

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

As part of Uruguay's presidency of the Security Council in January 2016, it has planned an open debate focusing on the Secretary-General's June 2015 report on the protection of civilians and the recommendations from the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations relevant to the [protection of civilians](#). This is Uruguay's first month of its current two-year term as an elected Council member. Also joining the Council this month as new members are Egypt, Japan, Senegal and Ukraine. These five new elected members replace Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania and Nigeria will rotate off the Council at the end of December 2015.

Since late November 2015, Council members have been considering a possible visiting mission to [Burundi](#). At press time, it remained unclear if such a visiting mission would take place in January.

The recent AU peacekeeping initiative for [Burundi](#) as well as political talks in [Libya](#) and [Yemen](#) may require Council attention in January depending on developments. In addition, the Council may need to react to forthcoming recommendations it has requested from the Secretary-General by mid-January for ceasefire monitoring in [Syria](#) and for additional protection in and around Juba in [South Sudan](#). Council members will also be closely watching the aftermath of the presidential and legislative elections in [Haiti](#).

On the programme of work related to Africa, the Council is expected to renew the 2127 sanctions regime related to the [Central African Republic](#). There will also be briefings from:

- Special Representative Aïchatou Mindaoudou

on UNOCI in [Côte d'Ivoire](#);

- Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous on UNAMID in [Darfur](#) and MINUSMA in [Mali](#);
- Special Representative Maman Sidikou on MONUSCO in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#);
- UN Special Representative Michael Keating on UNSOM and AU Special Representative Jose Madeira on AMISOM in [Somalia](#); and
- Special Representative Mohamed Ibn Chambas on the [UN Office for West Africa](#).

Related to Europe, Council members expect to be briefed by Special Representative Lisa Bittenheim on UNFICYP in [Cyprus](#) ahead of the mission's anticipated renewal before the end of January. Special Adviser Espen Barthe Eide will also brief on the progress of talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

On Middle East issues, Uruguay's foreign minister will preside over the Council's quarterly open debate on [Israel/Palestine](#) with a briefing by the Secretary-General. On [Syria](#), the Council will have its regular monthly briefing on the chemical weapons track from Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo and on the humanitarian track from the head of OCHA, Stephen O'Brien. Council members will be closely following whether UN-facilitated talks between the delegations from the Syrian government and the Syrian opposition gets underway as called for in resolution 2254, unanimously adopted on 18 December 2015. •

23 December 2015

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Status Update since our December 2015 Forecast

Sahel

On 8 December, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the Sahel (S/PRST/2015/24). The statement covers challenges facing the region and highlights the different regional and international security and development initiatives. Compromises were reached to resolve contentious issues regarding the reporting cycle of the Secretary-General and recommendations on the location of the Special Envoy's office, which had delayed the statement's adoption at the Council's briefing on the Sahel in November 2015.

UNOCA/LRA

On 8 December, Abdoulaye Bathily, Special Representative and head of UNOCA, briefed the Council (S/PV.7572) on the latest UNOCA report (S/2015/914). Jackson Tuwei, Special Envoy of the AU for the Lord's Resistance Army, also addressed the Council via video teleconference from Nairobi.

Western Sahara

On 8 December, Council members met in consultations on Western Sahara. The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Christopher Ross, briefed, stating that the negotiation process meant to facilitate a solution to the conflict over Western Sahara remains stalemated, with a solution needed more urgent than ever. He said that while the Polisario is ready to resume face-to-face talks, Morocco remains unready to do so without significant preparation through shuttle diplomacy. Ross concluded that much more can be done by means of a sustained effort by the Council, including a reiteration of his freedom of movement. Special Representative and head of MINURSO Kim Bolduc also briefed.

Youth, Peace and Security

At the initiative of Jordan, on 9 December, the Council adopted resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security which recognised the contribution of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and warned against the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism amongst youth.

International Criminal Tribunals

On 9 December, the Council held a debate on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Rwanda (ICTR) in which the presidents and prosecutors of these bodies briefed along with the president of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (S/PV.7574). The meeting focused on

the completion strategy reports submitted by both Tribunals (S/2015/874 and S/2015/884) and the Residual Mechanism's review report (S/2015/896). On 22 December, the Council adopted resolution 2256 extending 17 ICTY judges' terms and the ICTY prosecutor's term for up to a year, with Russia abstaining.

DPRK

On 10 December, the Council held a meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK, with briefings by High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman (S/PV.7575 and Resumption 1). The meeting was convened in response to a joint request from Chile, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Spain, the UK and the US (S/2015/931). It was the second formal Council meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK, following its decision on 22 December 2014, to add "the situation in the DPRK" to its agenda as a separate item from the non-proliferation issue, in response to the findings of the February 2014 report of the Human Rights Council commission of inquiry (A/HRC/25/63). At the beginning of the meeting there was a procedural vote to adopt the agenda at the request of China, who said that the Security Council was not the right venue for discussing issues of human rights and that the human rights situation in the DPRK did not constitute a threat to international peace and security. The agenda was adopted by a vote of four against (Angola, China, Russia and Venezuela), two abstentions (Chad and Nigeria) and nine in favour.

Ukraine

On 11 December, the Council met on the situation in Ukraine at the request of Lithuania, who was represented by its foreign minister (S/PV.7576). Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson briefed along with the head of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, Ertugrul Apakan (via video teleconference); Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović; and OCHA official John Ging. The foreign Minister of Ukraine also participated.

Afghanistan

Council members issued two press statements condemning Taliban attacks near the Spanish embassy in Kabul on 11 December (SC/12158) and another near Bagram Air Field on 21 December (SC/12181). On 21 December, the Council adopted resolution

2255 which contained language clarifying how the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime functions and reflecting changing conflict dynamics in Afghanistan. The Council held its quarterly debate on Afghanistan on 21 December (S/PV.7591) with Special Representative Nicholas Haysom briefing on the most recent UNAMA report (S/2015/942).

Burundi

On 11 December, Council members were briefed in consultations under "any other business" by Special Adviser Jamal Benomar on the situation in Burundi. Council members also discussed Burundi under "any other business" on 14 December. On 19 December, Council members issued a press statement, noting the AU decision to deploy an African prevention and protection mission in Burundi, and called on all Burundian stakeholders to fully comply with it (SC/12174). The statement also highlighted the importance of UN contingency planning to develop options for the international community to respond to any further deterioration in the country.

Sudan/South Sudan

On 15 December, the Council adopted resolution 2251 which extended the mandate of UN Interim Security Force for Abyei until 15 May 2016.

Appointment of the Secretary-General

On 15 December, the presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly sent a joint letter on the appointment process of the next Secretary-General to member states. The letter was agreed on 14 December following a month of discussion, and was in line with General Assembly resolution 69/321 adopted on 11 September. Among the most controversial areas were the inclusion of a timeline for different steps in the appointment process, how to specify qualities expected of a UN Secretary-General, references to geographic balance and who can present candidates. The next phase of the Secretary-General appointment process requires members of the Council and General Assembly to examine the qualifications of the candidates and conduct informal dialogues or meetings with candidates. The General Assembly president has indicated that he will hold these meetings by the end of March, while the Council has yet to specify when it is likely to do so.

Iran

On 15 December, the chair of the 1737 Iran

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Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain), briefed the Council (S/PV.7583). While noting that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme came into effect on 18 October, he stressed that all current Council resolutions on Iran would remain in force until implementation day. Oyarzun said the 1737 Committee had received a report on 11 December from its Panel of Experts on the 10 October missile launch by Iran, which concluded that the launch was a violation of resolution 1929. The Panel said in a 9 December report on Iran's attempted procurement of titanium alloy bars, that it had not reached a definitive conclusion on whether the incident constituted a willful violation. Oyarzun also mentioned that the Committee had recently submitted its annual report to the Council (S/2015/947) along with the Panel of Experts' 6 November mid-term report, which had been considered by the Committee at a 24 November meeting.

Human Trafficking

On 16 December, the Council was briefed on the trafficking of persons in situations of conflict by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Yuri Fedotov, the Executive Director of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (S/PV.7585). Two civil society briefers also participated: the head of Freedom Fund, Nick Grono, and Nadia Murad Basee, an Iraqi woman of the Yazidi faith. The Council adopted a presidential statement focused on human trafficking by terrorists, especially on how ISIS generates revenue through trafficking and the slave trade, with a particular impact on women and children (S/PRST/2015/25).

Subsidiary Bodies

On 17 December, the Council held their

annual briefing from subsidiary body chairpersons from member states finishing their two-year term on the Council: Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania and Nigeria (S/PV.7586).

1267/1989 Sanctions Committee

On 17 December, the Security Council held a ministerial-level briefing on the 1267/1989 Al-Qaida sanctions regime, chaired by US Secretary of the Treasury Jack Lew (S/PV.7587). The Council was briefed by the Secretary-General and Je-Yoon Shin, President of the Financial Action Task Force. At the meeting, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2253, strengthening the Al-Qaida sanctions regime and focusing on the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (known as ISIS or ISIL). The sanctions list was also renamed as the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List to reflect this focus.

Iraq

On 18 December, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed (S/PV.7589) the Council on Iraq's complaint regarding the Turkish deployment of an armoured battalion to the Ba'shiqa region near Mosul (S/2015/963). On 8 December, at the request of Russia, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča briefed Council members on the same issue in consultations under "any other business".

Golan Heights (UNDOF)

On 22 December, the Council adopted resolution 2257 renewing UNDOF for six months after considering the Secretary-General's latest report on the observer mission during 17 December consultations (S/2015/930).

Yemen

On 22 December, the Council received briefings from Special Envoy Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, OCHA Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang and the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein (S/PV.7596). Departing from usual practice, Council members also delivered their statements publicly, expressing strong support for the parties to engage in negotiations and a ceasefire, as well as concerns over the humanitarian crisis and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by all sides of the conflict. The meeting occurred just two days after the conclusion of a new round of political talks from 15-20 December between the Yemen government and a joint Houthis-General People's Congress delegation. On 23 December, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the Yemeni parties' participation in recent peace talks (SC/12184).

Non-Proliferation

On 22 December, the chair of the 1540 Committee, Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain), briefed the Council on the work of the Committee (S/PV.7597).

Peace Operations

At press time, Council members were negotiating a draft presidential statement drafted by Chad on cooperation among the Council, the Secretariat and troop- and police-contributing countries with regard to peace operations.

Haiti

On 22 December, Council members issued a press statement stressing the importance of peaceful and credible elections (SC/12183).

Syria

Expected Council Action

Council members will receive their regular monthly briefings on the chemical weapons and humanitarian tracks in Syria. Special

Envoy Staffan de Mistura is also expected to brief on the political track in January.

It is possible that there may be action in the Council towards authorising a ceasefire plan

for Syria if one is agreed. Resolution 2254 requested the Secretary-General to provide options for ceasefire monitoring by mid-January 2016. How quickly such an authorisation

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution for the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2249 (20 November 2015) called for member states to take all necessary measures against ISIS. S/RES/2235 (7 August 2015), S/RES/2209 (6 March 2015) and S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) were on chemical weapons. S/RES/2258 (22 December 2015), S/RES/2191 (17 December 2014), S/RES/2165 (14 July 2014) and S/RES/2139 (22 February 2014) were on the humanitarian situation. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2015/25 (16 December 2015) was on trafficking in persons in situations of conflict, with a particular focus on ISIS. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.7592 (21 December 2015) was on the humanitarian situation. S/PV.7588 (18 December 2015) was a ministerial-level meeting on Syria. S/PV.7585 (16 December 2015) was on trafficking in persons in situations of conflict, with a particular focus on ISIS. **Security Council Letters** S/2015/946 (10 December 2015) and S/2015/928 (3 December 2015) Germany and the UK, respectively, reported to the Security Council that it would take military action against ISIS in Syria, citing resolution 2249 and Article 51 of the UN Charter – the right of self-defence under Chapter VII. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2015/962 (11 December 2015) was on the humanitarian situation. S/2015/908 (24 November 2015) was on chemical weapons.

will proceed in the Council is highly dependent on whether political talks begin in January.

Key Recent Developments

On 18 December 2015, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2254 at a ministerial-level meeting and enshrined the sequence of events that the international community deems necessary to end the Syrian crisis: UN-mediated political talks to begin in January 2016, a national ceasefire and a 2-year timeline to achieve a Syrian political transition. The text, agreed by the P5 only hours before the adoption, did not address the role of President Bashar al-Assad in any political transition.

The Council's 18 December meeting had been anticipated since the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) met on 14 November in Vienna. At the November meeting, the ISSG set an ambitious timeframe to prepare for a parallel ceasefire and political process by January 2016 that would lead to credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance within six months. This would be followed by the drafting of a constitution and elections within 18 months.

Between the November and December ISSG meetings, preparatory work to forge a unified opposition as well as to identify which among the armed groups should be identified as terrorists was facilitated by Saudi Arabia and Jordan respectively. Russia's public comments about its dissatisfaction with both of these preparatory processes cast doubt on whether the ISSG, let alone the Council, would be in a position to convene in December. The events of 18 December were finally agreed after US Secretary of State John Kerry's visit to Moscow on 15 December to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

On the morning of 18 December, the ISSG met in New York to discuss the UN's provisional arrangements to facilitate talks between government and opposition delegations in early 2016. It seems likely that the first round will be proximity talks that may initially avoid the harder political issues and focus solely on negotiating a ceasefire.

At the ISSG meeting, Saudi Arabia presented the final communiqué of the Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces that was agreed at a meeting held in Riyadh on 9 and 10 December 2015. Jordan updated on the ongoing work in Amman to determine which

actors in Syria should be identified as terrorist groups in addition to those already designated by the Security Council, such as Al-Qaida, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), and Al-Nusra Front. Such groups would be barred from participation in political talks and could be targeted by counter-terrorism operations.

One of the most powerful armed Islamist opposition groups inside Syria, Ahrar al-Sham, was pivotal in both the Amman and Riyadh processes. On the counter-terrorism track in Amman, there has been no agreement reached yet on which armed groups should also be identified as terrorists, but it seems that Russia is insisting that Ahrar al-Sham be included on that list. Meanwhile, on the opposition track in Riyadh, the opportunity for opposition groups to form a unified bloc was nearly lost when Ahrar al-Sham almost abandoned the conference. It seems that Ahrar al-Sham's commitment to the larger political process with the Syrian regime remains uncertain and their signature of the communiqué in Riyadh may be resisted by some of their commanders on the ground—especially in the absence of a firm timetable for Assad's departure.

On 21 December 2015, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung-Wha Kang and High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres briefed the Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Guterres said the fact that nearly half of the 1 million people who arrived by boat in Europe this year are Syrians shows how unbearable things have become in the region. Kang expressed concern about the almost daily strikes carried out by the government and its allies (a thinly veiled reference to Russia's airstrikes) that have caused scores of civilian deaths. Media reports indicate Russian airstrikes against rebel-held Idlib on 21 December targeted marketplaces, residential areas and official buildings, causing 43 deaths. Russia has not confirmed whether it carried out the strikes.

Kang reported that cross-border operations authorised by the Council have had a significant effect on improving humanitarian access. Throughout December, the humanitarian pen-holders—Jordan, New Zealand and Spain—led negotiations on a draft resolution to renew the authorisation in resolution 2191 for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access in Syria. They began negotiations early with a view to adopt before Jordan's term on the Council ended on 31 December. However,

negotiations were difficult due to Russia's insistence on including language on terrorism and suggesting that cross-border aid has been used to assist ISIS. The resolution was finally adopted on 22 December. It renewed the 2191 authorisations until January 2017 and included language calling on member states to prevent and suppress the flow of foreign terrorist fighters in and out of Syria.

In other developments, on 2 December 2015, Acting UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo briefed Council members on the regular chemical weapons track. The report he presented to Council members included the results of the OPCW fact-finding mission that investigated three incidents of alleged chemical weapons use. Two were in rebel-held areas and the third was in a government-held area. The report concluded that in the two instances of chemical weapons attacks against rebel-held areas, toxic chemicals including chlorine and mustard gas had been used, though the mission's mandate did not allow it to attribute responsibility for the attacks. It did not reach a similar conclusion in relation to the government's claim. Separately, the three-member leadership panel of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism—or JIM, the mechanism with the mandate to attribute responsibility for chemical weapons attacks—visited Damascus on 17 December. The JIM is expected to submit the first report of its activities to the Council by mid-February 2016. However, the JIM is not required to have reached any conclusions by that date.

On 8 December 2015, Russia requested a briefing under "any other business" in consultations on the Turkish deployment of an armoured battalion in northern Iraq. It seems that during consultations, Russia raised Turkey's downing of a Russian jet near the Syrian border in late November, and suggested that Turkey was a reckless partner in the anti-ISIS fight.

On 16 December 2015, the Council held a briefing and adopted a presidential statement on trafficking in persons in situations of conflict. The meeting and presidential statement focused on human trafficking by terrorists, with an overwhelming focus on how ISIS generates revenue through trafficking and the slave trade, with a particular impact on women and children.

Syria (con't)

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 17 December 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2253 on the 1267/1989 Al-Qaida sanctions regime which added ISIS, also referred to as ISIL, to the sanctions list, making it the "ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee". While ISIS has been on the sanctions list since 30 May 2013 under "Al-Qaida in Iraq", the renaming of the sanctions committee to include a reference to ISIS signals the Council's focus on addressing the threat to international peace and security from this group.

Key Issues

The essential issue for the Council—in the fifth year of a war that has exacted a death toll of 250,000, injured one million and displaced half of the Syrian population, including nearly 4.4 million refugees—is to build on the momentum of resolution 2254 and exert effective leadership in supporting a cessation of violence and efforts to implement a political solution.

Options

The ISSG and resolution 2254 have identified roles for the Security Council in the event that anticipated political talks in January produce concrete results towards a national ceasefire.

How such a ceasefire would be monitored will likely require more consideration by the Council after receiving options from the Secretary-General. The only specification in the 14 November ISSG statement was that such a mission would operate in areas where monitors would not come under threat of terrorist attacks. The UN is planning "light touch" options based out of Damascus—proxies calling in violations that could be investigated by a small group of UN officials.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Many Council members view the adoption of resolution 2254 as a significant achievement, as it was the first time the Security Council adopted a resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

Several Council members believe that the confluence of the Russian military involvement in Syria, the surge of Syrians seeking refuge in Europe, and the expanding reach of ISIS (whether real or perceived) has tipped the P5 closer to consensus on a political solution for Syria. The contours of that solution were partially indicated by resolution 2254.

However, the answer to the fundamental question that has divided the P5 since the beginning of the Syrian conflict has remained intentionally ambiguous—the role of Assad in any political transition.

It is not clear whether the shift in position by the P3 and some regional states—that Assad's exit from power does not have to be immediate—will be sufficient for Russia and Iran to modify their positions, which continue to exhibit a preference for a power-sharing arrangement (rather than a transitional government), sequencing such power-sharing only within the context of a united effort against terrorism, and elections that do not exclude Assad.

France is the penholder on Syria overall. Jordan, New Zealand and Spain lead on humanitarian issues. In practice, however, most texts are agreed between Russia and the US prior to seeking agreement by the broader Council.

Egypt will replace Jordan in the Arab seat on the Council as of 1 January 2016. Some Council members are interested to see how Egypt's greater hostility to Islamist opposition groups will impact Council dynamics on the Syrian political track.

Mali

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council expects to receive a briefing from Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, followed by consultations.

MINUSMA's mandate expires on 30 June 2016.

Key Recent Developments

On 6 October 2015, the Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mongi Hamdi, briefed the Council on major ceasefire violations by the Coordination and Platform coalitions of armed groups that had taken place since August 2015 in northern Mali, in places such as Anéfis and In-Khalil (Kidal region) and the Gao and Timbuktu regions. He also briefed the Council about his 23 September

meeting in Bamako with the leadership of the two coalitions, which had led to several commitments to respect the ceasefire agreement that were holding at that moment. In press elements following the briefing, the Council president presented the priorities for MINUSMA in the next three months: guaranteeing security, supporting the implementation of the 20 June 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali; and sharing peace dividends through quick impact projects.

After three weeks of negotiations, rival leaders signed a series of intra- and inter-communal agreements in mid-October to end tribal conflicts in Anéfis. These included agreements among Touareg and Arab leaders as well as between leaders of the Platform and Coordination coalitions. On 16 October 2015, leaders of the Coordination and the Platform signed an agreement providing for

a "strict and definitive" cessation of hostilities.

The Coordination and Platform resumed their participation in the follow-up mechanisms to the 20 June 2015 Agreement, namely the Comité de Suivi de l'Accord (CSA) and the Commission Technique de Sécurité (CTS). Despite the resumption of their participation in the CSA, which is chaired by Algeria, and its four sub-committees, issues regarding the membership and budget of the CSA hindered its work. The CTS—chaired by MINUSMA's Force Commander, Major General Michael Lollesgaard—started working on the identification of sites for the cantonment of armed groups. The two coalitions are expected to deploy joint patrols to the north, but less progress has been made in this regard.

Terrorism in Mali continues to be a threat to the stability of the country and the region.

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI Security Council Resolution S/RES/2227 (29 June 2015) renewed the mandate of MINUSMA. Security Council Press Statements SC/12143 (28 November 2015) condemned the attack against a MINUSMA camp in Kidal, in which two peacekeepers from Guinea and a contractor from Burkina Faso were killed and others injured. SC/12133 (20 November 2015) condemned the terrorist attacks in Mali on 20 November 2015. Secretary-General's Report S/2015/866 (12 November 2015) was on the implementation of the UN's integrated Sahel strategy. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7528 (6 October 2015) was a briefing by Hamdi on the situation in Mali and the report of the Secretary-General.

Mali (con't)

A 12 November 2015 report on the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel said that: “terrorist groups have intensified asymmetric attacks in the north and have even moved southwards with attacks in the centre, including in the capital, Bamako, at the border with Burkina Faso and Mauritania, and in the south at the border region with Côte d’Ivoire”. On 20 November, two gunmen carried out an attack against the Radisson hotel in Bamako. Of the 170 hostages that were taken, 22 were killed. Two terrorist groups—al-Murabitoun and the Massina Liberation Front—claimed responsibility for the attack.

The increased reach of terrorist groups in central and southern Mali has heightened the sense of alienation among some communities regarding a political process that only included the government and armed groups from the north. The appearance of protection threats in places like the town of Mopti, which hosted many people internally displaced by the conflict, are contributing to communal tensions, the formation of self-defence militias and a perception of disenfranchisement given the limited peace dividends so far.

MINUSMA, its contractors and other international actors (including NGOs) continue to be targeted by Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist groups through improvised explosive devices, ambushes, suicide bombings and other attacks. On 28 November 2015, an attack against a MINUSMA camp in Kidal resulted in the deaths of two peacekeepers and a contractor. Although the mission has reached 94 percent of its full operational capacity, it is over-stretched to address new protection threats to civilians given the resources needed to ensure force protection and convoy escorts.

Security incidents have had a negative impact on the distribution of humanitarian assistance in the north and on the resumption of basic services. As of 8 December 2015, OCHA said 2.5 million people in Mali remain in need of humanitarian assistance and 200,000 remain displaced internally and across borders.

On 22 October 2015, a high-level international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali was held in Paris. The Malian government presented a Specific Development Strategy for the northern regions of Mali and announced its own contribution of 450 million euros over the period 2016-2018. Despite the fact that the final communiqué

welcomed the government’s commitment to inclusive territorial development, the implementation of the 20 June Agreement remains slow. Peace dividends are not perceived to be trickling down, and important provisions such as the ones providing for the establishment of transitional exceptional administrative measures remain unheeded.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Human Rights Council’s independent expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, Suliman Baldo, visited the country from 10 to 19 October 2015. In a 19 October press release, Baldo highlighted several significant challenges facing the country. These include violations of the peace agreement and ceasefire; terrorist attacks targeting in particular security forces, MINUSMA and humanitarian actors; drug trafficking; continuing deterioration of living conditions; and a severe food crisis in several regions. He called on the international community to strengthen its technical cooperation and financial support in Mali and stressed the importance of the 22 October 2015 international conference for the development of Mali.

Key Issues

An overarching issue is the slow implementation of the 20 June Agreement and the lack of progress in areas such as trust-building measures, reconciliation, return of basic services to the north and deconcentration of the administration. Strengthening MINUSMA’s leadership and good offices role in the implementation of the agreement is a related issue. (On 17 December 2015, Hamdi, who was appointed on 12 December 2014, announced that he would be leaving his post on 14 January 2016.)

Ensuring that disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants takes place within a broader context of security sector reform and accountability for human rights violations is an important issue.

The marked increase in terrorist attacks and their reach, the deliberate targeting of MINUSMA and the safety concerns of troop and police-contributing countries are further key issues for the Council to address.

Options

The Council could issue a statement that:

- calls on the parties to act in good faith and with the spirit of compromise in the discussions regarding the implementation of the Agreement;
- urges the Malian government to swiftly implement the provisions of the peace

agreement within its purview;

- requests the Secretary-General to conduct an assessment of MINUSMA’s force projection in Mali in the light of the changing nature of the terrorist threat and the increasing resources used for force protection and the escorting of convoys; and
- reiterates the Council’s support of MINUSMA’s good offices mandate to encourage and support the full implementation of the peace agreement.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members remain united in support of the implementation of the 20 June 2015 Agreement in Mali. The Secretary-General suggested in his 11 June 2015 report that “the Council may wish to consider the introduction of sanctions against perpetrators of the ceasefire violations”, but this suggestion has found little echo among Council members. In press elements after the 6 October 2015 briefing, Council members just reiterated that the ceasefire must be fully respected.

At a 2-4 September 2015 AU meeting in Bamako focusing on security cooperation in the Sahelo-Saharan region, the AU said that establishing an intervention force brigade to combat terrorism in northern Mali should be further considered, but the AU has taken no action to assess this possibility.

Council members continue to be worried about attacks targeting MINUSMA in northern Mali. Despite improvements in the living conditions for troops deployed in the north, MINUSMA’s exceptionally high number of fatalities and casualties has led to tension between the troop contributors willing to deploy their forces in the most dangerous territory (whose troops are not necessarily those best equipped) and other, more risk-averse contributors. That tension reflects what is seen as an increasing divide between contributors from the developing and the developed world. Chad—which is the third-largest troop contributor to MINUSMA and has suffered a heavy toll as part of the mission and its predecessor, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali—left the Council on 31 December 2015. Senegal, which started its term on 1 January 2016, has 973 troops and police deployed in Mali.

France is the penholder on Mali.

Côte d'Ivoire

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Aïcha-tou Mindaoudou, regarding the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on UNOCI.

The mandate of UNOCI expires on 30 June 2016. Current sanctions—a partial arms embargo, asset freeze and travel ban—expire on 30 April 2016, while the mandate of the Group of Experts expires on 30 May 2016.

Key Recent Developments

A charged electoral environment characterised the run-up to Côte d'Ivoire's presidential election in October 2015. A faction of the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI), the party of former president Laurent Gbagbo, continued to call for a boycott of the elections, and a number of unauthorised protests organised by the opposition were broken up by security forces, including demonstrations on 10 September 2015 that became violent in several cities and led to three deaths. Over the course of the official election campaign from 9 to 23 October 2015, three candidates dropped out of the race, alleging that the election would not be fair and also calling on their supporters to boycott the vote.

Despite the tensions, the election occurred on 25 October 2015 without significant incidents and was judged positively by the approximately 5,000 international and national monitors who observed the poll. According to provisional results published on 28 October, President Alassane Ouattara was re-elected in a landslide, receiving 83.6 percent of the vote, with the next leading candidate, Affi N'Guessan of the FPI, obtaining just 9.3 percent of the vote. Voter turnout was reported at 52 percent. N'Guessan and other candidates conceded defeat that same day. The FPI faction that boycotted the election rejected the outcome, claiming irregularities. The Constitutional Council confirmed the results on 2 November. Ouattara was sworn in on 3 November 2015.

In other developments, on 28 October 2015, the International Criminal Court announced that the joint trial of Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé would be postponed from 10 November 2015 to 28 January 2016 in order to

evaluate Gbagbo's fitness to stand trial.

The Secretary-General's 8 December 2015 report characterised the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire as "generally stable but fragile". A worrying trend were attacks on two Malian towns near the Côte d'Ivoire border on 10 and 28 June 2015 that were claimed by the extremist group Ansar al Dine. An estimated 15 assailants carried out attacks in the early morning of 2 December 2015 against two army camps in Olodio in Côte d'Ivoire's southwest, killing 11 Côte d'Ivoire soldiers. Four attackers were also killed. Security forces subsequently arrested eight other assailants.

In November 2015, the Council approved the temporary deployment of troops from UNOCI's quick-reaction force to the Central African Republic (CAR) for a period not to exceed eight weeks. They will reinforce the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR ahead of the upcoming constitutional referendum and first round of elections there. On 26 November 2015, 250 UNOCI troops deployed to the CAR.

The Secretary-General's latest report recommended that, in light of the successful presidential election, UNOCI reduce its military component to 4,000 personnel by 31 March 2016 from its current total of 5,412 personnel. (UNOCI's authorised military component is 5,437 personnel.) While noting that the presidential election was a key milestone, the Secretary-General's report raised several concerns. These include the fact that Côte d'Ivoire continues to struggle with the divisive issue of who is an Ivoirian national, and that further progress in national reconciliation is needed, such as publicly releasing and discussing the report of the Dialogue, Truth and National Reconciliation Commission, which the government has not done. The report further noted the slow pace in holding perpetrators of crimes committed during the 2010 post-election crisis accountable, the prevalence of sexual violence and high rates of criminality.

Côte d'Ivoire has experienced strong post-conflict economic growth over the past year. The International Monetary Fund projected in September that the country's economy would expand by 8.4 percent in 2015 and experience similar growth in 2016.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 17 December, while briefing the Council, Ambassador Cristián Barros (Chile), the chair of the 1572 Côte d'Ivoire Sanctions Committee, noted that Côte d'Ivoire had made important steps in re-establishing its democracy and in regaining control over its territory. He stated that a strong argument could be made for lifting the sanctions regime in the near future.

The Committee last met on 11 September 2015 to discuss the interim update report of the Group of Experts. (A Committee meeting scheduled for 16 December 2015 had to be cancelled, and at press time the statements prepared by the planned briefers, Côte d'Ivoire Ambassador Claude Stanislas Bouah-Kamon and the Coordinator of the Group of Experts, were expected to be circulated to Committee members.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

The independent expert on human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, Mohammed Ayat, visited the country for the third time from 2 to 12 November 2015. In a 13 November press release, Ayat praised the success of the October 2015 presidential elections and commitments to strengthen national reconciliation, adding that no human rights violations were recorded during the October poll. However, the pursuit of all those responsible for serious human rights violations since the beginning of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and the fight against impunity remain major challenges for reconciliation, he said.

Key Issues

The key issue is the future of UNOCI, in particular the mission's drawdown and possible termination. A strategic review of UNOCI will be conducted in early 2016 to develop options and timelines for UNOCI's eventual withdrawal; those will be provided in a report to the Council expected by the end of March.

In addition to the successful conduct of the presidential election, important issues in considering UNOCI's conclusion include the security situation on ground, Ivorian security forces' capacity to maintain stability and the political environment around legislative elections scheduled for December 2016.

Connected with the drawdown of the mission is the eventual termination of the 1521 Côte d'Ivoire sanctions regime.

Options

The Council may approve through a letter or resolution the Secretary-General's recommendation to reduce the military component of UNOCI to 4,000 personnel by 31 March 2016.

UN DOCUMENTS ON CÔTE D'IVOIRE [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2226](#) (25 June 2015) extended the mandate of UNOCI for an additional year. [S/RES/2219](#) (28 April 2015) renewed sanctions measures (partial arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze) until 30 April 2016 and the mandate of the Group of Experts until 30 May 2016. [Secretary-General's Report S/2015/940](#) (8 December 2015) was on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7586](#) (17 December 2015) was a briefing by the chairs of Council subsidiary bodies.

Côte d'Ivoire (con't)

A resolution could additionally:

- commend Côte d'Ivoire for the peaceful and successful conduct of the 25 October 2015 presidential election;
- reiterate the importance of Côte d'Ivoire's making further progress on issues such as national reconciliation, promoting human rights and addressing sexual violence; and
- state that the Council looks forward to receiving options and recommendations

on UNOCI's future in the Secretary-General's special report due in March.

Council Dynamics

There is a great deal of support among Council members for the drawdown of UNOCI and its future withdrawal. After the presidential elections in October, support among members for downsizing and terminating UNOCI and ending the sanctions regime

will likely be stronger. A number of members hold the view that the operation might be terminated by the end of 2016 and that the sanctions regime might be ended in coordination with that or possibly sooner.

France is the penholder on Côte d'Ivoire. Chile has been the chair of the 1572 Sanctions Committee, a role that will be taken over by incoming member Uruguay in 2016.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council will be briefed by Maman Sambo Sidikou, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

MONUSCO's mandate expires on 31 March 2016.

Key Recent Developments

Rebel groups continue to spread violence in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Joint operations by the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) against the Ugandan Islamist group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have been ongoing since January 2014. Since October 2014, more than 500 deaths have been attributed to the ADF.

The former head of MONUSCO, Martin Kobler, last briefed the Council on 7 October 2015, shortly before leaving his post. Reflecting on his two-year tenure as head of the mission, Kobler noted improvements in the security situation in some areas in the east and in the performance of the FARDC, but said that the population in many areas

still relies on the presence of MONUSCO for critical security. He noted that the 1,100-strong Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) continues to terrorise civilians. He called on DRC President Joseph Kabila to resume cooperation with MONUSCO in order to carry out joint operations against the FDLR. On the same occasion, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, briefed on the latest report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement.

On 9 November 2015, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the situation in the DRC. The statement stressed the importance of neutralising, once and for all, armed groups in the DRC, and the Council's concern that joint operations between the Congolese army and MONUSCO's FIB have yet to resume, in particular against the FDLR. The statement further reiterated the importance of the extension of state authority over territory vacated by armed groups and of the effective disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants. It also called on the DRC to ensure the timely holding of presidential and legislative elections by November 2016 and expressed the Council's concern over the increasing

political tensions in the DRC.

The violence in eastern DRC has not subsided. On 29 November 2015, the ADF carried out coordinated overnight attacks in North Kivu on a hospital in Eringeti and a MONUSCO base. Reports indicate that some of the victims were civilians at the hospital who were killed with machetes. A Malawian peacekeeper, four FARDC soldiers and 12 rebels were also among the dead. MONUSCO responded with an attack on ADF positions several miles southeast of Eringeti the following day, with the assistance of attack helicopters. On 30 November, Council members issued a press statement condemning the repeated attacks perpetrated by the ADF against civilians and called for the urgent resumption of operations against these groups.

In a 16 December 2015 letter to the Council president, the Secretary-General reported that a joint DRC-MONUSCO assessment team found that the FARDC had improved its capacity and that the security situation had improved in some areas. He noted the willingness of the DRC to reengage in a strategic dialogue to develop MONUSCO's exit strategy and to enhance cooperation. He thus recommended that the Council reduce MONUSCO's troop level by

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2211 (26 March 2015) renewed the mandate of MONUSCO, including its intervention brigade. **S/RES/2198** (29 January 2015) renewed the DRC sanctions regime and the mandate of the Group of Experts. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2015/20** (9 November 2015) stressed the importance of neutralising armed groups in the DRC and the Council's concern that joint operations between the Congolese army and the Force Intervention Brigade in cooperation with the whole of MONUSCO have yet to resume. **Secretary-General's Report S/2015/735** (22 September 2015) was on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC. **Security Council Press Statement SC/12145** (30 November 2015) condemned repeated attacks perpetrated against civilians by the ADF and called for the urgent resumption of operations against all armed groups in the DRC. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7529** (7 October 2015) was a briefing on the situation in the DRC and the Secretary-General's report. **Security Council Letters S/2015/983** (16 December 2015) contained the Secretary-General's recommendation for reducing MONUSCO's troop strength by 1,700 peacekeepers. **S/2015/766** and **S/2015/767** (5 and 7 October 2015) were between the Secretary-General and the Council president on the appointment of Sidikou as the head of MONUSCO. **Sanctions Committee Documents S/2015/797** (16 October 2015) was the midterm report of the Group of Experts of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS Special Representative of the Secretary-General Maman Sambo Sidikou (Niger) **MONUSCO Force Commander** Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz (Brazil) **MONUSCO Size, Composition and Cost of Mission** *Strength as of 31 August 2015:* 23,438 troops (including 481 military observers and 1,178 police), 840 international civilian personnel, 2,725 local civilian staff and 450 UN volunteers. *Approved budget* (1 July 2015–30 June 2016): \$1.33 billion *Mission duration:* July 2010 to present

Democratic Republic of the Congo (con't)

1,700 at the next mandate renewal.

Political tensions surrounding the elections also continue to mount. The electoral cycle, including six local, provincial and national elections, was to commence on 25 October 2015, culminating with the presidential and legislative elections on 27 November 2015. However, the 25 October local and provincial elections did not take place following an 8 September ruling by the DRC Constitutional Court that the packed electoral calendar should be reassessed by the electoral committee.

Kabila called on 28 November 2015 for a national dialogue to address several issues, including the funding of the elections and the election calendar. Kabila also expressed support for a UN mediator to facilitate the dialogue, a condition the largest opposition party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, has been insisting on.

Many fear that Kabila intends to stay in power beyond the constitutionally mandated limit of two terms, which ends in November 2016, and that the unreasonable electoral calendar and consequent delays are part of this strategy. While Kabila has not commented publicly on his political future, the government's official line is that Kabila will abide by the constitution.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that the government has adopted a policy of limiting the opposition's ability to conduct political activities ahead of the electoral cycle. The UN Joint Human Rights Office published a report on 8 December 2015 that highlighted a clampdown on opposition actors, the media and civil society since the beginning of the year. The report documented 143 human rights violations in relation to the pre-electoral process between 1 January and 30 September 2015, including summary executions, arbitrary detention, excessive use of force by

security forces and restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 14 October 2015, the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 Sanctions Committee briefed the Committee on their midterm report. One issue raised in the report is a recommendation that an independent inquiry should be conducted into the inability of MONUSCO to protect civilians and measures to be taken to improve MONUSCO's future ability to protect civilians against the ADF. With respect to the FDLR, the Group reported that FARDC operations (carried out without MONUSCO) have forced the FDLR to retreat from some positions temporarily, but that the military capacity of the FDLR thus far remains intact. The report further states that certain elements in the FARDC have provided advanced warning of attacks to the FDLR.

The Chair of the Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Dina Kavar (Jordan), briefed Council members on the report in consultations on 28 October 2015. She also briefed the Council on 17 December 2015, along with the other Committee chairs ending their term on the Council. She advocated more listings and that the Committee should focus on sanctioning the companies outside the DRC that are illicitly profiting from minerals extracted in eastern DRC, thereby helping to sustain the same criminal elements who destabilise the east.

The Committee met with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, on 20 November 2015. Zerrougui reiterated that she had previously provided the Committee with names to be added to the sanctions list. Kavar said that the Committee should consider new additions at this point.

The Committee held a meeting with Burundi, the DRC, South Africa, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda on 14 December 2015 in an effort to encourage the regional countries to engage and cooperate with its Group of Experts.

Key Issues

The relationship between MONUSCO and the government, in particular, and the breakdown in cooperation against the FDLR

continues to be an important issue.

The continued activity of the ADF and its impact on the population in North Kivu remains a serious concern.

An increasingly troubling development is the political tension surrounding the electoral calendar and Kabila's possible attempt to remain in power.

Options

Council members may wish to adopt a more robust stance regarding the need to uphold constitutionally mandated terms and the conduct of free, fair and timely elections.

The Council may also consider visiting the country during the electoral period to take stock of the situation and deliver a strong political message to interlocutors.

Another option is for the Council to call on the Secretary-General to appoint a mediator to help facilitate the DRC national dialogue.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are of the view that the security situation in the DRC remains problematic and has not shown significant improvement in recent months. In addition, concerns over the electoral process and its effects on the stability of the DRC are mounting.

There is some hope among Council members that Sidikou might be able to provide new insight on the way forward and a strategic vision for MONUSCO's future, as well as improving the situation on the ground.

Although discussions over MONUSCO's mandate renewal are still months away, some Council members are sceptical that the situation on the ground warrants further troop reductions, especially during an unpredictable election period. Council members will be looking to receive further information on what served as the basis of this conclusion.

France is the penholder on the DRC.

Sudan (Darfur)

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council will receive a briefing, followed by consultations, on the Secretary-General's quarterly report on the AU/UN Hybrid Operation for Darfur (UNAMID), which was expected to be released by 28 December.

The mandate of UNAMID expires on 30 June 2016.

Key Recent Developments

The security and humanitarian situations in Darfur continued to be dire in 2015, marked by fighting between government and rebel groups, intercommunal violence and widespread displacement. Government forces made significant advances against rebel movements during its "Decisive Summer" military campaign from December 2014 to June 2015. Fighting between the government and rebel groups has subsided since then, but there have been reports of clashes in recent months in east Jebel Marra between government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) rebel group. From September to November 2015, intercommunal conflict continued between nomadic and pastoral groups over access to land, cattle and water. The UN has confirmed that approximately 100,000 people were displaced during the year; reports that an additional 66,000 were displaced have not been confirmed. Overall, there are some 2.5 million internally displaced persons in Darfur.

From 19 to 23 November 2015, the AU High-Level Implementation Panel mediated peace talks in Addis Ababa between the government of Sudan and two Darfur rebel groups, the SLA-Minni Minnawi (SLA-MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The talks ended unsuccessfully, as the government reiterated its position that the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) should be the basis for the negotiations while the SLA-MM and the JEM rejected this approach. As members of the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), a broad coalition of rebel groups in Sudan, the SLA-MM and the JEM have instead advocated an inclusive national dialogue process leading to meaningful democratic reform. Parallel talks between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), a rebel group based in South

Kordofan and Blue Nile states, also ended without success.

While addressing parliament on 24 November 2015, Sudanese Minister of Defence Awad Ibn Ouf said the military's intention was to root out the remaining rebel resistance in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur. The speech focused as well on plans to defeat rebels in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

On 28 October 2015, the Council received a briefing, followed by consultations, on UNAMID. Then Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet told the Council that the security situation in Darfur remained "precarious and unpredictable". He emphasised the problem of ongoing access restrictions placed on UNAMID and humanitarian actors by the Sudanese government.

On 15 December 2015, ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda gave her semi-annual briefing to the Council on the court's work with regard to Darfur. She reiterated her frustration with the ongoing impunity in Darfur, noting that the Council's resolutions on the issue over the past decade have amounted to an "empty promise" to the victims of crimes in the region.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Idriss Jazairy, the special rapporteur of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures (UCMs) on the enjoyment of human rights, visited the country from 23 to 30 November at the invitation of Sudan. In a 30 November press statement, Jazairy called for the limitation in scope and time of UCMs imposed against Sudan and for them to be linked to achieving specific purposes. He added that their comprehensive nature does not correspond to the Security Council's practice of imposing targeted sanctions. He welcomed the exemptions introduced for vital supplies, but indicated that lifting constraints on financial transfers was needed to make the exemptions effective. He also suggested broadening the exemptions that preserve the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, including access to health, education and other basic services. The special rapporteur will present a report to the HRC in September.

Key Issues

The underlying issue for the Council is the continuing instability of the security and humanitarian environment in Darfur, with no progress on the political front.

An additional important matter is the difficult relationship of host country Sudan with UNAMID. Ongoing challenges include restrictions imposed on the access and movement of UNAMID and its humanitarian partners and delays in issuing visas to mission personnel.

Another key issue is the apparent ineffectiveness of the sanctions regime, reflected in violations of the arms embargo and the travel ban.

Options

One option would be to adopt a resolution or presidential statement that encourages a removal of bilateral sanctions on Sudan and debt relief for the government contingent on meaningful cooperation with UNAMID. From the government's side, this cooperation would entail:

- ending access restrictions for the mission and its humanitarian partners;
- issuing visas for UN personnel and individuals from NGOs in a more timely fashion, and
- acknowledging that an exit strategy for the mission must be conditioned on significant progress in achieving UNAMID's benchmarks (i.e. an inclusive peace process, protection of civilians and unhindered humanitarian access and prevention and mitigation of community conflict).

Another option would be to request briefings from the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on the human rights and humanitarian challenges in Darfur.

The Council could also consider establishing a co-penholder system on Darfur whereby the current penholder, the UK, shares the pen with an African member of the Council, thus heightening African engagement on this issue in the Council and possibly bringing a fresh perspective to the matter.

Council Dynamics

Darfur remains a divisive issue in the Council. The P3 (France, the UK and the US) and others are very critical of Sudan for, among other things, human rights abuses, aerial bombardments, lack of compliance with the arms embargo and lack of cooperation with UNAMID. China and Russia, on the other hand, have a more sympathetic view of

UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2228 (29 June 2015) renewed the mandate of UNAMID for one year. S/RES/2200 (12 February 2015) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the Sudan Sanctions Committee for one year. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.7582 (15 December 2015) was a briefing by the ICC prosecutor. S/PV.7545 (28 October 2015) was a briefing on Darfur.

Sudan (Darfur) (con't)

Sudan, maintaining that the government is doing what it can to promote stability in the region in the face of an ongoing insurgency. Russia has espoused debt forgiveness and an end to bilateral economic sanctions against Sudan as a means to help the country address

economic challenges in Darfur, which it has argued are exacerbating the conflict.

Incoming Council members Egypt and Senegal will most likely be strongly engaged in the Council's work on Darfur. Egypt, which shares a 1,273-kilometre border with Sudan,

contributes approximately half of its more than 2,000 peacekeepers to UNAMID. Senegal also contributes peacekeepers to UNAMID.

While the UK holds the pen on Darfur, Venezuela is the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

The Council will receive the Secretary-General's plan, due by 15 January 2016, for "appropriate action to deter and respond to any escalation of violence in and around Juba, in order to effectively protect civilians, and to protect critical infrastructure in Juba", in accordance with resolution 2252 on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). At press time, it remained unclear when the Council would convene to discuss the Secretary-General's plan.

The UNMISS mandate expires on 31 July 2016.

Key Recent Developments

A humanitarian and security catastrophe continues to unfold in South Sudan, as the parties have made only limited progress in fulfilling their commitments under the August 2015 peace agreement. There are now 1.66 million internally displaced persons in South Sudan, including the approximately 180,000 provided with physical protection in UN bases. Since the crisis began on 15 December 2013, more than 645,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries. Some 3.9 million South Sudanese, approximately one-third of the population, now face severe food insecurity.

Sporadic violations of the ceasefire have taken place in several parts of South Sudan. Clashes were reported in Western Equatoria state in early December 2015 between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)—i.e. government forces—and the "Arrow Boys", a militia group that has declared its support for the SPLA in Opposition. Several thousand people displaced by these clashes have fled into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which shares a border with South Sudan's Western Equatoria and Central

Equatoria states. Also in early December 2015, SPLA and SPLA in Opposition forces clashed in Western Bahr el-Ghazal, with the opposition alleging that government forces attacked their cantonment area near Wau, the state capital. Fighting between the SPLA and the SPLA in Opposition on 9 December 2015 was reported in northern Upper Nile state; the SPLA announced that it had captured 13 soldiers during the fighting, a claim denied by the SPLA in Opposition.

On 27 November 2015, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), a body designed to oversee implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement, convened for the first time in Juba. Opposition representatives did not attend.

On 15 December 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2252, which renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 31 July 2016. The resolution maintains core elements of the mission's mandate from resolution 2241 in October 2015, including the protection of civilians, monitoring and investigating human rights, creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and supporting implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement. While 13 members voted in favour of the resolution, Russia and Venezuela abstained.

The resolution makes some key changes to the structure and mandate of UNMISS, largely consistent with recommendations in the Secretary-General's 23 November 2015 report, which reviewed the mandate and discussed ways to support the South Sudan National Police Service and the Joint Integrated Police described in the August 2015 peace agreement. The resolution increases the ceiling for military personnel to 13,000

(from 12,500) and for police personnel to 2,001 (from 1,323). The mission's role in supporting implementation of the peace agreement is augmented; UNMISS is given responsibility for supporting the constitutional review process, at the request of the yet-to-be-formed transitional government of national unity (TGoNU), and with advising and assisting the National Elections Commission of the TGoNU.

On 21 December, 15 SPLA in Opposition representatives arrived in Juba as a part of an advance team to discuss fulfilment of the peace agreement and to pave the way for the future arrival of their leader, Riek Machar.

The Council received a briefing, followed by consultations, on South Sudan on 2 December 2015. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous told the Council that "implementation of the peace agreement is progressing very slowly and with great difficulty". He added that a "complete and immediate cessation of hostilities would be the first real contribution to the peace process", and highlighted the tensions that had been created by the 2 October 2015 decision of South Sudan's President Salva Kiir to establish 28 states. (This decision complicates implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement, which is based on power-sharing formulas pertaining to the current ten states. Concerns have also been raised that the establishment of 28 states would create ethnic enclaves that could exacerbate inter-communal tensions.)

Council members received a briefing on South Sudan from Under-Secretary-General for Field Support Atul Khare under "any other business" on 21 December. The briefing, requested by Russia, focused on the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2252](#) (15 December 2015) increased the force structure of UNMISS to a ceiling of 13,000 troops and 2,001 police, while adding additional tasks to the mandate. [S/RES/2241](#) (9 October 2015) adjusted the mandate of UNMISS to support implementation of the "Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan". [Secretary-General's Report S/2015/899](#) (23 November 2015) was on South Sudan. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.7581](#) (15 December 2015) was the meeting record at which resolution 2252 was adopted and included explanations of vote by Russia, Venezuela and the US. [S/PV.7570](#) (2 December 2015) was a briefing on South Sudan.

South Sudan (con't)

implications of the government's 12 December order authorising South Sudan's armed forces to shoot down unauthorised aircraft flying over the country's territory. Khare reportedly spoke about the measures in place to protect UNMISS aircraft which might be misidentified by government forces.

Key Issues

A key issue for the Council is how to exert leverage on the parties to ensure that they fulfil their obligations under the August 2015 peace deal. Since the signing of the deal, the implementation of the agreement has faltered and questions remain regarding the level of commitment of the parties to the agreement.

Another key issue is how appropriate resources and personnel can be garnered for UNMISS to perform its mandate effectively. It is unclear how long it will take for the additional troops and police authorised by the Council in resolution 2252 to be deployed.

Options

One option is to request a briefing from Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNMISS Ellen Margrethe Løj, together with UNMISS Force Commander Yohannes Gebremeskel Tesfamariam, on the Secretary-General's plan to respond to any escalation of violence in and around Juba.

Another option is to dispatch a small emergency mission to South Sudan that would convene an informal strategy session with IGAD-plus representatives and JMEC

chair Festus Mogae, and meet with Kiir and Machar in an effort to promote implementation of the peace agreement.

The Council could also consider establishing a co-penholder system on South Sudan whereby the current penholder, the US, shares the pen with an African member of the Council, thus heightening African engagement on this issue in the Council and possibly bringing a fresh perspective to the matter.

Council Dynamics

There is widespread concern on the Council over the dire security and humanitarian situations, which have been marked by violations of the ceasefire, food insecurity, displacement and access restrictions imposed on UNMISS personnel and equipment. In the context of this difficult environment, a number of members emphasise the need for the parties to step up implementation of the peace agreement.

All members appreciate the severity of the crisis in South Sudan, and they are committed to the key elements of the UNMISS mandate. Nonetheless, there are divergent views regarding the Council's approach to South Sudan that coloured the negotiations on resolutions 2241 and 2252 on the UNMISS mandate in October and December 2015, respectively. Among other issues, these differences relate to language in both resolutions authorising the use of unarmed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), threatening targeted sanctions on spoilers and calling on the Secretary-General to make available technical assistance for the

planned Hybrid Court for South Sudan. The inclusion of language on these matters led to abstentions by Russia and Venezuela during the vote on both resolutions.

The P3 (France, the UK and the US) and some others support the use of UAVs in South Sudan to enhance the situational awareness and early warning capacity of UNMISS. However, Angola, Russia and Venezuela have expressed reservations, noting that their deployment would be disrespectful to the sovereignty of South Sudan, which strongly opposes their deployment. In addition, Russia, along with Chad, has stressed the importance of the consent of neighbouring countries before they are deployed.

The threat of sanctions in South Sudan is another controversial issue. Several Council members (the P3, Chile, New Zealand, Lithuania and Spain) believe that the threat of targeted measures can play an effective role in pressuring spoilers to comply with the peace agreement. However, Angola, Russia and Venezuela maintain that the threat of sanctions is counter-productive and could undermine the limited progress that has been made in the agreement's implementation.

Regarding the Hybrid Court, some members believe that it is important for the UN system to stay engaged in the development of this institution, which will be a significant element of South Sudan's fight against impunity. However, Angola, Russia and Venezuela have argued that under the peace agreement, issues pertaining to the Court are the responsibility of the AU and not the UN.

Protection of Civilians

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council is planning to hold an open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The debate is expected to focus on the Secretary-General's June 2015 report on the protection of civilians and the recommendations in the June 2015 report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace

Operations (HIPPO) relevant to the protection of civilians.

Although unclear at press time, a presidential statement could be a possible outcome.

Key Recent Developments

Conflict continues to have a devastating impact on civilians. There are approximately 59.5

million refugees, internally displaced persons or asylum seekers worldwide—the highest level ever recorded. At press time, the UN Refugee Agency estimated that more than 950,000 refugees and migrants had arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean Sea in 2015, with the “vast majority of those attempting this...crossing... in need of international protection, fleeing war,

UN DOCUMENTS ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2222 (27 May 2015) focused on the need to combat impunity against journalists. **Security Council Presidential Statements** S/PRST/2015/23 (25 November 2015) recognised the contribution of the updated Aide Memoire and changed the cycle for protection of civilians reports from every 18 months to every 12 months. S/PRST/2015/22 (25 November 2015) took note of the recommendations of the HIPPO report and the Secretary-General's implementation report. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2015/682 (2 September 2015) was on the implementation of the recommendations of the HIPPO. S/2015/453 (18 June 2015) was on the protection of civilians. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.7564 (20 November 2015) was the briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the recommendations of the HIPPO. S/PV.7450 (27 May 2015) was an open debate on the protection of journalists. S/PV.7374 (30 January 2015) was an open debate with a particular focus on the protection challenges of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Protection of Civilians (con't)

violence and persecution in their country of origin". Approximately 6.6 million people are now internally displaced in Syria, and approximately 4.3 million Syrians have fled to other countries. More than 250,000 people have died in the conflict since it started in 2011. In 2015, displacement, killings, sexual violence and other human rights violations continued to be features of conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR), Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iraq, South Sudan and Syria, among others.

On 18 June 2015, the Secretary-General issued his most recent report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. He argued that in spite of "some progress on the normative level in the past 18 months, the general state of protection on the ground remains bleak". Protection concerns were highlighted with regard to several specific cases: Afghanistan, the CAR, Colombia, the DRC, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.

Among other issues, the report underscored three key challenges with regard to the protection of civilians: limited humanitarian access, attacks on humanitarian and health-care workers and facilities and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The Secretary-General noted that "the denial of access prolongs suffering and kills people". He enumerated many impediments to access, including "active hostilities, attacks against humanitarian workers and facilities, bureaucratic restrictions and interference in the delivery of assistance". With regard to explosive weapons, he argued that "the development of policy standards to curb or limit the use of explosive weapons in populated areas... could significantly strengthen the protection of civilians", citing as precedents how the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the AU Mission in Somalia "place[d] limits on the use of certain explosive weapons in certain locations where civilians tend to be present, in order to minimize the impact of military operations on civilians".

The Secretary-General's report further highlighted the plight of internally displaced persons, noting that they "often have limited access to basic services...and...are at increased risk of discrimination and exploitation", while "many lack legal documentation and struggle to find employment or

reclaim property". The report argued that there needs to be better coordination among humanitarian organisations to help governments and development actors meet the needs of the internally displaced. It emphasised the importance of sustainable development in combatting long-term displacement.

Also in June 2015, the Secretary-General sent to the Security Council and the General Assembly the report of the HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace, Partnership and People*. The report emphasised that mandates to protect civilians need to be connected to an overarching political strategy.

While arguing that unarmed strategies—e.g. human rights monitoring and advocacy, rule of law development and political engagement—should be central to the UN's protection efforts, the Panel said that peacekeeping missions with the mandate and capacity to use force must do so to protect civilians facing imminent physical threat. Although the Panel endorsed the three main principles of UN peacekeeping—host country consent, impartiality and the use of force in self-defence or in defence of the mandate—it said that adherence to these principles should not be "an excuse for failure to protect civilians or defend the mission proactively" and that there should be "a flexible and progressive interpretation of these principles".

On 2 September 2015, the Secretary-General issued an implementation report responding to the recommendations of the Panel and setting an agenda to take forward these recommendations. The report argued that all UN peace operations are responsible for advocating the protection of civilians. Like the HIPPO, the Secretary-General highlighted a range of non-military protection tools in his report, including "strong political advocacy, credible reporting and liaison with communities." Also in keeping with the HIPPO's recommendations, he argued that when "missions have an explicit mandate to protect civilians, uniformed personnel must play their part, including, where necessary, through the use of force." When the Secretary-General briefed the Council on his implementation report on 20 November 2015, he reiterated that "all tools, including, where necessary, the use of force" must be used in peace operations with a mandate to protect civilians.

The Council adopted a presidential statement on 25 November taking note of the recommendations of the HIPPO report and

the Secretary-General's implementation report. The statement further welcomed the Secretary-General's commitment to keep the Council informed "of situations of escalating risk to civilians...where United Nations peace missions are deployed, [of] serious shortfalls in the capability of missions to fulfill their mandates and of any incident in which a mission...fails...to implement [its] mandate...".

On 25 November 2015, the Council adopted a presidential statement recognising the contribution of the updated Aide Memoire, a document designed to facilitate the Council's consideration of language about protection of civilians in country-specific situations. (This marked the sixth edition of the Aide Memoire since the Council first adopted it in March 2002.) The statement requested the Secretary-General to submit his next report on the protection of civilians to the Council by 15 May 2016 and to submit future reports every 12 months thereafter. This represents a departure from previous practice, which had been for a report on this issue to be submitted to the Council every 18 months. Furthermore, the statement requested that the Council formally consider these reports each year within the same General Assembly session. Thus, a report submitted in May would need to be considered before the September opening of the next General Assembly session every year.

The Council discussed the protection of civilians at the thematic level on 27 May 2015 under Lithuania's presidency of the Council. It held an open debate on the protection of journalists in armed conflict, chaired by Lithuania's foreign minister, Linas Linkevičius, and with briefings by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, Secretary-General of Reporters Without Borders Christophe Deloire and Mariane Pearl, the widow of Daniel Pearl, The Wall Street Journal reporter who was kidnapped and beheaded in Pakistan in early 2002. During the debate, the Council adopted resolution 2222, which affirmed that UN peace operations should include information on violence against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in their mandated reporting.

An Arria-formula meeting on the responsibility to protect and non-state actors was convened on 14 December 2015 at the initiative of Chile and Spain. Panellists included Jennifer Welsh, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the Responsibility to

Protection of Civilians (con't)

Protect; Edward Luck, International Advisory Board member of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect; and Luis Peral, Senior Analyst of Global and Strategic Affairs, Club de Madrid, an organisation committed to promoting democracy. In their interventions, a number of Council members highlighted the importance of receiving timely briefings from the Secretariat on crisis situations and political will as important parts of the Council's ability to address atrocity crimes. Some members expressed ongoing concerns that the responsibility to protect could be used to undermine state sovereignty.

Key Issues

An overarching key issue is whether and how discussions about the protection of civilians at the thematic level can be translated into concrete measures to ameliorate the suffering of civilians in armed conflict. In this sense, it is important for the Council to consider how the open debate can galvanise greater attention to and support for addressing the needs of civilians in armed conflict.

A related matter is ensuring that the Council receives timely and high-quality analysis of the protection needs of civilians in country-specific contexts and acts on this information in meaningful ways. As the high-level panel noted in its recent report, this entails working to ensure that resources

and capabilities are compatible with mandates in situations where UN peace operations are deployed, that adjustments are made when they are not compatible with mandates and that the Council has access to regularly updated assessments of the needs of peace operations.

Options

One option is to invite the Deputy Secretary-General to brief on elements of the Secretary-General's implementation report on the HIPPO recommendations relevant to the protection of civilians. Other briefers could include the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (The two open debates in 2015 broke with the consistent practice since November 2009 of having a high-level UN human rights official brief the Council during debates about protection of civilians.)

The Council could also consider adopting a resolution or statement that:

- urges conflict parties to develop policies on the use of explosive weapons, that reduce their risk to civilians;
- requests that the UN system develop a civilian casualty tracking process to monitor violations of international law in country-specific contexts; and
- condemns the arbitrary refusal of humanitarian access.

Council Dynamics

In recent months, competing priorities have pulled the Council's attention away from protection of civilians at the thematic level. The most recent report of the Secretary-General on this matter was issued more than six months ago (June). Yet until this month, none of the monthly Council presidents elected to take up the report. Members are acutely aware of the devastating and worsening impact that armed conflict has had on civilians in recent years. As a result, they realise that much more needs to be done to ensure that advances at the normative level are translated into the implementation of effective strategies at the country-specific level.

In some instances at the country-specific level, one ongoing hindrance to the Council's work is the differing views of state sovereignty among its members. Some members emphasise the need to respect state sovereignty as an element in decisions to ensure civilian protection. Others give less weight to the sovereignty argument and thus have a lower threshold for when the Council should act to protect civilians. This divide has complicated Council efforts to protect civilians in South Sudan, Sudan and Syria, among other cases.

The UK is the penholder on the protection of civilians.

Libya

Expected Council Action

Council members will be watching developments in Libya closely following the adoption of resolution 2259 on 23 December 2015. Resolution 2259 welcomed the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement and the formation of the Presidency Council, calling on it to form a government within 30 days.

The mandates of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee expire on 15 March and 30 April 2016, respectively.

Key Recent Developments

On 17 November 2015, Martin Kobler took over from Bernardino León as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. León last briefed the Council on 5 November 2015. In that briefing, León blamed the leaderships of the House of Representatives and the General National Congress (GNC) for delaying a vote on the outcome of the Libyan dialogue process (an October political agreement providing for the formation of a presidency council and a government of national accord). Despite expressions of support from

members of both parliaments, their presidencies refused to hold votes on the text.

Furthermore, on 6 December 2015, an agreement was reached between some members of both parliaments (including their two vice-presidents) in Tunisia on a "declaration of principles" outlining a different roadmap for the political process that would substitute for the agreement proposed by UNSMIL. In an 8 December joint declaration, the governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, the US and the EU reaffirmed their strong support for the UN-facilitated

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2259 (23 December 2015) welcomed the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement. S/RES/2238 (10 September 2015) renewed the mandate of UNSMIL until 15 March 2016. Security Council Press Statement SC/12108 (7 November 2015) expressed concern about activities that could damage the integrity and unity of Libyan state financial institutions and the national oil company and highlighted that it was important for these institutions to continue to function for the benefit of all Libyans. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.7577 (11 December 2015) was a briefing by Kobler and Ambassador Ramlan Ibrahim (Malaysia) as chair of the 1970 Sanctions Committee. S/PV.7550 (5 November 2015) was León's last briefing on the situation in Libya. S/PV.7549 (5 November 2015) was a briefing by the prosecutor of the ICC, Fatou Bensouda.

Libya (con't)

Libyan political agreement “as the only way forward to resolve Libya’s political, security and institutional crises”. They highlighted that the “declaration of principles” had been announced by a very small number of members of the House and the GNC, and asserted that “no last minute attempt to derail the UN-driven process will succeed.” On 15 December, Agila Saleh Essa Gwaider and Nouri Abusahmain, presidents of the House and the GNC respectively, met in Malta in an attempt to give momentum to a parallel negotiation track not facilitated by the UN.

On 11 December 2015, Kobler briefed the Council on the 10-11 December round of the political dialogue he convened in Tunis. He said there was agreement on several issues among dialogue participants, such as that the Libyan Political Agreement would be the basis for the political settlement and would not be reopened. The date for signing the agreement was scheduled for 16 December 2015, and Kobler called on all political and security actors to create a conducive environment to enable the future government to assume its responsibilities in Tripoli. In this regard, he called on the GNC to allow free access to all security actors, particularly in Tripoli. (The signing date was later postponed to 17 December.)

Kobler also conveyed several demands made by dialogue participants, such as the need for the Council to support unequivocally the outcomes of the Libyan political dialogue and the Political Agreement; the importance of ensuring that technical support to the future government is quick, visible, tangible and sustainable in order to ensure that the government can deliver as soon as possible; and the need to address the humanitarian situation and the terrible plight endured by the civilian population.

On 13 December 2015, Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni and US Secretary of State John Kerry hosted a high-level ministerial conference on Libya in Rome. The member states present (including permanent members of the Council, some European countries and regional stakeholders) issued a communiqué recognising and supporting the institutions validated by the political agreement and pledging support for a government of national accord as the sole legitimate government of Libya. They announced that they would cease official contacts with individuals claiming to be part of institutions not validated by the agreement.

On 17 December, participants in the political dialogue, including from the House and the GNC, as well as Libyan political parties, civil society, municipalities and women’s groups, signed the Political Agreement in Skhirat, Morocco. In a statement welcoming the signing, the UN Secretary-General said that “the door will remain open to those who wish to join on the road to peace” and that the UN “will continue to work to broaden the basis of support for the new Government”. On 23 December, the Council adopted resolution 2259 welcoming the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement and the formation of the Presidency Council calling on it to work expeditiously within 30 days to form a government and to finalise interim security arrangements necessary for stabilising Libya.

The security situation continues to be critical, particularly in Benghazi. UNSMIL has repeatedly condemned the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas there by all parties. In the south, Qatar recently brokered a ceasefire agreement between Tuareg and Tebu tribes.

The increasing presence of terrorist groups continues to be a threat to Libya and the region. A 22 September 2015 report of the Monitoring Team of the 1267/1989 Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee stated that the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has clearly demonstrated its intention to control additional territory in Libya, given the country’s strategic location as a transit point within the region. The report also highlights that ISIS in Libya is the only affiliate that has benefited from support and guidance by ISIS’ core in Iraq and Syria. At the briefing, Kobler said that “mobilising international support to assist Libyan authorities to take decisive measures to combat, contain and eliminate [the] imminent danger [of ISIS] is a must”. Contingency planning to support counter-terrorism efforts in Libya once a government of national accord is sworn in has been ongoing by France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US, in discussion with the UN and the EU.

On 5 November 2015, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a Council briefing that all parties to the conflict are committing large-scale crimes, including those under ICC jurisdiction. A 16 November report released by UNSMIL and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights established that all parties in Libya’s conflict are committing breaches of international law

that may amount to war crimes, including abductions, torture and killing of civilians.

According to OCHA, 2.4 million people, of whom 435,000 are estimated to be internally displaced, are in need of humanitarian assistance, in addition to several hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants.

Human Rights-Related Developments

UNSMIL and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights jointly published a report on 16 November 2015, covering 1 January to 31 October 2015. The report documents indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, abduction of civilians, torture, executions and deliberate destruction of property. It also highlights abuses faced by internally displaced people, human rights defenders, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. It concludes that all parties to the conflict appear to be committing violations of international humanitarian law, including those that may amount to war crimes, and gross violations of international human rights law, including torture, enforced disappearance and unlawful killings. The report said all parties are also conducting military operations that appeared to violate the principles of distinction and proportionality.

Key Issues

An overarching issue is how to ensure the broad acceptance of the legitimacy of a Political Agreement that is not signed by all relevant actors, how to bring on board those unwilling to sign the agreement, how to maintain the engagement of the parties in the process, and how to isolate spoilers actively undermining the process.

A key issue is ensuring that military actors are brought into the political process to address the implementation of the ceasefire and other security arrangements provided for in the agreement. Stopping violations of international humanitarian law by the parties is a related issue.

The growing threat in Libya of terrorist groups with regional reach is an urgent issue.

Options

Options for Council members on Libya include:

- reiterating that the door will remain open to others who may wish to sign it and stressing the role that UNSMIL will continue to play in facilitating the broadening of its basis and its implementation;
- visiting Libya to hold discussions with the parties and regional stakeholders to exert the collective leverage of the Council in order to bring on board those who have

Libya (con't)

- not signed the Political Agreement;
- authorising interdiction of vessels suspected of being involved in violations of the arms embargo;
- establishing a mechanism to ensure the independence and neutrality of the Central Bank of Libya as well as the National Oil Company and its support to the government of national accord; and
- imposing sanctions on spoilers.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members generally support

UNSMIL's mediation efforts and have repeatedly stated that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Libya. There is also a feeling of urgency among Council members given the growing threat of ISIS in Libya. However, in consultations, at least one Council member warned against rushing the signing of a peace agreement.

Until now, disagreements over how to support mediation efforts, including the use of UN sanctions, have hindered the Council's engagement on Libya. Divergences might again arise as the Council welcomes

the Political Agreement and recognises the legitimacy of the government of national accord, over deciding what action to take regarding those who decide not to sign or accept its authority. In addition, once the government is sworn in, Council members might have different perspectives regarding the kind of international engagement the Council should support against terrorist groups like ISIS in Libya.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

UNOWA (West Africa)

Expected Council Action

In January, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the head of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), will brief the Council, followed by consultations. Members will consider the semi-annual UNOWA report. UNOWA's mandate expires 31 December 2016 and is customarily renewed through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the president of the Security Council.

Key Recent Developments

Over the preceding months, Chambas continued to play an active role in mediating political tensions ahead of elections in Burkina Faso and Guinea. Much of the region also continued to endure violence caused by the conflict with Boko Haram as well as other extremist groups.

In Burkina Faso, a coup was carried out on 16 September 2015 by the Republican Security Regiment (RSP), an elite military unit created under former President Blaise Compaoré. The coup occurred less than a month before scheduled presidential and legislative elections meant to conclude Burkina Faso's political transition, which was established after nationwide protests in October 2014 led to Compaoré's resignation. Ahead of the coup, tensions existed over changes to the electoral code that banned candidates

who had supported Compaoré's constitutional amendment for a third term, and two days before the putsch, a commission recommended disbanding the RSP.

The rest of the armed forces remained loyal to the transitional government. After the army advanced on Ouagadougou and threatened to use force against the coup perpetrators, an agreement was reached that led to the reinstatement of the transitional authorities on 23 September. The RSP was subsequently disbanded. Members of the regiment who refused to disarm were captured in a raid on their main base on 29 September. According to the government, the coup resulted in 12 dead and 271 wounded, mostly during clashes between protestors and the RSP.

Elections, which were rescheduled for 29 November 2015, took place successfully. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, a former prime minister who had strongly opposed Compaoré's bid for a third term, won the presidential race with 53.49 percent of the vote. His party, the Movement of People for Progress, won a plurality but not a majority of the seats in parliament.

Ahead of Guinea's October 2015 presidential elections, the situation there was also tense. Earlier in the year, the government decided that long-delayed local government elections would not be held until 2016, which opposition parties believed would give

incumbent president Alpha Condé an advantage in his re-election bid. (According to the deal brokered by then-UNOWA head Said Djinnit in July 2013, local government elections, which were last held in 2005, should have occurred in 2014. These were never organised due to the Ebola epidemic.)

Protests in spring 2015 over the sequencing of the presidential and local elections led to six deaths. The opposition withdrew from an inter-Guinean dialogue process on 26 June 2015. Further consultations, however, resulted in a deal on 20 August. The government and opposition agreed to the presidential election as scheduled and to hold local elections in the first half of 2016. Additionally, the opposition would appoint representatives to local government administrations ahead of the presidential election, and commitments were made for reforms of the electoral commission and updating the voter roll. In the run-up to the vote, the opposition claimed that the government was not living up to the deal. The presidential election was held on 11 October. Amidst some election-related violence, which according to Amnesty International involved 13 deaths and at least 80 injured in the election's immediate run-up and aftermath, Condé was re-elected with 58 percent of the vote.

Boko Haram continued to pose a serious threat despite the formation of the

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNOWA Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2015/24 (8 December 2015) encouraged close coordination between the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel and the Secretary-General's Special Representatives for West and Central Africa and welcomed updates on the Sahel in his regular reports on the two regions. **S/PRST/2015/14** (28 July 2015) commended Lake Chad Basin Commission members and Benin for their efforts to establish the MNJTF. **Security Council Press Statements SC/12057** (24 September 2015) welcomed the reinstatement of Burkina Faso's transitional authorities. **SC/12051** (17 September 2015) condemned the seizure of power by RSP elements and expressed support for UN, ECOWAS and AU mediation efforts. **SC/12048** (16 September 2015) condemned the RSP's detention of Burkina Faso's transitional president, prime minister and other ministers. **Secretary-General's Report S/2015/866** (12 November 2015) was on the implementation of the UN's Sahel Strategy. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7480** (7 July 2015) was a briefing by UNOWA head Mohammed Ibn Chambas.

UNOWA (West Africa) (con't)

Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Having been driven out of most of the territory that it held in Nigeria's northeast at the start of 2015, Boko Haram has reverted to mostly asymmetric warfare, which it has carried out on a regular basis, with frequent suicide bombings and raids on villages. Boko Haram attacks have increasingly spread into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger, particularly after forces from Chad and Niger temporarily deployed to Nigeria in early 2015. In August 2015, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari set what was widely perceived as an unrealistic December 2015 deadline for defeating the group. By early December, the government acknowledged that was not possible. According to the Secretary-General's 12 November report on the UN's Sahel Strategy, the conflict is Africa's second-largest displacement crisis, having uprooted 2.5 million people, 2.1 million of whom are in Nigeria.

Nigeria has experienced other sources of violence. Hundreds of members of a Shiite Muslim sect were reportedly killed by security forces in the northern town of Zaria during the weekend of 12–13 December 2015, which the chairman of Nigeria's national human rights commission described as a massacre. According to the government, the deaths occurred when Shiite Muslims attacked the convoy of Chief of Army Staff General Tukur Buratai. Protests in Nigeria's south-east, for an independent state of Biafra, turned violent on 2 December 2015, resulting in the deaths of eight demonstrators and two police.

Key Issues

A key issue is Chambas' good offices activities, including in Guinea and Burkina Faso and as the Secretary-General's High Representative for Nigeria. Relevant to these is the risk of

instability during the presidential and legislative elections in early 2016 in Niger (due to political tensions, as well as security threats posed by Boko Haram) and Benin.

The threat of Boko Haram and regional and international efforts to combat the group is a related key issue, as is the humanitarian crisis created by the conflict.

Other important issues are transnational threats posed by terrorist groups in the Sahel, organised crime, drug and arms trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and lingering risks from Ebola.

Options

The Council could issue a statement:

- commending UNOWA's mediation efforts in Burkina Faso and Guinea and highlighting the importance of continued cooperation with regional and other international actors for UNOWA to carry out its good offices role;
- expressing concern over the continued threat posed by Boko Haram to the region and commending regional efforts to combat the group, while encouraging international assistance to the MNJTF and to address the humanitarian crisis and underlying causes of the conflict; and
- emphasising the Council's intention to monitor upcoming elections across the region in 2016.

A statement could additionally recognise the importance of UNOWA's having adequate resources to fulfil the functions of its broad mandate.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members seem to value greatly the good-offices role of Chambas and are pleased with UNOWA's work, considering the mission a useful tool for preventive diplomacy

and conflict resolution. On Burkina Faso, Chambas was closely involved throughout the political transition and sought to maintain close coordination of UN positions with the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). During the transition, including the coup, Chambas and Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman often updated members on developments in consultations organised under "any other business". Chambas further played an active role throughout 2015 in Guinea and as the Secretary-General's High Representative for Nigeria. Going forward, UNOWA may take on a closer role in support of elections in Niger and elsewhere.

The election of Senegal, which hosts UNOWA, as a non-permanent member may provide a new Council dynamic. Its president, Macky Sall, is the current chairman of ECOWAS, which often works closely with UNOWA. It remains to be seen how the Council's new composition will affect its consideration of the Boko Haram conflict. Outgoing member Chad played a key role in pushing for greater Council engagement over the past two years, while Nigeria, which also is leaving the Council at the end of 2015, often sought to limit Council involvement. Senegal is likely to replace Nigeria as penholder for West Africa. While Council products linked to its regular UNOWA briefings are uncommon, members issued a press statement following a July 2014 briefing. The Department of Political Affairs sought that statement as a signal of Council support for a proposed analytical unit within UNOWA. At the Council's last UNOWA briefing in July 2015, Nigeria initiated another press statement, but members could not agree on the text after Chad sought additional language on the MNJTF and Boko Haram.

Israel/Palestine

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council will hold its quarterly open debate on the Middle East, with a focus on the situation in Israel/Palestine.

Issues likely to be raised include the absence of a path toward a political solution and continuing incidents of violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Key Recent Developments

Spiralling levels of tension and violence between Israelis and Palestinians continue since being sparked by clashes between

UN DOCUMENTS ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7584 (16 December 2015) was the regular monthly briefing. **Security Council Press Statement SC/12052** (17 September 2015) expressed grave concern over escalating tensions in Jerusalem, including clashes in and around the Haram al-Sharif compound. **Security Council Letter S/2015/809** (21 October 2015) was from the Secretary-General, containing a summary of a 2014 review by the Secretariat of a number of historical precedents for the administration of territory by the League of Nations and the UN.

Israel/Palestine (con't)

Palestinians and Israeli police on 13 September 2015 at the Al-Aqsa mosque in the Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound in Jerusalem. Since the start of October 2015, a series of stabbings, shootings and car-rammings by Palestinians has killed 19 Israelis. Israeli forces have killed at least 117 Palestinians, 69 of whom the Israeli army identified as assailants, with thousands more injured and allegations of excessive use of force by Israeli forces.

The Council met on 16 October 2015 at Jordan's request, with a briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tayé-Brook Zerihoun. He stated that the occupation and diminishing prospects for achieving Palestinian statehood, compounded by dire economic circumstances and Israel's expanding settlement activities, had transformed simmering Palestinian anger into outright rage. On 21 October 2015, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed Council members in consultations via video teleconference from Amman in an emergency meeting on the situation and his visit to the region, which included meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Ban apparently reiterated the call he had made to Council members during his monthly lunch on 13 October, to find a better way of working on this important international peace and security issue.

In recent months, Palestine has repeated calls for a UN or other international protection force, which Israel has publicly rejected. On 21 October 2015, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the Council that contained findings from a 2014 review by the Secretariat of the historical precedents for the administration of territory by the League of Nations and the UN. The letter stressed the review was not an options paper proposing any particular system of protection for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, but was compiled for the purpose of assisting and informing any future work that might take place within the Secretariat on this subject.

In response to the escalating violence and calls for the Council to respond, New Zealand circulated a draft resolution to all Council members on 23 October 2015, calling on both parties to take the necessary steps to end the violence, declaring that continued suspension of negotiations is unacceptable and calling on all parties to rebuild trust and prepare for the commencement of negotiations

towards a two-state solution. It further calls on both parties to refrain from actions or statements that might prejudice the resumption or outcome of negotiations, including continued settlement activities and referral of a situation concerning Israel or the Occupied Palestinian territories to the ICC.

New Zealand circulated a slightly revised draft on 19 November 2015. It seems New Zealand consulted widely with key parties. Both drafts were circulated beyond the Council membership, including to Israel, Palestine, key Arab countries and other interested parties, such as Norway. Palestine has criticised the draft resolution for not being strong enough as it does not address the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, terms of reference for a renewed peace process and Palestine's calls for a UN or other international protection force. Israel has criticised the draft resolution as a distraction from the need for direct talks and raised concerns over New Zealand's broad consultation process.

On 30 October 2015, Abbas met with ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and submitted for the third time this year information relevant to the preliminary investigation into the situation in Palestine. Announced by the Office of the Prosecutor on 16 January 2015, the preliminary investigation is intended to establish whether criteria for opening a formal investigation have been met. Palestine acceded to the Rome Statute on 2 January 2015.

The Middle East Quartet (comprising the EU, Russia, the UN and the US) last met in Vienna on 23 October 2015 and issued a statement calling for significant steps to be taken to restore confidence and hope in the viability of a negotiated two-state solution. At press time, Quartet envoys were in Israel and Palestine to engage directly with the parties and encourage them to take concrete actions.

US Secretary of State John Kerry travelled to Jerusalem and Ramallah on 24 November 2015 for talks with Netanyahu and Abbas, his first trip to Israel in more than a year. Appearing with Netanyahu, Kerry said Israel had "every right" to defend itself and that he and the prime minister would discuss ways to "push back" against violence and restore calm. In the West Bank, Kerry said the situation for Palestinians is "very dire" and assured them the US wants

to "help contribute to calm and to restore people's confidence in the ability of a two-state solution to still be viable".

Over the past few months, Egypt has reportedly flooded numerous underground tunnels along the border of the Gaza Strip, asserting that they were being used to move arms and militants. Tunnel diggers say the underground routes are mainly used for bringing commercial goods in and out of Gaza. By some estimates, fewer than 20 out of thousands of previously existing tunnels remain. The Rafah crossing, controlled by Egyptian authorities, remained closed for more than 100 days, before opening for two days on 3 and 4 December 2015.

The Council last met on the issue on 16 December 2015, and was briefed by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča, who stated that the current circumstances and bloodshed on an almost daily basis should not be accepted as the new normal. He condemned all terrorist acts but emphasised a need to address primary elements motivating Palestinian anger. Israeli statements on commitments to a two-state solution have yet to be followed by actions demonstrating the sincerity of that commitment, he said. Meanwhile, he noted that in Gaza, Palestinian militants fired 10 rockets towards Israel over the past month and Israel conducted four airstrikes. He concluded that "we continue to look to the Security Council for any additional guidance on developing a new peace architecture for resolving the conflict."

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Human Rights Council held a special meeting on 28 October 2015 to hear addresses by Abbas and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. In his statement, Abbas said the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, was the worst and most critical since 1948. He called on the Security Council to urgently set up a special regime for international protection of the Palestinian people, and urged for a Security Council resolution that would include clear standards for achieving peace based on the two-state solution along the 1967 lines and set a timeline to end the occupation, with international supervision. In the meantime, Israel should release the fourth tranche of prisoners and halt settlement activities, he said. High Commissioner Zeid warned that, if not stopped immediately, the violence would draw ever closer to a catastrophe and that the Middle East peace process must be reactivated with an unprecedented sense of purpose.

Israel/Palestine (con't)

Key Issues

An immediate issue is determining how to de-escalate the current levels of tension and violence. The overarching issue is how to urgently move forward with confidence-building measures towards restarting negotiations on a two-state solution.

Options

The Council has limited options on the Middle East peace process, and it is likely that the open debate will again feature the reiteration of previously stated positions—such as support for establishing conditions for the parties to return to realistic and meaningful negotiations, while encouraging parties to refrain from undertaking actions that could threaten the viability of such negotiations.

One option is to consider New Zealand's draft resolution or to revisit the idea of adopting a resolution outlining parameters for a final status agreement.

Another option would be to explore other Council outcomes that could help advance prospects for a negotiated settlement and to invite the Quartet to report back to the Council on its ongoing efforts.

Council Dynamics

It seems that despite an escalation in the situation on the ground and calls for the Council to respond, Council dynamics on the issue remain largely unchanged and do not signal a decisive shift towards action at this time.

Some Council members have expressed support for New Zealand's initiative, but

it seems the US in principle is still against adopting a resolution. While New Zealand has indicated that it does not currently envision a time frame for adopting the text, it is unlikely it will pursue the draft further without at least some US support. It seems members such as France and the US are seeking to focus on creating the necessary atmosphere conducive to resuming talks outside the Council, including around the Quartet.

It is generally accepted that the fate of any Council outcome on Israel/Palestine lies ultimately with the US.

Separately, developments in relation to Egypt, particularly in regard to Sinai and Gaza, may gain prominence when it becomes a member of the Council in January 2016.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council is expected to renew the sanctions on the Central African Republic (CAR), which expire on 29 January 2016, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 Sanctions Committee, which expires on 29 February 2016.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) expires on 30 April 2016.

Key Recent Developments

Violence in the CAR continues as the country heads towards elections, marking the end of the transitional period. At press time, the first round of elections was scheduled for 27 December 2015, with a second round on 31 January 2016 if necessary.

Protests broke out in the capital city of Bangui on 8 December 2015 when the Constitutional Court rejected the bid of exiled former President François Bozize to run in the presidential elections. Bozize is listed on the 2127 sanctions list, but the Panel of Experts has reported that he has been travelling freely in the region, undermining the

transitional political process.

Another individual on the sanctions list, Nourredine Adam—the leader of the Patriotic Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC), a faction of the ex-Séléka rebel group—said on the radio that the group will not allow the elections to take place in areas under its control in the north-east of the CAR. On 14 December 2015, Adam declared an autonomous state in his north-eastern stronghold, “the Republic of Logone”, with its capital in Kaga-Bandoro (located 245 kilometres north of Bangui).

To maintain security during the elections, the Council authorised on 19 November 2015 the temporary deployment to MINUSCA of 300 Senegalese troops currently serving in Côte d'Ivoire for a period of eight weeks. (The request was presented to the Council by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous during consultations on 16 November.) On 6 December, French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said that France would maintain its current troop level in the CAR (900 troops) until the newly elected president is able to assert control over the country.

Pope Francis visited the CAR on 29–30 November 2015. The pope met with religious and civic leaders and visited the Koudoukou mosque in the Bangui's PK5 neighbourhood, where 15,000 Muslims remain confined (out of about 120,000 that lived there when violence erupted in March 2013). The pope called on the factions fighting in the CAR to lay down their weapons and arm themselves “with justice, love, mercy and authentic peace”. According to media sources, a temporary pact was signed between Muslim ex-Séléka rebels and Christian anti-Balaka rebels to allow the visit to go smoothly.

Despite the calm during the pontiff's visit, violence ensued soon after. In one incident on 3 December 2015, ex-Séléka rebels attacked a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ngakobo (about 60 kilometres south of Bambari), leading to the death of eight IDPs and five rebels. Several people were injured, including a UN peacekeeper who was among those intervening to stop the attack. This incident was in addition to previous attacks on IDP camps that resulted in casualties in November.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2196](#) (22 January 2015) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 29 January 2016 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee until 29 February 2016. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2015/17](#) (20 October 2015) reiterated the importance of holding the constitutional referendum and first rounds of presidential and legislative elections by the end of 2015. [Security Council Press Statement SC/12116](#) (11 November 2015) condemned attacks on IDPs and MINUSCA peacekeepers. [Security Council Letters S/2015/894](#) and [S/2015/895](#) (17 and 19 November 2015) were exchanged between the Secretary-General and the president of the Council on a temporary troop increase for MINUSCA through inter-mission cooperation.

Central African Republic (con't)

Ladsous briefed the Council on 14 December 2015. In the consultations that followed, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of MINUSCA, updated the Council on the constitutional referendum that took place the day before. He said that 60 percent of eligible voters participated. He commented that only 70 percent of the polls were open, due to intimidation by both anti-Balaka elements and the FPRC and to fighting that broke out in the PK5 neighbourhood, in which five people were killed (apparently the referendum was extended for an extra day in areas hit by violence). Onanga-Anyanga added that MINUSCA will draw lessons from the conduct of the referendum ahead of Election Day.

At press time, Council members were negotiating a press statement on the holding of the referendum and stressing the importance of free, fair and inclusive elections. It seems that the main point of disagreement between Council members is whether to just take note of the referendum or refer to its conduct with more positive language.

On the issue of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers, four French troops stationed in the CAR were interrogated by the Paris Prosecutor's Office for their part in the alleged abuse of children that took place from December 2013 to June 2014. The report of the three-member panel appointed by the Secretary-General to review how the UN handled the sexual abuse reports, following allegations that senior UN officials failed to respond adequately, was released on 17 December. It found systematic failures in UN reporting chains and inadequate responses by some UN officials on the ground to reports of sexual abuse, including by the then-head of MINUSCA, Babacar Gaye. Several incidents of alleged sexual misconduct by international peacekeepers in the CAR have surfaced over the last year, causing the Secretary-General to ask for the resignation of Gaye in August 2015.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 3 December 2015, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict held a joint meeting, during which they were briefed by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui. Zerrougui named several ex-Séléka factions that are still recruiting children as a

bargaining chip, releasing them in exchange for political gains. She lamented that as long as there is no functioning judicial system in the country, it is very hard to prevent crimes against children. Zerrougui further provided the Committee with several names of individuals that may meet the criteria for listing and suggested the Panel of Experts further investigate these cases (the names provided have already been suggested before by the Panel for listing).

The final report of the Panel of Experts was presented to the Committee on 20 November 2015. The Panel regards the prospects for peace and security in the CAR as still remote. Taking advantage of the lack of state authority, the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka rebel groups continue to run parallel administrations in the west and east, respectively, taxing goods and profiting from natural resources. Another issue raised by the Panel was the work of spoilers, such as Bozize, who continue to undermine the political dialogue in Bangui. The Panel further noted that Bozize is travelling freely within the region despite being on the Committee's sanctions list.

The annex to the report noted the very high numbers of incidents of sexual violence. In 2015, the UN Population Fund registered 13,329 cases of sexual assault and 7,517 cases of rape in the CAR.

The Committee adopted the recommendations contained in the report. In addition, during the meeting, the Panel of Experts presented the Committee with a list of four names and one entity to be listed (in addition to pending suggestions previously conveyed to the Committee).

On 17 December, the Committee added Haroun Gaye, one of the leaders of the FPRC acting in the PK5 neighbourhood, and Eugène Barret Ngaïkosset, an anti-Balaka leader, to the sanctions list at the request of France, the UK and the US. Both are considered as perpetrators of the violence that erupted in Bangui in late September 2015 and were listed for undermining the peace, violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law and targeting peacekeepers.

The chair of the Committee, Raimonda Murrkaić (Lithuania), briefed the Council on the report on 14 December. Murrkaić urged the Council to send a strong message to spoilers of the transitional process.

Human Rights-Related Developments

High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein released a statement on 11 December 2015 that condemned the ongoing inter-communal violence and increasing use of sectarian language in the country, warning that this could have dramatic consequences given the highly volatile pre-election atmosphere. Zeid also urged the state authorities to reform, vet and train troops of the national army, and to investigate the increasing number of human rights violations they have been accused of committing.

Also on 11 December, MINUSCA published its first report on the human rights situation, pursuant

to Security Council resolutions 2149 and 2217, jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Covering September 2014 to May 2015, the report found that despite a general improvement during the reporting period, human rights violations continued on a daily basis. At least 785 people, including 88 women and 43 children, were victims of human rights violations, including killings, torture, abductions and sexual violence. These violations were mainly the result of armed groups acting with impunity in parts of the country.

Key Issues

Renewing the sanctions regime will be an immediate task for the Council in January.

Monitoring the security situation and the political developments closely and reconfiguring MINUSCA's operations and priorities accordingly will be an ongoing issue.

Ensuring successful and inclusive elections to end the transition period, beginning necessary institutional reforms and expanding state authority to the whole country will remain important issues.

Options

A likely option is to renew the sanctions regime. A related option for the 2127 Committee is to list further individuals and entities whose names were submitted to the Committee by the Panel.

Another option for the Council is to assess whether any adjustments and long-term planning regarding MINUSCA's presence and tasks are necessary after the elections.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are hoping that holding successful, free and fair elections will provide momentum, under a newly elected government, to move forward and address some of the fundamental issues facing the country, including disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform programs, accountability measures and re-establishing state authority and institutions, including incarceration facilities and judicial institutions.

One sanctions-related issue is the repeated request by the CAR transitional government for the Committee to allow the arming of the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA). However, Council members have generally taken the view that until security reforms commence and the FACA is vetted

Central African Republic (con't)

for anti-Balaka elements, it would be dangerous to provide the FACA with arms.

During the 14 December 2015 consultations, Russia, New Zealand and Malaysia raised concerns over the fact that despite the

high voter registration numbers in the CAR itself, refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan have not been allowed to register. As these refugees are mainly Muslim, there is a concern that this may affect

Muslim representation in the election results.

France is the penholder on the CAR. Ukraine will succeed Lithuania as chair of the Sanctions Committee.

Cyprus

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another six months ahead of its 31 January expiry. Lisa Buttenheim, Special Representative and head of mission, is likely to brief on the latest UNFICYP report. Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide is expected to brief on the progress in the negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Key Recent Developments

The negotiations for the latest UNFICYP mandate renewal in July were conducted in a fairly routine and smooth manner. Council members seemed to be very content with the situation on the ground and the positive atmosphere surrounding the unification talks, which officially resumed on 15 May 2015. Since then, both Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci have continued to engage in constructive dialogue facilitated by Special Adviser Eide.

Though there was a month-long pause in August 2015, the unification talks resumed on 1 September 2015, when Eide hosted a meeting between Anastasiades and Akinci. The discussion focused mainly on the issues of property and governance. The negotiating teams continued to meet regularly during September, while the leaders met again on 14 September 2015 to review the progress made. At that meeting, both leaders agreed to intensify negotiations and increase the frequency of meetings in the upcoming period.

During the general debate of the General Assembly, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with Anastasiades on 26 September and Akinci on 2 October 2015. After the meetings, Ban commended the leaders

for their efforts and commitment to reach a settlement as soon as possible. In his statement at the General Assembly debate, Anastasiades noted that significant progress had been achieved on various issues regarding all chapters of the Cyprus problem but that notable differences still remained on some of the substantive issues. Anastasiades also indicated that there was a renewed hope that “the new round of negotiations will lead to the final settlement of the Cyprus problem”.

Soon after their return from New York, the Cypriot leaders continued the unification talks on the island. During October 2015 they held two meetings, while in November they intensified their efforts and held a total of six meetings. Three meetings were held in December. In addition to these, Eide held separate meetings with each Cypriot leader while the negotiating teams have continued to meet almost daily.

At press time, no specific details regarding particular convergences have been made public. However, it seems that substantial progress has been made on the issues of governance, EU matters and the economy, while the more contentious issues of property, territory and security have yet to be resolved. Speaking with the media on 15 December 2015 after meeting with Anastasiades in Nicosia, Eide said that most of the issues regarding the island are to be resolved by the Cypriots themselves. However, he noted that in the final stages of the negotiations some issues would require the involvement of the guarantor powers—Greece, the UK and Turkey. Eide noted that there is strong engagement on the issue by these countries.

Both leaders as well as Eide have expressed hope that a settlement can be found in the near future. Some media reports have indicated that a referendum on the final settlement

could be held early in 2016. Nevertheless, the timing of a possible solution will depend on the progress made by Cypriot leaders as there is no timeline set.

There was a flurry of diplomatic activity in Cyprus from late November through early December 2015. On 19 November, UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond visited Cyprus and met with both Cypriot leaders as well as Eide. Hammond used this opportunity to express the support of the UK as one of the guarantor powers in the effort to reunite the island. On 2 December, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Cyprus, meeting with Anastasiades and Eide. However, Lavrov did not meet with Akinci because the latter insisted that the visit take place in northern Cyprus instead of in the neutral buffer zone as proposed by Lavrov. Though he expressed support for the unification talks, Lavrov said that attempts “to set artificial deadlines and impose schemes and so-called independent arbitration from the outside were made in the past and did not lead to any good”. The day after Lavrov’s visit, US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived on the island and met with both Cypriot leaders and Eide. In a statement to the press, Kerry said that the US remains supportive of “the UN-facilitated, Cypriot-led settlement process to reunify Cyprus as a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation” and that the US would provide technical and financial assistance to that end.

Key Issues

Besides renewing the UNFICYP mandate, the main issue for the Council remains how to assist in maintaining the ongoing positive atmosphere and momentum, as well as how to facilitate a more substantial process of unification talks between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders.

UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2234 (29 July 2015) renewed the mandate of UNFICYP. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7496** (29 July 2015) was a vote on resolution 2234. **Security Council Press Statement SC/11894** (15 May 2015) welcomed the resumption of the Cyprus settlement talks.

Cyprus (con't)

In the absence of significant progress in the more than 50 years since the mission was established and in light of all the resources spent by the UN, a persistent issue for the Council is whether to reconfigure and possibly downsize the mission. However, this issue will likely not be considered during the upcoming UNFICYP renewal in anticipation of the possible agreement at the island.

Options

The most likely option for the Council is to renew the UNFICYP mandate for an additional six months in its current configuration.

The Council could also take note of the positive momentum and atmosphere surrounding unification talks while calling on both parties to consider a specific timeframe for the process in light of the more than 50 years of UNFICYP's presence on the island.

Should there be a breakthrough in negotiations, the Council could issue a press statement welcoming the progress.

Council Dynamics

Cyprus still remains a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda, followed closely by few Council members—mainly France, Russia and the UK. The US has recently showed increasing interest in finding a solution to the Cyprus problem as the island continues to gain strategic importance due to its potential hydrocarbon resources and its geographical position as it relates to the US's ongoing fight against terrorist organisations in the Middle East. Traditionally, France and Russia tended to be more supportive of the Greek Cypriot position while the UK has been more supportive of the Turkish Cypriot position.

Though all Council members support

continued negotiations, there have been some divergences as to a timeframe and conditions related to the unification talks. The UK and other Council members share frustration over the longevity of the process. These members hold the view that in order to stimulate the negotiations, it would be beneficial to impose some form of pressure on both sides. Russia, on the other hand, strongly opposes imposition by external actors of any conditions or timeframe on the negotiation process.

In 2016 Council dynamics regarding Cyprus should not change dramatically as a result of the rotation of five non-permanent members. Considering the current positive political environment in Cyprus it seems very likely that negotiations for the UNFICYP draft resolution will not be contentious and that the Council will be supportive of the ongoing negotiation process on the island.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In January, the Council will consider the Secretary-General's 120-day report on Somalia. At press time, it was expected that there would be a briefing by the new Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating, who is succeeding Nicholas Kay in January, and possibly also by the new Special Representative for Somalia of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and head of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Francisco Caetano José Madeira, who took up his position on 4 December 2015, followed by consultations. A presidential statement on the electoral process was seen as a possibility.

Also, the 751/1907 Somalia-Eritrea Sanctions Committee may meet in January. It last met on 9 October 2015.

Key Recent Developments

At a 9 November 2015 ministerial-level meeting on Somalia chaired by UK Foreign Minister Philip Hammond, the Council adopted resolution 2245. This changed the name of the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) to the UN Support Office in

Somalia (UNSOS), to reflect the fact that it also provides support to the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and to the Somali National Army (SNA) on joint operations with AMISOM. More important, the resolution incorporated recommendations from the AU-UN strategic review presented in a 7 October 2015 letter to the Council from the Secretary-General, aimed at consolidating and prioritising the activities of UNSOA and addressing administrative, coordination and structural gaps. Among other things, the resolution authorised the continued provision of logistical support for up to 22,126 AMISOM personnel and a targeted support package "on an exceptional basis" for up to 10,900 SNA troops, in addition to medical evacuation for the Somali national police on joint operations with AMISOM. The number of staff is expected to increase by some 130, while the head of the office will be elevated to the level of Assistant Secretary-General.

On 10 November 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2246, renewing for one year the counter-piracy measures for Somalia initially authorised in 2008. The resolution

noted that there had been a steady decline in pirate attacks and hijackings since 2011, but stressed the need for a continued comprehensive response. On 26 November, following a 15 November hijacking of a Pakistani fishing vessel and its 15 crew members, Kay said in a statement condemning it that there was a risk that the recent rise in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing off the coast of Somalia could lead to a resurgence of piracy.

On 8 December 2015, Kay and Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud co-hosted a meeting in Mogadishu of the high-level partnership forum attended by 29 international delegations, in addition to Somali stakeholders. The forum, which was created in 2014 as a platform to discuss implementation of the so-called New Deal Somali Compact relating to reconstruction and development, reviewed progress over the past six months with a view to addressing challenges, identifying possible gaps and agreeing on what must be accomplished ahead of a ministerial-level meeting to be held in Istanbul in February 2016. In his opening speech, Kay noted in particular the progress that had been

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2246 (10 November 2015) renewed the counter-piracy measures for one year. S/RES/2245 (9 November 2015) was on UNSOS. S/RES/2232 (28 July 2015) extended UNSOM's mandate until 30 March 2016 and re-authorised AMISOM through 30 May 2016. Security Council Letter S/2015/762 (7 October 2015) concerned the strategic review of UNSOA. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7551 (9 November 2015) was the ministerial-level meeting on Somalia. Secretary-General's Report S/2015/702 (11 September 2015) was the most recent Somalia report. Security Council Press Statement SC/12103 (1 November 2015) condemned Al-Shabaab's attack against the Sahafi hotel. Sanctions Committee Document S/2015/801 (9 October 2015) was the Monitoring Group's latest report on Somalia.

Somalia (con't)

made in creating the new federal structure, with the three new federal states Galmudug, Jubbaland and South West, scheduled to join Puntland soon as part of a federal Somalia. He expressed concern, however, about slow progress in forming the fifth state from the administrative regions of Hiraa and Middle Shabelle, and urged a swift conclusion of that process.

From 12 to 16 December 2015, the National Consultative Forum met in Mogadishu to discuss the 2016 electoral process after a series of regional consultative meetings were held across Somalia in November on the four main options for the formation of an electoral college. (These are: a nationwide electoral college; establishing electoral colleges in each of the existing and emerging federal states; formation of district-level electoral colleges based on the 1991 administrative divisions of the country; and using a clan-based electoral college as was used in 2012, but with wider representation. They were developed in response to the 28 July decision by the Somali Federal Parliament that a country-wide “one person, one vote” election would not be possible before the end of the mandates of the legislature and the executive in August and September 2016, respectively.) The meeting concluded that only an electoral model combining elements from each of the four options would reflect the preferences of the Somali people. It was agreed that a political roadmap should be developed for the period leading up to the implementation of the electoral process as well as the period between 2016 and 2020, with a view to the holding of universal suffrage elections in 2020. Furthermore, it was agreed that the details of the electoral model and implementation plan should be launched at a ceremony in Kismayo on 10 January 2016.

The Al-Shabaab rebel group seemed to consolidate its presence, with no major military advances reported by AMISOM and SNA. On 1 November 2015, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing against the Sahafi hotel in Mogadishu in which at least 14 people were killed. Council members condemned the attack in a press statement. Meanwhile, there were new reports of Al-Shabaab infighting over

whether to support Al-Qaida or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). According to Somali media, the spiritual head of Al-Shabaab, Sheikh Abdalla, warned that ISIS sympathisers would be beheaded.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović visited Somalia from 13 to 17 November 2015. In a 17 November press release, he noted that the government had made progress in operations against Al-Shabaab; implementation of a human rights road map; reforming the justice and security sectors; consultations on an electoral model for 2016; and the adoption of legislation for a national human rights commission. But he added that Somalia still faced serious human rights challenges, including allegations of human rights violations committed during military operations. He called on the government and all security forces operating in Somalia, including the SNA, AMISOM and other foreign forces, to take effective measures to prevent and address violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Šimonović also emphasised the need to address the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, corruption and lack of good governance.

Key Issues

On the security side, the continuing threat posed by Al-Shabaab remains a key issue. There also seems to be growing concern about ISIS increasing its influence in Somalia.

Another key issue is the lack of progress in implementing recent Council decisions to bolster the fight against Al-Shabaab, including the reconfiguration of AMISOM aimed at enabling a surge in its efficiency, as initially requested by resolution 2232.

On the political side, key issues include finalisation of the electoral model for the 2016 electoral process, completion of the new federal structure and promoting women's participation.

Ensuring the protection of civilians and addressing the difficult humanitarian situation are other key issues.

A separate issue is the threat to the long-term stabilisation of Somalia posed by continuing high levels of corruption and misappropriation of public funds and natural resources, as reported by the Monitoring Group assisting the Sanctions Committee in its latest report.

Options

One option for the Council in January is to adopt a presidential statement on the electoral process to reiterate its expectation, as expressed in resolution 2232, that there should be no extension of the agreed timelines. Such a statement would also provide an opportunity to address other key concerns.

At the Sanctions Committee level, the main option is to consider additional targeted sanctions listings as recommended by the Monitoring Group.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council remains largely united on Somalia. While the AU was unhappy with some of the provisions of resolution 2245, it seems African Council members were in full support. As stated by the AU representative at the 9 November 2015 Council meeting, the AU had argued in its discussions with the UN that UNSOS, in order to remain independent, should report directly to UN headquarters and be accountable to the AU Special Representative for all matters relating to the AMISOM support package. He therefore regretted that the resolution instead would require the head of UNSOS to report to the Secretary-General's Special Representative. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the level of financial support for AMISOM, in particular in light of the EU's decision to cut the allowances of AMISOM's uniformed personnel by 20 percent as of 1 January 2016. It remains to be seen how this will impact AU-UN relations.

In the Sanctions Committee, which is chaired by Ambassador Rafael Ramírez (Venezuela), there seems to be a sense, at least among some Council members, that Venezuela's general opposition to the imposition of sanctions as a matter of principle and its abstention on the latest Somalia-Eritrea sanctions resolution, is making it difficult for the Committee to work effectively. It seems, however, that due to political considerations, other Council members are also cautious in their approach when it comes to additional targeted sanctions designations.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia. POW 23 December 2015.pdf

Notable Dates for January

REPORT DUE	REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN JANUARY	REQUESTING DOCUMENT
18 June 2015	SG report on the protection of civilians (S/2015/453)	S/PRST/2013/2
15 December 2015	SG report on UNOCI (Côte d'Ivoire) (S/2015/940)	S/RES/2226
23 December 2015	OPCW report on the implementation of resolution 2118 (Syrian chemical weapons)	S/RES/2118
23 December 2015	SG report on UNOWA (West Africa)	S/2013/759
28 December 2015	SG report on MONUSCO (DRC)	S/RES/2211
28 December 2015	SG report on UNAMID (Darfur)	S/RES/2228
29 December 2015	SG report on MINUSMA (Mali)	S/RES/2227
31 December 2015	AU report on AMISOM (Somalia)	S/RES/2232
31 December 2015	Report of the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts	S/RES/2196
8 January 2016	SG report on UNFICYP (Cyprus)	S/RES/2234
11 January 2016	SG report on UNSOM (Somalia)	S/RES/2232
15 January 2016	SG plan for protection in and around Juba (South Sudan)	S/RES/2252
18 January 2016	SG report on options for ceasefire monitoring in Syria	S/RES/2254
20 January 2016	SG report on the humanitarian situation in Syria	S/RES/2139

MANDATES EXPIRE	RELEVANT DOCUMENT
29 January 2016	CAR sanctions S/RES/2196
31 January 2016	UNFICYP (Cyprus) S/RES/2234

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