditions permit. There was one confirmed case of COVID-19 among United Nations staff in Libya.

V. Observations and recommendations

90. The increased risks of military escalation in Libya and regional tensions are of great concern. I urge Libyan and foreign actors to refrain from aggressive rhetoric and actions that will further sow division. I welcome recent Libyan calls for a ceasefire and hope that they will be respected by all armed forces. Stability requires a lasting ceasefire and a full return to political dialogue.

91. I call upon Member States to continue to use their influence on Libyan parties to support the talks of the UNSMIL-facilitated 5+5 Joint Military Commission. Members of the international follow-up committee provided valuable support for the resumption of those talks. Their continued constructive engagement in supporting an end to hostilities and paving the way for a meaningful and inclusive political dialogue is critical.

92. I reiterate my call upon the parties to the conflict to finalize the draft ceasefire agreement and proceed with its implementation. Doing so would constitute a response to the aspirations and calls of the overwhelming majority of Libyans, who long for a return to a safe and dignified life. I intend to make proposals to the Security Council on effective ceasefire monitoring arrangements, in accordance with resolution [2510 \(2020\)](#).

93. I welcome the significant contributions of Member States and regional organizations that are actively participating in the working groups of the international follow-up committee. The African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States play a critical role as Co-Chairs of the relevant working groups, and I thank them for their respective efforts to support the United Nations in advancing the intra-Libyan dialogue.

94. The persistent violations of the arms embargo continue to be of great concern. Strict adherence to the embargo, in accordance with Security Council resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#), is vital to prevent the continued escalation of violence and to support efforts to end the conflict. I remind all Member States of their obligation not to sell or supply arms to the Libyan parties and urge Member States to implement all measures related to the embargo, in accordance with resolutions [2473 \(2019\)](#), [2509 \(2020\)](#) and [2510 \(2020\)](#).

95. The flow of arms into and out of the country and the proliferation of armed groups and criminal networks create an attractive operating ground for terrorists. Further escalation of the conflict could offer new opportunities for ISIL to expand its activities, with possible negative effects on existing fragile situations in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions.

96. I remain committed to providing United Nations good offices to facilitate a solution to end the blockage of oil infrastructure, which is negatively affecting the country's already weakened economic and financial situation. The action taken by the European Union through its military operation in the Mediterranean in preventing the illicit export of crude oil from Libya and the violations of the arms embargo is a positive step. It is important to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the arms embargo, not only at sea but also across air and land borders.

97. The continued determination of the Libyan electoral authorities to resume municipal council elections despite the challenges posed by the conflict and COVID-19 is commendable. Municipal service delivery must be shielded from national politics. The legitimacy and unity of elected local authorities must be maintained. I encourage the Government to support and safeguard local democratic processes.

98. I encourage all Libyan actors to implement Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security. The voices of women and young people must be taken into account to achieve sustainable peace and stability, as well as to shape tomorrow's Libya. The continued efforts of UNSMIL and others to ensure the inclusion of women and youth in intra-Libyan dialogue processes is critical.

99. I strongly condemn the indiscriminate shelling and air strikes affecting civilians and residential areas, as well as the repeated targeting of medical personnel and facilities. I remind all parties of the strict prohibition of indiscriminate attacks under international humanitarian law and appeal to all to refrain from conducting aerial bombardment or shelling of residential neighbourhoods and other civilian areas. I also denounce the increased use of landmines, booby traps and improvised explosive devices, which have a disproportionate impact on civilians. I recall the obligation of all parties to ensure respect for and the protection of medical personnel and facilities. Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, could constitute violations of international humanitarian law and may amount to war crimes.

100. Armed groups throughout Libya hold thousands of men, women and children in prolonged arbitrary and unlawful detention and subject them to torture and other human rights abuses. I call for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained arbitrarily or otherwise unlawfully deprived of their liberty. Furthermore, those lawfully detained must be transferred to official detention facilities and treated in accordance with applicable international laws and standards.

101. The continued arbitrary detention of migrants and refugees in formal detention centres and at informal smuggler sites remains a critical concern. Refugees and migrants in Libya should be released from detention and provided with safe shelter. Libya is not considered to be a safe port of disembarkation for refugees and migrants, and I urge relevant Member States to revisit policies that support the interception at sea and return of refugees and migrants to Libya. In addition, refugees and migrants should be included in the country's COVID-19 planning and response.

102. The lack of accountability for serious crimes has had a clear impact on peace and stability. There is a need for credible investigations into alleged systematic violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the recently discovered mass graves in Tarhounah, to hold the perpetrators of those violations accountable and to provide justice and remedies to victims and survivors. Accountability is key to reinstating public trust in justice and security institutions, to rebuilding the rule of law and to achieving a sustainable peace. In that vein, I welcome the establishment of an international fact-finding mission to Libya by the Human Rights Council and the commitment of the Government of Libya, among others, to investigate the mass graves in Tarhounah.

103. I urge Member States to support the Humanitarian Response Plan for Libya, including the aspects included in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, which is vital to ensure that lifesaving needs are met and existing vulnerabilities are not exacerbated further owing to COVID-19.

104. UNSMIL has been operating in Libya under difficult security circumstances throughout the protracted conflict. The Mission has maintained a presence in Tripoli and Benghazi despite the security challenges, and a back office in Tunis. I reiterate

my commitment, security conditions permitting, to continue to maintain a United Nations presence in Libya while reviewing security risk assessments and arrangements in order to implement the UNSMIL mandate. With the support of the Security Council, appointing my next Special Representative remains a top priority. Accordingly, I recommend a 12-month extension of the Mission's mandate.

105. I express my appreciation to my acting Special Representative for Libya, Stephanie Williams, and to all United Nations personnel working in support of peace, security and humanitarian assistance in the country in a challenging environment. I wish to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Government of Nepal for providing the vital personnel of the United Nations Guard Unit. I also thank the Government of Tunisia for supporting UNSMIL staff and hosting an office in Tunis.
