

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

The US has the presidency in September. At press time, the intention appears to be to hold all Council meetings in public, with consultations only scheduled for the adoption of the programme of work for the month. Although no meetings are currently foreseen for the last week of September, the US could still choose the presence of the world's top officials in New York to schedule a high-level meeting in the Council.

The US has two signature events: on [peacekeeping](#), and on [corruption and conflict](#). The meeting on corruption will include a briefing by Secretary-General António Guterres and a representative from civil society. The Council will also receive the first comprehensive annual briefing on the reform of UN peacekeeping, requested by resolution 2378 in September 2017.

There are a number of Latin American issues on the programme this month. The Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in [Colombia](#). There will be a briefing on the situation in [Haiti](#) following the second report on the implementation of resolution 2410 that extended the mandate of MINUJUSTH in Haiti. It seems the US is also interested in holding

a meeting on the current unrest in Nicaragua, but some members may oppose having this issue discussed by the Council.

Early in the month Council members expect to receive briefings on [Libya](#) by Special Representative and head of UNSMIL Ghassan Salamé and the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden). An adoption to renew UNSMIL is scheduled for mid-September.

Other African issues this month include:

- [Somalia](#), on the activities of UNSOM;
- [Sudan](#), on the activities of UNISFA in Abyei; and
- [South Sudan](#), on the activities of UNMISS.

Regarding Middle East issues, Council members expect to receive the regular briefing on chemical weapons and a combined briefing on political and humanitarian developments in [Syria](#). There will also be the regular monthly briefing on [Israel/Palestine](#).

Regarding Asian issues, the Council will hold its quarterly debate on UNAMA in [Afghanistan](#) with Special Representative and head of UNAMA Tadamichi Yamamoto expected to brief.

In Hindsight: South Sudan Arms Embargo

With the adoption of resolution 2428 on 13 July, the Security Council imposed an arms embargo on South Sudan until 31 May 2019. The imposition of an arms embargo on South Sudan is a major development. Some Council members had proposed an arms embargo more than four years ago—then-elected member Australia raised this in the Council in May 2014, for instance (S/PV.7168)—but until this July, the proposal had failed to garner sufficient support.

As this year's negotiations on resolution 2428 demonstrated, the arms embargo on South Sudan remains controversial. The resolution received the bare minimum of nine votes required for adoption

absent a veto from a permanent member, with abstentions by six members (Bolivia, China, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Russia). One notable factor that made the adoption possible was the support of Côte d'Ivoire, which in doing so broke ranks with the other two African members of the Council.

A previous effort by the US, the penholder on South Sudan, to push for an arms embargo on South Sudan failed in 2016. However, resolution 2304 of 12 August 2016, which authorised the deployment of a regional protection force (RPF) in South Sudan, stated that the Council would consider imposing an arms embargo

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if the government of South Sudan were to obstruct either the deployment of the RPF or the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in the fulfilment of its mandate. This was controversial for China and Russia, among others, who did not support this trigger for considering an arms embargo and felt that there had been a lack of appropriate consultation with the South Sudanese government about the deployment of the RPF. On the other hand, members such as France, Spain, and the UK would have preferred for the resolution to impose an immediate embargo in light of the deteriorating security situation. The resolution was adopted one month after Juba descended into violence following the collapse of the power-sharing agreement between President Salva Kiir and then-First Vice President Riek Machar. These divisions in the Council were reflected in the vote tally on resolution 2304, where the 11 votes in favour were accompanied by abstentions from China, Egypt, Russia and Venezuela.

With the South Sudanese government continuing to hinder the operations of UNMISS, the US was ready by late November 2016 to put to a vote a draft resolution for an embargo (and additional targeted sanctions), but subsequently withdrew the draft, apparently because the nine votes required for adoption were not forthcoming. In addition to those countries that were strongly opposed to the embargo, reservations came from less expected places, including Senegal, which chaired the South Sudan Sanctions Committee, and close US ally Japan. Some sources maintained that Japan's ambivalence was driven by the fear that supporting the embargo could subject its peacekeepers in South Sudan to potential retaliation. (Japan withdrew its peacekeepers from South Sudan in 2017.)

Despite the lack of support, the US tabled a draft resolution for an arms embargo and additional targeted sanctions on 23 December 2016. It received only seven affirmative votes (France, New Zealand, Spain, Ukraine, the UK, the US and Uruguay), along with eight abstentions (Angola, China, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, Senegal and Venezuela). Why the US proposed the draft when a negative outcome was likely is not entirely clear. It may have been done out of principle, to demonstrate that it had at least made an

effort to stem the flow of weapons to the conflict parties in the waning days of the Obama administration. In this regard, US Ambassador Samantha Power said the following in her explanation of vote: "At a certain point, drifting along and internalizing the constraints imposed by those Council members who do not want to take action in the face of the violence, that is not an option. We learned that from Rwanda, Srebrenica and chapters past" (S/PV.7850).

The US position on the arms embargo had shifted from one of ambivalence in 2014 and 2015 to full support after the large-scale violence in Juba in July 2016, whereas France, the UK and several of the elected members had consistently supported an arms embargo. Media reports indicated that US National Security Advisor Susan Rice, who served as her country's ambassador to the UN from 2009 to 2013, had been opposed to the embargo because of concerns that it would disadvantage the government more than the opposition.

The dust had hardly settled on the failed 23 December 2016 draft resolution when members again began discussing a potential arms embargo in early 2017, prompted by the further deterioration of the security and humanitarian environment in South Sudan amidst a faltering political process. In a 23 March 2017 briefing, France, Ukraine, the UK and the US mentioned an arms embargo and targeted sanctions as tools available to the Council, while Egypt and Russia reaffirmed their opposition to sanctions against South Sudan (S/PV.7906). Similar divisions on an arms embargo were evident in Council meetings throughout the year and into 2018.

When the Council negotiated resolution 2406 of 15 March extending the UNMISS mandate for one year, one of the more contentious issues was whether and how to reference the threat of a possible arms embargo to address the violence in South Sudan. Some members were initially reluctant to include such a reference, but it was retained in the final draft with some modifications. The final version says that the Council will "consider all measures, including an arms embargo, as appropriate, to deprive the parties of the means to continue fighting and to prevent violations" of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), which had been signed three months earlier, on 21 December 2017,

by all parties to the 2015 peace agreement as well as new parties to the conflict.

Those members supportive of the resolution maintained that the embargo would help to diminish the level of violence and protect civilians. Their views were consistent with those of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts, which has repeatedly recommended an arms embargo and said in its 12 April final report (S/2018/292) that "an arms embargo is technically feasible and would have a positive impact on the political and security environment". Members uncomfortable with the embargo were concerned that coercive measures could undermine the peace process. They emphasised the importance of following the lead of the region, particularly the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, whose Council of Ministers issued a press release on 30 June in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in which they said that "given the latest developments in the peace process and the need to implement the permanent ceasefire and achieve an inclusive peace agreement, it is not helpful to pursue punitive measures at this stage".

However, continued violations of the CoHA in the first half of 2018 bolstered the conviction of those supporting an arms embargo that another effort should be made to pursue this measure to help protect civilians. On 31 May, the Council adopted resolution 2418 renewing the sanctions regime until 15 July. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to report by 30 June on whether any fighting had taken place since the adoption of the resolution and whether the parties had come to "a viable political agreement". It decided that the Council will consider applying additional targeted sanctions or an arms embargo, or both, within five days of receiving the Secretary-General's report. The resolution was adopted with nine votes in favour and six abstentions (Bolivia, China, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Russia). The parties to the conflict agreed to a permanent ceasefire on 27 June in Khartoum (the Khartoum Declaration) but fighting continued to be reported. On 5 July, Council members were briefed in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's assessment (S/2018/653), which observed that there had been credible reports of fighting and that UNMISS had documented "gross

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violations of international human rights and humanitarian law”.

On 6 July, the US circulated a draft resolution imposing an arms embargo (and additional targeted sanctions). A version of this draft was adopted as resolution 2428 on 13 July. Ambassador Nikki Haley (US) said at the explanation of vote: “The goal of the draft resolution is simple. If we are going to help

the people of South Sudan, we need the violence to stop, and to stop the violence we need to stop the flow of weapons...” (S/PV.8310).

It is too early to draw conclusions about the impact of the arms embargo on the conflict or whether recent developments on the political front will bear fruit over the longer term. Following the 27 June Khartoum Declaration, the parties signed an Agreement

on Outstanding Issues of Governance and Responsibility Sharing in Khartoum on 5 August. However, a final overarching agreement still needs to be signed by the parties. Council members recognised in elements to the press on 10 August that “considerable challenges remain on the path to peace, stability and security”.

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Yemen

On 2 August, the Council received a briefing from Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths and OCHA Director of Operations John Ging (S/PV.8323). Griffiths announced his intention to organise a first round of consultations with the warring Yemeni parties on 6 September in Geneva to discuss, among other things, the framework for negotiations and to agree on relevant confidence-building measures and specific plans for moving the process forward. Council members discussed Yemen under “any other business” on 10 August, at the request of Peru on behalf of Bolivia, Netherlands, Poland and Sweden, following an air strike on a school bus in Saada province which had killed more than 40 children the previous day. Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tayé-Brook Zerihoun briefed. Council members subsequently issued press elements expressing their grave concern at the attack and all other recent attacks in Yemen, called for a credible and transparent investigation, and also called on all parties to engage in good faith with the UN-led process, notably consultations scheduled for September in Geneva. On 10 August, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee met with the Yemen Panel of Experts to consider the Panel’s mid-term update, which is an unpublished report on the implementation of the sanctions regime. The mid-term update stated the Panel’s continued belief that most of the weapons it inspected, including the debris of ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, show characteristics similar to weapons systems known to be produced in Iran. It also reported that the Panel had received information that the Houthis obtain financial support

from Iran through the donation of fuel. At the same time, the midterm update said that the Panel believes Iran might now be willing to play a constructive role in furthering a peaceful solution for Yemen, flagging Iran’s recent efforts with several European countries to try to broker a ceasefire during Ramadan. The update affirmed, among other things, that the Panel continues to receive evidence of widespread violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by all parties to the conflict, outlining different incidents that it was investigating.

Iraq

On 8 August, the Council was briefed by the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of UNAMI, Ján Kubiš, on the latest Secretary-General’s report on UNAMI (S/2018/677) and the most recent developments in the country (S/PV.8324). Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Delegation to the United Nations Philip Spoerri and Suzan Araf Maroof from the Women Empowerment Organization in Iraq also provided briefings. Kubiš updated the Council on the partial manual ballot recount following the 12 May parliamentary elections. Spoerri briefed on the issue of the missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the respective activities by the Tripartite Commission chaired by the ICRC. Maroof spoke about the work of the Iraq Cross Sector Task Force for the implementation of resolution 1325. She named social protection, non-discriminatory legislation, stabilisation of the country, livelihood opportunities, and support for women’s participation at all levels as security priorities for the Council to work on with the Iraqi government. In other

developments, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, Special Adviser and head of the investigative team to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant accountable for crimes it committed in Iraq, undertook his first mission to Iraq from 6 to 14 August. In a letter dated 15 August 2018 (S/2018/773) the Secretary-General informed the Council that the investigative team will begin its work on 20 August.

Lebanon

On 9 August, Council members issued a press statement condemning the 4 August attack against UNIFIL in southern Lebanon (SC/13451). During the incident, some of the UNIFIL’s vehicles were set on fire and weapons and equipment seized while the peacekeepers were threatened with illegal weapons. On 15 August, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita briefed Council members in consultations on the situation in Lebanon. During the consultations, members reiterated their support for the mission and the importance of stability in Lebanon for the wider region. On 30 August, the Council adopted unanimously resolution 2433 extending UNIFIL’s mandate for another year.

Burundi

On 9 August, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi Michel Kafando briefed the Council on the situation in Burundi (S/PV.8325). On 22 August, Council members issued a press statement reiterating their concern over the political situation, the slow progress of the inter-Burundi dialogue led by the East African Community, and the lack of engagement by the government in that regard.

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They also welcomed the announcement by President Pierre Nkurunziza that he will not seek another term in 2020 (SC/13461).

Children and Armed Conflict

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict adopted its sixth conclusion on the DRC (S/AC.51/2018/2) on 7 August 2018, based on the Secretary-General's country-specific report on the situation of children affected by armed conflict in the DRC (S/2018/502).

Western Sahara

On 8 August, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, briefed Council members in consultations. Köhler updated members on his 23 June to 1 July visit to the region to push for the resumption of negotiations, and on his vision for how to move forward the political process.

West Africa and the Sahel

On 10 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/16) on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PV.8327). The statement, which covers a range of issues facing the region, welcomed collective efforts, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, to recalibrate the UN's Sahel strategy to expedite its impact and encouraged greater coherence of the UN system and partners through implementation of the UN Support Plan for the Sahel. The presidential statement marked the first time that the Council addresses the herder-farmer conflicts in the region. It expressed concern for increased tensions between pastoralists and farmers, which the statement describes as being driven by competition for natural resources, rapid population growth, weak governance, pressures related to climate and ecological factors, and the circulation of small arms and light weapons. Country situations that are touched on in the statement include Togo, Guinea-Bissau, and The Gambia, along with regional security initiatives such as the G5 Sahel joint force and the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 10 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement on UNOCA (S/PRST/2018/17), welcoming the renewal of its mandate for another three years, from 1 September to 31 August 2021, via exchange

of letters with the Secretary-General (S/PV.8328). In the statement, the Council expressed its concern at the grave security situation, violations and abuses of human rights, and the continuing terrorist activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the Lake Chad Basin. It also expressed concern about the persistent violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Central African Republic, the ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and an increase in violence in parts of Cameroon. In the statement, the Council recognised the adverse effects of climate and ecological changes, and of natural disasters, on the stability of the region. It stressed the need for long-term strategies by governments and the UN, based on risk assessments, to support stabilisation and build resilience, and requested UNOCA to take such information into consideration in its activities. The statement asked the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of the scope of UNOCA's mandate and activities and present recommendations for areas of improvement or new or refocused priorities to the Council by 1 August 2019. The Council expressed its intention to consider these recommendations, including any proposed changes to the mandate, by 31 August 2019.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 13 August, Council members issued a press statement on developments in the electoral process in the DRC (SC/13455). The statement welcomed President Joseph Kabila's respect for his commitment to abide by the Congolese Constitution and the provisions of the 31 December 2016 political agreement. It also underlined the importance of the entire Congolese political class and the institutions responsible for organising elections to remain committed to ensuring the success of the electoral process, leading to a peaceful transfer of power. On 27 August, the Security Council was briefed on the electoral process via video teleconference by Special Representative and head of MONUSCO Leila Zerrougui; President of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo Monsignor Marcel Utembi; and Solange Lwashiga Furaha, spokesperson for Rien Sans les Femme (S/PV.8331). On 28 August, Council members were briefed on the current Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC, under "any other business" in consultations.

At press time, on 31 August, the DRC Sanctions Committee was scheduled to meet with the Group of Experts assisting it, which will present their programme of work.

Peacekeeping Operations and Conflict Prevention

On 16 August, there was a joint meeting of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations and the Ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa on the institutional reform of the AU and its contribution to enhancing Africa's capacity in the area of peace and security.

Israel/Palestine

On 22 August, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed the Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (S/PV.8329). The briefing was followed by consultations. DiCarlo noted that the UN had worked with Egypt and other regional and international actors to prevent another outbreak of fighting in Gaza. She called on the parties to enable humanitarian supplies to reach the Gaza, saying that such "supplies should not be held hostage to political and security developments". She thanked member states who had taken measures to help address the shortfall in funding facing the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and called on others to enhance their support.

Counter-Terrorism

On 23 August, Under-Secretary-General in the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov briefed the Council on the seventh report (S/2018/770) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) (S/PV.8330). Also briefing were Michèle Coninx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and Joana Cook, Senior Research Fellow with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at King's College, London.

Mali

On 24 August, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the publication of the final results of the presidential elections in Mali (SC/13464). On 30 August, the Council adopted resolution 2432 renewing

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the targeted sanctions regime on Mali—travel ban and assets freeze—and the mandate of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee’s panel of experts.

Myanmar

On 28 August, the Council was briefed by Secretary-General António Guterres, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Cate Blanchett, and UNDP Associate Administrator Tegegnework Gettu on the situation in Myanmar and the Rohingya refugee crisis (S/PV.8333). The UK Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN, Lord Ahmad, chaired the meeting. The meeting was held to discuss developments one year after the violent reaction by Myanmar military forces to the 25 August 2017 attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on security posts led to an exodus of refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

Mediation and the Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

On 29 August, an open debate was held on mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts (S/PV.8334). The briefers were Secretary-General António Guterres; Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, who is a member of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation; and Mossarat

Qadeem, the co-founder of PAIMAN Alumni Trust, which works to prevent violent extremism in Pakistan. The UK Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN, Lord Ahmad, chaired the meeting.

Guinea-Bissau

On 30 August, the Council held a briefing on Guinea-Bissau. Speakers were Special Representative and head of UNIOGBIS, José Viegas Filho; Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea), chair of the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee; and Ambassador Mauro Vieira (Brazil), chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. Civil society representative Elisa Maria Tavares Pinto, of the ECOWAS Women Peace and Security Network, briefed via video-teleconference. Prime Minister Gomes also participated. Viegas Filho briefed the Council based on the Secretary-General’s 16 August report on Guinea-Bissau (S/2018/771). The report highlighted that the political situation remains fragile despite the progress made earlier this year towards resolving the country’s political crisis, while the organisation of legislative elections scheduled for 18 November is facing serious technical and financial challenges. On 31 August, the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee held informal

consultations. Representatives of the Security Council Affairs Division presented the Secretary-General’s annual report on progress in Guinea-Bissau’s stabilisation and restoration of constitutional order (S/2018/791). Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau Aristides Gomes also addressed the committee.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 30 August, the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Karel van Oosterom (Netherlands), briefed the Council in consultations on the work of the committee during the past three months. The briefing was primarily focused on the developments related to the work of the committee, the implementation of the sanctions, and the midterm report of the Panel of Experts circulated to the committee earlier in August. Council members also discussed the ongoing diplomatic efforts on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

The Annual Report to the General Assembly

On 30 August, the Council adopted unanimously its annual report to the General Assembly, covering the period 1 January–31 December 2017. The action will be reflected in a note by the president S/2018/797.

Peacekeeping Operations

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold a debate on peacekeeping reform. As requested in resolution 2378, Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to deliver the first comprehensive annual briefing on the reform of UN peacekeeping.

Key Recent Developments

The briefing will take place against the backdrop of the recent push to strengthen UN peace operations, marked by the 2015 report of the High-Level Independent Panel on

Peace Operations (HIPPO) and by the Secretary-General’s reform initiatives regarding the UN’s peace and security architecture.

Since 2017, the US, which is the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping assessed budget, has become more assertive in its efforts to reduce the cost of UN peace operations. During its presidency in April 2017, the US organised a briefing on reviewing peacekeeping operations with Guterres as the main speaker. During the meeting, US Ambassador Nikki Haley laid out four principles for the review of peacekeeping operations with the stated aim

of modifying mission mandates to be more achievable while also reducing their cost:

- missions must support political solutions;
- host countries must cooperate;
- peacekeeping mandates must be realistic and achievable; and
- there needs to be a clear exit strategy.

Since then, several Council members—including China, Egypt, France, Italy, Poland and the UK—have organised thematic briefings and open debates on specific aspects of peacekeeping, illustrating the renewed interest in this issue.

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2378 (20 September 2017) was on UN peacekeeping reform. S/RES/2272 (11 March 2016) addressed sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations. **Security Council Presidential Statements** S/PRST/2018/10 (14 May 2018) was on peacekeeping operations. S/PRST/2017/27 (21 December 2017) laid out the elements related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace to be considered when reviewing the mandates and configuration of peacekeeping missions. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8251 (9 May 2018) was a briefing by the heads of three military components of peacekeeping operations. S/PV.8218 (28 March 2018) was an open debate on “Collective action to improve UN peacekeeping operations”. S/PV.8086 (6 November 2017) was a briefing on the role of UN policing in peacekeeping operations. S/PV.8064 (5 October 2017) was a briefing on UN peacekeeping operations focusing on strategic force generation. S/PV.8051 (20 September 2017) was a high-level open debate titled “Reform of UN peacekeeping: implementation and follow-up”. S/PV.8033 (29 August 2017) was an open debate on “UN peacekeeping operations: Their potential contribution to the overarching goal of sustaining peace”. S/PV.8006 (19 July 2017) was an open debate on “Enhancing African capacities in the areas of peace and security”. S/PV.7918 (6 April 2017) was a briefing on the review of peacekeeping operations.

Peacekeeping Operations

On 20 September 2017 the Council held a high-level open debate organised by Ethiopia titled “Reform of UN peacekeeping: implementation and follow-up”. Guterres and Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, briefed the Council, along with José Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and chair of the HIPPO. Many participants spoke at the head of state or head of government level. At the meeting, the Council adopted resolution 2378, which was drafted by Ethiopia. The resolution stressed that the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the UN’s approach to resolving conflict and reaffirmed the Council’s determination to articulate clearer priorities when evaluating, mandating and reviewing peacekeeping operations. The resolution also underscored the need to enhance the overall effectiveness and efficiency of UN peacekeeping by improving mission planning, increasing the number of relevant capabilities, and reinforcing peacekeeping performance through training and the fulfilment of outstanding pledges. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to provide an annual comprehensive briefing to the Council on the reform of UN peacekeeping.

The Netherlands organised an open debate focusing on “Collective action to improve UN peacekeeping operations” on 28 March. The prime minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, chaired the meeting, and the Council was briefed by Guterres, Mahamat, and Fatimata Touré, the director of a Malian NGO. At the meeting, Guterres highlighted the urgent need for “a quantum leap in collective engagement” and announced the launch of “Action for Peacekeeping” (A4P), an initiative aimed at renewing political commitment to peacekeeping operations.

A 14 May presidential statement, drafted by the Netherlands as a follow-up to the open debate held during the country’s presidency in March, welcomed and supported the Secretary-General’s commitment to continue to take steps to improve UN peacekeeping. In particular, the presidential statement noted the intention of the Secretary-General, in consultation with all stakeholders, to develop a set of mutually agreed commitments to adapt peacekeeping operations to today’s complex and high-risk environments.

As part of this exercise, in May the Secretariat asked ten member states to lead broad

consultations on five priority areas for the A4P agenda: politics (Côte d’Ivoire and the UK), partnerships (Ethiopia and France), performance (the Netherlands and Rwanda), people (Bangladesh and Uruguay) and peacebuilding (Brazil and Indonesia). Once consultations were concluded, the Secretariat engaged member states to draw up a Declaration of Shared Commitments that their leaders could endorse during the upcoming high-level debate of the General Assembly. The Council meeting on peacekeeping is expected to be an opportunity for Guterres to take stock of what has been achieved in the process so far and present ideas for following up the commitments expressed in the declaration.

One of the issues likely to be a focus of the briefing is the performance of those involved in peacekeeping operations. Discussions about performance have been a source of contention in the Council and among the wider membership. Some Council members have prioritised increased accountability for under-performance while some troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs) have argued for broadening the focus of performance discussions beyond uniformed personnel. They have underlined that performance cannot be delinked from other factors related to mandate implementation including the roles of the Security Council and the UN Secretariat, as well as the role of mission leadership. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) and the Council have expressed support for the development of a comprehensive and integrated performance policy framework that promotes full and effective mandate implementation and identifies clear performance standards for evaluating all UN civilian and uniformed personnel working in and supporting peacekeeping operations. The 14 May presidential statement recognised that effective mandate implementation is contingent upon several critical factors, including well-defined, realistic and achievable mandates; political will, leadership, performance and accountability at all levels; adequate resources; policy, planning and operational guidelines; and training and availability of equipment.

Another issue likely to feature in the meeting is the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers. This has been a priority for Guterres, who at the beginning of his term established

a high-level task force to develop a system-wide response that prioritises prevention, the protection of the rights of the victims, and the promotion of accountability. Despite the widespread condemnation among member states of incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse, some TCCs and PCCs have challenged the focus on this issue as unfairly targeting those member states that contribute troops and police. The Secretary-General has proposed a voluntary compact for all member states that support UN operations to demonstrate joint commitment and mutual responsibility to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse, secure accountability and provide meaningful support to victims. By 23 July, 96 member states had signed the voluntary compact or were processing it for signature.

Finally, the meeting may also discuss the recent round of reviews of peacekeeping operations. Some of these were requested by the Council, often at the initiative of the US; the Secretariat subsequently began conducting strategic reviews ahead of mandate renewals and giving clearer indications of how mandates can be prioritised. The recent renewal of the mandate of the UN Multi-dimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali, however, showed that the Secretariat continues to experience pressure from member states regarding the outcome of these reviews.

Issues and Options

In the context of peace operations, the Council’s own decision-making processes could be tweaked to bring out collective thinking that is more strategic. Among other possibilities, the Council could start any mandating process by seeking greater clarity around the political objectives before they negotiate draft language; by reviewing and modifying mandates when needs on the ground shift, rather than in strict conformity with mandate cycles; by encouraging the emergence of groups of friends on particular situations on its agenda; and by agreeing to compacts with host governments. The Council could use its Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations to draw lessons on mandate design and monitoring of mission implementation, and agreement on strategic objectives. The working group could submit recommendations for the Council’s consideration after engaging with a broad range of actors, including Secretariat officials, TCCs and PCCs.

Peacekeeping Operations

Council and Wider Dynamics

A recurrent element in the discussions about peace operations is the gap between those who determine the mandates of peace operations and carry their financial burden, and those who deploy troops and police to implement them. Pressure from the US and others to reduce the peacekeeping budget has featured prominently in mandate renewal discussions over the last year, as it has in the

recent negotiations in the Fifth Committee. One of the mechanisms available to bridge this gap—triangular consultations between the Council, the Secretariat and TCCs and PCCs—has been criticised for not serving this purpose.

During negotiations on the 14 May presidential statement, some Council members pushed back against language that they considered too prescriptive regarding

peacekeeping reform, displaying the tensions between the Council and the C34. The consultation process regarding the Declaration of Shared Commitments has similarly illustrated the challenges of finding a common denominator of acceptable commitments for the UN membership regarding peacekeeping operations.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and receive briefings by the Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Ghassan Salamé, and the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden).

UNSMIL's mandate expires on 15 September, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the sanctions committee expires on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

Deep divisions remain between the parties in Libya, specifically between the competing Tripoli-based and UN-supported Presidency Council and the eastern Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR). Little progress has been achieved in implementing the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), signed on 17 December 2015 and designed to establish unified and legitimate institutions with the capacity to deliver basic services to the Libyan population. Special Representative Salamé has been focusing on implementing a UN action plan that the Council endorsed in October 2017. This plan includes corresponding efforts to amend the LPA, finalise a new constitution, and prepare for parliamentary and presidential elections. In a

declaration following a meeting in Paris on 29 May, hosted by the French president and held under the auspices of the UN, the Libyan parties committed to finalise legislation by 16 September on regulating the holding of elections and to accept the election results. The date selected for the elections was 10 December. The parties present were Fayed al-Sarraj, president of the Presidency Council; Aguila Saleh, president of the HoR; Khaled Meshri, president of the High Council of State; and General Khalifa Haftar, commander of the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA), operating in eastern Libya.

Recent weeks have seen an increase in tensions between Mediterranean governments such as Italy, Malta and Spain regarding their responsibilities for admitting ships carrying refugees and migrants rescued at sea. This has resulted in these vessels being forced to stay in international waters for days until they are able to dock.

During a bilateral visit at the end of July with US president Donald Trump in Washington, D.C., Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced his plans for a fall conference on stabilising Libya.

The security situation in many parts of Libya remains very volatile. Around the oil crescent, armed groups opposing General Haftar attacked and seized control of two oil

terminals, Ras Lanuf and Es Sider, in mid-June. General Haftar regained control after a week of fighting but announced that revenues would now go through a self-styled national oil cooperation, based in eastern Libya. On 11 July, following international pressure, he handed over control to the National Oil Cooperation of the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA). The overall loss in oil revenue for Libya was estimated to be around \$1 billion. In that context, Fayed al-Sarraj, prime minister and president of the Presidency Council, called upon the Security Council in a July letter to review the issue of the parallel existence of two central banks, one connected to the GNA and the other in the eastern part of Libya. In a press statement on 19 July the Council condemned the June attacks, welcomed the re-opening of the oil terminals and stressed that the country's oil resources fall under the exclusive control of the National Oil Corporation. Furthermore, following Sarraj's request, the Council invited Salamé to submit proposals addressing the specific issue of the two competing central banks within the larger goal of unifying Libya's parallel institutions.

During his most recent briefing on 16 July, Salamé announced that the consultative phase of the national conference process, aimed at bringing Libyans together around a common

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2420](#) (11 June 2018) renewed the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. [S/RES/2380](#) (5 October 2017) renewed the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. [S/RES/2376](#) (14 September 2017) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 15 September 2018. [S/RES/2362](#) (29 June 2017) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee and the measures regarding attempts to illicitly export oil from Libya until 15 November 2018. [S/RES/1970](#) (26 February 2011) referred the situation in Libya to the ICC, imposed an arms embargo and targeted sanctions (assets freeze and travel ban), and established a sanctions committee. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/11](#) (6 June 2018) welcomed the momentum generated by the international conference on Libya in Paris. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2018/451](#) (11 May 2018) was on the implementation of resolution 2357, authorising member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. [S/2018/429](#) (7 May 2018) was on UNSMIL. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13429](#) (19 July 2018) was on the developments around Libya's National Oil Corporation. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8312](#) (16 July 2018) was the latest briefing by the Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Ghassan Salamé, and the Swedish chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee. [S/PV.8250](#) (9 May 2018) was the semi-annual briefing by ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on recent developments concerning cases in Libya. [Sanctions Committee Related Document SC/13371](#) (7 June 2018) was a press release by the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee regarding the adding of six individuals to the sanctions list.

Libya

national narrative, had concluded after 14 weeks of meetings. According to Salamé, more than 7,000 Libyans, a quarter of whom were women, participated around Libya and abroad and voiced their ideas about Libya's future. The next step will be a final report drawn from these consultations, with conclusions and recommendations, presented at a final event.

Migrants and refugees in Libya continue to suffer from grave human rights violations and abuse, including arbitrary detention and forced labour, reportedly inflicted by state officials, armed groups, smugglers, traffickers and criminal gangs.

The humanitarian situation in Libya remains dire. At press time, the UN's 2018 humanitarian \$312.7 million response plan for Libya was funded at 22.5 percent, with \$242.4 million outstanding.

ICC-Related Developments

On 4 July, Pre-Trial Chamber I of the ICC issued a second arrest warrant for Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf Al-Werfalli. According to the first arrest warrant, issued on 15 August 2017, Al-Werfalli appears to be directly responsible for the deaths of 33 persons during seven different incidents in Benghazi or surrounding areas between June 2016 and July 2017, by having killed them himself or ordered their execution. The second arrest warrant relates to an eighth incident on 24 January in which Al-Werfalli allegedly killed ten persons in Benghazi.

The two other open cases in the situation in Libya are against Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee addressed the issue of human rights violations and abuse of migrants and refugees in Libya in June by designating six leaders of transnational trafficking networks (four Libyans and two Eritreans) for sanctions in the form of a travel ban and asset freeze. This was also the first time any UN sanctions committee listed individuals for human trafficking. During the latest briefing to the Council on 16 July, the representative of the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions informed members that the committee is currently considering the listing of another individual against several designation criteria.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 17 August press statement, the spokesperson of the High Commissioner for Human Rights called on the Libyan GNA to take all necessary measures to protect Tawerghan internally displaced persons (IDPs) from further displacement, torture and other human rights violations, following the forced eviction of some 1,900 people from an IDP camp in Tripoli on 10 August. According to the statement, an armed group allied to the GNA detained at least 87 IDPs during raids on the camp and took them to unknown locations. Those that were released gave accounts of their torture and ill-treatment, and reports indicate that the armed group still holds 19 people. The spokesperson urged the authorities to provide shelter and protection for the evicted IDPs, and called on the armed group immediately to release those who were being detained while ensuring the full rights of all detainees to physical and psychological integrity and to due process. The Human Rights Council will hold an interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's update on Libya during its 39th session in September.

Key Issues and Options

The Council will have to decide whether and how to adapt UNSMIL's mandate, considering issues such as the UN-led mediation efforts, the electoral preparations, and the implementation of the 2017 UN Action Plan in general. At the appropriate time, and in support of Salamé's work, the Security Council might consider a visiting mission to Libya and neighbouring countries to engage with key stakeholders.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Overall, Council members are united in their support of Salamé's mediation efforts, but they have often had different sensitivities regarding the way forward to achieving a solution. Regarding the upcoming elections, some members, including the US, appear to be more cautious about defining a concrete timeline for the electoral process, considering the challenges to establishing an environment conducive to peaceful and credible elections. Council resolutions and presidential statements have called upon UN member states to cease support for and official contact with parallel institutions in Libya, but it seems that some Council members have not respected this.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, and Sweden chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council will receive the second report on the implementation of resolution 2410 that on 10 April extended under Chapter VII of the UN Charter the mandate of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), and will hold a briefing on the situation in Haiti.

The mandate of MINUJUSTH expires on 15 April 2019.

Key Recent Developments

Resolution 2410, which extended the mandate of MINUJUSTH for another year, set comprehensive reporting requirements on the implementation of the resolution. Starting 1 June, the resolution requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months, conduct a strategic assessment of the mission, and present recommendations on its future. The April meeting was the Council's most recent meeting on Haiti.

It did not hold a meeting in June after the Secretary-General issued his first report on the implementation of resolution 2410. It seems that no Council member—including the penholder, the US—requested a meeting to discuss the report.

Describing the situation in Haiti as relatively stable, the 1 June Secretary-General's report noted the positive steps taken by President Jovenel Moïse to engage the Haitian population and move forward with political and

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2410](#) (10 April 2018) extended MINUJUSTH's mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter until 15 April 2019. [S/RES/2350](#) (13 April 2017) extended MINUSTAH's mandate for a final six-month period until 15 October and authorised the establishment of a smaller successor peacekeeping mission, MINUJUSTH. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2018/527](#) (1 June 2018) was on MINUJUSTH. [S/2018/241](#) (20 March 2018) contained the Secretary-General's strategic assessment of MINUJUSTH and benchmarks for the mission's exit strategy. [Security Council Press Statements SC/13419](#) (12 July 2018) condemned the acts of violence against civilians during the anti-government protests. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8226](#) (10 April 2018) was the vote on resolution 2410, on which China and Russia abstained. [S/PV.8220](#) (3 April 2018) was a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in Haiti.

Haiti

socio-economic development. While it recognised the progress made over the past several years, the report emphasised the importance of reforming the justice sector, strengthening the rule of law, and improving human rights. The report outlined in detail the specific dates and indicators for achieving benchmarks, with the aim of transitioning responsibilities to the government in coordination with the UN Country Team and in line with MINUJUSTH's two-year benchmarked exit strategy.

Economic stagnation, coupled with high inflation and a significant budget deficit, has persisted over the past several years in Haiti. On 6 July, the government announced that it would raise fuel prices by about 40 percent, triggering a series of violent protests in Port-au-Prince and other parts of the country. In defending its decision, the government claimed it could no longer afford to subsidise fuel and that it needed to free up funds for other social services. The next day, Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant announced that the government would temporarily halt the price hike. Nevertheless, protests and violence continued for many days thereafter and resulted in several civilian deaths. In a 12 July press statement, the Council condemned all acts of violence and attacks on civilians while emphasising the importance of respect for the rule of law.

Anticipating a no-confidence vote in the legislature, Lafontant formally resigned on 15 July. In early August, Moïse nominated Jean Henry Céant as the new prime minister. Céant has been an active player on the political scene in Haiti and ran in the 2010 and 2016 presidential elections.

Haiti's Constitution requires the legislature to approve the appointment of a new prime minister. At press time, the legislature still had not reached agreement on Céant's appointment.

On 1 August, Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Helen Meagher La Lime (USA) as his Special Representative for Haiti and head of MINUJUSTH. La Lime succeeds Susan D. Page, who served in the position for just over six months; on 4 May she had been appointed the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Rule of Law, Global Focal Point Review Implementation. Guterres designated Mamadou Diallo, the Deputy Special Representative, as the acting head of mission following Page's departure.

Earlier this year, Page was at the centre of a dispute with the Haitian government after she issued a statement welcoming a judicial corruption inquiry into alleged mismanagement of Venezuelan oil loans by former Haitian government officials and called on authorities to examine alleged human rights violations by the Haitian National Police (HNP). The statement drew criticism from the Haitian government, which perceived Page's comments as overstepping the UN's role of supporting the country in the enforcement of rule of law and justice. In a sign of protest, several Haitian government ministers and President Moïse cancelled their plans to attend a February retreat on eradicating cholera in Haiti at Greentree on Long Island hosted by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Haiti, Josette Sheeran.

In other developments, on 19 April the government of Haiti and representatives of the UN system reviewed progress on the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017-2021 in light of the UN's transition to a non-peacekeeping presence. UNDAF 2017-2021 is a joint effort by the government and the UN to promote sustainable development in the country, covering such issues as poverty reduction and employment, social services, resilience, gender equality/protection, and governance. During the meeting, both sides deliberated MINUJUSTH's activities in support of strengthening the rule of law in the context of transition. Some aspects of MINUJUSTH's benchmarked exit strategy are also aligned with relevant elements in UNDAF 2017-2021.

The members of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti visited Haiti in May, meeting with President Moïse and other key political actors, civil society and development agencies operating in the country. The discussions between the group and its interlocutors focused primarily on socio-economic issues, development priorities and rule of law. The group was established in 1999 to provide recommendations to ECOSOC on how to achieve the most effective and coordinated approach over international assistance to Haiti, but became inactive within months. In 2004, ECOSOC reactivated the group with the mandate to promote socio-economic recovery and to seek coherence and sustainability in international support to Haiti.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 3 July, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue during its 38th session with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and considered his report on the development of a national plan of action to implement the recommendations of international human rights mechanisms, including those made in the context of the Universal Periodic Review and by the independent expert on human rights in Haiti (A/HRC/38/30). The report addressed efforts by the government of Haiti to implement recommendations regarding pre-trial detention, prison overcrowding, criminal legislation reform, accountability, illiteracy and the situation of internally displaced persons and migrants. "There has been very little progress in all these areas," the High Commissioner said. The report recommended that the HRC continue to pay close attention to the human rights situation in Haiti and monitor progress made in the development and implementation of a national human rights action plan.

Key Issues and Options

Chief among the issues the Council faces in Haiti is achieving the mission's benchmarked exit strategy within the projected timeframe of two years from the date of 15 October 2017. Given the possibility of failing to do so, the Council will have to consider how long the mission should continue to work towards these goals. Remaining issues for the Council include the need for the mission to develop further the capacity of the HNP and to continue to encourage progress across all rule of law sectors, in particular regarding reforms related to human rights and criminal justice, before the projected closure of MINUJUSTH in the last quarter of 2019.

The recent tensions in Haiti have exposed some of the underlying socio-economic issues that could potentially threaten the overall security situation. Should this persist, the Council could issue a statement calling for calm and dialogue and supporting the work of the mission and its special representative. It could also, in due time, reassess the plans for the drawdown of the mission and the timelines of the benchmarked exit strategy.

The protracted absence of sufficient funding for the Secretary-General's new approach to cholera in Haiti is another concern for the Council. To date, only around \$8.7 million has been deposited to support cholera efforts; the Secretary-General had estimated that the new approach would cost \$400 million.

Haiti

Council Dynamics

The prevailing view among Council members is that Haiti has recently made notable progress. The Council commended, as a major milestone, the successful holding of the presidential, legislative and municipal elections and restoration of constitutional order in 2017. This was the backdrop for the Council's decision to initiate a gradual drawdown and the eventual closure of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the establishment of the smaller successor mission MINUJUSTH in October last year.

Negotiations on the last two mandate renewal resolutions have exposed some diverging views about the scope and the mandate of the UN mission in Haiti. Although in

April 2017 the Council voted unanimously for resolution 2350—renewing the mandate of MINUSTAH until 15 October, to be followed by the start of MINUJUSTH the next day—China, Russia and to some extent Bolivia raised concerns regarding the inclusion of human rights in the MINUJUSTH mandate and its being established under Chapter VII, which authorises enforcement action in order to restore international peace and security. During the last mandate renewal, in April, Russia and China abstained during the vote on resolution 2410, citing similar concerns. The Russian representative noted that while there was consensus among Council members that the situation in the country continues to improve, the penholder decided

to toughen the draft resolution by invoking the application of Chapter VII for the entirety of the mission's mandate. He further noted that over the past 14 years, application of Chapter VII has been “carefully limited to the specific tasks of ensuring the physical security of the civilian population and the peacekeepers themselves”. Bolivia voted in favour of the resolution but also echoed these concerns.

Council practice is that draft resolutions on Haiti are negotiated and agreed among the Group of Friends of Haiti, which comprises Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay and the US, before being circulated to all 15 Council members by the US as the penholder.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, which expires on 26 September.

Key Recent Developments

President Iván Duque was sworn in on 7 August after having won 54 percent of the vote in the second round of the presidential elections on 17 June. During the campaign, Duque said he was committed not to terminate the November 2016 peace agreement but to propose certain “corrections”. Although no firm decisions have been made, areas that the new administration may aim to modify include provisions related to the transitional justice mechanisms, land reform, and how to deal with the cultivation of coca.

During the last months of former President Juan Manuel Santos' term, political divisions delayed the Colombian Congress' approval of the statute of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), the justice component of the transitional justice system. The SJP statute was finally adopted in June and was deemed constitutional by

the Constitutional Court in a ruling of 16 August. Centro Democrático, the political party of President Duque, had proposed amendments in the final stages of the legislative process, including limiting the role of the SJP in evaluating extradition requests and forbidding human rights attorneys from serving as magistrates in the SJP, but the Constitutional Court rejected these changes. The Court also reaffirmed that those former guerrilla members found responsible for crimes by the SJP, and who have fully cooperated with the tribunal, can participate in politics, including holding office.

The new Congress was inaugurated on 20 July. The political party Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), which was founded after the laying-down of weapons, was allocated five seats in each of the chambers (House of Representatives and Senate) in accordance with the peace agreement. FARC leader Seuxis Hernández (aka Jesús Santrich) did not take his seat as he is detained, charged with drug trafficking. In solidarity with Santrich, Luciano Marín (aka Iván Márquez) refused to assume his position as senator. FARC members continue to

harbour misgivings about whether the peace agreement will be implemented in full. In his 20 July report, the Secretary-General said that “the country's new authorities have the critical responsibility to restore a sense of confidence about the future among the rank and file, the mid-level commanders and the leadership of the former guerrilla group”. In a press statement adopted on 27 July, Council members reaffirmed their commitment to continuing to work with Colombia as it implements the peace agreement in order to secure a lasting peace in the months and years ahead. They also urged the parties to consolidate the gains already made and to work together to renew the momentum behind implementation of the peace agreement.

The UN Verification Mission has continued to implement its mandate to verify the political, economic and social reintegration of the former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), as well as the upholding of security guarantees. Attacks against former FARC-EP members and their families have persisted, and fragile security conditions for members outside some of the 26 areas

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2381](#) (5 October 2017) authorised the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to participate in and coordinate the work of the monitoring and verification mechanism for the temporary ceasefire between the government of Colombia and the ELN. [S/RES/2366](#) (10 July 2017) established the UN Verification Mission in Colombia as the successor mission of the UN Mission in Colombia. [Secretary-General's Report S/2018/723](#) (20 July 2018) was the latest 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8319](#) (26 July 2018) was a briefing by Jean Arnault on the Secretary-General's latest report on Colombia. Colombian Vice President Óscar Naranjo also participated in the meeting. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13438](#) (27 July 2018) reaffirmed the Council's commitment to continuing to work with Colombia as it implements the peace agreement in order to secure a lasting peace in the months and years ahead.

Colombia

designated for training and reintegration continue to pose a challenge for their return to civilian life. FARC-EP dissident groups have continued to mount attacks, including trans-border operations into Ecuador. Other armed groups that are filling the vacuum left in the large areas formerly under the influence of FARC-EP continue to be a threat to communities. Human rights defenders have been targeted as well, with 121 killed in 2017, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Despite the polarisation observed during the electoral cycle, state institutions and political parties signed a “pact of repudiation of violence against social leaders” in early July, displaying the collective concern of political actors in Colombia to address this pressing issue. Addressing the Council on 26 July, Colombian Vice President Óscar Naranjo highlighted the contradiction that although the country has had the lowest murder rate in 42 years, there has been an increase in threats and attacks against social leaders and human rights defenders.

The socioeconomic reintegration of the 14,000 former combatants through the establishment of productive projects and other forms of income generation continues to be a challenge. Briefing the Council on 26 July, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, Jean Arnault, stressed that in addition to supporting institutions in curbing violence, the central challenge for peace consolidation remains the combination of poverty, violence and illicit economic

activities affecting inhabitants of the former conflict zone. He called for a tightly coordinated and well-resourced effort to bring opportunities to areas that have long been prey to violence and state neglect.

Even though the administration of President Santos conducted talks in Cuba with a still-active guerrilla group known as Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) until the end of his term, no bilateral ceasefire agreement was reached. During the campaign, Duque expressed the need for preconditions for the government to remain at the negotiating table with the ELN. Given the role that the UN Verification Mission played with the Catholic church in monitoring and verifying an earlier bilateral ceasefire with the ELN, Council members are expected to follow any future negotiations closely. The ELN has continued to carry out attacks, and in early August kidnapped nine people in the regions of Chocó and Arauca.

Key Issues and Options

An important issue is ensuring that the peace agreement is implemented in its entirety despite the change in government. When Council members visited Colombia in May 2017, they expressed unanimous support for the agreement and during meetings with representatives of the main political parties stressed the need to secure its irreversibility. Appreciating the vital role of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia in contributing to the momentum for implementing the agreement, the Council is likely to renew the mission’s mandate for another year.

The government’s ability to develop a well-resourced strategy for reintegrating former FARC-EP members into society and to provide safety and security in areas previously occupied by the FARC-EP remain critical issues in the successful implementation of the agreement. Council members could encourage high-level contacts between representatives of the government and the FARC to discuss how the commitments made in the agreement are to be carried out in this new phase.

Council Dynamics

Council members are unified in their support for the peace process in Colombia. Several members have viewed engagement in Colombia as a rare bright spot for the Council as it struggles to play an effective role in several other conflict situations. However, some members have expressed concerns about the future of the agreement under the new administration.

The current political context may mean a significant change in the role the two successive UN missions have played since the government of Colombia requested the Council’s involvement in January 2016. The present mission, with the Council’s close attention and support, could be in a position to use its leverage to sustain key provisions of the agreement at a moment of uncertainty in order to reassure Colombians about the irreversibility of the process. During a visit to New York on 23 August, Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo expressed support for the renewal of the mission’s mandate.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In September, the Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Michael Keating, will brief the Council, followed by consultations. The mandate of UNSOM expires on 27 March 2019.

A joint operational readiness assessment of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is

due on 15 September. The authorisation of AMISOM expires on 31 May 2019.

Key Recent Developments

The armed group Al-Shabaab remains highly active. On 23 July, the group claimed to have killed 27 Somali soldiers in an attack on an army base 50 kilometres from Kismayu.

Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for two car bombs that killed six people on 5 August at separate locations in Somalia. At least nine were killed and several others wounded on 13 August in clashes between Al-Shabaab and local fighters in Juba region when the group attacked local farmers. On 16 August, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2431 (30 July 2018) renewed the authorisation of AMISOM until 31 May 2019. S/RES/2408 (27 March 2018) renewed the authorisation of UNSOM for an additional year. S/RES/2385 (14 November 2017) was on Somalia and Eritrea sanctions, with 11 affirmative votes and four abstentions (Bolivia, China, Egypt, and Russia). S/RES/2372 (30 August 2017) reauthorised AMISOM until 31 May 2018. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2018/411** (2 May 2018) was on UNSOM. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8322** (30 July 2018) was a briefing by the chair of the 751/1907 Somalia and Eritrea Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kairat Umarov (Kazakhstan). S/PV.8321 (30 July 2018) was the meeting at which resolution 2431 was adopted. **Security Council Letters S/2018/687** (11 July 2018) was from Djibouti to the president of the Security Council regarding its unresolved boundary dispute with Eritrea. S/2018/674 (5 July 2018) was the Secretary-General’s report on the comprehensive assessment of AMISOM, requested by resolution 2372.

Somalia

Mohamed replaced key security officials, including appointing a new army chief and deputy director of the national intelligence agency, a move authorities said is part of a new strategy to quell the wave of recent attacks.

In a 5 July letter to the president of the Security Council, the Secretary-General conveyed the findings of a comprehensive assessment of AMISOM conducted jointly with the AU, requested by resolution 2372. This assessment echoed views previously expressed by the AMISOM troop-contributing countries (TCCs), namely that Somali security forces have deficiencies in capacity and in command and control. The assessment concluded that a premature handover of security responsibilities would be risky, and that the continued presence of AMISOM is necessary during the transition as Somalia builds the capability of its security forces and institutions and prepares for elections in 2020-2021. These conclusions were similar to those of the December 2017 operational readiness assessment of the Somali security forces prepared by Somalia at the request of the Council.

On 30 July, the Council adopted resolution 2431 renewing the authorisation of AMISOM until 31 May 2019 and determining that troop levels will be reduced to 20,626 by 28 February 2019, down from the current 21,626, and that the mission will have a minimum of 1,040 police personnel. The reductions were in line with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the drawdown (initially scheduled for 30 October 2018, under resolution 2372) be postponed in light of the conclusions of the joint assessment. The resolution stated that the Council regretted the need for delay in drawing down the level of uniformed AMISOM personnel, and stressed that there should be no further delay in this regard beyond 28 February 2019. The new deadline should allow the forthcoming joint AU-UN operational readiness assessment of AMISOM, as well as the recent joint comprehensive assessment of AMISOM, to feed into the revised AU concept of operations for AMISOM, which is expected by 1 November. Detailed planning for the first phase of the Somali transition plan for its security forces to take over responsibilities from AMISOM is also expected to be completed by the end of the year.

The resolution stressed the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for AU-led peace support operations authorised by the Council, repeating language from previous resolutions, and encouraged the Secretary-General, AU and partners to continue to explore arrangements to establish secure future funding for AMISOM. Though some Council members are open to using assessed contributions to fund AMISOM, the US continues to oppose the use of such contributions for a non-UN mission. Others have expressed concerns over AMISOM's human rights record in this context.

On the political front, the UN, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), AMISOM, the EU, the AU, the UK and the US issued a joint statement on 8 August, voicing concern over delays in the resolution of Somalia's long-standing political crisis and urging Somalia to move more swiftly on political reforms. The statement came as Somalia struggled to recover from a crisis that was ignited when a recent parliamentary no-confidence vote almost turned violent, eventually resulting in the ouster of Somalia's then prime minister. (The standoff ended peacefully after AMISOM intervened to encourage the sides to engage in dialogue.) Since then, the Parliament has confirmed Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke as the country's new prime minister.

On 9 July, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki signed a peace agreement in Asmara, ending a 20-year conflict. They restored diplomatic relations and agreed to open embassies and resume flight services. In addition, Ethiopia will use port facilities in Eritrea. In a visit to Ethiopia the same day, the Secretary-General said that the agreement could lead to the removal of UN sanctions on Eritrea. On 23 July, Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia) updated Council members on the recent developments under "any other business". Ethiopia has taken the position that sanctions on Eritrea should be lifted.

Welcoming these recent developments in a letter transmitted to the Secretary-General on 11 July, Djibouti referred to resolutions 1862 and 1907 of 2009, which called on Eritrea to withdraw its forces to their previous positions from an area disputed with Djibouti, the Ras Doumeira peninsula and

adjacent territory, and to engage in the peaceful settlement of the dispute (resolution 1907 imposes sanctions for obstructing the implementation of resolution 1862 concerning Djibouti). The letter further noted that an unsuccessful Qatari mediation effort ended on 13 June 2017, and all Qatari observer forces deployed since 2010 have left. Djibouti called on the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the Security Council, to use his good offices to facilitate an agreement between the parties on a particular method of dispute settlement, preferably adjudication or arbitration.

On 30 July, the presidents of Eritrea and Somalia announced that the two countries would establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors after years of animosity. The two also called for the lifting of sanctions on Eritrea.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 20 July, Keating briefed the 751/1907 Somalia and Eritrea Sanctions Committee.

On 30 July, the chair of the sanctions committee, Ambassador Kairat Umarov (Kazakhstan), briefed the Council on the work of the committee, followed by consultations. Umarov updated the Council on his 4-10 May visit to Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, during which he was accompanied by representatives from Ethiopia, Kuwait, the Netherlands and Sweden. The delegation was unable to visit Eritrea, which has continuously refused to cooperate with the committee. During this meeting, the representative of Djibouti said that as long as Eritrea refuses to comply with the sanctions regime, the sanctions must remain in place.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 13 August, UNSOM and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released a joint report detailing human rights violations and abuses by state security forces, including the police and intelligence agencies, and non-state actors, among them Al-Shabaab, that were committed before, during and after the parliamentary and presidential elections in late 2016 and early 2017. According to the report, 13 clan elders and two electoral delegates were killed between August 2016 and the presidential election on 8 February 2017. Violent attacks on people involved in the election process continued after this with the killing of 29 clan elders and electoral delegates, including three women. In addition, journalists, human rights defenders and political leaders were subjected to attacks, intimidation and other forms of harassment and interference. The report concluded that "insecurity, weak justice institutions, and an insufficient human rights protection

Somalia

system contributed to the lack of accountability for human rights violations throughout Somalia” and called for prompt, independent and impartial investigations into human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of the electoral process. The Human Rights Council will hold an interactive dialogue with the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia and consider his report (A/HRC/39/72) during its 39th session in September.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is maintaining AMISOM’s capabilities until the Somali security forces can progressively take the lead in providing security and ensuring that AMISOM has the means to assist Somali security forces to achieve this goal.

After the postponement of troop reductions to 28 February 2019, a priority for the Council is to continue to monitor the situation and the readiness of the Somali security forces in order to assess whether the drawdown timeline remains appropriate.

Closely related is the continued need to secure predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM and Somali security institutions throughout this process, as this subject was not addressed in resolution 2431 and

remains a contentious issue among Council members.

Council members will consider the impact of the recent positive regional developments on the sanctions regime, particularly as it is scheduled to review the regime and renew some of its elements by 15 November.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in supporting state-building and in their support for AMISOM and UNSOM. The negotiations over resolution 2431, however, exposed a divergence in views among Council members on some important issues.

During the negotiations over resolution 2431, France and the US made clear that they will not support further delays in troop reductions, and language to that effect was inserted into the text. No Council member took the position during the negotiations that the drawdown should be cancelled altogether. However, it is unclear if there will be changes between now and 28 February 2019 that make the situation more conducive for troop reductions, or if any progress will be made in the implementation of the Somali transition plan during this period.

Another controversial issue is giving AMISOM a political role, similar to that of a UN peacekeeping mission, which was advocated by Ethiopia during the negotiations. After the adoption of resolution 2431, Alemu said that AMISOM “can and should play a role in carrying out civilian responsibilities complementary to the efforts” of UNSOM. Several Council members maintain that this would be unnecessary, given UNSOM’s political mandate.

Council members have started a conversation on lifting sanctions on Eritrea. Some Council members would like to see the sanctions lifted soon, especially as the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group has consistently found no evidence that the country has supported Al-Shabaab in recent years. Others point to the fact that Eritrea has never accepted the Security Council’s sanctions regime and take the view that if sanctions are to be lifted, Eritrea must acknowledge it in some form. There are also concerns over sanctions related to Eritrea’s dispute with Djibouti, which have yet to be addressed.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council expects to receive the monthly Syria briefings on the humanitarian situation, political developments, and the use of chemical weapons.

Key Recent Developments

The conflict has been marked in recent weeks by the consolidation of territory by the government in the southwest and the potential for a military offensive in the northern governorate of Idlib and adjacent areas, near the border with Turkey. While Idlib was supposed to be part of a de-escalation zone agreed to by Iran, Russia and Turkey, it has been the target of Russian and Syrian airstrikes. Idlib, which remains under the control of armed

groups, hosts hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced by the conflict, and the UN has repeatedly warned about the terrible humanitarian impact of an escalation of military activity in and around Idlib. The presence of several thousand members of Council-designated terrorist groups in Idlib continues to be used to justify military operations, as has happened in other parts of Syria.

A 30-31 July meeting of Iran, Russia and Turkey in the Russian city of Sochi yielded no agreement on Idlib’s fate. The final statement calls upon the international community to restore basic infrastructure assets, including social and economic facilities. However, the final declaration of an EU-UN conference held in Brussels on 24-25 April stressed

that international support for reconstruction will only be possible once a credible political solution is firmly underway. It stated that this also requires minimal conditions for stability and inclusiveness, a democratic and inclusive government, an agreed development strategy, reliable and legitimate interlocutors as well as guarantees in terms of funding accountability.

The political process remains stalled. Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura continues his efforts to facilitate the establishment of a constitutional committee. While the government and the opposition have provided a list of 50 candidates for the committee, de Mistura has reiterated the importance of including civil society and fulfilling the aspiration for women to make up 30 percent of the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2401 (24 February 2018) demanded that all parties cease hostilities in Syria. S/RES/2393 (19 December 2017) renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line aid delivery. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) was on chemical weapons. Secretary-General’s Reports S/2018/777 (22 August 2018) was the monthly report on the humanitarian situation. S/2018/617 (19 June 2018) was a review of the UN’s humanitarian cross-border operations. Security Council Letter S/2018/745 (27 July 2018) was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8320 (27 July 2018) was a briefing by Lowcock and Gamba on humanitarian developments and the situation of children in Syria.

Syria

committee. At a 25 July briefing to Council members, he emphasised some of the challenges that he is facing in facilitating that process, such as fostering agreement on the committee's purpose, its membership and its rules of procedure, including decision-making mechanisms. In press elements agreed to at the meeting, Council members called on the Syrian parties to engage with the Special Envoy constructively, in good faith and without preconditions over the constitutional committee. De Mistura has invited Iran, Russia and Turkey for formal consultations in Geneva on 11-12 September to work on the constitutional committee.

Humanitarian access continues to be restricted for the UN and its partners, despite the swaths of territory that are increasingly under the control of the government and the fact that it would be possible to deliver aid through regular Damascus-based humanitarian programmes. In a press conference on 9 August, Jan Egeland, the special advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, highlighted the need for more protection guarantees for civilians notwithstanding the deployment of Russian military police in some of the territory recently taken over by the government.

On 27 July, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock and Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba briefed the Council on humanitarian developments and the situation of children in Syria. Sweden, as Council President, conceived the meeting as a way to address the special vulnerabilities of children in Syria. Gamba told Council members that since the beginning of 2018 alone, over 1,200 violations against children have been verified. These include more than 600 children killed or maimed, and more than 180 recruited and used for military purposes. In addition, more than 60 schools have been attacked, and there have been over 100 attacks on hospitals and medical facilities or personnel. Actual numbers may be much higher, Gamba told the Council.

The deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Thomas Markram, briefed Council members in consultations on 2 August. Although the two remaining chemical weapons production facilities have been destroyed, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continues to consider that the initial declaration

submitted by the Syrian government to the OPCW in 2013 was incomplete. The Fact-Finding Mission of the OPCW continues to investigate the 7 April incident in Douma. The OPCW Technical Secretariat is currently putting in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria in line with the decision taken on 27 June by the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In late July, terrorist raids and suicide bombings in the southern city of Sweida killed more than 200 people. According to press reports, several meetings have taken place between Kurdish representatives holding territorial control in north-eastern Syria and government representatives in Damascus to discuss self-administration. So far, these meetings have been inconclusive.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 31 July press statement, the spokesperson of the High Commissioner for Human Rights strongly condemned the attacks in Sweida by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). According to the statement, ISIL militants raided homes in at least eight villages, shooting and killing civilians inside their homes and abducting women and children. The ISIL militants included many who were recently evacuated and relocated from the Palestinian Yarmouk refugee camp, Hajar Al-Aswad, and Al-Tadamon areas of southern Damascus as part of a government reconciliation agreement. "The transfer of armed fighters with a history of gross human rights abuses and contempt towards international law can mean an increase in the likelihood of violent attacks against civilians like the ones carried out... in Sweida", the spokesperson said. "We urge the Syrian government not to put civilians at serious risk through such relocations". The Human Rights Council will hold an interactive dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and consider the commission's report (A/HRC/39/65) during its 39th session in September.

Key Issues and Options

The current level of P5 divisions raises the question of whether the Council will be able to work constructively on Syria in the foreseeable future. If the paralysis continues, those with even a limited capacity to act—whether elected members, the Secretary-General, or members of the General Assembly—may seek to take the initiative.

While divided on Syria for more than seven years, the Council has been able to unite at times around some aspects of the conflict, such as initially setting the agenda

for a political process, investigating the use and providing for the destruction of chemical weapons, and authorising cross-border deliveries of humanitarian relief. As the political climate deteriorated, the Security Council failed to renew the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism in late 2017, and there is a risk that Council decisions may be further undermined. Council members could hold informal, unscripted and forward-looking discussions at the ambassadorial level to seek ways to increase pressure on the parties to the conflict and strive for a political settlement that is both realistic and acceptable to all.

Since it was established in August 2011, the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria has briefed Council members in an Arria-formula meeting seven times, most recently on 21 April 2017. Council members could hold a meeting to be briefed on the commission's newest report, released in June, on the siege of Eastern Ghouta, which could also be transmitted to the Council as an official document.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council dynamics on Syria continue to be characterised by increased polarisation on the three files through which the conflict is discussed: political, humanitarian, and chemical weapons. In May, P5 members started meeting regularly on Syria at the ambassadorial level, but it seems that these discussions have now subsided. As the government consolidates territory, including in areas of strategic importance for external actors near Syria's borders, the regional dimension of the conflict is likely to feature more prominently in Council discussions.

In December 2017, the adoption of resolution 2393, drafted by Egypt, Japan and Sweden, renewed the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian access to Syria. It was adopted with the abstentions of Bolivia, China and Russia. In explaining their vote, China and Russia highlighted the importance of working through the government and eventually rolling back a provision that had been devised originally as a temporary measure. In the Council, Russia has continued to question the *raison d'être* of this mechanism, which is currently authorised until 10 January 2019.

Syria

As pressure mounts to facilitate the return of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, UNHCR has emphasised that while refugees

always have a right to return, this has to be voluntary, sustainable, and under safe and dignified conditions.

Kuwait and Sweden are the penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council will hold its quarterly debate on Afghanistan and will consider the latest Secretary-General's report on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, is expected to brief. A civil society representative might also brief.

The mandate of UNAMA expires on 17 March 2019.

Key Recent Developments

On 19 August, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced another ceasefire with the Taliban, following a unilateral ceasefire in June for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. In response, the Taliban had observed a three-day ceasefire, limited to the Afghan government. Conditional upon reciprocity by the insurgents, the latest government ceasefire started on 20 August, the holiday of Eid al-Adha, and may last until 21 November (the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad). This announcement was welcomed by Council members with a press statement, urging the Taliban to reciprocate. At press time, the Taliban had not shown willingness to adhere to a ceasefire.

Following a large-scale assault by the Taliban and five days of heavy fighting in Ghazni City in mid-August, Afghan security forces, supported by US forces, regained full control of the city. According to preliminary UN estimates, 300 civilians were killed. The latest quarterly report by the Special Inspector

General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, an oversight body reporting to the US Congress, puts Taliban control at almost one-fifth of Afghan territory.

Preparations for the forthcoming elections are a major preoccupation. Parliamentary and district council elections are to be held on 20 October, and the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced on 1 August that the presidential election would be held on 20 April 2019. During his last Security Council briefing, on 26 June, Yamamoto raised concerns about the electoral process so far. For instance, in some provinces, only a small percentage of eligible voters registered; in other regions, people were unable to register for security and logistical reasons. Considering the multi-ethnic composition of the Afghan population, Yamamoto warned that these registration disparities among communities might lead to challenges to the election results. The voter registration process concluded on 18 July with 8.9 million Afghans registered, according to a preliminary estimate. In a 23 July presidential statement, the Council pointed out matters in which progress is still needed, including a central database of registered voters and the publication of a final list of candidates for this year's elections. The Council also requested UNAMA to update Council members on electoral preparations within one month of the adoption of the statement. On 22 August, under "any other business", UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča,

who had travelled to Afghanistan from 6 to 8 August, gave the requested update. He repeated Yamamoto's concerns, adding that recent disqualification of over 30 candidates for supposed connections to armed groups had led to protests in Kabul.

In late July, a meeting was held in Qatar between representatives of the US and the Taliban for the first time in seven years, with the next round of talks planned for later this year.

President Ghani's wide-ranging offer to the Taliban during the second meeting of the Kabul Process for Peace and Security Cooperation in Afghanistan in February is still standing. It includes talks about a ceasefire, prisoner exchange, a review of the constitution, and the removal of sanctions against insurgents. The Taliban usually do not respond formally to offers by the Afghan government, as they do not recognise its legitimacy.

Terrorist attacks, perpetrated mostly by the Taliban and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continued to shape the security situation. In line with its usual practice, the Council reacted by issuing press statements condemning these attacks.

Additionally, two-thirds of Afghanistan is currently suffering an unusually severe drought, resulting in over 100,000 people having left their homes in search of water, according to OCHA.

ICC-Related Developments

On 20 November 2017, ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda requested authorisation from the

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2405](#) (8 March 2018) renewed the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2019. [S/RES/2255](#) (21 December 2015) contained language clarifying how the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime functions and reflecting changing conflict dynamics in Afghanistan. **Security Council Presidential Statements** [S/PRST/2018/15](#) (23 July 2018) was on the electoral process, following the conclusion of the voter registration process on 18 July for this year's parliamentary and district council elections and for the 2019 presidential elections. [S/PRST/2018/2](#) (19 January 2018) emphasised the importance of advancing regional, interregional and international cooperation to achieve stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region. [S/PRST/2017/15](#) (24 August 2017) was on the review of the implementation of resolution 2255. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/539** (6 June 2018) was the latest report on Afghanistan. **Security Council Letter S/2018/37** (12 January 2018) contained the terms of reference for the visiting mission to Afghanistan. **Security Council Press Statements** [SC/13467](#) (27 August 2018) welcomed the announcement by the government of Afghanistan on 19 August of a second conditional ceasefire with the Taliban from the start of the Eid al-Adha holiday and urged the Taliban to reciprocate without delay. [SC/13457](#) (15 August 2018) condemned the terrorist attack that took place in Kabul on 15 August against an education centre, which resulted in at least 48 people killed and numerous wounded. [SC/13444](#) (3 August 2018) condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks that took place the week before, targeting a medical centre for midwives and a government building in Jalalabad as well as the Khawaja Hassan mosque in Gardez, resulting in at least 48 people killed and numerous wounded. [SC/13408](#) (2 July 2018) condemned the terrorist attack that took place in Jalalabad on 1 July, which resulted in at least 19 people killed and many wounded, for which ISIL claimed responsibility. [SC/13386](#) (18 June 2018) condemned the two terrorist attacks that took place in Nangarhar on 16 and 17 June, which resulted in at least 43 people killed and 45 injured and for one of which ISIL claimed responsibility. [SC/13385](#) (18 June 2018) welcomed the announcement by the government of Afghanistan on 16 June to extend the temporary ceasefire with the Taliban after the Eid al-Fitr holiday and expressed its strong disappointment that the Taliban had not extended their previously announced partial ceasefire. [SC/13376](#) (11 June 2018) welcomed the announcement by the government of Afghanistan on 7 June of a temporary ceasefire with the Taliban for the end of Ramadan and the Eid al-Fitr holiday and welcomed the subsequent announcement by the Taliban of a three-day partial ceasefire. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8294** (26 June 2018) was the latest quarterly debate on Afghanistan.

Afghanistan

Court's judges to initiate an investigation into alleged international crimes in the context of the ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan since 2003. These included war crimes (committed by the Taliban and their affiliated Haqqani Network, Afghan security forces, the United States armed forces, and the US Central Intelligence Agency) and crimes against humanity (committed by the Taliban and their affiliated Haqqani Network). The victims representation process at the ICC concluded on 31 January. The judges received a report prepared by the Victims Participation and Reparations Section; a redacted version of the report was made public on 20 February. The judges will consider the report and the facts presented by the prosecutor in deciding whether to comply with her request.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 29 May, UNAMA and the UN Human Rights Office released a joint report, *Injustice and Impunity: Mediation of Criminal Offences against Women*, which examined the wide use of mediation by community leaders, as well as institutions aimed at eliminating violence against women, to resolve criminal offences against women. The report is based on 280 cases of murder, including "honour killings" in 2016 and 2017, a further 237 documented cases of violence against women

between 1 August 2015 and 31 December 2017, and focus group discussions with 1,826 mediators. It concluded that the wide use of mediation in criminal offences of violence against women promotes impunity, enables the recurrence of violence, and erodes trust in the legal system. Among its recommendations, the report calls for the expansion of authorities' obligation to investigate and prosecute criminal offences of violence against women, particularly to include forced marriages and harmful traditional practices.

Key Issues and Options

The Council faces a variety of ongoing issues that continue to grow in complexity. Afghan civilians still bear the heaviest burden of the security situation, as evident from the latest UNAMA mid-year update on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, which reported 5,122 civilian casualties in the first six months of 2018. The security situation is further complicated by the increased presence of ISIL and other terrorist groups. Insurgency in Afghanistan continues to be closely interlinked with illicit drug production and trafficking, activities that reached record levels during 2017, when opium cultivation was

up 63 percent over 2016. Council priorities include awaiting the next steps in the framework of the Kabul process and holding inclusive, transparent and credible parliamentary and district council elections in 2018 and presidential elections in 2019.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally concerned about the progressively more volatile security environment and its implications for the civilian population, specifically in the context of the upcoming elections. In addition to the recent surge of hostilities by the Taliban, the presence of ISIL and its violent tactics have added another layer of complexity to the conflict, with a potential to deepen ethnic and sectarian tensions. Among permanent members, Russia in particular has continued to emphasise the threat ISIL poses in Afghanistan. The issue of attributing responsibility for civilian casualties remains a sensitive matter among the permanent members.

The Netherlands is the penholder on Afghanistan, and Kazakhstan chairs the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council expects a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, requested in resolution 2406. Council members will also receive his monthly report on violations of the Status of Forces Agreement or obstructions to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 15 March 2019.

Key Recent Developments

There has been recent progress in the peace process, followed by some reduction in the fighting which continued despite the cessation of hostilities declared in December 2017 and the permanent ceasefire agreed to in June. The human rights, humanitarian, food security and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormous impact on

civilians. South Sudan faces unprecedented levels of hunger and malnutrition as conflict and broader insecurity further decrease food production and access to food. Combined with the impact of the lean season, which typically runs from May to July, this could cause around 7.1 million people in the country (63 percent of the population) to become severely food insecure in the coming months.

Following negotiations in July facilitated by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar signed an agreement on 5 August on outstanding issues of governance and responsibility-sharing in Khartoum. Other parties, including the South Sudan Opposition Alliance and Former Detainees, also signed the agreement after initially refusing to do so. According to its terms, during a transitional period, Kiir will remain president, Machar

will be first vice-president and four other vice-presidents will be nominated, one by each of the parties specified in the agreement. There will be 35 ministers, ten deputy ministers and 550 members of parliament, in accordance with the number of representatives from the different parties set out in the agreement. An independent boundaries commission will be appointed to consider and make recommendations on the number of states and their boundaries. Al-Bashir and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda signed the agreement as guarantors, and it was witnessed by representatives of the UN, the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Sudan transmitted the agreement to the Council the following day. The agreement was welcomed by the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, and Special

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2428](#) (13 July 2018) imposed an arms embargo and additional targeted sanctions and renewed the sanctions regime and mandate of the Panel of Experts. [Secretary-General's Report S/2018/609](#) (14 June 2018) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8310](#) (13 July 2018) was the adoption of resolution 2428. [Security Council Letter S/2018/574](#) (6 August 2018) was from Sudan transmitting the agreement on outstanding issues of governance and responsibility sharing. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2018/776](#) (20 August 2018) extended the appointments of the Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts.

South Sudan

Representative and head of UNMISS David Shearer. The members of the Troika (Norway, the UK and the US) said in a statement on 10 August that “[c]onsiderable challenges lie ahead” and expressed concern that “the arrangements agreed to date are not realistic or sustainable”. Regarding next steps, the statement urged the parties to involve “a wider range of stakeholders, and develop clear plans for the transition period, including how resources will be used in a transparent and accountable way for the benefit of all South Sudanese”. It added, “[c]ritical questions remain, such as how security will be provided in Juba during the transition period and how meaningful checks will be placed on executive power”.

The 5 August agreement deals only with outstanding governance and security issues. The parties still need to sign a final agreement that will address revitalisation of other aspects of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS). The IGAD heads of state and government said in a communiqué on 5 August that al-Bashir will continue to facilitate talks between the parties until such a final agreement is signed. On 9 August, the IGAD Council of Ministers convened an extraordinary session in Khartoum on the situation in South Sudan and decided the following day to set 19 August as the deadline for the conclusion of the next round of talks in Khartoum. Talks between the parties were held from 13 to 19 August on the remaining unresolved issues, including Article 4 of the ARCSS, dealing with the number and boundaries of states; the creation of five new ministries; judicial reforms; composition of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee; the powers and functions of the president and vice presidents; and an implementation matrix. On 20 August, the talks were postponed until after the Eid Al Adha holidays to 25 August. At press time, the parties were expected to initial a final agreement on 30 August.

On 10 August, Security Council members held consultations on South Sudan, focusing on food security and developments in the peace process. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Nicholas Haysom, and Shearer briefed during the consultations. Following this, Council members issued press elements expressing “grave concern about the level of food insecurity”, with the ongoing conflict “being one of the main

direct causes” and demanding that all parties allow unhindered humanitarian access. The press elements also welcomed the region’s role in reaching agreement on outstanding governance and security issues but noted that “considerable challenges remain”, including the need for detailed plans for implementation. In addition, they called for immediate implementation of the ceasefire and for the parties to demonstrate commitment to fully implement and finalise a more inclusive and revitalised ARCSS. (For more details, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 9 August.)

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 20 August, the Secretary-General appointed five members of the Sanctions Committee’s Panel of Experts until 1 July 2019. On 27 August, committee chair Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland) and the coordinator of the Panel of Experts briefed the committee on their respective reports following their visit to South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya from 16 to 26 June.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan conducted its fifth field mission to South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia, from 20 to 31 August. The Human Rights Council will hold an interactive dialogue with the Commission during its 39th session in September.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how the Council can support IGAD and other regional actors in finalising the peace process and ensuring implementation of the various agreements, given what the Council called in resolution 2428 “continued and flagrant violations” of the ARCSS, the 21 December 2017 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, and the 27 June Khartoum Declaration. An option would be to invite Haysom to brief the Council on a more regular basis in the future. Another option would be to adopt a presidential statement or press statement calling for implementation of the various agreements concluded by the parties, including unhindered humanitarian access and evidence of a sustained, significant reduction in violence. To reduce the level of violence and exert leverage on the parties, Council members could consider imposing, or threatening to impose, further targeted sanctions against those who undermine the process.

Another key issue for the Council is the implementation of the arms embargo and targeted sanctions imposed by resolution 2428,

including in the context of the lack of support for the Council’s imposition of such measures among key regional actors. An option would be to use the various ways in which the Council can receive relevant information, as set out in resolution 2428, to inform the Council’s response in this regard.

The Council could also revisit the idea of holding an Arria-formula meeting with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, given the high levels of violations and abuses of human rights and the Commission’s recent visit. The idea of holding such a meeting was proposed in July, but it has not yet taken place.

Council Dynamics

Council members share deep concern about the crisis in South Sudan and its devastating impact on civilians and, in this context, continue to be supportive of the roles played by IGAD and the region towards a political resolution of the conflict. While some Council members may be cautiously optimistic about the recent progress made by the parties, other members are more sceptical as to whether, when and how the various agreements will be implemented and if this will translate into an improved situation on the ground. Several members, including the Netherlands, together with Côte d’Ivoire, Kuwait and Sweden, are particularly concerned about the current lack of food security and the alarming humanitarian situation.

The longstanding issue of whether the Council should impose an arms embargo was resolved with the adoption of resolution 2428 on 13 July, which passed with nine votes, the minimum number required for adoption under the UN Charter. Bolivia, China, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan and Russia abstained. However, several members still hold the view that the timing was not appropriate, given the ongoing peace process, and that more should have been done to obtain a higher level of consensus within the Council ahead of the adoption and to coordinate any such efforts with regional organisations and actors.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan. Poland chairs the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council expects to receive a briefing on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and on the report of the Secretary-General containing detailed recommendations about the reconfiguration of UNISFA, requested in resolution 2416 and submitted to the Council in August. Council members also expect to receive by 15 September a report from the Secretary-General, requested in resolution 2412, on progress in implementing any steps taken by the parties as set out in that resolution as well as resolution 2386. This report may also be covered during the briefing.

The mandate of UNISFA expires on 15 November. The mission's support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), established in 2011 to conduct monitoring and verification activities along the Sudan/South Sudan border, expires on 15 October.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in Abyei, the disputed territory along the Sudan/South Sudan border, remains relatively stable but unpredictable in the absence of significant progress on establishing temporary arrangements for its administration and security pending resolution of its final status. Humanitarian needs remain substantial and are exacerbated by intercommunal tensions and a lack of basic public services. In this context, UNISFA continues to carry out its mandate, including ongoing facilitation of peaceful migration throughout Abyei; conflict prevention and deterrence; and mediation.

On 15 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2416, which renewed the mandate of UNISFA until 15 November and reduced the authorised troop ceiling of the mission from 4,791 to 4,500. Resolution 2416 authorised a further decrease in the troop ceiling to 3,959 on 15 October, unless the Council decides to extend the mission's support to the JBVMM, which remains at initial operating capability. Resolution 2412, adopted on 23 April, extended the mission's support for the JBVMM until 15 October, saying this would be the final such extension unless the parties demonstrate measurable progress on border demarcation in line with

six specific measures set out in the resolution. (For more details, see our What's in Blue stories of 22 April and 14 May.)

Resolution 2416 expressed the Council's intention to revise the configuration and mandate of UNISFA, following recommendations to this effect in the 22 April confidential letter from the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General's letter presented a summary of the independent and integrated review of UNISFA conducted from February to April (the mission was one of the eight peacekeeping operations subject to review, as initiated by the Secretary-General). The resolution acknowledges that "over the course of the seven years since [the] establishment of UNISFA, the mission has been able to stabilize and demilitarize the Abyei Area and that UNISFA is now an interim security force with no viable exit strategy". It requested the Secretary-General to report by 15 August on detailed recommendations regarding the reconfiguration of UNISFA's mandate "to create the space for a viable political process that would also serve as an exit strategy, including the role of the UN Country Teams in support of rule of law and peacebuilding, and detailed information on steps the governments should take to create the conditions for an exit strategy".

Council members received the Secretary-General's further recommendations on 20 August, which propose that the mission be reconfigured to play an enhanced and more proactive role in support of a political solution to resolving the final status of Abyei, including implementation by Sudan and South Sudan of two agreements concluded in 2011 on border issues and security arrangements. Acknowledging that the mission "has lacked the civilian tools to keep the parties engaged", recommendations include appointing a civilian deputy head of mission to function as the main focal point on political matters and expanding UNISFA's civilian component. (A 2015 decision by the Secretary-General to appoint a civilian head of mission was never implemented.) Recommended changes to the mission's military component include transferring troops to the JBVMM to fully operationalise it, based on the reduced need for a large military presence and the assessment that the JBVMM "remains vital" in

contributing to preventing conflict between the two countries and that its full deployment is of "paramount importance". A larger police component is also recommended, including the addition of specialised police officers to provide advisory support and the transfer of some tasks from the military to the police. These proposed changes would represent an overall decrease in troop numbers.

Council members were last briefed on UNISFA on 24 April by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Nicholas Haysom. The briefing was held in consultations and not in the open chamber, as was the case at the preceding briefing on the issue on 26 October 2017.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is whether to maintain UNISFA's support to the JBVMM. An option is to continue the mission's support in recognition of recent efforts made by the parties towards its full operationalisation, including the establishment of some team sites along the border crossing corridors. Continued support could include some or all of the 20 August recommendations of the Secretary-General related to the JBVMM. Another option is to retain the mission's support for a shorter period, as a means of putting pressure on the parties to intensify efforts to fully implement the JBVMM and reach a political solution. A further option is for the Council to take no action to extend the mission's support for the JBVMM, which would result in UNISFA's troop levels decreasing on 15 October from 4,500 to 3,959, as set out in resolution 2416.

Another key issue for the Council to consider is the appropriateness of UNISFA's current mandate in relation to its strategic priorities and the situation on the ground, ahead of the mandate renewal in November. This assessment could be informed by the 20 August recommendations of the Secretary-General.

Council Dynamics

Over the last several years, the US has repeatedly expressed its concern that UNISFA is persisting longer than had been intended

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2416 (15 May 2018) extended UNISFA's mandate until 15 November and reduced the authorised troop ceiling of the mission from 4,791 to 4,500. **S/RES/2412** (23 April 2018) extended UNISFA's support for the JBVMM until 15 October. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/293** (3 April 2018) was on the situation in Abyei. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8078** (26 October 2017) was a briefing on Sudan/South Sudan. **Security Council Letter S/2018/778** (20 August 2018) was from the Secretary-General transmitting recommendations on the reconfiguration of UNISFA's mandate.

Sudan/South Sudan

for an interim force, and that Sudan and South Sudan are taking advantage of the relative stability that UNISFA provides to delay attempts to resolve the status of Abyei and related border-security issues. During the negotiations for resolution 2416, the US again pushed for troop reductions. The reduction in the troop ceiling initially proposed by the US was slightly adjusted (from 4,222 to 4,500) as a compromise following opposition from Ethiopia (UNISFA's primary troop-contributing country), which was

supported by some other members. Ethiopia had similarly expressed concern about troop reductions during negotiations in November 2017 on resolution 2386 and in April on resolution 2412, both of which ultimately maintained a troop ceiling of 4,791, despite initial drafts seeking to reduce it. Insofar as the reconfiguration of UNISFA will likely involve further troop reductions, these dynamics are expected to arise again in discussions leading up to the mandate renewal in November.

Regarding the JBVMM, Ethiopia and several other Council members are of the view that suspending the mission's support to the JBVMM would undermine the effectiveness of the mission, and that the parties have taken sufficient steps towards establishing the JBVMM to merit retaining support. This difference in perspective will likely feature in discussions ahead of deciding whether to extend support for the JBVMM in October.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

Corruption and Conflict

Expected Council Action

In September, the US is planning to hold a briefing under the agenda item "Maintenance of International Peace and Security" on corruption and conflict. Secretary-General António Guterres will brief. Additionally, John Prendergast, Founding Director of the Enough Project and co-founder of The Sentry will brief. A formal outcome is not anticipated.

Background

Within the UN system, different bodies have addressed the issue of corruption. For instance, the preamble of the UN Convention against Corruption names corruption as a threat to the stability of societies and as a transnational problem in need of international cooperation. The Executive Director of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, Yury Fedotov, called the fight against corruption "a vital component of our collective efforts to strengthen peace and security [...]" during a high-level debate at the UN in New York in May to mark the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the convention. The Secretary-General has addressed the issue of corruption

in his reports to the Council on country situations before it. More broadly, the Council has addressed misappropriation of resources within sanctions regimes. For instance, in the cases of Somalia, the Council has banned trade in charcoal, and in Libya, trade in crude oil, among others.

The Enough Project researches conflicts in African countries and advocates for peace and an end to mass atrocities. Connected to the Enough Project is The Sentry, an organisation researching financial networks profiting from and supporting armed conflict and atrocities with the ultimate aim of altering those systems, with a focus on countries in Africa.

Key Issues and Options

This is the first time that a Council meeting considers corruption as a cross-cutting issue. While no formal Council product is envisaged, the meeting is expected to focus on the link between corruption and instability, and ultimately conflict, and how best to confront that cycle. Members may suggest how to incorporate these issues into topics on

the Council's agenda. On the one hand, tackling corruption may factor into the broader idea of prevention of conflict; on the other hand it may also be of relevance to combating the financing of terrorism and conflicts over resources in country-specific situations before the Council. Concrete settings for implementation of these ideas could be sanctions regimes and resolutions. Another point could be to strengthen the involvement of civil society and its expertise, also with a view to UN involvement in peacebuilding, where existing state structures may have suffered from the corrosive effects of corruption.

Council Dynamics

On most occasions when the Council discusses thematic issues not formally on its agenda, some member states, in particular China and Russia but also several elected members, express the view that the Council's taking on the topic encroaches on the authority of other UN organs. Considering that the focus of this meeting is unprecedented, similar points can be anticipated.

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