Monthly Forecast

Overview

During Japan’s presidency of the Security Council in July, Council members will hold their first straw poll to gauge the viability of candidates that have been nominated for the position of the next Secretary-General. Several informal meetings with candidates are also expected.

Japan has organised two open debates during its July presidency: one on Security Council working methods and another at ministerial-level on post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa. There will be discussions on several other African issues this month:

- Central African Republic, discussion of MINUSCA’s strategic review ahead of the mission’s mandate renewal;
- Democratic Republic of the Congo, an update on MONUSCO activities;
- Somalia, the renewal of AMISOM’s authorisation and discussion of the 751/1907 sanctions regime;
- South Sudan, the renewal of UNMISS;
- West Africa and the Sahel, an update on UNOWAS activities; and
- Western Sahara, an update on when MINURSO will return to full functionality.

Council members will continue to monitor developments on the Syria political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks. Other Middle East issues that will be considered this month are:

- Iran and non-proliferation, discussion of the 2231 implementation report;
- Iraq, the renewal of UNAMI;
- Israel/Palestine, the quarterly open debate; and
- Lebanon, an update on UNIFIL activities.

Council members will also be following developments in Colombia following the 20 June signing of a bilateral ceasefire agreement. Resolution 2261 requested that the Secretary-General provide the Council with recommendations for a political mission to monitor the ceasefire within 30 days of the signature of the agreement.

Security Council Working Methods

The adoption of a Note by the President of the Security Council on working methods on 19 July 2006 was the Council’s first significant move to collect in one document the body’s accepted practices and make this document publicly available (S/2006/507). The effort—spearheaded by Japan, which served on the Council in 2005-2006—came in the wake of the 2005 World Summit, in the final document of which world leaders recommended that the Security Council “continue to adapt its working methods so as to increase the involvement of States not members of the Council in its work, as appropriate, enhance its accountability to the membership and increase the transparency of its work”. On 19 July, as one of the highlights of its presidency of the Council and to mark the tenth anniversary of the culmination of its first working methods initiative, Japan is organising an open debate on working methods.

The 2005 World Summit’s seemingly innocuous recommendation to the Council was in fact highly charged politically. It was a manifestation of the growing impatience and frustration on the part of most UN members with the Security Council’s opacity and the lack of clear rules about how it should function. In the period since the end of the Cold War, the Council had increasingly called upon the wider membership to implement its decisions—for example, those related to sanctions or peacekeeping operations—but had lagged behind in making those members privy to information about its thinking and decision-making processes. Embarking on a project that led to the elaboration of the more than 5,000-word
Security Council Working Methods (con’t)

presidential Note—a document that in UN parlance became known as Note 507—was the Security Council’s somewhat reluctant response to this external pressure.

In 2016, Japan is chairing for the third time the Council’s Informal Working Group on Documentation and other Procedural Questions, the principal venue in which Council members have discussed working methods. By holding the open debate during its July presidency, Japan hopes to prompt member states to look at the implementation of the Council’s previous agreed working methods, recognise useful and productive practices and identify gaps and shortcomings. Through the open debate, Japan hopes to obtain suggestions and recommendations for the process of updating Note 507.

The Council’s working methods have been evolving constantly, with changes necessitated by the fluctuating nature of the global peace and security environment, the evolving dynamics on the Council or the use of new technologies. When Japan chaired the Informal Working Group for the second time, in 2009-2010, it undertook the task of updating the original Note. The new document included areas not mentioned in 2006, such as the relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission and Security Council visiting missions. It also solidified some then-recent new practices in the relationship of the Security Council with troop- and police-contributing countries and highlighted areas of faulty implementation of previously agreed-to working methods understandings.

Over the years, however, working methods continued to be a sensitive area, with the permanent members insisting on the Council’s being the master of its own rules and resisting public discussion of the matter or yielding to ideas from outside. In this context, holding an open debate on working methods, which has been an annual event since 2010, was at one time extremely controversial. One such debate was held in 1994, but when an open debate was suggested in 2007, several of the permanent members opposed the initiative. In December 2007, Slovakia, Japan’s first successor as chair of the Informal Working Group, held an Arria-formula meeting on “Enhancing and widening interaction and dialogue between the Security Council and other United Nations Member States, as part of the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document”. Later, on its last day on the Council, Slovakia sent a letter to the president of the Security Council summarising the Arria-formula meeting (S/2007/784).

Working together, several elected members succeeded in organising the first open debate on working methods in more than a decade in August 2008, during the presidency of Belgium. The next such debate was held during Japan’s presidency in April 2010. During that meeting, several member states advocated holding such an open debate annually, and indeed from that point on the Council has discussed its working methods with the participation of the wider UN membership every year.

These annual meetings have provided an opportunity for sometimes very robust critiques of the Council by member states not on the Council (and indeed the anticipation of criticism had been among the reasons several permanent members were initially unenthusiastic about holding these public discussions). Over the years, members came to appreciate the usefulness of frank discussions, and some recommendations initially made during these debates were acted upon. Among the recurring themes regularly raised in open debates during the past several years has been the process and the timing of appointing the chairs of Council subsidiary bodies. Elected Council members usually chair these bodies, but the appointments have always been done through a decision by permanent members with little or no consultation with individuals and missions concerned.

A related matter, also frequently brought up in debates and other discussions, is the issue of penholders, i.e. member states considered as the lead on particular situations. Until approximately 2010, elected and permanent members alike took the lead on a country-specific Council agenda item, and the burden of producing drafts and chairing negotiations was shared among most of the 15 members. More recently, a system has emerged whereby the P3 (France, the UK and the US) have divided among themselves nearly all situations on the agenda into more or less permanent leadership arrangements. This system, while perhaps efficient in some respects, has been criticised as depriving the elected members of an opportunity to take initiative, reducing their input into the decision-making process and increasingly deepening the chasm between the permanent and elected Council members, thus negatively affecting overall Council dynamics.

An additional sore point has been the fact that the chairs of the sanctions committees spend most of their time on the Council dealing with the country situations to which these sanctions apply, acquiring considerable country-specific expertise, but short of being sought to participate in the resolution-drafting processes (including on sanctions as such), in some cases they are not even consulted by the penholder.

Both the selection of subsidiary bodies’ chairs and the issue of penholders featured prominently in the two most recent public debates on the topic of working methods: the October 2015 open debate on working methods organised by Spain and the February 2016 debate relating to sanctions organised by Venezuela. Both issues were addressed in the non-paper summarising the open debate prepared by Spain (S/2016/35). A Note by the president of the Security Council, issued following the February debate on sanctions, addressed various aspects of the selection and the work of the subsidiary bodies’ chairs (S/2016/170).

While no outcome is expected in July, the debate will likely feed into the process of revising, consolidating and updating the Council’s comprehensive document on its working methods, the task Japan is planning to undertake during the remainder of its chairmanship of the Informal Working Group.
Mali
On 1 June, Council members issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack against a MINUSMA camp in Gao during which a peacekeeper from China was killed (SC/12384). On 16 June, Special Representative Mahamat Saleh Annadif briefed the Council (S/PV.7719) on the Secretary-General’s latest MINUSMA report (S/2016/498). The meeting was followed by an informal interactive dialogue of Council members with Malian Prime Minister Modibo Keita. On 29 June, the Council adopted resolution 2295 renewing MINUSMA’s mandate for a year.

DPRK (North Korea)
In a 1 June press statement, Council members condemned the DPRK’s failed missile launches conducted on 27 and 28 April and 31 May which were in grave violation of relevant Council resolutions (SC/12385). They called on all member states to redouble their efforts to implement fully the measures against the DPRK, in particular those contained in resolution 2270, and report on these efforts to the Council as soon as possible, while also welcoming efforts to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialogue. The 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee met on 15 June to discuss implementation of resolution 2270. On 22 June, at the request of the US and Japan, Council members held consultations and were briefed by Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča on the medium-range missile launches conducted by the DPRK on 21 June. In a 23 June press statement, members strongly condemned the launches and reiterated the main elements of the 1 June press statement (SC/12418).

Women, Peace and Security
On 2 June, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Bangura briefed (S/PV.7704) the Council prior to its open debate on the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2016/361). France circulated a concept note ahead of the open debate (S/2016/496). On 15 June, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa (S/PRST/2016/9).

EU-UN Cooperation
On 6 June, Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, briefed the Council at its annual meeting on cooperation between the EU and the UN (S/PV.7705). Among issues discussed were the Middle East peace process, the situation in Syria, Libya and the ongoing crisis in eastern Ukraine. Mogherini also updated the Council on EU-UN cooperation in various peacekeeping operations in Africa, on the Iranian nuclear issue and counter-terrorism.

Yemen
On 6 June, following publication of the annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (S/2016/360), the Secretary-General removed the Saudi Arabia-led coalition from the listing in Annex 1 of the report, where it had been included for the first time. The removal came after strong pressure from Saudi Arabia and other member states and is considered “pending” until the conclusion of a joint review of the report’s findings with coalition members. On 21 June, Special Envoy Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed reported to the Council that he had presented to the parties in Kuwait a roadmap that provides for the implementation of resolution 2216 and the establishment of a national unity government, but that the sides were divided over the “sequencing” of the steps in the roadmap (S/PV.7721). Council members issued press elements urging the parties to show flexibility to secure an agreement.

Libya
On 6 June, Special Representative Martin Kobler briefed the Council on the latest UNSMIL report (S/2016/452) and recent political developments (S/PV.7706). The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Ramlan Ibrahim (Malaysia), briefed as well. On 13 June, the Council adopted resolution 2291 renewing the UNSMIL mandate until 15 December. During this period, the mission is expected to continue to support the establishment of the Government of National Accord. On 14 June, the Council adopted resolution 2292 providing a one year authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect, in the high seas off the coast of Libya, vessels bound to or from Libya which they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. The resolution further authorises member states to seize and dispose of arms and ammunition found during the inspection of these vessels.

International Criminal Tribunals
On 8 June, the Council held its semi-annual debate on the ICTY and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals at which the respective presidents and prosecutors briefed (S/PV.7707). The meeting focused on the assessment reports of the ICTY (S/2016/454) and the Residual Mechanism (S/2016/453) as well as the Office of Internal Oversight Services’ evaluation report on the ICTY (S/2016/441).

Counter-Terrorism
On 8 June, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed the Council on UN counter-terrorism efforts against ISIL (S/PV.7708) and presented the latest Secretary-General’s report on this issue (S/2016/501). On 13 June, Council members issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack in Orlando, Florida, which targeted persons as a result of their sexual orientation (SC/12399). On 17 June, the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee was briefed by the Secretariat regarding administrative arrangements of the Office of the Ombudsperson and how these may be improved to ensure the independence and effectiveness of the Office as per resolution 2253. On 27 June, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee met to discuss countering terrorism in South East Asia.

Sudan (Darfur)
On 9 June, the Council received a briefing by the ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on the Court’s work on Darfur (S/PV.7710). Bensouda reiterated her concern regarding the Council’s inaction with respect to Sudan’s non-compliance with the Court. On 14 June, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous briefed the Council (S/PV.7716) on the special report of the UN Secretary-General and the AU Commission Chairperson on UNAMID (S/2016/510). On 29 June, the Council adopted resolution 2296 renewing UNAMID’s mandate for one year.

Status Update since our June Forecast
Status Update since our June Forecast (con’t)

Peacekeeping
On 10 June, the Council held a ministerial-level open debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra of the CAR and ICRC President Peter Maurer briefed the Council (S/PV.7711). France prepared a concept note ahead of the debate (S/2016/503) and the annual report on protection of civilians was also viewed as relevant to the debate (S/2016/447). On 24 June, the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations held a meeting on the potential for complementarity between counter-terrorism bodies and peacekeeping operations. Renata Dwan, chief of the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, and Weixong Chen, Deputy Executive Director of CTED, briefed Council members.

Guinea-Bissau
On 14 June, Special Representative and head of UNIOGBIS Modibo Touré briefed the Council along with AU Special Representative Ovidio Pequeno on Guinea-Bissau’s ongoing political crisis (S/PV.7714). Also addressing the Council were Ambassador Fode Seck (Senegal) on behalf of ECOWAS, Ambassador João Soares Da Gama (Guinea-Bissau) and Ambassador Maria Helena Pires (Timor-Leste) on behalf of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. The next day, Council members issued a press statement encouraging national actors to abide by the constitution and the rule of law and commended security forces for their non-interference in the political crisis. The statement expressed support of the decisions taken at the 4 June ECOWAS summit and expressed members’ readiness to take necessary measures to respond if the situation worsened (SC/12405).

UNRCCA (Central Asia)
On 15 June, Special Representative Petko Draganov briefed Council members in consultations on the work of UNRCCA. In keeping with established Council practice, Russia proposed a press statement to welcome the briefing. Russia withdrew the text, however, after other Council members put forward amendments that it deemed unacceptable relating to the situation in Afghanistan and cooperation with regional organisations. It was the third consecutive time that Council members failed to reach agreement on a press statement on the UNRCCA. The last press statement was issued on 23 January 2015.

UNOCA (Central Africa)
On 15 June, Abdoulaye Bathily, Special Representative and head of UNOCA, briefed the Council (S/PV.7718) on the latest UNOCA report (S/2016/482). Ahmad Alami-Mi, the Secretary-General of ECOWAS, also addressed the Council.

Non-Proliferation
From 20 to 22 June, the 1540 Committee held formal open consultations on the comprehensive review of resolution 1540, which aims to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors. 60 member states, some 20 international organisations, and 15 NGOs spoke at the meeting. The 1540 Committee is due to submit its report to the Council on the comprehensive review by 30 November this year.

Afghanistan
On 21 June, the Council held its quarterly debate on Afghanistan (S/PV.7722) which focused on the most recent UNAMA report (S/2016/532). Exiting Special Representative Nicholas Haysom briefed the Council for the last time. On the same day, Council members issued a press statement, condemning the 20 June terrorist attacks in Kabul and Badakhshan Province (SC/12413). The 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee held informal consultations on 1 June to meet with a representative of the Collective Security Treaty Organization about counter-narcotic efforts.

Colombia

Security Council Elections
On 28 June, the General Assembly held elections for five non-permanent members to serve on the Security Council for the 2017-2018 term: Bolivia (GRULAC), Ethiopia (African group), Kazakhstan (Asia/Pacific group), and Sweden (WEOG) secured seats. After five inconclusive rounds of balloting, Italy and the Netherlands had proposed a split 2017-18 term. On 29 June, WEOG agreed that Italy is to serve in 2017 and the Netherlands in 2018. On 30 June, the General Assembly elected Italy for the remaining non-permanent seat allocated for the WEOG Regional Group.

Golan Heights (UNDOF)
On 29 June, the Council adopted resolution 2294 renewing UNDOF for six months after considering the Secretary-General’s latest report (S/2016/520) on the observer mission during 22 June consultations. Both the report and the resolution noted the UN’s plan for the phased redeployment of UNDOF to vacated positions, security conditions permitting.

Secretary-General Appointment

Expected Council Action
The Council will hold its first straw poll on 21 July to gauge the viability of candidates who have been nominated for the position of the next UN Secretary-General. Depending on the results of that initial straw poll, there may be a second one held before the end of the month. Several informal meetings with candidates are also expected. For more on the 2016 selection process and the history of straw polls, please see our 30 June 2016 report, Appointing the Secretary-General:

UN DOCUMENTS Letters 15 June 2016 letter from the Council president informing the General Assembly president of the start of consideration of candidates. 15 June 2016 letter from the General Assembly president to the member states informing them that the Council will start consideration of candidates. 15 December 2015 joint letter from the Council and General Assembly presidents setting in motion the process of selecting and appointing the next Secretary-General. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/69/321 (11 September 2015) was on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly included decisions on the selection of the Secretary-General.
Secretary-General Appointment (con’t)


Key Recent Developments
Since 18 December, 11 candidates have been formally nominated: Irina Bokova (Bulgaria), Helen Clark (New Zealand), Natalia Gherman (Moldova), António Guterres (Portugal), Vuk Jeremić (Serbia), Srgjan Kerim (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Miroslav Lajčák (Slovakia), Igor Lukšić (Montenegro), Susana Malcorra (Argentina), Vesna Pusić (Croatia) and Danilo Türk (Slovenia).

The General Assembly held informal dialogues—generally referred to as “hearings”—on 12-14 April and 7 June with the 11 candidates. At least one more hearing is expected in mid-July.

Since mid-April, Council members have begun to address its next steps. There have been a series of meetings among the ten elected members, as well as meetings among smaller groups of Council members who have taken a particular interest in this issue, or who have upcoming presidencies. In addition, it seems there may have been at least one meeting among the P5. Several papers on the procedure of the selection process were circulated. Egypt and Spain produced a paper on informal guidelines for the process, and Russia circulated a paper on the procedure for straw polls. In early June, soon after it took on the Council presidency, France circulated a comprehensive paper on the procedure for the 2016 selection process, which included an annex on the practice related to straw polls.

On 25 May, Council members discussed the selection process under “any other business”. A number of issues, including whether to meet with candidates nominated for the position, and the timing of the start of the straw polls, were considered. This was followed by an informal meeting on 7 June, where members discussed the issues raised in the French paper, including the starting date of straw polls and modalities for conducting them.

By mid-June, the Council came to an agreement on the date of the first straw poll, and the president of the Council sent the president of the General Assembly a letter informing him that the Council would start the process of consideration of the candidates on 21 July.

Discussion in the ad hoc working group on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly of its next draft resolution, which is expected to be adopted in September, began on 23 May. The initial draft refers to the developments in the Secretary-General selection process including the joint letter and circulation of names of candidates, and welcomes the organisation and convening of the informal dialogues. Negotiations are ongoing and language from the nonaligned members group on the recommendation of multiple candidates to the General Assembly by the Council, and the duration and renewability of the term of the Secretary-General, may be contentious.

Key Issues
A key issue is how to narrow the field of candidates. Using the system of one ballot paper per candidate, with the 11 currently nominated candidates there would be 165 ballots in total. Having three columns—“encouraged”, “discouraged” and “no opinion expressed”—may not be conducive to whittling down the number of candidates by persuading candidates with low scores to withdraw. If candidates do not drop out early, multiple rounds of straw polls will be needed before a formal vote can be taken. The effect of a “discouraged” indication signalling an intention to veto from a permanent member of a candidate otherwise commanding strong support could further lengthen the process.

A related issue is making a recommendation early enough to allow adequate preparation time for the new Secretary-General before the beginning of his or her term of office on 1 January 2017. The Council’s busy schedule in July could limit further straw polls in the remaining days of that month, and there appears to be reluctance to schedule straw polls in August, as several of the permanent representatives are expected to be on holiday. This could result in the bulk of straw polling being undertaken in September, giving rise to the possibility that a candidate may not be selected until an uncertain date in October or even November.

Another likely issue is whether, and if so when, colour-coded ballots should be used to give an indication of an intended veto by a permanent member. While there is agreement that the first straw poll will be undifferentiated, it is uncertain when the permanent members may want to bring in colour-coded ballots or the position elected members may take on this issue.

How to handle the results of the straw polls in a discreet and sensitive way is another key issue. Members need to agree what information candidates will be given following a round of straw polling and how to communicate this promptly so that the public does not hear before the candidates.

Options
Options for narrowing the field of candidates include establishing a cut-off score below which candidates would not go forward into the next straw poll, and to find a way to discreetly encourage candidates with low scores to consider withdrawing. An option to force members to provide firm opinions would be to remove the “no opinion” column in the straw ballots at some point.

Regarding colour-coded ballots, one option is to use them as a last resort to determine if a veto is likely. Another less likely option is to consider not using colour-coded ballots at all during the straw poll process in order to exclude the influence of a veto from a permanent member before proceeding to a formal vote. As happened in 2006, the Council could agree that the president of the Council communicate to the candidates and the permanent representatives of nominating states the number of ballots of “encouraged”, “discouraged” or “no opinion expressed” received by candidates, together with the highest and lowest scores among the candidates, without identifying the candidates who received these.

Council Dynamics
Informal meetings on the selection process have revealed differences related to timing of the start straw polls and modalities such as the use of colour-coded ballots. As the Council moves into this critical phase other issues related to support for different candidates are likely to come to the fore. While the permanent members, with their veto power, are expected to play a prominent role in this next phase, the elected members, many of whom have taken an active interest in this issue, may not be content to take a back seat. Except for October, elected members hold the presidency of the Council in the months where this issue is expected to be most active, giving them the opportunity to play a key role in shaping the process.
Central African Republic

**Expected Council Action**

In July, Special Representative Parfait Onanga-Antanga will brief on the strategic review of the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The Council is due to renew MINUSCA’s mandate, which expires on 31 July.

**Key Recent Developments**

March marked the end of the period of office of the transitional political government in the Central African Republic (CAR), which began in April 2013 and was initially due to expire after 18 months. On 1 March, the Constitutional Court confirmed that former Prime Minister Faustin Archange Touadéra had been elected president after winning a runoff election on 14 February. On 27 January, the transitional constitutional court nullified the results of legislative elections held on 30 December 2015 because of massive irregularities. After a new round of elections, the National Assembly opened its first extraordinary session on 3 May.

MINUSCA’s mandate was originally due to expire on 30 April. Council members discussed the MINUSCA mandate renewal under “any other business” on 17 March. France proposed a technical rollover of MINUSCA’s current mandate until the end of July. France reasoned that this would allow time for consultations between MINUSCA and the incoming government on adapting the mission’s mandate to the post-transition period. It would also allow time for a strategic review of MINUSCA to inform Council members’ deliberations on a new mandate. On 26 April, the Council adopted resolution 2281, which extended MINUSCA’s current mandate until 31 July and requested the Secretary-General to complete a strategic review of its mandate by 22 June.

While many view the electoral process as an overall success, the security and humanitarian situations in the CAR remain dire. Though attacks by rebel groups have waned, Muslim-dominated ex-Séléka and Christian anti-Balaka factions still control vast parts of the country, and some of their elements have been unwilling to engage in dialogue with transitional authorities. Criminality is on the rise, and the numbers of refugees who have fled the CAR (roughly 468,000) and of internally displaced people (IDPs, roughly 415,000) are not decreasing.

This status quo means that the potential for an upsurge in violence is very present. On 10 June, fighting broke out between groups supported by the anti-Balaka elements and herdsmen supported by the ex-Séléka in Ouham Pende Prefecture in the north-west. The fighting resulted in more than ten casualties, as well as property burnt and looted. In addition, several thousand people were displaced from their homes, including some who have fled into neighbouring Chad and Cameroon.

Fighting also erupted in the Muslim PK5 neighbourhood in Bangui on 20 June, when ex-Séléka elements took six police officers hostage. MINUSCA released a statement the following day saying that a “hostile and armed crowd” had fired upon peacekeepers trying to evacuate police officers, and three civilians were killed in the cross-fire. A peacekeeper was wounded by a grenade in the exchange.

On 17 June, unidentified gunmen killed a Medecins Sans Frontières (MSF) driver northeast of Bangui. A similar incident resulted in the killing of another MSF driver north of Bossangoa on 18 May.

The Council held a ministerial-level open debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations on 10 June. Touadéra was among those who addressed the Council. He said that the continued presence of the armed groups — the anti-Balaka, ex-Séléka and the Lord’s Resistance Army — poses the most serious threat to the protection of civilians and security in the CAR. Other threats include a drop in agricultural production, forced displacement and rampant crime. Thus, he continued, the protection of civilians should remain MINUSCA’s main priority. Touadéra added that justice in the CAR must be served in order to combat impunity and promote human rights, and in that regard requested the international community to assist with the establishment of the Special Criminal Court (a hybrid court to be composed of both domestic and international personnel).

Touadéra met with the Secretary-General on the same day, after which the latter commended the former’s outreach to armed groups and his spirit of national reconciliation and inclusiveness.

Council members received the MINUSCA strategic review on 22 June. The report notes that there are improvements in the security and economic situation and that Touadéra enjoys overall legitimacy among the population. It identifies the continuing operation of armed groups as the main impediment to the consolidation of peace in the country. Accordingly, the strategy consists of three main pillars. On the political front, the report calls for supporting government dialogue with armed groups, addressing the root causes of the conflict and establishing state authority throughout CAR. Regarding security, the report recommends a strong protection of civilians emphasis, including applying pressure on armed groups and support for security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs. Furthermore, the report calls for support for justice and reconciliation efforts.

The review does not recommend a change in troop numbers, though it says that in later stages more police units and fewer military units may be warranted.

**Sanctions-Related Developments**

On 29 April, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee held a meeting with representatives of the EU regarding the activities of the European External Action Service to establish the EU training mission in the CAR.

On 18 May, the Committee met with the Panel of Experts assisting it for an update on its work. During the meeting the Committee was also briefed by several Secretariat officials on the situation in the CAR ahead of the 25-27 May visit to the country by the Committee’s Chair, Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine).

On 13 June, the Committee met to discuss Yelchenko’s trip, on which he was accompanied by the Ukrainian and French CAR experts and the Committee’s Panel of Experts. Yelchenko reported that he met, among others, with Touadéra, Prime Minister Simplice Sarandi and several government ministers in Bangui. The officials stressed the need to address the security situation as a priority and the importance of SSR. They said that the arms embargo is an obstacle to revamping the CAR security sector. Yelchenko noted that the sanctions regime allows
Central African Republic (con’t)

Yelchenko then visited the town of Bambari to the east. Ex-Séléka rebels control some parts of the town, which MINUSCA troops do not patrol. Yelchenko met with local authorities and visited an IDP camp, conveying the Committee’s commitment to the country and concern over the situation in the CAR.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The independent expert on the situation of human rights in the CAR, Marie-Thérèse Keïta Bocoum, conducted her seventh visit to the country from 10 to 20 June. On 28 June, the Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with Bocoum. She will submit her written report in September.

Key Issues

Renewing MINUSCA’s mandate with modifications reflecting the end of the transitional phase and the establishment of newly elected executive and legislative bodies will be an immediate task for the Council in July.

Continuous monitoring and close attention by the Council to the security situation and political developments will be an ongoing issue.

Options

The resolution renewing MINUSCA’s mandate could:

- follow the priorities identified in the strategic review;
- call on MINUSCA to develop a long-term deployment plan, including a future exit strategy;
- call on MINUSCA contingents to adopt a proactive approach to expand areas under its control, and for the Secretariat to provide the mission with appropriate capabilities;
- call on countries in the region to play a constructive role in the political dialogue; and
- recommend an increase in the police component of MINUSCA.

Council and Wider Dynamics

All Council members hope that the end of the transition period and the installation of the newly elected government will provide momentum to address some of the fundamental issues facing the country, including constructive dialogue with armed groups and their disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; and, later on, SSR programs, accountability measures and re-establishing state authority and institutions, including incarceration facilities and judicial institutions.

With respect to the mandate renewal, it seems that there is a general consensus in the Council to proceed on the basis of the strategic review.

On sanctions, there does not seem to be any appetite among Council members to lift the arms embargo on the CAR government before the security sector has begun its reforms and it can be established that arms will not flow from government forces to rebel groups.

France is the penholder on the CAR and Ukraine is the chair of the Sanctions Committee.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In July, the Council is expected to adopt a resolution reauthorising the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The Council also expects to receive a briefing by the Chair of the 751/1907 Somalia-Eritrea Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Rafael Dario Ramirez Carreño (Venezuela).

Key Recent Developments

On 27 May, the Council adopted resolution 2289, which authorised a short technical rollover of AMISOM until 8 July. This rollover has allowed Council members time to assess the results of their 17-22 May Somalia-focused visiting mission to the Horn of Africa and the possible implications for the AMISOM mandate.

On 27 June, Council members met for an informal interactive dialogue on AMISOM. Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia (SRCC), Ambassador Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Michael Keating and Under-Secretary-General for Field Support Atul Khare briefed, and Council members had the opportunity to comment and ask questions. The meeting provided an opportunity for the SRCC to brief the Council on the review of AMISOM’s Concept of Operations, which took place in Addis Ababa a week prior, and the AU Military Operations Coordination Committee, which met 22-23 June in Kampala. The meeting also provided another opportunity for the Council to have a direct dialogue with the AU on security issues ahead of the mandate renewal.

The security situation in Somalia remains of serious concern, with Al-Shabaab continuing asymmetric and conventional attacks. On 1 June, militants detonated a car bomb at the gates of a popular hotel in Mogadishu, and gunmen then stormed the hotel, leaving at least 16 people dead, including two Somali members of parliament. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack. On 25 June, a suicide bomber detonated a vehicle loaded with explosives at a Mogadishu hotel, and gunmen stormed the building. Fifteen people, including one government minister, were killed in the hours-long attack. On 10 June, the group said that it had executed four people it accused of espionage, including one who was beheaded for allegedly giving information to the US that led to the killing of an Al-Shabaab’s leader. On 5 June, gunmen suspected of belonging to Al-Shabaab shot and killed a female journalist working for a state-run radio station, Radio Mogadishu. Late last year, a female reporter who also worked for Radio Mogadishu was killed in a car blast, and the two men convicted of the killing were executed in April.


UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions


securitycouncilreport.org 7
On 23 June, Uganda, which provides AMISOM’s largest military contingent, announced that it plans to withdraw its troops from the mission by December 2017.

On 6 June, five AMISOM soldiers and ten Somalis were arrested for selling military equipment after being found with improvised detonators, fuel, sandbags and empty ammunition boxes, police said. AMISOM confirmed the arrests, saying it would not accept “unprofessional conduct among its personnel”.

Somalia appears to be on track to hold elections in August as outlined by its electoral timetable. On 23 May, Council members issued a press statement that welcomed the electoral process set out in President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud’s decree of 22 May, noting that this should enable the necessary technical preparation and implementation without further delay.

President Mohamud paid a three-day visit to Kenya from 6 to 8 June to meet with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta. They discussed the situation of refugees following the Kenyan government’s May announcement that it would close its refugee camps. President Mohamud visited Dadaab Refugee Camp, which hosts more than 300,000 refugees, and addressed its inhabitants, assuring them that the government of Somalia is committed to receiving them back home to participate in state-building, peacebuilding and national reconciliation. He said that their repatriation would be orderly, humane and dignified as per the 2013 Tripartite Agreement between the UN refugee agency and the governments of Kenya and Somalia. President Mohamud expressed gratitude for the generosity and hospitality of Kenyans for hosting his people for the past quarter-century. During the visit, the two leaders issued a communiqué that called on the international community to support the repatriation process by providing adequate backing to Somalia to receive the returnees.

**Human Rights-Related Developments**

During its 32nd session in June, the Human Rights Council considered the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on Somalia. The report contains 227 recommendations, including one calling for core human rights instruments to be ratified and implemented. The review recommended that the implementation of the National Human Rights Roadmap and related Action Plan should be speeded up, that the Action Plan on ending the recruitment and use of children signed in 2012 should be fully implemented, and that senior political and military officials should be investigated and prosecuted for violations of international human rights law.

**Key Issues**

A key issue surrounding the re-authorisation of AMISOM is the need to prioritise the mandate to improve its implementation. In this regard, the importance of enhancing command and control and improving coordination within AMISOM remain issues of high importance, as does assessing how AMISOM’s Concept of Operations could be refined to enable the mission to better respond to the threat posed by Al-Shabaab. Addressing the financial challenges facing AMISOM is a longstanding issue.

On the sanctions front, a main challenge, according to the Secretary-General’s 9 May report, is that increased interest in Somalia’s rich maritime and mineral resources has not been matched by adequate efforts to manage and protect them. Another issue is whether the measures against Eritrea should be revised in light of its recent release of Djiboutian prisoners of war and the absence of any evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab, as reported by the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group. Assessing the arms embargo on Somalia, which expires on 15 November, and determining whether to maintain the current partial embargo thereafter, revert to a full embargo or lift the sanctions entirely, as requested by Somalia, is a further issue.

Another pressing issue is ensuring that Somalia adheres to the timeline for the current electoral process and conducts peaceful, transparent and inclusive elections in August. Likewise, progress must be made towards the constitutional review process and completion of the federal state formation, with support from UNSOM.

**Options**

The main option for the Council is to adopt a resolution renewing AMISOM’s authorisation for one year. It is likely that there will be no major changes to the mandated tasks, but Council members may use the perspectives gained from their visit to Somalia in May and from their 27 June interactive dialogue on AMISOM to further refine the mandate.

**Council Dynamics**

At press time, discussions on AMISOM’s renewal were underway. While it appeared that the main tasks of the mandate would remain the same, it seemed that the focus would be on prioritising the mandate, as requested by troop-contributing countries, to enhance the efficacy of AMISOM’s implementation.

The Council remains generally united on Somalia and in its support for AMISOM and the Somali National Army. As demonstrated during the Council’s visit to Somalia and in its 23 May press statement, the Council is united in supporting Somalia’s electoral and state-building processes.

On sanctions, the Council is divided between those members who believe it should consider lifting the measures against Eritrea, such as Angola, China, Russia and Venezuela, and those who remain concerned about Eritrea’s other activities in the region and seem to view cooperation with the Monitoring Group as a precondition for any changes in the sanctions regime. Venezuela has also called on the Council to heed Somalia’s appeal for the lifting of sanctions.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia and Venezuela is the chair of the 751/1907 Somalia/Eritrea Sanctions Committee.
Lebanon

Expected Council Action
In July, Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag and a representative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will brief Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1701, which called for a cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006.

Key Recent Developments
There have been no major incursions in the area of operations of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in recent months; however, the threat of confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah remains.

On 13 May, Hezbollah announced the death of Mustafa Badreddine, its most senior military commander in Syria’s war, who was reportedly killed in an explosion in Damascus. Hezbollah’s Al-Mayadeen network initially reported that Badreddine was killed by an Israeli Air Force attack near Damascus’ airport. Later reports, however, did not mention Israeli involvement. For years, Badreddine masterminded military operations against Israel and he was more recently in charge of Hezbollah’s operations in Syria.

Badreddine was being prosecuted in absentia by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) for his alleged involvement in organising and carrying out the massive bomb blast in downtown Beirut in 2005 that killed Lebanon’s former prime minister, Rafik Hariri. The prosecution was not able to obtain Badreddine’s official death certificate from Lebanese authorities and did not have information as to when one might be issued. Prosecutors presented circumstantial evidence of his death to the three-judge trial chamber, which decided that Badreddine would continue to stand trial, pending the STL’s receipt of further information from the government of Lebanon. However, on 22 June the court suspended the proceedings, pending a final decision on whether to terminate the case.

The UN’s Fifth Committee adopted a resolution on 19 May on UNIFIL’s budget. The resolution reiterated the request that Israel compensate the UN for the destruction of a UN compound in an 18 April 1996, attack in Qana, Lebanon. The compound, which was sheltering local residents, was shelled by Israeli forces, killing 106 people and wounding more than 100. The resolution called on Israel to pay $1,117,005 in compensation.

Blom Bank has been criticised by some pro-Hezbollah politicians for taking a hard-line position concerning a US law that imposes sanctions for doing business with the militant group. Authorities say dozens of bank accounts connected to Hezbollah have been closed in recent weeks.

On 13 May, Hezbollah announced the death of Mustafa Badreddine, its most senior military commander in Syria’s war, who was reportedly killed in an explosion in Damascus. Hezbollah’s Al-Mayadeen network initially reported that Badreddine was killed by an Israeli Air Force attack near Damascus’ airport. Later reports, however, did not mention Israeli involvement. For years, Badreddine masterminded military operations against Israel and he was more recently in charge of Hezbollah’s operations in Syria.

Badreddine was being prosecuted in absentia by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) for his alleged involvement in organising and carrying out the massive bomb blast in downtown Beirut in 2005 that killed Lebanon’s former prime minister, Rafik Hariri. The prosecution was not able to obtain Badreddine’s official death certificate from Lebanese authorities and did not have information as to when one might be issued. Prosecutors presented circumstantial evidence of his death to the three-judge trial chamber, which decided that Badreddine would continue to stand trial, pending the STL’s receipt of further information from the government of Lebanon. However, on 22 June the court suspended the proceedings, pending a final decision on whether to terminate the case.

The UN’s Fifth Committee adopted a resolution on 19 May on UNIFIL’s budget. The resolution reiterated the request that Israel compensate the UN for the destruction of a UN compound in an 18 April 1996, attack in Qana, Lebanon. The compound, which was sheltering local residents, was shelled by Israeli forces, killing 106 people and wounding more than 100. The resolution called on Israel to pay $1,117,005 in compensation.

A UN report issued in January said the UN Secretariat has transmitted 21 letters to the Permanent Mission of Israel on the subject, the most recent of which was dated 12 January 2016, to which no response has been received.

On 24 May, which marked two years of a vacancy in the Lebanese presidency, members of the Council issued a press statement that underscored their deepest concern over the vacancy and expressed their intention to continue following related developments with a particular sense of urgency.

Key Issues
A central issue is that Hezbollah and other non-state actors continue to maintain weaponry that directly hinders the government’s exercise of full authority over its territory, poses a threat to Lebanon’s sovereignty and stability, and contravenes its obligations under resolutions 1559 and 1701.

Another issue is the inability of Lebanon to elect a president, which has paralysed the country’s parliament and threatens Lebanon’s stability because of its potential to aggravate sectarian tensions within the country.

Options
Considering that Council members issued a comprehensive press statement in March outlining the main issues on which they stand united in their support of Lebanon, and a press statement in May on the vacancy in the presidency, the most likely option is to merely receive the briefing and take no other action at this time.

Council Dynamics
The Council has been united in its position that UNIFIL contributes to stability between Israel and Lebanon, especially considering the current Syrian crisis. Council consensus includes support for Lebanon’s territorial integrity and security, condemnation of acts of terrorism on Lebanese territory and recognition of the crucial role of the Lebanese Armed Forces in responding to security challenges.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.
Democratic Republic of the Congo

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

The mandate of MONUSCO expires on 31 March 2017.

Key Recent Developments
On the political front, the presidential elections scheduled for November continue to be a deeply divisive issue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), given the absence of an agreed electoral calendar, a budget for the elections or a national dialogue to reach agreement on these questions. As preparations are at a standstill, it seems highly unlikely that presidential elections can or will be held on time, thus leaving President Joseph Kabila in power after the second of the two terms that he is allowed under the constitution expires at the end of 2016. On 11 May, the DRC Constitutional Court decided that the constitution permits the president to remain in office until the installation of the newly elected president. Opposition leaders view the decision as “unconstitutional” and continue to maintain that Kabila lacks authority to remain in power beyond his current term.

Tensions are also high regarding the ability of opposition parties to participate in political activities leading up to the elections amid an atmosphere of increased harassment and human rights violations, mostly against opposition members, civil society representatives and journalists.

Resolution 2277 of 30 March, which renewed MONUSCO’s mandate, expressed “deep concern at increased restrictions of the political space in the DRC”. Notwithstanding the logistical impracticality of timely elections, the Council stressed “the crucial importance” of holding the presidential and legislative elections by November 2016, in accordance with the constitution.

While attention is focused on the political situation, rebel groups continue to spread violence in eastern DRC. The UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) documented 199 victims of human rights abuses committed by armed groups in eastern DRC in May, 26 of them killed.

On 23 June, the US imposed sanctions on Celestin Kanyama, police commissioner of Kinshasa, for alleged involvement in dozens of deaths and other actions that have created a “climate of fear” over the past three years.

The operations of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) against the Hutu rebel group Force Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) continue, with a significant impact on FDLR. However, the movements of the Hutu population as a result of the operation have given rise to ethnic tensions with other groups, producing violence and casualties. On 14 June, tensions in Buleusa, North Kivu, between Hutus and Kobo and Nande communities resulted in the death of four Hutus and the destruction of hundreds of Hutu huts, according to Samuel Ntaota, a spokesman for the local Hutu community.

On 17 June, MONUSCO troops from the Force Intervention Brigade killed seven and injured 11 Kobo and Nande militiamen in an operation to counter efforts to prevent aid workers from giving out food to Hutu civilians in a displacement camp in Buleusa.

Sanctions-Related Developments
The annual report of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee was presented to the Council by the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Amr Aboulatta (Egypt), on 16 June.

The Council adopted resolution 2293 on 23 June, renewing the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2017 and the mandate of the Group of Experts until 1 August 2017. The resolution requests the Committee to report orally, through its Chair, at least once a year to the Council on the state of the overall work of the Committee and encourages the Chair to hold regular briefings for all interested member states. (For more information, see our What’s in Blue story of 22 June.)

On 7 June, the Committee met regarding DRC-bound cargo that included explosives and detonators aboard a ship sailing from Izmir, Turkey. Greek authorities confiscated the cargo in March. In response to the Committee, Turkey stated that the cargo was meant for a private company for construction purposes. The Committee has written to the DRC, requesting information about the destination of the shipment, but it has yet to receive a reply. The Turkish response raises questions regarding equipment with dual military and civilian usage, which is not addressed in the sanctions regime, and no decision has been taken as to how to instruct Greek authorities regarding the cargo.

Key Issues
A key issue for the Council is the political tension surrounding the electoral calendar and Kabila’s possible attempt to remain in power, with the lack of a political resolution in sight.

The continued violence by rebel groups against the population of North Kivu remains a serious threat to peace and security. This violence may worsen if political instability ensues in western DRC.

Wider regional stability in the Great Lakes region and its relation to the DRC are also matters of concern, in particular the continuing political turmoil in Burundi. (According to the Group of Experts, Burundian rebels continue to operate in the DRC, some being trained and equipped in Rwanda.)

Options
The Council could adopt a resolution or presidential statement:

• condemning human rights abuses related to the pre-election developments and urging the government to ensure that free, fair and credible elections are held as soon as possible;
• calling on opposition parties to enter immediately into a national dialogue to reach consensus on a new and viable electoral calendar so that elections could be held on time or as soon as possible thereafter;
• urging the Secretary-General to appoint a mediator to help facilitate a DRC national dialogue and support the work of AU Special Envoy Edem Kodjo to facilitate such dialogue;
• calling on all political actors to abide by the constitution and its term limits;
• threatening to impose sanctions on actors who destabilise the DRC by contributing to electoral violence or incitement to violence; and
• calling on neighbouring states to cease

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2293 (23 June 2016) renewed the DRC sanctions regime and the mandate of the Group of Experts. S/RES/2277 (30 March 2016) renewed the mandate of MONUSCO for a year. Security Council Letter S/2016/542 (15 June 2016) was from the DRC to the president of the Council stating that the DRC will investigate reports by the Group of Experts about FARDC officers’ involvement in massacres in the Beni area. Sanctions Committee Document S/2016/466 (23 May 2016) was the report of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS Special Representative of the Secretary-General Maman Sambo Sidikou (Niger) MONUSCO Force Commander Lieutenant General Derick Mbuyiselo Mgwebi (South Africa) MONUSCO Size, Composition and Cost of Mission Strength as of 31 March 2016: 16,936 troops (including 456 military observers and 1,245 police), 816 international civilian personnel, 2,654 local civilian staff and 399 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)

assistance to rebel groups operating in the region.

The Council (or a representative group of Council members) could also consider visiting the country during the electoral period to take stock of the situation and deliver a strong political message to interlocutors.

Council Dynamics
Council members all share concerns over the political tensions surrounding the issue of elections and fear potential destabilization in the country if presidential elections are not held as soon as feasible. However, the issues that arose during the negotiations over resolution 2293 show that it will be difficult to find a common approach in the Council towards resolving the political stalemate. Much like the divisions among Council members regarding President Pierre Nkurunziza’s third term in Burundi, some view this issue mainly as an internal constitutional matter that should be dealt with through local institutions and through dialogue among political actors. Other Council members are of the view that addressing actions that seem to have been taken to override the constitutional order and human rights abuses related to the political process are integral to solving the crisis.

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action
In July, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), will brief on the semi-annual UNOWAS report. This is the first briefing on UNOWAS since the Council decided to merge the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel (OSES) into the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA).

UNOWAS’s mandate expires on 31 December 2016.

Key Recent Developments
During the first half of 2016, the threat of terrorism to West Africa became an increasing concern. On 15 January, gunmen attacked the Splendid Hotel and Cappuccino Café in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, killing 30 people. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility. The incident followed an AQIM-claimed attack on the Radisson Blue hotel in Bamako, Mali, in November 2015.

On 13 March, gunmen attacked hotels in the beach resort city of Grand Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire. Nineteen people were killed in Côte d’Ivoire’s first terrorist strikes, for which AQIM again claimed responsibility. Senegal has increased security measures amid concerns that it is a likely potential target for terrorist groups.

In the Lake Chad basin region, Boko Haram remains a threat, despite the losses it has incurred since 2015 in the face of increased military cooperation between Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The group has resorted to more attacks on soft targets, such as internally displaced persons camps, and has increased the use of suicide bombers, who are frequently women or girls. Boko Haram has still demonstrated its capacity to launch large-scale attacks. On 1 March, it attacked the town of Bosso, Niger, reportedly killing 32 soldiers and displacing 50,000 people. Amidst continued fighting, Chad sent 2,000 soldiers to Niger on 8 June. A major humanitarian crisis continues as a result of the insurgency, with 2.1 million Nigerians internally displaced and more than 600,000 displaced persons and refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. On 14 May, the second Regional Security Summit was held in Abuja, bringing together regional countries and international partners, to evaluate efforts to defeat Boko Haram.

Nigeria has experienced troubling violence elsewhere. This has included attacks by militant groups in the Niger Delta on oil infrastructure, which have reduced Nigeria’s oil output to its lowest levels in 20 years.

On 20 March, Niger held a run-off presidential election. It took place peacefully despite tensions over opposition candidate Hama Amadou’s detention since November on charges of child-trafficking. The opposition boycotted the second round and President Mahamadou Issoufou was re-elected.

In Guinea, local elections, which have been postponed for years and are a source of tension between the government and opposition, were not held during the first half of 2016 despite the 20 August 2015 agreement to do so. In The Gambia, the government violently suppressed demonstrations on 14 and 16 April, and concerns were raised that several of those arrested were later killed, including a leading opposition party member.

The Secretary-General recommended merging OSES into UNOWA in a 14 January letter following a review of OSES. After a 25 January meeting in consultations under “any other business” on the proposal, the Council requested the Secretary-General to proceed with the merger, thus establishing UNOWAS. Chambas, previously head of UNOWA, continues to lead UNOWAS and is responsible for overseeing its work, including implementing the UN Integrated Sahel Strategy (UNISS), while Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, formerly the Special Envoy for the Sahel, was appointed Deputy Special Representative. A UNOWAS liaison office has been established in Nouakchott to ensure coordination of the UNISS with the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel), comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

On 8 March, the Council visited UNOWAS in Dakar. Chambas briefed members on regional developments and progress in the merger. On 25 April, the Council held an open debate on Gulf of Guinea piracy, adopting a presidential statement requesting updates on the issue in the Secretary-General’s UNOWAS and UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) reports. Chambas last briefed the Council at a 26 May meeting on the impact of climate change and desertification on peace and security in the Sahel.
Key Issues
A key issue is the spread of terrorism and radicalisation in the region. A related issue is the threat of Boko Haram and accompanying humanitarian crisis.

UNOWAS’s good offices activities and upcoming elections in the region are further issues.

Progress in the UNOWAS merger and in implementing the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel will be an important issue.

Options
The Council may issue a statement that, inter alia, could:

- express serious concern over the increasing threat of terrorism to the region and the continued threat posed by Boko Haram, while commending progress in combating the group and stressing the need to address the humanitarian crisis and underlying causes of the conflict;
- welcome progress in the UNOWAS merger and signal that the Council looks forward to the results of the independent evaluation of the UNISS; and
- commend UNOWAS’s good-offices activities and its increasing cooperation with the AU and sub-regional organisations.

Regarding the Boko Haram conflict, the Council could request the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of creating a liaison office to increase support for and cooperation with Lake Chad basin countries.

A statement could express support for establishing a UN trust fund for the Sahel to address administrative challenges faced by UN agencies and programmes in implementing joint and regional projects for the Sahel strategy.

Council and Wider Dynamics
Members perceive very positively the good offices activities of Chambas and UNOWAS, especially following its interventions in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Nigeria and efforts to address other election-related tensions in West Africa. Some view it as a model in conflict prevention that the Secretariat and Council want to replicate in the work of UNOCA and possibly by establishing new regional offices elsewhere.

The decision to merge UNOWA and OSES has proved controversial. Members were in agreement on the merger, wanting to eliminate redundancies between the two offices. It was also felt that placing UNISS under the umbrella of the regional office could improve the strategy’s implementation, with some members having previously expressed the desire to see more concrete results. Moreover, the decision reflected some members’ preferences to set up such an arrangement in 2013 ahead of OSES’s relocation from Italy to Dakar. The G5 Sahel, however, opposed the merger and has sought to reverse the decision. Those countries feel the merger will diminish the Council’s focus on and attention to the Sahel region and UNISS, as this will no longer be considered in a separate reporting cycle but instead included in UNOWAS reports covering a broader region. Chad, as a Council member from 2014 to 2015, pushed for relocating OSES from Dakar to Mauritania, and G5 Sahel opposition also seems linked to geopolitical concerns with Senegal’s hosting of the office.

The merger also represents a change in the office’s traditional focus of addressing political conflicts. With the merger, UNOWAS additionally provides political advocacy and strategic guidance for UN agencies and programmes, a function that underpins the UNISS.

Senegal is the penholder on West Africa.

Israel/Palestine

Expected Council Action
In July, the Council will hold its quarterly open debate on the Middle East with a focus on the situation in Israel/Palestine and the absence of a path toward a political solution. An outcome is unlikely.

Key Recent Developments
On 3 June, France hosted senior diplomats from 29 countries, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, US Secretary of State John Kerry and representatives from the Arab League, the EU and key Arab states, at a one-day summit in Paris, to reaffirm their support for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to organise an international conference later this year with the parties present.

Following the meeting, the participants issued a communiqué in which they reiterated that a negotiated two-state solution is the only way to achieve peace and expressed alarm that actions on the ground, including violence and ongoing settlement activity, are imperilling prospects for such a solution. Participants stressed that both sides must demonstrate a genuine commitment to the two-state solution and resolve all permanent-status issues through direct negotiations based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The communiqué also recalled relevant Security Council resolutions and highlighted the importance of implementing the Arab Peace Initiative, a proposal for an end to the Arab–Israeli conflict that was endorsed by the Arab League at the Beirut Summit in 2002. Participants discussed ways in which the international community could advance prospects for peace, including by providing meaningful incentives. They also highlighted the potential for regional peace and security as envisioned by the Arab Peace Initiative. Finally, the participants highlighted the key role of the Quartet, comprised of the UN, US, EU and Russia, and of regional stakeholders and welcomed France’s offer to coordinate an international conference before the end of the year.

That day, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement describing the event as a “missed opportunity” and said that the international community was allowing the Palestinians to continue to evade direct bilateral negotiations. On 30 May, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had expressed interest in resuming the peace process in the Middle East and proposed to make amendments to the Arab Peace Initiative. On 13 June, he told Likud ministers that the positive part of that initiative was the willingness of the Arab nations to achieve peace and normalisation with Israel. Its negative
elements, he said, included the demands that Israel retreat to the 1967 borders, leave the Golan Heights and permit the return of Palestinian refugees. In a 4 June statement, Arab League head Nabil Al-Arabi rejected making any amendments to the initiative. Concerning the Paris meeting, Al-Arabi said on 6 June that Kerry was “definitely not enthusiastic”, and that he prevented the summit from issuing a communiqué with stronger recommendations outlining a timeframe for conducting any future peace talks and specifying the UN resolutions such talks would be based on.

The summit was intended to follow the publication of a Middle East Quartet report that would review the situation on the ground, identify dangers to a two-state solution and provide recommendations on the way forward, however, at press time it had not yet been released. Early reports indicated that US might take a stronger stance on settlements in the report. Media reports have suggested that Israel has been lobbying the US to soften the tone of the Quartet report and prevent it from mentioning future possible steps by the Security Council.

On 8 June, two Palestinians from the town of Yatta in the occupied West Bank opened fire on patrons at a Tel Aviv food and retail centre. Hamas praised what it referred to as a “heroic attack” but did not claim responsibility. In a press briefing on 10 June, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the attack, which killed four Israelis, and expressed concern at the response of the Israeli authorities, “which includes measures that may amount to prohibited collective punishment and will only increase the sense of injustice and frustration felt by Palestinians in this very tense time”. The response, according to the spokesperson, included cancelling all of the 83,000 permits granted to West Bank and Gaza residents to travel during Ramadan, suspending 204 work permits of individuals in the alleged attackers’ extended families and sealing off the entire town of Yatta by Israeli security forces.

Israeli forces on 21 June opened fire on a car in the occupied West Bank, killing one Palestinian teenager and wounding four others, according to Palestinian officials. An initial probe by the Israeli Defense Forces found that the teenager was killed by mistake. The teenagers appeared to be innocent bystanders hit when the military tried to stop Palestinians who were throwing stones and firebombs.

US National Security Adviser Susan Rice promised on 13 June that the new military aid agreement that is currently being negotiated between the US and Israel would constitute “the single largest military assistance package with any country in American history”. The new decade-long aid package, which is expected to provide Israel between $37.5 and $40 billion over the life of the pact, will be used to update Israel’s aircraft fleet and strengthen missile defences.

On 27 June, Israel and Turkey struck a deal to restore diplomatic relations, ending a six-year rift over the Israel’s killing of ten Turkish activists on a Gaza-bound flotilla. According to the deal, Israel will pay $20 million in compensation and will allow Turkey to send aid to, and carry out infrastructure projects in, Gaza.

Concerning the ICC’s inquiry into possible war crimes in the 2014 Gaza conflict, Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a 2 June interview that Israel is holding talks with the court and information is being exchanged. Until this point, Israel has publicly declined to cooperate with the ICC on investigations related to its conflict with the Palestinians, arguing that the Palestinian Authority is not a sovereign state and has no right to formal relations with the international court.

On 14 June, Israel won a General Assembly election to chair the UN’s Sixth Committee, which oversees issues related to international law, marking the first time that the country will head one of the UN’s six permanent committees. Committee heads are normally elected by consensus, but opponents of Israel’s candidacy called for a vote. Israel received 109 out of 175 valid votes cast in the 193-nation General Assembly.

Israeli politician Avigdor Lieberman agreed on 25 May to bring his far right Yisrael Beitenu party into Israel’s governing coalition. As part of the deal, Netanyahu named Lieberman the country’s defence minister, replacing Moshe Yaalon, a member of Netanyahu’s Likud party. Yaalon resigned from his post and from parliament in protest of Lieberman’s appointment days before it was made official. Yaalon, who warned that Israel was being taken over by “dangerous and extreme elements”, on 16 June announced his intention to run against Netanyahu in the next election.

On 6 May, Council member Egypt, along with Angola, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela, organised an Arria-formula meeting on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The meeting was open to all member states.

Key Issues
The overarching issue is determining what role the Council ought to play in encouraging the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties to achieve a two-state solution. A related issue is how to urge the parties to cease actions that hinder the resumption of negotiations, such as settlement-building, acts of violence and other provocative acts, and to agree to new bilateral talks.

Options
One option for the Council is to adopt a resolution outlining parameters and a timeline for a final status agreement.

Another option would be to take a piece-meal approach and pursue an outcome on areas where agreement may be more likely among Council members, such as on settlements.

Council and Wider Dynamics
With US-led talks having failed over two years ago, P5 member France has pursued the organisation of an international conference aimed at restarting negotiations between the parties. Council member Egypt has also voiced its willingness to act as a broker between the parties. Egypt accepts France’s approach of involving international participation, which the Palestinian Authority favours, but Israel would prefer direct negotiations with the Palestinians, with Egypt’s role being to act as a broker between Israel and other Arab states.

Several other members, including Angola, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal and Venezuela, have shown an interest in using the tools available to the Council to address various aspects of the conflict.

It is generally accepted, however, that the fate of any Council outcome on Israel/Palestine lies ultimately with the US. Earlier this year, reports suggested that US President Barack Obama was exploring options for addressing the conflict, including possibly through the Council, before the end of his second term, but there has been no indication so far that the US will allow a Council outcome at this time.
Expected Council Action
In July, the Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on South Sudan. It is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) prior to the 31 July expiration.

Key Recent Developments
Some steps have been taken to fulfil the transitional government arrangements in South Sudan in accordance with the August 2015 peace agreement. Opposition leader Riek Machar was sworn in as First Vice President on 26 April. The South Sudan Transitional Government of National Unity was constituted on 28 April, when President Salva Kiir appointed 30 ministers and 8 deputy ministers. In keeping with the power-sharing arrangements delineated in the peace agreement, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was allotted 16 ministerial posts, while the SPLM/A in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) is represented by ten ministers and the other political parties and former detainees by two each.

However, in spite of these developments, the political, security, humanitarian and economic situation in South Sudan remains extremely fragile. Kiir has continued to implement his October 2015 decree increasing the number of states in the country from ten to 28. This decision violates the August 2015 agreement, which is based on power-sharing ratios in ten states. In addition, it has aroused the ire of minority ethnic communities, who view the decision as an effort to confiscate some of their land and power for the benefit of the Dinka, Kiir’s ethnic group. The parties have yet to concur on the terms of reference for a committee—expected to consist of a diverse group of South Sudanese political actors and international representatives—that Kiir agreed to appoint on 1 June to generate recommendations for him about the number of states and their boundaries.

While violence has subsided in the Greater Upper Nile region, fighting has been reported in areas that were not major theatres of conflict during the civil war, including in the Greater Bahr el-Ghazal and Equatoria regions. In April, fighting was reported between SPLA and SPLA-IO forces in Wau county, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, with both sides reportedly sustaining significant losses. There were also reports in mid-May of fighting near Diem Zubeir, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, between SPLA-IO affiliated forces and the Darfur-based Justice and Equality Movement, a rebel group that crossed the border from Sudan into South Sudan and supported South Sudanese government forces during the recent civil war. In Western Equatoria state, the South Sudan People’s Patriotic Front, a rebel group that expressed its support for the opposition in late 2015, has reportedly engaged in skirmishes with the SPLM/A in recent months.

On 15 June, unidentified armed men attacked and temporarily occupied the town of Raja, the administrative capital of the newly established Lol state, targeting government employees. An unspecified number of soldiers were killed in the attack, and the state governor, Rizik Zechariah Hassan, and several other officials were forced to evacuate.

The monitoring and verification teams of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) have faced access restrictions at the hands of the government. The restrictions on the CTSAMM, which UNMISS is mandated to participate in and support, were noted both in the 23 June statement of Festus Mogae, the chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission entrusted with overseeing implementation of the peace agreement, and in the Secretary-General’s 20 June UNMISS report.

At press time, Council members expected to receive a briefing on 30 June under “another other business” from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations focusing on the situation in the newly formed Wau state. Thousands of people were displaced as a result of clashes in Wau on 24-25 June, apparently between Dinka and Fertit ethnic groups. Men in SPLA uniforms reportedly supported the Dinka fighters.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains dire. As noted in the recent Secretary-General’s report, “A combination of fighting in previously stable areas of the country, mounting food insecurity, economic decline, and humanitarian funding gaps continue to make life unbearable for many civilians”. There are currently 1.61 million internally displaced persons in South Sudan, and more than 721,000 South Sudanese have sought refuge in neighbouring countries since the civil war started in December 2013, including more than 115,000 from January to mid-May of this year. Some 170,000 civilians remain sheltered in six UNMISS “protection of civilians” (POC) sites across the country. The OCHA humanitarian appeal for 2016 is currently only 30 percent funded.

Meanwhile, UNMISS and its partners continue to face operational restrictions and harassment. Between 1 April and 3 June, the period covered in the Secretary-General’s UNMISS report, the mission recorded 33 violations of the status-of-forces agreement.

The August 2015 peace agreement called for the creation of a Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, as well as a Hybrid Court for South Sudan, which is to be established by the AU Commission. On 7 June, The New York Times published an opinion piece, supposedly by President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar, which called for the international community to reconsider its backing for a hybrid court for South Sudan. The article argued that “disciplinary justice…would destabilize efforts to unite our nation by keeping alive anger and hatred among the people of South Sudan”. Instead, it emphasised the importance of truth and reconciliation.

Shortly after the publication of the article, representatives of Machar said that he had not co-written the piece and that he did not concur with its substance. On 11 June, The Times said in an editor’s note that “the president’s spokesman maintains that Mr. Machar had been consulted before the essay was written.” Media reports have further indicated that the article was written in consultation with a US-based public relations firm.

On 22 June, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support Atul Khare, and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O’Brien briefed Council members in consultations on the POC sites in South Sudan. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNMISS head Ellen Margrethe Løj was available via video-teleconference to answer questions. The discussion focused on three confidential documents that were submitted to Council members in June: a lessons-learned report on the POC sites, the
initial findings of the special investigation ordered by the Secretary-General to ascertain responsibilities for the violence at the Malakal POC site on 17-18 February, and a document summarising the main recommendations of the Board of Inquiry report on the same incident.

At the stakeout following the meeting, Ladsous said that “a unit and...individual officers” who had not performed adequately during the Malakal incident would be repatriated, although he did not specify the nationality of the peacekeepers.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 June, the President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Ambassador Choi Kyonglim, announced the appointment of Yasmin Sooka, Kenneth Scott and Godfrey Musila to serve as the three members of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, established in a 23 March HRC resolution (A/HRC/RES/31/20) for a period of one year, to monitor and report on the situation of human rights in South Sudan and make recommendations for its improvement. The Commission is scheduled to present a report to the HRC in March 2017.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Council continues to be how to ensure that the parties fulfil their obligations under the August 2015 peace deal. Since the signing of the agreement, its implementation has been slow, and questions remain regarding the parties’ commitment to peace.

Another significant issue is how to ensure that UNMISS is better able to protect civilians. This has been a long-standing challenge for the mission, given the high rates of displacement and the massive human rights violations since the start of the civil war in December 2013. Furthermore, the recent investigations of the POC sites underscore the difficulties of providing security and keeping thousands of people safe at sites never intended, and therefore poorly equipped, for that purpose. The initial findings of the Board of Inquiry into the Malakal incident further emphasise lapses in the chain of command and lack of understanding of the roles of engagement, which are a problem for peacekeeping in South Sudan, as in other contexts.

Also an important issue is the need for improved relations between the mission and the government. Violations of the status-of-forces agreement are an ongoing problem, inhibiting the ability of the mission and its partners to fulfil their responsibilities.

Options

The most likely option is for the Council to renew UNMISS for an additional six months, maintaining the core elements of the mandate: the protection of civilians; monitoring and verification of human rights violations; facilitation of humanitarian access; and support for implementation of the peace agreement. In doing so, the Council might consider:

- condemning ceasefire violations and restrictions on the freedom of movement of the CTSAMM monitoring and verification teams;
- emphasising the urgent need for the establishment of the cantonment sites envisioned in the peace agreement; and
- urging donors to provide financial support to transitional security, justice and governance processes and to the humanitarian appeal for South Sudan.

The Council could also consider dispatching a visiting mission to South Sudan to meet with the leaders of the newly formed Transitional Government of National Unity, including Kiir and Machar, and to encourage them to work together to continue to implement the peace agreement.

Another option would be to hold an informal interactive dialogue with the AU to discuss next steps with regard to the establishment of the hybrid court for South Sudan and other options for justice, accountability and reconciliation in the country.

Council Dynamics

While Council members are generally encouraged by the steps that have been taken by the parties to implement the peace agreement, there are concerns among several members that the peace process could unravel without the strong commitment of the parties to the agreement. How to calibrate the language on accountability could be a source of tension during the upcoming negotiations. The US and others have tended to emphasise the importance of accountability in South Sudan, including as represented by the hybrid court envisioned in the August 2015 peace agreement. Others—including 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. They were therefore uncomfortable with language in resolution 2252 indicating that the Council would assess efforts to establish the court.

Security Council Press Statement

The US is the penholder on South Sudan.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In July, Council members will receive their regular monthly briefings on the humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks regarding Syria.

Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura is also scheduled to brief on the intra-Syrian political process, which has been suspended since late April. The possibilities for the resumption of talks and the formation of a transitional government by 1 August are quickly dissipating, in light of escalating violence and steady government offensives around Aleppo, Idlib and the suburbs of Damascus.

Key Recent Developments

In a 3 June briefing to Council members, de Mistura reported that the chances of...
Syria (con’t)

Resuming talks during the month were remote. The chief negotiator of the Riyadh-based opposition umbrella group, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), resigned on 29 May, saying the international community had been unable to implement its own decisions regarding the cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and the release of detainees. At press time, de Mistura was scheduled to brief Security Council members again on 29 June. On 21 June, de Mistura briefed the General Assembly, reporting that the government and the HNC had agreed during the March and April talks in Geneva on the need for a “transition”, but remained far apart on how to achieve it. The government proposed a national unity government but explicitly rejected the opposition’s position calling for a transitional governing body with full executive powers (in line with the June 2012 Geneva Communiqué). Bashar al Assad’s presidency was not subject to negotiation, the government insisted.

De Mistura has an intention to resume talks in July, but only if Russia and the US make sufficient progress on agreeing to a common vision of a political transition. On 17 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the US proposal to include representatives of the opposition in the current government was “absolutely acceptable.” The US denied ever having made such a proposal, reiterating that its policy on the departure of Assad had not changed.

In a 7 June broadcast on state television, Assad said that he would win back every inch of Syria, and highlighted the “liberation” of Aleppo as a major objective. On 22 June, Assad replaced the prime minister and requested that a new government be formed. Both of these developments signal that Assad hardening his position towards a military solution and moving away from any negotiations that would dilute his presidential powers.

On 15 June, US Secretary of State John Kerry met Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on the sidelines of the Oslo Forum, where Kerry also said in public remarks that US “patience is not infinite” in reference to the government’s Aleppo offensive, which is supported by Russian airstrikes and Iranian-backed foreign militias. Zarif reportedly indicated that Tehran might be amenable to finding ways to end the conflict. Separately, Iran has shown preliminary interest in a decentralised or federal structure of governance for Syria, which Assad hinted at in his 7 June speech when he said that Syrian unity is not bound to geographical borders. A Financial Times article reported that Iran may be signalling a certain degree of flexibility on Syria in return for relief from secondary sanctions and access to the US banking system. Nevertheless, the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shi’a militia, Hezbollah, announced on 24 June that it was sending more fighters to Aleppo.

On the humanitarian track, the 17 May statement of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) called for UN air bridges and air drops if the government continued to deny humanitarian access to besieged areas after 1 June. Council members were briefed by OCHA on 3 and 16 June to follow up on the status of the delivery of humanitarian aid to besieged areas in Syria and the UN’s planning for air drops.

On 14 June, the Security Council received a letter on behalf of 59 member states regarding humanitarian air access, air drops, effective implementation of the cessation of hostilities and the need for all parties to work towards a genuine political transition. The letter was an initiative of Saudi Arabia and was co-sponsored by nine Council members (the P3, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain and Ukraine). Egypt, one of the humanitarian leads on Syria in the Council, did not co-sponsor the letter.

In a 23 June Council briefing, OCHA head Stephen O’Brien said that the UN had received approval to access 15 of the 18 besieged locations in Syria. However, the approvals were ad hoc, and some were partial in nature, i.e. there were restrictions on food or medicine as well as restrictions on the number of beneficiaries. He told the Council that the Syrian authorities’ limitations on where, to whom, when and how much aid could be delivered rendered assistance to some communities a non-starter. He added that in addition to these limitations, the Syrian authorities made every effort to delay and dismantle aid convoys as the UN and its partners tried to deliver assistance. O’Brien reported that OCHA’s July plan had been submitted to the government, and it needed to be approved in full and unconditionally. In the consultations that followed, it seems that O’Brien said that despite increased aid deliveries to besieged areas, overall aid delivery remained quite low.

Also on 23 June, the Department of Political Affairs briefed Council members in consultations under “any other business” on the situation on the Syrian/Turkish border. Russia requested this briefing, expressing concern about “Turkish incursions into Syrian territory and seeking more information about the wall.” Turkey is building on the border with Syria. There was also interest in getting more information about the allegations that on 19 June Turkish guards killed 11 Syrian refugees trying to cross the border. Turkey said an investigation is underway. Turkey, which hosts 2.73 million registered Syrian refugees, has closed its borders to further refugee flows.

On chemical weapons, Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo briefed Council members on 16 June. Virginia Gamba—the head of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), the body mandated to determine responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria—also briefed on the nine cases the JIM is investigating. Eight are related to allegations of the government’s use of chemical weapons and one is an alleged use of chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 10 June, the special rapporteur on the right to health condemned the direct targeting of medical units, which amounts to war crimes and may constitute crimes against humanity. From the beginning of May alone, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights documented attacks on at least eight medical units in Syria, the majority targeting health facilities in opposition-held areas.

The Commission of Inquiry on Syria released a report on 16 June, which found that ISIL had committed, and continues to commit, the crime of genocide against the Yazidis. ISIL is still holding more than 3,200 Yazidi women and children, mostly in Syria, while thousands of Yazidi men and boys are missing. The Commission recommended that the Security Council refer the situation to justice, possibly to the ICC or an ad hoc tribunal; consider engaging its Chapter VII powers, given the acknowledged threat ISIL poses to international peace and security; and include formal briefings by the Commission to the Security Council, including a further update on ISIL crimes against the Yazidis (A/HRC/32/CRP2).

In a related development, Canada sent two letters to the Security Council, asking it to establish a mechanism to investigate reports of violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria, determine whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes, and identify the perpetrators of such violations and take measures to ensure accountability, including a referral to the ICC (S/2016/499 and S/2016/545).
Key Issue
With Syria entering the sixth year of a war that has exacted a death toll of 470,000 and displaced half of the Syrian population, including 4.8 million refugees, the essential issue for the Council is to exert effective leadership in supporting a cessation of hostilities and efforts to reach a political solution.

Options
The ISSG and resolutions 2254 and 2268 have identified roles for the Council in the event that talks in 2016 produce concrete results towards a national ceasefire and a parallel political process. In the near term, however, day-to-day oversights of resolutions 2254 and 2268 has been outsourced to the ISSG broadly, and Russia and the US in particular. So long as Russia and the US remain committed to this particular iteration of a political process, options are limited for other Council members to inject new thinking or energy to help resolve the situation.

Council Dynamics
Many Council members are of the view that the government’s offensives, particularly around Aleppo and the suburbs of Damascus, confirm the regime’s preference for prolonged armed conflict over a negotiated settlement. There is also broad recognition that if fighting in Syria cannot be controlled, it will be difficult for UN mediation between the government and the opposition to resume with any chance of success.

Some Council members are concerned that even if Russia and the US agree on the contours of a political solution, any such deal will be so far removed from the spirit and intent of the June 2012 Geneva Communiqué that it will be destined to fail. Some are also of the view that Russian-US cooperation on Syria has reached its limits, resulting in familiar divisions recurring in the Security Council.

On the humanitarian track, the increased access to besieged areas in June means that plans for air drops and air bridges will remain a contingency so long as land routes can be secured. For the UN and Council members, the cost, questionable efficacy, safety concerns and difficult logistics of air bridges and drops make it an option of last resort, though it remains on the table.

Most outcomes on Syria are agreed between Russia and the US prior to adoption by the Council. Egypt, New Zealand and Spain lead on humanitarian issues.

Iraq

Expected Council Action
In July, Special Representative Ján Kubiš will brief the Council on the Secretary-General’s report on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). UNAMI’s mandate, which expires on 31 July, is likely to be renewed for a year.

Key Recent Developments
When Kubiš briefed the Council on 6 May, he reported on Iraq’s deepening political crisis and challenges to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi’s reform efforts; the financial crisis resulting from corruption, plunging oil prices and the high cost of fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); and projected increased humanitarian needs in the context of counter-ISIL operations.

On 23 May, the campaign to retake Fallujah from ISIL was launched by Iraqi forces with the Shia militia Hashd al-Shaabi—or the popular mobilisation forces (PMF)—that are nominally under the command and control of the government. The PMF operated mostly on the perimeter of Fallujah. The campaign was also supported by local Sunni fighters and airstrikes from the US-led anti-ISIL coalition. This is a notable shift from past practice as the US-led coalition has not previously participated in offensives that included the PMF, in deference to the US position that Iraq’s use of Shia militias in Sunni areas stokes sectarian tension and deepens the distrust of the Shia-led government among Sunni leaders.

The PMF has been accused of abusing Sunni men and boys fleeing Fallujah during security screenings. Allegations include disappearances, torture to elicit forced confessions, and summary executions. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has said that while screening civilians is legitimate when done in strict accordance with international human rights and international humanitarian law, it should not be conducted by paramilitary groups. Abadi has said the government will establish an investigative committee to look into all alleged abuses.

The Fallujah campaign has also resulted in a humanitarian situation verging on disaster. Some 82,000 civilians have fled the city during the month-long offensive, according to OCHA. While the government secured a corridor for civilians to flee Fallujah, they have been barred from entering Baghdad to seek shelter and services, and outside of the capital there are insufficient camps and resources to respond effectively to the needs of the surge in internally displaced persons (IDPs).

On 17 June, Abadi announced the recapture of Fallujah, but this military advance is unlikely to translate into political stability in light of continuing violence against Sunnis, disastrous conditions for IDPs, and insufficient re-stabilisation of areas liberated from ISIL. UN officials have repeatedly flagged the concern about lagging re-stabilisation. UNAMI has said that for military advances against ISIS to hold, the government, in cooperation with the UN, would have to work quickly to restore the rule of law and basic services. This is particularly important in relation to the Sunni provinces, which have a strained relationship with the Shia-led government in Baghdad.

On 21 June, Kubiš briefed Council members under “any other business” via videoconference from Baghdad on the situation in and around Fallujah, particularly on the human rights situation and humanitarian needs. On 22 June, the US announced it would host a humanitarian pledging conference for Iraq on 20 July.

The government’s campaign to retake Fallujah was driven by Abadi’s need to consolidate his leadership by securing a significant victory prior to the resumption of parliament in July. Abadi’s attempt in April to put forward a reform cabinet of technocrats...
to counter corruption and curtail the power of political actors opposed to reform efforts continues to be stalled in parliament. The Fallujah victory seems unlikely to fundamentally shift that dynamic. On 7 June, however, Abadi fired the intelligence director and the heads of six state-owned banks, all of whom had been appointed by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Malaki, who belongs to the same Shi’a Dawa party as Abadi. Malaki continues to pose a significant obstacle to Abadi’s reform efforts.

Later this year, the government is expected to launch a campaign aimed at retaking Mosul. The PMF has insisted it will play a role in that offensive, despite objections from the US-led coalition and Iraqi government forces. Meanwhile, Sunni fighters have signalled their unwillingness to participate in the Mosul offensive alongside the government if Shi’a militias are involved, especially after the reports of abuses resulting from the militia’s participation in the Fallujah operation.

UN officials anticipate that the humanitarian consequences of a campaign to dislodge ISIL from Mosul, which has a population of 2 million, could be significantly worse than the result of the Fallujah exodus. The UN Refugee Agency reported in late May that 4,200 Iraqis fled from Mosul to Syria amid reports that ISIL had increased executions of men and boys in Fallujah as the government fought to retake the city.

In other developments, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča briefed Council members in consultations on 23 June under “any other business” on cross-border issues involving Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. The Turkish presence in the Ba’thiqa region near Mosul, which Turkish forces maintain to counter the activities of ISIL and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in northern Iraq, was raised. It seems ongoing Turkish airstrikes against PKK targets in northern Iraq was not discussed.

Human Rights-Related Developments
A report on a May visit to Iraq by the Human Rights Council’s special rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs concluded that intensified efforts by the Iraqi government are required to meet the humanitarian needs and protect the human rights of many of the millions of IDPs, that Iraq has neither a legal framework for addressing the rights and needs of those persons nor a comprehensive policy in line with international standards that is implemented in practice, and that its resources are diminishing, reducing its capacity to respond effectively to the displacement crisis (A/HRC/32/35/Add.1).

The Commission of Inquiry on Syria released a report on 16 June that found that ISIL had committed, and continues to commit, the crime of genocide against the Yazidis. The Commission recommended that the Security Council refer the situation to justice, such as the ICC or an ad-hoc tribunal, and invite formal briefings by the Commission to the Security Council, including a further update on ISIL’s crimes against the Yazidis (A/HRC/32/CRP.2).

Canada has sent two letters to the Security Council, asking it to establish a mechanism to investigate reports of violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria, determine whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes and identify the perpetrators of such violations and take measures to ensure accountability, including a referral to the ICC (S/2016/499 and S/2016/545).

Key Issues
The key issue for the Council is promoting a genuinely inclusive government that is accountable to the Iraqi people. A related issue is determining how the Council and UNAMI can support Prime Minister Abadi’s reform process and encourage greater cooperation on financial, security and humanitarian issues between Abadi’s dominant Shi’a Dawa party and Kurdish and Sunni parliamentarians, and thereby build confidence in the central government and fortify Iraq’s response to ISIL.

Another issue is how to address the impact of the anti-ISIL military campaigns on the human rights, humanitarian and security situations in Iraq.

Options
Options seem limited since the security response to ISIL is happening outside the Council’s purview. However, an option is to include in the resolution renewing UNAMI a call for the government to work towards enhanced security and humanitarian coordination with Kurdish and Sunni leaders, and for UNAMI to support the government in that effort. In the resolution, the Council could also condemn human rights violations by ISIL and by Iraqi security forces, including the PMF.

The resolution could also call on the government to enhance its cooperation with UNAMI in areas that may require prioritisation in the mandate renewal, such as human rights, humanitarian response, rule of law, security sector reform, stabilisation activities in areas liberated from ISIL, and best practices for child protection and gender policies.

Options for the Council to address the pressing issue of accountability would be to refer the situation to the ICC or express support for the High Commissioner’s call from June 2015 for the Iraqi government to accede to the Rome Statute and, as an immediate step, to accept the ICC’s jurisdiction with respect to the current situation. A narrower accountability option for the Council would be to consider Canada’s request for the Council to establish a mechanism to investigate reports of ISIL’s violations of international law.

Council Dynamics
Council members support UNAMI and some subscribe to the view held by the US and Iraq, as well as by Kubiš, that the mission’s mandate is sufficiently broad and flexible to fulfil its good offices role. Other Council members believe that UNAMI would benefit from a resolution that updates and prioritises its tasks since the mandate has not changed since resolution 1770 was adopted in 2007.

Spain and the UK, as co-chairs of the 2242 Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, would like to see some of the gender priorities identified during the Group’s 29 April meeting on Iraq incorporated into the mandate renewal, especially in relation to sexual violence in conflict. The Informal Expert Group on Protection of Civilians is also keen to strengthen language in the mandate regarding the issue of human rights violations in the context of IDP detention. Others believe that opening up the mandate to changes will give Russia a window to highlight the Turkish presence in Iraq, an issue the P3 would prefer not to address directly in an Iraq-related resolution.

Regarding accountability, it seems there has been some limited P3 discussion of Canada’s request, but with a very low appetite for an ICC referral that would include Iraq in any way. On the issue of accountability focused solely on ISIL violations, some Council members feel that such a selective approach would set a highly problematic precedent.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general, and the UK is the penholder on Iraq-Kuwait issues.
Expected Council Action
In July, the Secretary-General is due to submit a report to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2231 adopted on 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme. Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman is expected to brief on the report. A briefing by the Council’s 2231 facilitator, Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain), is also due. In a 16 January presidential note, the Council requested the Secretary-General to report every six months on the resolution’s implementation and appointed one of its members to serve as a facilitator for the tasks relating to the resolution, including briefing the other members of the Council every six months, in parallel with the Secretary-General’s report.

Key Recent Developments
On 16 January, the IAEA confirmed that Iran had taken the actions required under the JCPOA for the termination of all previous Council resolutions and the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions, thus marking the arrival of the JCPOA’s implementation day. That same day, the 1737 Iran Sanctions Committee and its Panel of Experts were terminated, and the provisions in annex B of resolution 2231 came into effect.

The new provisions provide for close monitoring of any nuclear-related transfers or activities involving Iran, and continued restrictions relating to Iran’s ballistic missile programme and conventional arms transfers. Most transfers of nuclear-related technology, technical assistance, financial services or investments are subject to advance approval by the Council through the so-called procurement channel specified in the JCPOA. Requests for approval are to be considered by the procurement working group of the Joint Commission, the mechanism established by the JCPOA parties to monitor its implementation. Decisions are made by the Council based on the working group’s recommendations.

Annex B also includes a clause calling on Iran “not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”, including launches. Ballistic missile-related transfers or activities involving Iran are subject to advance approval by the Council. With regard to conventional arms, states are called on to prevent the transfer of arms from Iran “except as decided otherwise by the Security Council in advance on a case-by-case basis”, while all transfers of arms to Iran are subject to advance approval by the Council.

In addition, some asset freeze and travel ban listings remain in place. The new list, referred to as the 2231 list, includes the individuals and entities that were under sanctions prior to the adoption of resolution 2231, with the exception of 36 individuals and entities delisted on implementation day, as specified in annex B. Also, on 17 January, the Council removed Bank Sepah from the 2231 list, which now contains 23 individuals and 61 entities.

On 1 March, Oyarzun, in his capacity as facilitator, held an open briefing for member states to explain the changes that came into effect on 16 January. At the time of writing, it seems the Council had only received one proposal under the procedures established by resolution 2231, and this was later withdrawn.

In a 26 February report, the IAEA, which in resolution 2231 was assigned the task of undertaking the necessary verification and monitoring of Iran’s nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, said that Iran’s stockpile of heavy water had briefly exceeded the agreed limit of 130 metric tonnes but confirmed that Iran had otherwise complied with all its commitments. The IAEA’s most recent report, issued on 27 May, confirmed Iran’s continued compliance with the JCPOA.

On 8 and 9 March, Iran conducted several ballistic missile launches. Iran said that the launches did not violate either the JCPOA or resolution 2231 since the missiles were conventional defensive instruments. In response, Council members held consultations on 14 March at the request of the US and were briefed by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman.

On 29 March, France, Germany, the UK and the US submitted a joint letter to the Council stating that the launches were inconsistent with resolution 2231 and calling for additional Council discussions on the matter. Subsequently, Council members met at expert level on 1 April to hear a briefing by US missile experts. They asserted that the missile systems used by Iran were inherently capable of delivering nuclear weapons due to their range and payload capacity and that the launches were therefore inconsistent with resolution 2231.

On 28 March, the US Navy announced that it had confiscated a shipment of weapons which it believed was being transported from Iran to Houthi rebels in Yemen, and that it was at least the third time in two months that such a shipment had been stopped. The US reported the interception to the Secretary-General and to the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee in early June. Also, there were reports that the commander of the Iranian Quds forces, Qassem Souleimani, who is on the 2231 travel ban list, visited Moscow in April.

In other developments, Iran’s oil exports in June were reportedly almost back to their pre-sanctions level of 2.5 million barrels per day, and Federica Mogherini, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said that trade between the EU and Iran had increased by 22 percent during the first four months of the year. On 19 June, Iran announced that it had reached an agreement with the US company Boeing to buy 100 airplanes, subject to the approval of US authorities. Iranian officials have nevertheless complained that the US is not living up to its sanctions-relief commitments and must do more to encourage banks to do business with Iran.

Human Rights-Related Developments
The special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, and the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, released a joint statement on 8 June in which they said the current wave of incitement of hatred against the Baha’i community reflected in speeches made by Iranian officials had exposed the authorities’ “extreme intolerance for adherents of the religious minority group”. Since mid-May, 169 religious, judiciary and political leaders have allegedly openly spoken or written against the Baha’i community, and there are currently at least 72 Baha’is in prison solely because of their religious beliefs and practices, the statement said. The experts called on Iran’s government to end state-sanctioned discrimination against the group.
Key Issues
A key issue for the Council is what kind of reporting the Secretary-General and the facilitator should provide, in particular with regard to the non-nuclear related restrictions contained in resolution 2231. A related question is the legal and technical interpretation of these restrictions.

A further issue is whether there is a need for additional guidance to member states in light of the absence of any submissions under the procedures established by resolution 2231. Council members seem unsure as to whether this is because member states are still not clear about the new measures, whether states are carrying out transfers and other activities without seeking the Council’s consent, or whether it is mainly due to Iran’s not taking steps that are necessary to facilitate such exchanges.

Options
One option for the Council would be to issue a press statement following the briefing in July to clarify the restrictions on Iran’s ballistic missile activities and remind all member states of what is allowed and what is not allowed under resolution 2231.

Council Dynamics
As was clear from the discussions on Iran’s missile launches in March, Council members disagree on the interpretation of the relevant provisions in resolution 2231, in particular with regard to the legal implications of the term “calls on Iran not to undertake” as opposed to the unambiguous phrase “decides that Iran shall not undertake”, used in resolution 1929. Furthermore, resolution 1929 prohibited “any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons”, but resolution 2231 instead refers to “missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons”. It seems that China and Russia argue that the restrictions on ballistic missiles are not legally binding obligations and that a missile must be explicitly designed to deliver a nuclear weapon to fall within the terms of the resolution.

It seems that these differences are also reflected in Council members’ views on what they expect from the Secretary-General’s report, and how much focus there should be on Iran’s compliance with the non-nuclear related restrictions.

Cyprus

Expected Council Action
In July, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another six months, ahead of its expiry on 31 July. Elizabeth Spehar, the new Special Representative and head of the mission, will brief the Council on the latest UNFICYP report, which is due in early July. Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide is expected to brief on the progress in the negotiations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Key Recent Developments
The current round of unification talks in Cyprus, which started officially on 15 May 2015, has continued steadily in 2016 despite some minor interruptions. When it last discussed the issue in January, the Council adopted resolution 2263, which extended UNFICYP’s mandate and acknowledged the positive momentum and atmosphere in the unification talks in Cyprus. The talks have now entered a more intensive phase, during which Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci committed to increase the frequency of their meetings with the aim of reaching a solution this year.

On 30 March, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced a change in the leadership of UNFICYP, appointing Elizabeth Spehar (Canada) to the post of Special Representative and the head of the mission. She formally assumed her duties on 13 June, succeeding Lisa Buttenheim, who had occupied the post since 2010.

Marking the anniversary of the ongoing round of talks on 15 May, the two leaders issued a joint statement in which they expressed satisfaction with the progress made so far, while stressing their determination to work on resolving outstanding issues “with an aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement agreement within 2016”.

During 23 and 24 May, Anastasiades attended the UN Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, but he cut his visit short on 23 May, following what he perceived to be a breach of diplomatic protocol when Akinci was invited to one of the receptions for the heads of state. As a result, Anastasiades announced that he would suspend the ongoing unification talks. In a phone conversation with Anastasiades on 27 May, Ban reiterated that the UN policy towards Cyprus remains unchanged. The Republic of Cyprus is a member of the UN, and the bi-communal dialogue on the Cyprus issue which takes place under UN auspices is, he said, “based on relevant UN Security Council resolutions”. Following the phone call, Anastasiades announced that he would resume negotiations with Akinci.

In an effort to promote confidence-building measures, the Technical Committee on Education organised an event in a buffer zone on 2 June aimed at bringing together students and educators from both communities. Both Cypriot leaders attended the event and used the opportunity to meet informally. On 7 June, Eide met separately with Anastasiades and Akinci. In adding the media following the meetings, Eide said that the leaders would work on creating a joint catalogue that would list issues where achievements have been made and those that require more work. According to Eide, this would enable both Cypriot leaders to have a more structured approach towards negotiations.

Following the suspension of talks in May, the formal negotiations between the Cypriot leaders resumed on 8 June. During the meeting, both Anastasiades and Akinci agreed to increase the intensity of the negotiations and resolve outstanding issues in a more structured manner. The current intense phase of negotiations, during which the leaders agreed to hold two meetings per week, commenced on 17 June. Though no specific details about the talks have been made public, both Cypriot leaders have expressed their
Cyprus (con’t)

optimism regarding the possibility of reaching a solution.

Both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have offered technical assistance to Cyprus and have been working on possible solutions to secure sustainable public finances and a unified economy in light of the prospects for the island’s reunification.

Key Issues
In addition to the UNFICYP mandate renewal, the primary issue for the Council is how to help support the current momentum in negotiations and facilitate progress in the unification talks between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders.

A looming issue for the Council is the possibility of reconfiguring and downsizing the mission.

Options
The most probable option for the Council is to renew UNFICYP’s mandate in its current configuration for another six months.

Another option for the Council would be to recognise the current positive trend in negotiations while adding a sense of urgency to the issue by insisting that the ongoing process cannot be open-ended, considering that UNFICYP has been present on the island for more than 50 years.

If concrete progress is made in the negotiations, the Council could issue a statement welcoming the positive development.

Council Dynamics
Cyprus still remains an issue of low-intensity on the Council’s agenda, followed closely by few Council members—most notably France, Russia and the UK. Recently, it seems that the US has become more engaged in seeking a solution to the Cyprus question, as the island continues to gain strategic importance due to its potential hydrocarbon resources and its location vis-à-vis the ongoing fight against terrorism in the Middle East.

Despite Council-wide support for the continued negotiations, some divergences persist regarding the timeframe and conditions related to the unification talks. Some Council members, in particular the UK, seem frustrated by the longevity of the process. These members seem to think it would be beneficial to impose some sort of pressure on both sides to stimulate the negotiations. Conversely, Russia strictly opposes any conditions or a timeframe for negotiation process imposed by external actors. This is also the Greek Cypriot position.

Although the most recent UNFICYP renewal resolution received unanimous support from Council members, Russia and Egypt voiced their dissatisfaction with the inability of the penholder (the UK) to address their proposed changes to the draft. Given the current positive political environment surrounding the negotiations, it is likely that negotiations for the UNFICYP draft resolution will not be contentious. The prevailing view is that the Council should renew UNFICYP’s mandate without raising any issues that could negatively affect the ongoing negotiations on the island.

Western Sahara

Expected Council Action
In July, the Council expects a briefing on the situation in Western Sahara and the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), as requested by resolution 2285. Resolution 2285 renewed MINURSO’s mandate and emphasised the urgent need for the mission to return to full functionality following Morocco’s expulsion of 84 civilian staff members in March due to a dispute with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, following Ban’s use of the term “occupation” to describe Morocco’s relationship to Western Sahara.

Key Recent Developments
On 29 April, the Council adopted a resolution renewing MINURSO’s mandate for an additional year with ten votes in favour, two against (Uruguay and Venezuela) and three abstentions (Angola, New Zealand and Russia). The lack of consensus on the resolution reflected the divisions over the developments and process leading up to this adoption. The resolution extended the mandate of MINURSO for additional six months and requested the Secretary-General “to brief the Council within 90 days on whether MINURSO has returned to full functionality” and expressed the intention, should this not be the case, “to consider how best to facilitate this”.

On 16 June, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous briefed Council members under “any other business” on the situation in Western Sahara. Venezuela requested the briefing, the first Council meeting on the issue since the adoption of 2285, in order to hear about the situation on the ground and ongoing efforts to restore MINURSO to full functionality. Ladsous provided a short update with few details on what he described as far-reaching consultations between the UN and Morocco held from 9 to 12 June. He reported that a UN team of four had travelled to Rabat and Layounne to meet with Moroccan officials and that it was agreed in principle that MINURSO would return to full functionality; however, talks were ongoing. Concerning the mission’s operations at that time, Ladsous said that the mission was unable to fulfill its mandate and that it was carrying out limited observation and de-mining activities at substantial risk to the personnel involved because of a shortage of security and maintenance staff in the mission.

On 17 June, media reports surfaced that Morocco had agreed to allow 25 staff members to return immediately to MINURSO. On 22 June, DPKO circulated a confidential note to the Council informing it that the gradual return of staff would commence with the return of an initial group of 25 critical staff “in the immediate future” and that it anticipated that additional staff would return subsequently. The note also said that with the return to full functionality, it was anticipated that a range of administrative and support processes that had been suspended would resume. The note added that the...
mission, along with DPKO and the Department of Field Support, would continue to monitor the return to full functionality and that the UN would provide the 90-day briefing as expected. Minutes after the note was circulated, it was recalled by the Secretariat. At press time, it appeared that no further update had been provided.

Mohamed Abdelaziz, the head and co-founder of the Polisario Front independence movement, died on 31 May. The Polisario ordered a 40-day mourning period, after which it said a new secretary-general would be chosen.

Key Issues
This year’s report of the Secretary-General said that the expulsion of most of MINURSO’s international civilian component had resulted in the “de facto alteration of the mandate of MINURSO”, and that the issue of immediate concern was to ensure that MINURSO resumes full functionality, as requested by resolution 2285.

The underlying issue is that the parties to the conflict remain deadlocked and the political process has stalled due to the fact that the parties’ proposals for the basis of a political solution as outlined in 2007 are mutually exclusive. Ascertaining what the Council can do to break the deadlock between the parties is therefore a key issue.

Another key issue is that the resumption of armed conflict cannot be ruled out, and the Council may need to focus on how best to mitigate that threat.

A wider issue for the Council are the implications of allowing a member state to insist on the removal of parts of a Council-mandated mission, especially from a disputed territory.

Options
Depending on what the Council learns in the briefing, it may choose to take further action to facilitate MINURSO’s return to full functionality.

If necessary, one option would be for the Council to issue a statement urging Morocco to reverse its decision in order to let MINURSO continue its work unhindered. However, given the deep divisions among Council members on how to interpret the situation, agreeing on any further action is likely to be difficult.

Council Dynamics
The Council is deeply divided on both the approach to the wider conflict and the current impasse between Morocco and the UN. Council members who support the Moroccan position include Egypt, France, Senegal and Spain. It appears that their views cannot be reconciled with those of some other members, particularly those that recognise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), declared by the Polisario in 1976. Three Council members have recognised SADR: Angola, Uruguay and Venezuela. Angola and Uruguay also maintain diplomatic relations with Morocco, while Venezuela does not.

Council members who are sympathetic to the Moroccan position have resisted the Council’s putting pressure on Morocco to reverse its decision. These countries have advocated minimal Council involvement, which they argue could hamper bilateral efforts to resolve the crisis.

Several members, including Angola, New Zealand, Uruguay and Venezuela, have urged that the Council must act to protect the MINURSO mission that it has mandated. They dissented from resolution 2285 in part because it did not demand the immediate return of the expelled staff. Some of these members have also expressed frustration at what they perceive to be a double standard in how the Council has declined to impose measures on Morocco as, in their view, it would on other African countries in such circumstances.

In their explanation of vote on 2285, several countries lamented the lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the negotiation of the resolution, which was dominated by Moroccan ally France and the penholder, the US.

Peacebuilding

Expected Council Action
In July, Japan, as Council president, is organising a ministerial-level open debate, presided over by Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, on peacebuilding in Africa with a focus on institution-building.

A presidential statement may be adopted.

Key Recent Developments
On 27 April, the Council and General Assembly adopted substantively identical resolutions to conclude the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture (S/RES/2282 and A/RES/70/262). The resolutions were the most comprehensive ever adopted on peacebuilding at the UN, expanding the understanding of peacebuilding from being perceived as a post-conflict activity to a process occurring before, during and after conflict. This broader understanding was embodied in a definition in the resolutions of “sustaining peace”, described as “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict” which “should flow through all three pillars of the UN’s engagement at all stages of conflict”. The resolutions recognised peacebuilding as a responsibility of the entire UN system and placed new emphasis on conflict prevention.

The resolutions further reaffirmed the Peacebuilding Commission’s (PBC) mandate: to sustain international attention on conflict-affected countries; to promote a strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding; to serve an advisory “bridging role” among the principal UN organs and entities; and to provide a forum for convening all relevant actors. The Council expressed its intention to regularly request and draw upon the PBC’s “specific, strategic and targeted advice” in the formation, review and drawdown of
peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Moreover, the resolutions encouraged the PBC to diversify its working methods in support of sustaining peace, which is expected to enable it to take on a role in conflict prevention and to consider more diverse country and regional issues.

On the financing gap for peacebuilding activities—highlighted by the Advisory Group of Experts, which prepared an initial report for the review—the General Assembly resolution included a decision, which the Council version took note of, to invite the Secretary-General to provide a report during its 72nd session, which should contain options for funding peacebuilding through assessed and voluntary contributions.

On 22 June, former PBC Chair Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden) briefed the Council on the PBC’s annual report. Current PBC chair Ambassador Macharia Kamau (Kenya) also briefed, highlighting plans to build on key areas of the PBC’s work from 2015, including the PBC’s increased regional focus, and to implement the new resolutions. Ahead of the meeting, the Council revised the title of the agenda item under which it considers peacebuilding from “post-conflict peacebuilding” to “peacebuilding and sustaining peace”. An informal interactive dialogue with PBC country-configuration chairs and representatives of its agenda countries followed.

Developments in the PBC
Kamau undertook a mission to Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone from 8 to 17 June to promote Ebola recovery and PBC cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Previously, on 6 April, the PBC Organizational Committee discussed the subregional dimensions of peacebuilding in West Africa. Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco and representatives from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the UN Development Programme briefed. Fernandez-Taranco highlighted his 9 to 18 March visit to Mali, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso to follow up on support provided by the Peacebuilding Fund and explore opportunities to address transnational and cross-border peacebuilding challenges.

Within the country-specific configurations, the Burundi configuration met on 20 June with Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović. The Central African Republic (CAR) configuration has focused on engaging the new government, which was elected earlier this year and concluded CAR’s political transition. The Guinea country-configuration last met on 2 May to discuss justice sector reforms, with Guinea’s justice minister participating via video teleconference.

The country configuration for Guinea-Bissau remained engaged in the country’s political crisis. On 16 May, it issued a statement highlighting the pressing need to mobilise resources for the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau, and on 9 June, it adopted a statement supporting the outcomes of a recent ECOWAS summit on the crisis. The Liberia configuration has focused on preparing for the drawdown of the UN Mission in Liberia to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities to the government and UN country team. A peacebuilding assessment mission travelled to Sierra Leone from 29 February to 8 March. Its report, which is being finalised, is expected to recommend continued engagement by the Sierra Leone configuration through the 2018 elections.

The PBC held its third annual session on 23 June. It focused on transitions and how the PBC can enhance its advice to the Council and General Assembly during transitions from country teams to peacekeeping or special political missions; between types of peace operations; and from peace operations to country teams.

Key Issues
For the debate, member states will consider the challenges related to peacebuilding in Africa and identify lessons learned and best practices from African countries that have achieved peace, stability and strong economic growth. They will further consider how the international community can make its support for peacebuilding in Africa more effective and efficient. In this context, there will be a focus on institution-building, which can lay the foundations for conflict prevention as weak institutions are less capable of managing tensions in societies or can be sources of conflict.

Options
The Council may adopt a presidential statement, which, inter alia, could:
• recall resolution 2282 and the importance of recognising that peacebuilding and sustaining peace are responsibilities of the entire UN system that involve activities to prevent the outbreak, relapse or continuation of conflict;
• welcome the PBC’s efforts to consider the regional dimensions of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa and to enhance partnerships with African regional and sub-regional organisations; and

Council and Wider Dynamics
The recently adopted resolutions on peacebuilding have been hailed as an opportunity to change the UN’s approach to addressing international peace and security issues. During a 23 February Council open debate, member states expressed strong support for broadening the understanding of peacebuilding and the concept of sustaining peace, with its emphasis on conflict prevention. The new resolutions notwithstanding, it remains to be seen how the UN system and member states will apply the resolutions’ ideas. This includes whether the Council will seek and be able to derive more benefit from the PBC. The P5 have often perceived the PBC as seeking to intervene on the peace and security prerogatives of the Council and have been sceptical about the added value it has provided so far to the Council’s work.

The upcoming Council debate reflects Japan’s interest in peacebuilding, which it highlighted during its last Council presidency in April 2010. From 2011 to 2015, Japan was chair of the PBC Working Group on Lessons Learned. Organising a high-level debate on peacebuilding in Africa is further expected to contribute to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) being held in August. The TICAD, held every three years, will for the first time take place outside Japan, in Nairobi.

Egypt has assumed from Malaysia the role of convener of the Council-PBC stock-taking sessions, which are organised periodically to review relations between the two bodies.
Notable Dates for July

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORT DUE</th>
<th>REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN JULY</th>
<th>REQUESTING DOCUMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 June</td>
<td>SG report on UNMISS (South Sudan) S/2016/552</td>
<td>S/RES/2252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 June</td>
<td>OPCW report on the implementation of resolution 2118 (Syrian chemical weapons)</td>
<td>S/RES/2118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 June</td>
<td>SG report on MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo)</td>
<td>S/RES/2277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 June</td>
<td>SG report on UNIFIL (Lebanon)</td>
<td>S/RES/2236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>SG report on UNFICYP (Cyprus)</td>
<td>S/RES/2263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 July</td>
<td>SG report on UNAMI (Iraq)</td>
<td>S/RES/2233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 July</td>
<td>SG report on the implementation of resolution 2231 (Iran, non-proliferation)</td>
<td>S/RES/2231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 July</td>
<td>SG report on the humanitarian situation in Syria</td>
<td>S/RES/2139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MANDATES EXPIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORT DUE</th>
<th>RELEVANT DOCUMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 July</td>
<td>S/RES/2289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 July</td>
<td>S/RES/2281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 July</td>
<td>S/RES/2232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 July</td>
<td>S/RES/2263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 July</td>
<td>S/RES/2233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Security Council Report and What’s in Blue Apps are available for free at the App Store.

Keep informed of the latest developments in the Security Council through our Apps for the iPhone and iPad.

The material in this publication is subject to copyright ownership. Material in this publication may be freely used as in the public domain. You are free to copy, distribute, or make derivative works of the work under the following conditions: you must attribute the work to Security Council Report, Inc.; you may not use this work for commercial purposes; if you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a license identical to this one.