



# Security Council

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## Situation in Mali

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. By its resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2023 and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers developments since the previous report ([S/2023/236](#)), issued on 30 March 2023. It also provides an update on the four parameters for mandate implementation, as presented in the report of the Secretary-General on the internal review of MINUSMA ([S/2023/36](#)).

#### II. Major political and other related developments

##### A. Political transition

2. Following the finalization of the draft constitution in March, the authorities embarked on the popularization of the document among the Malian population. Several national stakeholders publicly expressed their positions with regard to the constitutional reform process. Those in favour include the Adéma-Parti africain pour la solidarité et la justice, the Union pour la République et la démocratie, the Mouvement ensemble pour un Mali nouveau, Yelema-le changement, the Coordination des associations et organisations féminines du Mali, the Alliance démocratique pour la paix and the Conseil supérieur de la diaspora malienne. Conversely, the Mouvement du 5 juin-Rassemblement des forces patriotiques-Mali Kura, the Cadre des partis et regroupements politiques pour le retour à l'ordre constitutionnel, the Appel du 20 février pour sauver le Mali and the Forum des organisations de la société civile, separately called upon the authorities to abandon the process.

3. On 5 May, the Government announced that the constitutional referendum would be held on 18 June; the electoral campaign for the referendum would start on 2 June and end on 16 June, and Malian Defence and Security Forces would vote in advance on 11 June. The announcement of the new date was welcomed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as an important step in the implementation of the transition timetable. The local follow-up Committee, comprising the African Union, ECOWAS and MINUSMA, also welcomed the



announcement and called upon the international community to adequately support Mali in the endeavour. On 9 May, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission also welcomed the announcement and called on all national stakeholders to constructively engage the transitional authorities in building an inclusive, democratic and capable State.

4. Meanwhile, the operationalization of the new electoral management body, the Independent Authority for Election Management, in the regions is ongoing, with the aim of establishing 994 local coordination branches in 19 regions, 1 district, 159 circles and 815 communes. The selection of Authority members to be deployed to the branches was officially finalized on 15 May. On 10 May, the Council of Ministers adopted an ordinance amending some provisions of the electoral law to facilitate the preparation of the referendum. The provisions include the possibility for voters to use existing voter cards instead of the biometric identity cards that are being rolled out. The ordinance acknowledges the complexity of establishing the new electoral management body and its impact on the transition timeline, while also allowing for Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization to complement the activities of the Authority.

5. Multifaceted support was also extended in the context of preparations for the elections. MINUSMA continued to coordinate its technical and logistic support with Malian counterparts through the joint working group of the Independent Authority for Election Management and MINUSMA. On 5 April, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) handed over computer equipment worth about \$530,000 to the Authority. The Mission continued to support women's participation in the electoral and political processes through various initiatives. For instance, in May, it organized a pilot workshop in Gao on leadership and public speaking for 40 women from civil society and political parties that will be replicated in other regions of northern and central Mali.

## **B. Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali**

6. The international mediation team pursued its consultations with the parties to facilitate the resumption of the work of the monitoring mechanisms. On 7 April, proposals were submitted to them to solicit engagement on issues revolving around the following: (a) political and institutional reforms, including the identification of and consensus around the legislative and regulatory measures aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali; (b) defence and security issues, in particular the swift operationalization of the ad hoc commission mandated to resolve outstanding issues related to the chain of command within the national defence and security forces and the integration of senior civilian officials of the movements into the Malian Defence and Security Forces and State institutions, preparatory measures for the launching of the global disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the revision of current security arrangements; (c) the effective launch of development projects agreed upon within the framework of the Sustainable Development Fund and the identification of additional priority projects, as well as the scaling up of the humanitarian response in support of affected communities; and (d) the role of the international mediation team, including as it relates to its arbitration authority. The parties have yet to communicate their formal responses to the proposals. The Special Representative for Mali, together with the *chef de file* continued to engage with the parties to ensure a common understanding of the proposed actions and the way forward. In the same vein, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Ahmed Attaf, visited Bamako from 23 to 25 April to urge the signatory parties to adhere fully to the proposals made by the international mediation team. On 12 May, the Minister for Reconciliation, Peace and National

Cohesion, Colonel-Major Ismaël Wagué, met with representatives of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Plateforme in Kidal to rebuild confidence and facilitate the resumption of the work of the monitoring mechanisms. He reiterated the Government's commitment to the Agreement and took the opportunity to visit the reconstituted battalion together with officials from the signatory movements, stressing that its continued deployment in Kidal testified to the commitment of the parties to peace.

7. These developments took place against the backdrop of rising tensions between the parties following the 5 April flight by an aircraft of the Malian Armed Forces over northern Malian locations, including Kidal. MINUSMA promptly liaised with the signatory parties at the capital and regional levels to help de-escalate tensions and issued a statement calling on the parties to exercise utmost restraint. On 6 April, the international mediation team held a meeting and reiterated its call to the signatory parties to refrain from statements and actions that could jeopardize efforts to revitalize the peace process. On 24 April, the Chief of Defence Staff, in a communiqué, informed of a significant operation in Tinfadimata, Ménaka region, that had reportedly resulted in the arrests of 12 alleged extremists. He also called upon the signatory armed groups to coordinate their movements with the Malian Armed Forces to prevent tensions on the ground. Two of the 12 detainees were identified as members of the Ménaka battalion des forces armées reconstituées and eventually released. On 27 April, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad issued a communiqué indicating that the remaining 10 people arrested on suspicion of terrorism by Malian Armed Forces and foreign security personnel were combatants of the signatory movement and called for their release. To prevent further such incidents in this increasingly volatile security landscape, MINUSMA has been working with the parties to the Agreement to seek a consensual revision of the security arrangements.

### **C. Stabilization and the restoration of State authority in the centre**

8. MINUSMA continued to support the State's stabilization efforts in the central regions, including through conflict management initiatives. In this regard, seven new communal reconciliation committees were created, and members were trained during the reporting period. As a result, on 8 April, the Government's Adviser on economic and financial affairs intervened in Syn, Djenné *cercle*, Mopti region to manage a land conflict that had blocked the final demarcation of an important transhumance path that passes through agricultural lands. MINUSMA also continued to support the revamping of land commissions to prevent and resolve conflict, improve governance and extend State authority, while contributing to the legitimacy of State authority at the communal and village levels, including in areas under the influence of extremist groups. From 2 to 4 May, MINUSMA provided technical and logistical support to the Judge of Douentza, Douentza region, in holding civil and criminal hearings in his jurisdiction.

## **III. Security developments and the Mission's response**

9. Fighting continued in Gao and Ménaka regions, with Islamic State in the Greater Sahara expanding the area under its control. In central Mali, groups affiliated with Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin continued to pose a significant threat, as exemplified by the complex attacks on Sévaré on 22 April. Extremist attacks against State targets such as customs and forestry posts also persisted in southern and western Mali. On the basis of figures collected by the Mission, from 1 July 2022 to 22 May 2023, a total of 1,002 civilians died and 445 others were injured because of armed conflict, improvised explosive device incidents and criminal acts, which marks a

decrease from the 1,556 civilians killed and the 530 injured between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022. The decrease in the number of civilian casualties may be attributed to the pressure exerted by the military operations of the Malian Armed Forces on extremist groups, as well as a change of tactics by the latter (e.g. issuing ultimatums to populations to leave ahead of attacks).

### North Mali

10. In Timbuktu region, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara activities were concentrated in the Gourma Rharous *cercle*, where those groups were fighting for influence. In response, Malian Armed Forces intensified their presence. On 1 April, an improvised explosive device attack destroyed a checkpoint of the Malian Defence and Security Forces located approximately 2.5 km from MINUSMA Goundam camp. No casualties were reported. Coordination between the Mission and the Malian Defence and Security Forces continued, resulting in three patrols per week to provide security to civilian populations in the city of Timbuktu, as well as foot and motorized patrols in the *cercles* of Ber and Goundam. In the latter, MINUSMA has been conducting long-range patrols to Niafunké, Diré and Tonka on a weekly basis to support the free movement of people and goods. The Mission supported two regional workshops on strengthening the capacities of advisory security committees in Taoudenni and Timbuktu, from 4 to 6 and 10 to 12 April, respectively. As envisioned in the Agreement, participants included State officials, Malian Defence and Security Forces and civil society representatives.

11. In Gao region, Ansongo *cercle* experienced the highest number of incidents related to activities of extremist groups and opportunistic criminality. On 20 April, alleged combatants of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara attacked a post of the Malian Armed Forces in Labbezanga village, killing one soldier and injuring another. Protesting rising insecurity, the local population in Bara blocked the Gao-Ansongo road on 26 April. In response, Malian Armed Forces reinforced patrols in the area. On 10 and 11 May, MINUSMA also patrolled Bara village and, on 11 May, conducted a deterrence flight in coordination with Malian Armed Forces to deter extremist group activities in the area. In Ansongo, the Mission rehabilitated a military camp to support the deployment of Malian Armed Forces and ameliorate the living conditions of Malian soldiers. Within the same project, and in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, MINUSMA built a checkpoint for Malian Defence and Security Forces in support of their efforts to secure Ansongo town and the surrounding areas. In Gao and Ansongo, the Mission conducted daily patrols to ensure the protection of the towns and the sites for internally displaced persons.

12. In Ménaka region, elements of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara stormed the village of Tidermene on 10 April, signalling the expansion of the group's presence into all six *cercles* of the region. The Malian Armed Forces have conducted operations in Anderanboukane, Inékar and Tidermene *cercles*. On 31 March, Malian Armed Forces undertook aerial dominance and deterrence flyovers covering Ménaka town, Tinfadimata and Anderamboukane *cercle*. Similar flights were later undertaken on 12 and 17 April in Talataye (Gao region), Tidermene and Ménaka *cercles*. On 11 April, MINUSMA conducted a medical evacuation for two soldiers of the Malian Armed Forces who had suffered injuries during the attack by Islamic State in the Greater Sahara on Tidermene. The continued fighting has resulted in new waves of displacement. At the end of April, 78,484 registered internally displaced persons were living in 23 different sites in Ménaka. To ensure security for the local and displaced populations, MINUSMA undertook two patrols during the day and two at night in Ménaka town, including sites for internally displaced persons, seven days per week.

In addition, joint patrols with the Malian security forces are conducted three times per week, and the Mission is providing fuel for these joint activities.

13. On 21 May, an improvised explosive device exploded against a MINUSMA convoy 12 km from Tessalit, Kidal region. No peacekeeper was seriously injured.

### **Central Mali**

14. Since 30 June 2022, despite sustained efforts by the Government to improve the situation, the central regions of Mali continued to experience a high level of insecurity.

15. On 22 April, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin carried out complex attacks against bases of the Malian Armed Forces in Sevaré town, including the Air Force base, next to the airport and MINUSMA camp. The attacks killed 10 civilians, injured 61 others and severely damaged civilian infrastructure, including 20 houses and shelters for internally displaced persons in the Sarema neighbourhood. Overall, the attacks directly affected 366 civilians, including 144 internally displaced persons. Local authorities, the humanitarian community and the United Nations country team provided humanitarian assistance.

16. The Malian Armed Forces continued to conduct counterterrorism operations in various locations, such as in Douentza and Haïre (Douentza region), and in Bandiagara and Dourou (Bandiagara region) to free areas from the presence of extremist groups. Reprisal attacks by extremist groups against civilians suspected of collaborating with State forces continued, sometimes involving the abduction of individuals, including customary authorities. Following reports of an ultimatum against the local population in Débéré for collaborating with the Malian Armed Forces and allowing MINUSMA patrols in the area, the village chief was abducted on 15 April; he was eventually released on 25 April, unharmed. A field mission to Débéré that MINUSMA had scheduled as part of its outreach and protection plan was cancelled out of concern that it could provoke a retaliatory response against the community. The Mission is planning to resume activities and assessing the best way forward in consultation with local authorities and communities. MINUSMA continued its patrols around Douentza, convoys and patrols along RR30 towards Timbuktu, RN-16 north of Mopti, and along RN-15 to Bandiagara, including to protect the critical infrastructures of the Yawakanda and Songho bridges. During the reporting period, MINUSMA suffered four improvised explosive device attacks in the centre but they did not inflict serious injuries to peacekeepers.

## **IV. Human rights situation**

17. MINUSMA continued to support the Malian authorities in strengthening the institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. On 20 April, MINUSMA and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights signed a memorandum of understanding for the provision of technical support to the Government's efforts to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including through the operationalization of the National Human Rights Directorate mandated to streamline and monitor respect for human rights in different State institutions. MINUSMA also supported the Malian authorities in the preparation of the country's national report for the fourth cycle of the Human Rights Council universal periodic review, held on 2 May. With MINUSMA support, the Malian Defence and Security Forces continued efforts to integrate human rights into their operations and institutions. Cooperation with the Malian Defence and Security Forces included the project to equip the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff with a national team of trainers and the production of a manual on human rights training specifically designed for the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

18. Monitoring and documentation of violence against civilians during April indicate that extremist groups continued to be the main perpetrators, followed by self-defence groups and armed militias, and signatory armed groups. Some violations of international human rights and humanitarian law were documented during operations conducted by the Malian Armed Forces. Overall, MINUSMA verified 132 human rights violations (33) and abuses (99). The violations and abuses included 89 people killed, 31 injured and 12 abducted or forcibly disappeared.

19. On 12 May, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a fact-finding report that concluded that there were strong indications that troops of the Malian Armed Forces and foreign security personnel had killed over 500 people during a five-day military operation in the village of Moura in the Mopti region of central Mali in March 2022. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended that the Malian authorities publish the findings of their announced investigations into possible violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in Moura, prosecute all alleged perpetrators and ensure that the victims and/or their family members have access to justice and obtain full reparation where appropriate.

20. On 13 May, the transitional Government issued a communiqué stating it “vehemently denounces this biased report, which is based on a fictitious story and does not meet established international standards”. The transitional Government held that “no Moura civilians lost their lives during the military operation”. Recalling the judicial investigation it had launched on 9 April 2022, the transitional Government stated that “the Government of Mali is determined to bring this procedure to a successful conclusion, with strict respect for human rights and in complete independence”. In connection with the Mission’s use of satellite imagery for fact-finding purposes, the transitional Government further stated it would immediately open a judicial investigation against the fact-finding mission and its accomplices for “espionage”, “undermining the external security of the State” and “military conspiracy”. On 19 May, the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to MINUSMA asking for a list of the personnel who had taken part in the fact-finding mission.

21. In April, the United Nations and non-governmental partners recorded 470 incidents of sexual violence, of which 51 were conflict-related. All the victims were female, including 11 girls between 12 and 17 years of age. Elements of signatory armed groups accounted for 18 per cent of the perpetrators, and unidentified armed elements for 82 per cent. The United Nations verified grave violations affecting 154 children, including 5 who were victims of double violations. These violations included recruitment and use (96), killing and maiming (32), sexual violence (3), abduction (6), attacks on schools and hospitals (8) and denial of humanitarian access to children (9).

## V. Humanitarian situation

22. During the reporting period, the humanitarian situation remained alarming. Humanitarian organizations working through the United Nations-coordinated humanitarian response plan estimated that, in 2023, 8.8 million people would require humanitarian assistance and protection across the country – a 17 per cent increase over 2022. The most severe humanitarian needs are concentrated in parts of Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Ménaka regions.

23. As at 30 April, the overall displaced population was estimated at 375,539 individuals, an 8.9 per cent decrease from 412,387 in December 2022: 208,210 internally displaced persons, or 55 per cent, in the central regions of Bandiagara, Douentza, Mopti, San and Ségou; and 151,384 internally displaced persons, or 40 per

cent, in Gao, Kidal Ménaka and Timbuktu regions. Heightened insecurity in Kidal and Ménaka regions has increased displacement there, whereas a relative improvement in security in Mopti and Ségou regions has resulted in lower figures. However, in the regions of Mopti and Ségou alone, more than 3 million people need humanitarian assistance, compared with 2.8 million in 2022. Under the 2023 humanitarian response plan, \$751.5 million is required to assist 5.7 million people across the country. As at 19 May, donors had provided \$82.9 million in funding – or 11 per cent of the required funds.

24. Humanitarian organizations continued to face access-related challenges owing mainly to conflict and criminality, with the greatest number of incidents reported in Ségou, Mopti, Gao, Ménaka and Timbuktu regions. In January 2023, a World Health Organization staff member was kidnapped in Ménaka and later freed. MINUSMA continued to secure convoys and locations where humanitarians stay overnight. MINUSMA also continued to secure road axis to ease access to civilians.

## **VI. Operational and other challenges**

25. A series of developments over the past year – including the departure of several troop- and police-contributing countries, constraints in the use of air assets for intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance purposes and the non-availability since July 2022 of three of the four combat escort convoy companies – have seriously affected the ability of MINUSMA to perform mandated tasks effectively and to predictably sustain its footprint across the country. To maximize increasingly limited resources to effectively implement the mandate, in early 2023 the Mission developed and implemented an integrated plan providing that MINUSMA would give priority (a) to resupply and base defence tasks; and (b) to supporting the implementation of priority activities by civilian pillars. Following the announcement of the decision of the Government of Egypt to phase out its combat convoy battalion, an evaluation of the escort model has been under way. The Government of Tunisia confirmed the deployment of an additional C-130 aircraft to Bamako. In April, an assessment and advisory visit was conducted with a view to replacing the outgoing Ivorian light infantry battalion in sector West and for the Jordanian quick reaction force in sector East. An armed helicopter unit from Pakistan is under deployment, with the cargo to be delivered by the end of May 2023.

26. The use of improvised explosive devices continued to pose serious threats to the security of peacekeepers and hamper the Mission's mobility. From 1 July 2022 to 11 May 2023, a total of 33 improvised explosive device incidents were reported, resulting in 9 peacekeepers killed and 33 seriously injured, representing a decrease in such incidents compared with the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, in which 85 such incidents had resulted in 17 peacekeepers killed and 37 others seriously injured. While better preparedness to counter such attacks through equipment and training was shown to have had a positive impact in terms of reducing risks for peacekeepers, the results have to be weighed against the intensification of the threat posed by the devices, including through regional expansion, better emplaced devices and higher explosive charges. On 2 May, MINUSMA established a threat mitigation cell. Bringing together specialized personnel from civilian and uniformed components, the cell integrates all elements of planning, operations, logistics, intelligence and training relating to the evolving threat in a headquarters cell that is supported by a network of personnel in the sectors to ensure a direct line of support, feedback and lessons learned.

27. The reporting period witnessed a surge in misinformation and disinformation against the Mission. In the aftermath of the 22 April attack against the Malian Armed

Forces in Sevaré, allegations and fake news on the role of the Mission contributed to heightened anti-MINUSMA rhetoric, including calls for violence against MINUSMA staff and premises, mainly conveyed through social media. MINUSMA posted factual statements on social media, intensified media outreach and launched a broadcast via message applications to rectify false statements. On 26 April, MINUSMA reached out to a major social media platform asking for the deletion of a video inciting violence against the Mission. The video was deleted by the platform on the same day. MINUSMA extensively engaged Malian partners, who were crucial in dispelling false allegations. The local authorities in Mopti publicly expressed support for the Mission's work and stressed the importance of its partnership with the Malian authorities. The regional authorities and the regional youth council also engaged with youth groups, stressing that the Government would not tolerate violence.

## **VII. Parameters for effective engagement by the Mission**

### **A. Advances in the political transition**

28. On 19 April, the technical committee tasked with monitoring the transition timetable, made up of experts from ECOWAS, the African Union and MINUSMA as well as their Malian counterparts, met to assess the progress made on the 57 activities identified by the Malian authorities to be rolled out between July 2022 and March 2024. At the session, it was assessed that 38 activities had been undertaken, of which 23 had been fully completed. The ongoing 15 activities, some of which experienced delays, related to the electoral register (2), the constitutional referendum (7), local elections (3), the organization of legislative and presidential elections (2), as well as the operationalization of the Independent Authority for Election Management (1). In total, 19 activities were reported to be pending.

29. The stated objectives of the new electoral law promulgated in July 2022 and amended in February 2023 are to address shortcomings in the electoral system, including those identified by Malians as important drivers of the 2020 post-electoral crisis. As mentioned above, the Independent Authority for Election Management was set up at the national level, and the operationalization of its structures in the regions was ongoing at the time of writing. The objectives of the six laws on territorial and administrative organization (see [S/2023/236](#)), adopted on 19 October 2022 and enacted on 13 March 2023, are to address structural governance shortcomings and to increase democratic local governance.

30. The holding of the constitutional referendum on 18 June will be a major milestone in the implementation of the political transition. Following concerns expressed by Malian stakeholders on the contents and process of the draft constitution, transitional authorities took several initiatives to enhance inclusivity and build consensus. These included nationwide consultations during the drafting phase and the creation of a 72-member commission tasked with finalizing the draft constitution.

### **B. Progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation**

31. Despite renewed momentum in the second quarter of 2022, the parties have not met in the framework of the Agreement monitoring mechanisms since last year. The high-level decision-making meeting held in August 2022 was followed by a ministerial-level session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee in September. Fifteen women from the signatory parties were nominated to participate in the monitoring mechanisms of the Agreement, increasing the overall number of women



to 24. New difficulties emerged in December 2022, after the signatory movements decided to suspend their participation in the monitoring mechanisms. To facilitate a resolution of the differences, the international mediation team engaged extensively with the signatory parties and exercised its good offices through a series of consultations in Algiers, Bamako and Kidal. Those efforts also included bilateral engagements of my Special Representative. The proposals crafted by MINUSMA and validated by the international mediation team, pending with the parties at the time of writing, is aimed at creating conditions for the resumption of the work of the monitoring mechanisms and decisive progress in the implementation of the outstanding provisions of the Agreement.

32. It is important to note, however, that the six bills on administrative and territorial reorganization mentioned above are largely aligned with the Agreement's provision calling for new institutional architecture to enable the northern populations to administer themselves through their own representatives elected to regional and local councils and increase their representation in national institutions. It is also important to note that the Independent Observer released a comparative study in March, which had been commissioned by the international mediation team and which showed overlaps between the draft constitution and the Agreement. According to the study, the draft constitution did retain the spirit and incorporated several aspects of the Agreement, including the creation of the Sénat as the higher chamber of Parliament, the endorsement of the role of traditional justice mechanisms such as the qadis, as well as the recognition of Malian national languages as being official in the country. If adopted, the new constitution would result in the implementation of some provisions of the Agreement.

### **C. Freedom of movement for the Mission, including for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets critical for the safety and security of peacekeepers**

33. MINUSMA continued to be subject to movement restrictions both on the ground and in the air. Between 1 April and 11 May 2023, MINUSMA requested 565 flight authorizations, of which 167 were not authorized (29.5 per cent). Among those, 47 flights were intended to support the Mission's logistical operations, and 120 intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights were to enhance situational awareness and the security of peacekeepers. Restrictions remained uneven across sectors. A total of 160 flights were not authorized for north Mali (105 in sector East, including 5 Gao-Ménaka passenger and cargo resupply flights; 46 in sector North; and 9 in sector West) and a total of seven for the centre. To ensure the safety of convoys and camps, MINUSMA used other air assets, such as specialized helicopters equipped with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability and dedicated fixed-wing aircraft equipped with such capability along resupply routes, particularly on the Gao-Kidal-Tessalit and Mopti-Timbuktu axis as well as over the MINUSMA camps of Tessalit, Kidal, Timbuktu, Ber and Goundam, during day and night. All casualty and medical evacuation flights requested were approved without delay.

34. MINUSMA also recorded two restrictions on ground movements. On 21 April, despite the information on movements having been with national counterparts, one MINUSMA patrol was denied access to N'Tomi Kono village, located 40 km from Sévaré, without receiving further details from Malian Armed Forces. Similarly, on 2 May, another patrol was blocked at the Malian Armed Forces checkpoint of Thy village, 9 km north of Sévaré. In the centre, since April, MINUSMA has had no access to Djenné and Sofara towns to conduct civilian protection patrols, owing to military operations of the Malian Armed Forces. For the same reason, in Gao, MINUSMA continued to have no access to southern areas of Ansongo and Tessit.

35. Although MINUSMA was able to exercise its right to import goods for its use without restrictions, impediments, taxes or charges, Malian authorities imposed additional clearance measures for medical supplies, in particular medicines. This required additional coordination between the Mission, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the transit of MINUSMA civilian and military aeromedical evacuation teams. There were no impediments to freedom of entry and departure for Mission personnel. One staff member was arrested and detained for two days on charges of terrorist activities, when breaking the temporarily imposed movement restrictions. During the ensuing legal process, the prosecutor dropped the charges and the staff member was released.

#### **D. Ability to implement the entire Security Council mandate, including its human rights provisions**

36. Since January, the Mission has submitted five official requests to Malian authorities to conduct human rights in situ fact-finding missions, of which four were denied. However, 43 remote fact-finding activities and/or missions were conducted in the same period, including in Bamako, Gao, Mopti and Ségou.

37. The Government and MINUSMA continued to cooperate on a number of important initiatives, including with regard to the provision of technical and capacity-building assistance to the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

### **VIII. Regional developments**

38. During the reporting period, the relations between Mali and neighbouring countries witnessed significant improvements. In March, the fourth joint technical commission of Mali and Côte d'Ivoire met in Bamako from 22 to 24 March to discuss bilateral cooperation and measures to prevent the recurrence of diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

39. Bilateral security cooperation and cross-border partnerships for the fight against terrorism were also strengthened. On 9 March, the transitional President, Colonel Assimi Goïta, received the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Niger to discuss security cooperation. Soon after the visit, the Niger conducted a military operation in the border area with Mali in late March. Similarly, Burkina Faso and Mali have held several high-level meetings since February 2023, resulting in increased security cooperation, including the launch of a large-scale military operation to combat insecurity along border areas.

### **IX. Consultations with stakeholders**

40. Since the internal review and the position of the transitional Government of Mali annexed therein ([S/2023/36](#)), the Malian authorities have reiterated that none of the options proposed meet the expectations of the Malian people and their own priorities. At the time of writing, the authorities indicated that they were still consulting internally to define a position in the context of the Mission's mandate renewal.

41. The African Union, ECOWAS, the Group of Five for the Sahel and relevant Member States were consulted and expressed their support to MINUSMA and its continued presence in Mali, as well as its support to the transition and the Agreement. They stressed the importance of the stability of Mali for the entire region. None expressed a preference for option 3, viewing the time as not right for a conversion

into a special political mission. Most stressed that the Mission's withdrawal would be very detrimental to Mali and regional security. Several countries in the region, deeply concerned about the expansion of extremist groups perceived as an existential threat and about instability spilling over, have advocated for a strengthened mandate and presence, with some opting for option 1, which calls for an increase in the troop ceiling to give MINUSMA the full capacity to implement its current mandate in all areas of deployment. The African Union, ECOWAS and the Group of Five for the Sahel expressed similar fears and a preference for option 1, should Mali agree. Should that not be the case, they felt option 2 – with adjustments to the mandate to make it more robust – should be considered. Most countries in the region that also contribute uniformed personnel stressed the importance of continuing to support the political transition and the Agreement, while reiterating the need to listen to Malian voices. Some countries, including in the region, pointed out the risks associated with option 2 (b), which could be perceived as “abandoning” Mali if the Mission were to withdraw from the centre. Many Member States have indicated that they consider Option 2 (a) to be the most realistic, and suggested recentring the mandate on the transition and the Agreement while emphasizing the balance to be maintained between the tasks that the Mission could reasonably accomplish in the current context, and the absence of additional resources. One Member State indicated that a review of the mandate would be useful while others stated that, in its current form, the mandate remained relevant. Several Member States increasingly view the four parameters as a pertinent framework through which concrete progress in the situation in Mali could be measured beyond June 2023.

## **X. Implications of the options for the reconfiguration of the Mission**

42. The options for the configuration of MINUSMA, as outlined in the report on the internal review of the Mission (S/2023/36), are expanded below, on the basis of the findings of a joint military and police capability study conducted in April.

43. To offset the withdrawal of several troop-contributing countries and optimize the use of resources at its disposal, the Mission made immediate adjustments to its force along the following lines: (a) generation of three stand-alone combat convoy companies (one troop-contributing country has already been invited to deploy); (b) reallocation of the mobile task force headroom to strengthen overall force protection capabilities and ensure that all sectors have a quick reaction force as a sector reserve (already in place in three out of four sectors); and (c) reassignment of mobile task force military staff officers to the improvised explosive device threat mitigation cell, Ménaka and other vital cells, such as information operations and strategic communications. With regard to the police component, the Mission will redeploy one formed police unit to Ansongo and a newly generated formed police unit will deploy to Ménaka instead of Kidal, where it was initially meant to replace the unit withdrawn by Benin. Whereas all actions pertaining to personnel already in theatre will be implemented by the end of the 2023, the generation and deployment of additional units will likely continue into 2024.

### **Option 1: full capacity to implement the Mission's mandate in its entirety across all areas of its deployment**

44. Option 1, and its sub-options (a) and (b), allow an augmentation of uniformed personnel that would restore the Mission's mobility, manoeuvrability and responsiveness, as it would free up infantry units currently providing security and convoy escorts, to advance the implementation of the Mission's two strategic priorities.

**Option 1 (a): augmentation by 3,600 military and 360 police personnel**

45. This option would give MINUSMA the means to support the improvement of the political and security situation in northern and central Mali and simultaneously advance its two strategic priorities. In the north, the Mission would preserve the space for the implementation of the Agreement by defending population centres against the operations of extremist groups and safeguarding the ceasefire; and, when signatory parties resume the implementation of the Agreement, it would support the demobilization disarmament and reintegration process, the redeployment of the reconstituted Malian Defence and Security Forces and civilian administration in northern Mali and the implementation of the development projects envisioned in the Agreement. In the centre, the Mission would have the means to implement its protection of civilians' mandate. Strengthening the police component with 360 formed police unit personnel instead of the 80 police personnel initially envisaged in the report on the internal review of the Mission (S/2023/36), would allow joint patrols with Malian security forces in the main urban centres of northern and central Mali and secure sites for internally displaced persons. MINUSMA could prevent the return of extremist groups to recently liberated areas by providing a security umbrella for the restoration of basic services and delivery of peace dividends in the framework of the stabilization strategy of the Government of Mali, as called for by the transitional Government in the annex to the above-mentioned report.

46. Generating the additional personnel for the formed police unit personnel could take up to one year, while generating additional military forces could take up to two years. Those estimates are made on the basis of middle-ground scenarios, assuming support from the Government, including for the allocation of land for new infrastructure, and pledges from troop-contributing countries that meet MINUSMA statement of unit requirements.

**Option 1 (b): augmentation by approximately 2,000 uniformed personnel, including 360 police personnel**

47. This option would also improve the overall ability of MINUSMA to implement its mandate; in the event of a deteriorating security situation, however, the Mission would not be able simultaneously to contribute to the creation of a secure environment and advance its two strategic priorities. In such a context, the Mission would be forced to prioritize security tasks at the expense of integrated operations between the civilian and uniformed pillars, which would have a negative impact on the Mission's overall support to the peace process, to the restoration of State authority and to the protection of civilians in the centre.

48. MINUSMA would be able to deliver additional logistical support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces but would lack the military and police strength to oversee the stabilization of areas liberated from extremist armed groups. Force and police generation timelines would be similar to option 1 (a). Except for the construction of a new camp in Bourem, infrastructure work would be limited to expanding existing camps.

**Option 2: maintaining focus on the strategic priorities with a consolidated footprint**

49. Within the existing resources and troop ceiling, a reconfiguration would be needed to enable an efficient use of uniformed personnel, also in support of civilian-led activities.

**Option 2 (a): reconfiguration to support existing mandated priorities**

50. Given the volatility and sensitivity of the current context, any handover of bases should be contingent on progress in the peace process. The Mission's continued presence in the centre would allow it to support Malian authorities in the implementation of their stabilization strategy, as well as to support Malian-led efforts to secure the electoral process. Contingent on the cooperation of Malian authorities, MINUSMA would conduct fact-finding missions and pursue its contribution to the fight against impunity in the part of the country where the largest number of allegations of human rights violations and abuses have been reported over the past years. The presence of MINUSMA would continue to provide a security umbrella to humanitarian actors in their efforts to assist internally displaced persons, host communities and returnees.

51. As is the case now, some logistical support may be provided to the Malian Defence and Security Forces, but it would fall short of the expectations of the transitional Government, as conveyed in its paper, which is annexed to the report on the internal review of MINUSMA ([S/2023/36](#)).

**Option 2 (b): reconfiguration within existing troop ceiling, focusing primarily on supporting the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali**

52. The Mission would focus its efforts on safeguarding the ceasefire and accompanying signatory parties in the implementation of the Agreement, including restoration of basic services, security provisions and peace dividends. In close cooperation with Malian authorities, it would strive to protect the main urban centres from the extremist threat and contribute to the creation of a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

53. The Mission's mandated tasks in the centre, including support to the Government's strategy for the stabilization of these regions, would need to be transitioned to the United Nations country team. These tasks include support to stabilization and restoration of State authority; efforts to ensure accountability; the protection of civilians, including through dialogue, engagement and the establishment of a protective environment; and the promotion and protection of human rights. The full continuation of those substantive responsibilities would depend on generating additional resources for, and increasing the field presence of, the United Nations country team. Technical and logistical electoral assistance would continue to be provided, through the electoral management body and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization. However, MINUSMA would not contribute to securing the legislative and presidential polls in central Mali, the most densely populated region of the country.

54. MINUSMA would end its patrols along the main axes and the securing of key infrastructure in central Mali. These tasks would have to be taken over by the Malian Defence and Security Forces to prevent the border areas with Burkina Faso from falling under the control of extremist groups, thereby dividing the country and endangering civilian, humanitarian and MINUSMA movements on the critical routes between southern and northern Mali. New attacks against civilians, including in Ogossagou, cannot be excluded.

55. The Mission's support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces would be limited to supporting the operationalization of the reconstituted units in the north. Full implementation of this option would take several months, as it would require moving personnel to their new duty stations under difficult conditions, exacerbated by the limited availability of combat convoy companies, the need to adapt existing

infrastructure to meet new requirements and the necessary work associated with closing vacated sites.

### **Option 3: withdrawal of uniformed units and conversion into a special political mission**

56. Without uniformed components, the Mission would not be able to maintain a civilian presence outside of Bamako. Its capacity to support political dialogue and reconciliation processes, build capacity for good governance and monitor, promote and protect human rights would be limited to Bamako, with the risk of reversing some of the gains made so far in support of the deployment of State authority. Technical electoral assistance could still be provided to relevant ministries in Bamako. The special political mission would not be able to contribute to the creation of conditions for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance. It would not provide any type of logistical or operational support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces.

## **XI. Financial aspects**

57. The General Assembly, by its resolution [76/288](#), appropriated the amount of \$1,245.0 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. As at 17 May 2023, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for MINUSMA amounted to \$292.0 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,764.7 million. Reimbursement of the costs of troop and formed police personnel, as well as for contingent-owned equipment, have been made for the period up to 31 December 2022 in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## **XII. Observations**

58. The present report is submitted nearly six months after the internal strategic review of MINUSMA, which provided a thorough assessment of the situation, acknowledging the significant challenges that Mali continues to face after close to 10 years of international engagement to help the country end insecurity and achieve lasting stability. In this context, the report provides three options for the future of the Mission, while also serving to underline the continued relevance of the overall objective of the United Nations presence in Mali, as framed back in 2013, and to reaffirm the validity of the strategic priorities determined by the Security Council, as they relate to the implementation of the Agreement, support to the transition and the stabilization of the centre regions. None of the developments that occurred during the reporting period called this conclusion into question.

59. As I stressed in January, the status quo is not and cannot be an option. It can also neither be an option for the Malian people, who continue to bear the brunt of unspeakable violence and whose strong yearning for a better future remains unfulfilled, nor one for the international community, which, since 2013, has invested heavily in the stabilization of the country. It is against this backdrop that the review sought to identify parameters under which MINUSMA would be able to deliver on its mandate more effectively for the benefit of Mali and its people on the basis of a strong partnership between the United Nations and the host country.

60. Over the past months, the situation in Mali, viewed from the standpoint of those parameters, has witnessed mixed developments. While there are areas of lingering and serious concern, there have also been some encouraging developments. No effort should be spared to address the former and consolidate the latter.

61. The recent announcement of the new date for the constitutional referendum is a positive step. Together with the reaffirmation by the authorities of their determination to successfully bring the transition to an end in March 2024, it has injected additional momentum into the transition process, building on steps taken since June 2022 to pave the way for the timely restoration of constitutional order. MINUSMA and the United Nations country team, which have supported this process, will also support the holding of the referendum and the polls to follow. The need to ensure that these polls take place in conditions that will allow for the free expression of the will of the Malian people cannot be emphasized enough. Above all, it is essential that all political stakeholders, regardless of how they position themselves on the issues at hand, prioritize the return of Mali to constitutional order. It is equally essential that the region, which stands to lose from instability in Mali, continue to play its part in steering the political transition toward a peaceful conclusion. I look forward to the leadership and stepped-up efforts of the African Union and ECOWAS, alongside the United Nations, to contribute to creating conducive conditions for holding the constitutional referendum and the subsequent polls.

62. An equally important process for the future of Mali relates to the implementation of the Agreement. I am concerned about the continued paralysis of the monitoring mechanisms, which deprives the parties of formal avenues to dialogue among themselves as well as with their international partners. I welcome the relentless efforts of the international mediation team, under the leadership of Algeria as its *chef de file*. The proposals submitted by the team since early April offer a sound basis for resuming the vital work of the Agreement's monitoring mechanisms. I urge the parties to respond to them in earnest and with the spirit of compromise that the dire situation prevailing on the ground so desperately calls for. I note the visit by the Malian Minister for Reconciliation to Kidal and the discussions he had with representatives of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Plateforme, and I look forward to a tangible follow-up.

63. The launch, in mid-March, of the strategy for the stabilization of the centre represented an important moment in the efforts to foster a comprehensive and politically led approach to the specific challenges confronting that part of the country. The most difficult part – translating the document into concrete action – starts now, and I once more encourage the authorities to use the remainder of the transition to lay the required groundwork in this respect.

64. The issue of freedom of movement in the context of the MINUSMA mandate continued to be a challenge with the transitional Government. Resolving the matter, however, and, more generally, building a predictable and stable partnership based on joint planning and closer coordination in the field, remains key for the overall effectiveness of the Mission's support and the ability to meet the expectations of the Malian people for greater security. The reporting period ended without the expected advances. The Mission will continue to engage its Malian partners with the view to addressing these challenges and ensuring a more effective use of its resources and capabilities in support of the Malian government-led stabilization efforts.

65. I note with deep concern the conclusions of the investigation led by OHCHR on the Moura incident. I call on the Malian authorities to swiftly follow up on the recommendations of the report. In this respect, the early completion of a credible and transparent investigation to hold perpetrators accountable would be of utmost importance. Respect for human rights is not only an ethical and legal obligation but also an operational imperative for the success of counterterrorism operations. In this context, and in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy, the Mission will continue its capacity-building support to the Malian Defence and Security Forces, taking advantage of the many joint initiatives already launched in this respect. I also urge greater cooperation from the Malian authorities to facilitate access for the



conduct of in situ human rights investigations, whose sole purpose is to further support them in the pursuit of lasting peace and security.

66. I remain deeply concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation, including alarming levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, new displacements in some areas and ongoing access difficulties due to insecurity. I commend humanitarian actors for succeeding in delivering assistance to more than 2.9 million people in 2022. However, funding remains a severe constraint, and I call on donors to contribute more generously to the 2023 humanitarian response plan.

67. While progress in the fulfilment of the parameters outlined in the internal review has been uneven, the Mission has nonetheless continued to play a vital role at both the political and operational levels. With Mali entering a crucial period leading to the return to constitutional rule, its continued presence remains invaluable. In addition, international support to keep the peace process on track, to help meet daunting protection needs on the ground and to facilitate the extension of State authority is sorely needed. As the people of Mali and of the Sahel region in general grapple with daunting security, humanitarian and governance challenges, the United Nations offers a vital framework to sustain international solidarity, keeping in mind that the effectiveness of the efforts made to that end is heavily dependent on the extent of the cooperation extended to the Mission by the Malian authorities and the level of commitment by all concerned stakeholders to the political processes that MINUSMA is mandated to support.

68. Given the political context of the transition, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of MINUSMA for a period of one year, with its current authorized strength of 13,289 military and 1,920 police personnel, as detailed in paragraphs 73 to 75 of the report on the internal review ([S/2023/36](#)). I intend to use my authority to reconfigure the Mission and deploy civilian and uniformed capacities where they are most needed, on the basis of progress in the implementation of the Agreement and the political transition. Considering current troop levels and the timeline for the reconfiguration of the uniformed component, the Council could consider streamlining MINUSMA tasks around a limited set of priorities to improve its overall effectiveness until the end of the political transition in March 2024. Assuming that the Mission's mandate is renewed, the Council could also reassess the situation at any time during the mandate.

69. The ability of MINUSMA to achieve its mandate is contingent not only on the level of cooperation it receives from the Malian authorities and progress on political processes but also on the extent of support received from Member States. I remain deeply grateful to the troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment and the immense sacrifices made. I am encouraged by the progress made in generating new uniformed personnel in replacement of countries that have ended or are about to end their deployment, as well as in the mobilization of additional capabilities. These efforts will continue to be pursued. Of equal importance is the political support of the Security Council, whose unity is paramount going forward.

70. I pay tribute to the personnel, civilian and military, as well as to the leadership of the Mission for their steadfastness and commitment. I deeply appreciate the strong collaboration between the Mission and other multilateral partners and welcome the invaluable contributions of ECOWAS, the African Union and the European Union.



## Annex I

## United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali: military and police strength as at 23 May 2023

Country	Military			Police								
	Experts on mission, staff officers and units			Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Armenia	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Australia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Austria	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bangladesh	1 310	68	1 378	2	–	2	215	65	280	217	65	282
Belgium	6	–	6	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Benin	236	25	261	16	1	17	0	–	0	16	1	17
Bhutan	5	–	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Burkina Faso	635	26	661	21	16	37	132	8	140	153	24	177
Burundi	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cambodia	234	34	268	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cameroon	1	1	2	4	0	4	–	–	–	4	0	4
Canada	4	1	5	3	1	4	–	–	–	3	1	4
Chad	1 394	30	1 424	6	–	6	–	–	–	6	–	6
China	388	18	406	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Côte d'Ivoire	642	25	667	8	4	12	–	–	–	8	4	12
Czechia	3	2	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Denmark	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Egypt	903	26	929	18	1	19	146	14	160	164	15	179
El Salvador	102	10	112	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Estonia	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ethiopia	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Finland	4	–	4	0	1	1	–	–	–	0	1	1
France	24	–	24	8	2	10	–	–	–	8	2	10
Gambia	7	1	8	5	1	6	–	–	–	5	1	6
Germany	612	52	664	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ghana	126	16	142	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Guatemala	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Guinea	615	53	668	3	4	7	–	–	–	3	4	7
Indonesia	9	–	9	4	4	8	–	–	–	4	4	8
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Ireland	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Italy	2	–	2	3	–	3	–	–	–	3	–	3
Jordan	335	–	335	18	3	21	–	–	–	18	3	21
Kenya	7	1	8	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Latvia	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Country	Military			Police								
	Experts on mission, staff officers and units			Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Liberia	150	15	165	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Lithuania	39	6	45	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Luxembourg	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mauritania	7	–	7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Mexico	8	1	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Nepal	164	17	181	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	4	–	4	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Niger	862	9	871	17	12	29	–	–	–	17	12	29
Nigeria	62	15	77	–	2	2	106	31	137	106	33	139
Norway	3	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pakistan	219	13	232	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Portugal	2	–	2	2	–	2	–	–	–	2	–	2
Romania	4	–	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Senegal	928	31	959	17	6	23	263	52	315	280	58	338
Sierra Leone	17	4	21	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Spain	1	–	1	4	1	5	–	–	–	4	1	5
Sri Lanka	239	–	239	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sweden	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Switzerland	5	–	5	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	1
Togo	672	63	735	14	12	26	253	26	279	267	38	305
Tunisia	81	7	88	12	5	17	–	–	–	12	5	17
Türkiye	–	–	–	10	1	11	–	–	–	10	1	11
Ukraine	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	8	1	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
United States of America	7	2	9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Zambia	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
<b>Totals</b>	<b>11 102</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>11 676</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>1 115</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>1 311</b>	<b>1 315</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>1 588</b>

