

Delegation from the Republic of Kenya
Position Paper for the United Nations Security Council

The issues before the United Nations (UN) Security Council are the Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security and the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. The Republic of Kenya reaffirms the need for international cooperation to ensure peace and security worldwide.

I. Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly affected all societies, straining national and transnational systems, and still poses a clear threat to all nations today. As the UN Secretary General outlined in May of 2021, the pandemic has had devastating effects, with an additional 114 million people falling into poverty as a result — but the proposed tools to deal with the current complex security environment are not proving effective. The uneven recovery from the pandemic is a reality, with Member States of the Global North making strides towards normalcy while Member States in the Global South are still struggling to get a hold of vaccines: At the current speed, African states are projected to achieve a 70% vaccination rate, a standard in European nations, by 2024 the earliest. The Republic of Kenya thus believes equitable vaccine access is at the core of building forward better from the pandemic: If nations in the Global South are left behind during this crucial time of recovery by not getting the vaccine doses they need, this will exacerbate existing economic, social, and humanitarian inequalities between nations, as well as further destabilize already fragile states while plunging them into a conflict spiral wherefrom recovery is significantly more challenging — thus posing as threat to international peace and security. Indeed, recovery from this crisis offers a unique opportunity to also address the root causes of conflict and inequality and put preventative measures at the forefront of global efforts. Nationally, Kenya seizes this opportunity, starting with the inauguration of the Kenya National Public Health Institute, designed to aid the national goal of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), an initiative creating lasting tools to tackle the pandemic. However, UHC is not only a Kenyan, but a global issue: Global UHC is the key to globally effective vaccination campaigns and prevents the emergence of new variants undermining current efforts. The Republic of Kenya believes that UHC is a crucial long-term answer to COVID-19 as well as a catalyst for enduring peace and security worldwide.

UHC is outlined in the African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063, a set of initiatives to boost African growth and prosperity. Agenda 2063's Goal 1 outlines the need for "high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens" in Africa, a plan which also drafts a route towards UHC in the entire continent. At a global level, UHC is also an issue tackled by the UN, as shown in the 2019 UN High Level Meeting on UHC during the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) high level week. However, given the current health crisis, Kenya believes the outlined goals should be updated and adjusted to the strained situation healthcare systems worldwide find themselves in. Moreover, UHC is also present in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically SDG 3.8., which sets the target of achieving "universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all". In light of the ongoing pandemic, the need for universally accessible COVID diagnostics, therapeutics, medicines and vaccines is of utmost priority within SDG 3.8. and as part of UHC. In this regard, the Republic of Kenya is a grateful recipient of COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), but nonetheless echoes the concerns expressed in Security Council resolution 2565 (2021) regarding a lack of cooperation within the initiative and stresses the need for more international, multilateral coordination to ensure vaccines are accessible to Africa and the rest of the Global South in a timely matter.

An issue so important to long-lasting peace and security should not be ignored, therefore, the Republic of Kenya highly recommends the UNGA call for an updated High Level Meeting on UHC and COVID-19 vaccine distribution, putting equal recovery and resources to regions left behind at this stage of the pandemic at the top of the agenda. It is crucial that UHC and vaccine distribution are treated as joint health initiatives that will better the lives of citizens worldwide and establish a key pillar for future peace and security in all Member States. Robust healthcare systems must be created, reformed, and updated in order to combat the current pandemic as well as prepare for new crises — and the UN must be involved in that process by providing information, hearing different perspectives and birthing initiatives through High Level

Meetings. Moreover, Kenya believes that the Meeting should promote special preparedness for future health crises and the toll they will surely take on vulnerable, fragile and conflict-ridden regions through concrete action to advance UHC in states where it is lagging the most to ensure long-term global stability.

II. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts

Over the past 18 months, the African continent has seen six military coups d'états, brought on by a complex weave of factors, such as humanitarian disasters, security threats and poverty. During this “epidemic of coups d'états” as the UN Secretary General has rightfully labeled it, there have been severe implications for civilians not only in those conflict zones, but also those in broader regions neighboring such countries. The Republic of Kenya is sadly one of those broader regions, with several neighboring countries plunged in violent conflicts for several years. It is this proximity and firsthand experience with conflict that leads Kenya to regard the Protection of Civilians (POC) of utmost importance when aiding conflict zones and establishing lasting peace. In particular, and as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) illustrated, resolving forced displacement is “at the heart of the Security Council’s mandate to maintain international peace”, and the Republic of Kenya shares this sentiment: Africa hosts over one third of the world’s displaced people, which were around 45 million individuals in 2020 by UNHCR estimates. And while the Security Council provides aid to these regions through UN Peacekeeping missions, there is only weak evidence that the presence of those missions in conflict zones decreases forced displacements, which in turn indicates that there are flaws within UN Peacekeeping operations when addressing and deterring this aspect of POC. Thus, Kenya strongly believes it is crucial for the Security Council to find new, more effective forms of action against this issue in light of the grim situation the African continent currently finds itself in.

At the regional level, the Republic of Kenya is a proud supporter of the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness put forth by the AU, serving as a long-term roadmap on forced displacement with solidarity, cooperation and mutual accountability at the forefront. Within the Security Council, resolution 1265 (1999), the first to directly address POC, already acknowledges forced displacement as a result of conflict as well as the vulnerability those individuals face, and the responsibility of Member States have to protect them. More recently, resolutions 1674 (2006) and 2417 (2018) likewise stress the need for protection of forcibly displaced persons and their right to unhindered access to humanitarian aid provided by UN Missions and Member States. However, these resolutions fall short of proposing concrete steps to alleviate forced displacement and act towards long-term measures towards prevention, such as reducing food insecurity and rebuilding infrastructure in conflict zones, as well as aiding fragile regions overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. Other key actors regarding forced displacement are UN Resident Coordinators (UN-RCs), who manage UN agencies’ initiatives at a country level and report to the Secretary General: They were designated as a liaison between UN bodies and national governments to coordinate regional efforts aiding refugees in the *Global Compact on Refugees* (2018). While Kenya commends this initiative, there is a crucial lack of cooperation between UN-RCs and UN Peacekeeping missions — who are often the primary sources of humanitarian aid when governments collapse — regarding the issue of forced displacement.

Given the fragile state of many regions worldwide, especially in Africa, the Republic of Kenya believes it is crucial that UN Peacekeeping missions, whose aim is to aid and stabilize such regions, improve their mechanisms regarding POC, and specifically, forced displacement. As mentioned above, current UN Peacekeeping missions do not lead to a decrease in forced displacement. Therefore, Kenya advocates for a deeper research into the local-level mechanisms that facilitate or hinder forced displacement when assessing current and drafting future UN Peacekeeping missions, ensuring that existing missions are reformed to be more effective in POC matters. To that end, Kenya proposes the creation of a strong, periodic communication between UN Peacekeeping missions and UN-RCs in conflict regions to gain a deeper understanding of what immediate and preventative measures can prove most effective when protecting civilians from forced displacement. This communication, denominated the Peacekeeping Force against Forced Displacement (PFFC), will take place at least on an annual basis and shall ideally integrate regional actors such as NGOs, in order to have a multilateral, intersectional view of situation. This will also produce an annual report sent to both the Security Council and the Secretary General— a report that could serve to inform their reports on UN Missions as well as the Security Council’s assessments when debating the renovation of UN Peacekeeping mandates.