

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

There will be two open debates during Malaysia's August presidency. Malaysia, also the chair of the Working Group on [Children and Armed Conflict](#), has organised an open debate on the Secretary-General's annual report on this thematic issue. Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman is expected to chair the second open debate focused on [preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction](#).

Council members will continue to hold straw polls to gauge the viability of candidates that have been nominated for the [position of the next Secretary-General](#).

In August, Council members will be closely following developments in South Sudan and Syria. On [South Sudan](#), at press time, the Council was due to briefly roll over the mandate of UNMISS, which expires on 31 July. It is expected that Council members will continue to monitor the situation following last month's outbreak of violence in Juba and will adopt a resolution modifying the mandate of UNMISS to enable it to address the latest developments. On [Syria](#), Council members will receive their regular monthly briefings regarding the humanitarian

and chemical weapons tracks. They will also be watching to see if the intra-Syrian political process will resume in August.

There will be discussions on several other African issues this month:

- [Guinea-Bissau](#), on the activities of UNIOGBIS and a review of the 2048 sanctions regime in the post-election environment;
- [Liberia](#), an update on UNMIL ahead of the mission's mandate renewal in September; and
- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), the quarterly briefing north/south issues.

Other Middle East issues that will be considered this month are: [Israel/Palestine](#), during the regular monthly briefing on the issue; the renewal of UNIFIL in [Lebanon](#); and an update on the [Yemen](#) political talks and the 2140 sanctions regime.

The Council will hold its quarterly meetings on UNMIK in [Kosovo](#) and another on the activities of the 1718 [DPRK](#) Sanctions Committee.

On 22 July, the Council received the Secretary-General's recommendations for a political mission to monitor the ceasefire in [Colombia](#), but it is unclear what the next steps will be in taking up the recommendations.

## In Hindsight: The Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians

The informal expert group on the protection of civilians was formed in 2009 at the initiative of the UK, the penholder on the protection of civilians. The group, which continues to meet regularly in 2016, receives briefings from OCHA and asks questions of OCHA and other UN entities on relevant protection concerns prior to the mandate renewals of peace operations. While the expert group is not a formal subsidiary body of the Council, the idea for it grew out of a recommendation in the Secretary-General's 2007 protection of civilians report, which called for establishing

"a dedicated, expert-level working group to facilitate the systematic and sustained consideration and analysis of protection concerns, and to ensure consistent application of the aide-memoire for the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians". (The aide-memoire, which includes a compendium of protection language in Council outcomes, is designed to facilitate the Council's consideration of protection issues in country-specific situations.)

The briefings, which are held in a conference room in the Secretariat building, provide an

29 July 2016

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## In Hindsight: The Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians (con't)

update on key protection concerns in country-specific situations, describe actions taken to address these concerns and offer suggestions for possible language to be incorporated in resolutions based on the aide-memoire. Proposed language—as well as relevant precedents for such language in other country-specific cases—is integrated into a “building-blocks” document focusing on the situation under consideration that is circulated to Council members in hard copy at the outset of each expert group meeting.

While tailored to the specific case, the “building-blocks” documents nonetheless adhere to the same format. They start with a brief overview of “key facts and trends” related to the protection environment in the country under consideration, followed by a one-page summary of the key recommendations for language in the mandate. After these introductory sections, the document describes the recommended language (and the rationale for these recommendations) under six separate sections: “conduct of hostilities and impact of conflict on civilians”; “human rights violations and abuses”; “humanitarian access”; “protection issues related to displacement”; “gender-based protection concerns, including conflict-related sexual violence”; and “specific protection concerns pertaining to children”.

Preparation for these meetings usually begins several weeks in advance. At that time, OCHA solicits input from its staff in the field and from other UN entities to help inform the development of the building-blocks document for the meeting. This input is solicited in the form of questions focusing on key protection concerns since the prior mandate renewal, together with recommendations for Security Council wording on protection of civilians. OCHA may seek clarification on the information provided by other UN entities, as required, while putting together the building-blocks document.

An expert group meeting usually occurs three to four weeks prior to the expiration of the mandate of the mission under discussion. This gives Council members sufficient time to consider language suggestions made in the expert group sessions prior to the distribution and negotiation of the draft resolution renewing the mandate in question. It is worth emphasising that resolutions are not negotiated at these meetings. Rather, the meetings are

designed to lay the groundwork for upcoming negotiations, preparing the diplomats with the background to consider relevant protection options before they enter into discussions on the mandates of peace operations.

Expert-level Council diplomats whose portfolios include the country under discussion and those covering the thematic protection of civilians issue are invited to participate. Most Council members attend these meetings on a consistent basis. China is the one Council member whose diplomats do not attend these meetings, while Russia attends sporadically.

Prior to mid-2013, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was the only other UN entity apart from OCHA to participate in these meetings, but at that time, the UK started to invite other relevant UN representatives to the meetings to answer questions from Council members. Currently, representatives from various UN entities—DPKO (for discussions on peacekeeping operations), the Department of Political Affairs (for discussions on political missions), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Mine Action Service, the UN Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the UN Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and UN Women—frequently participate in these meetings. The presence of representatives from other UN entities is critical because this makes it possible for Council members to receive informed answers to questions they may have on particular aspects of a mandate from UN officials with relevant expertise.

Expert group meetings generally last about two hours. While the meetings are chaired by the UK, OCHA briefs at the outset. Other UN entities are asked if they have any relevant information to add. This is followed by questions from Council members, which are answered by the UN entity or entities best placed to respond. The discussions are meant to be interactive.

On rare occasions, the expert group has met to discuss issues not related to mandate renewals. For example, in February 2012 the group held a thematic meeting on the challenges related to humanitarian access. It also met in December 2012 to discuss the proposed African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), and in November 2013 to discuss UN support for the AU International Support

Mission to the Central African Republic.

In 2015, the expert group held meetings on several peace operations: UNAMA (Afghanistan), MINUSCA (Central African Republic), MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo), MINUSMA (Mali), UNMISS (South Sudan) and UNAMID (Darfur). The group’s eight meetings in 2015 are relatively consistent with its level of activity in recent years, including 2011 (ten meetings), 2012 (ten meetings), 2013 (11 meetings) and 2014 (nine meetings). So far this year, the expert group has convened seven times regarding the situations in Afghanistan, the CAR, Darfur, the DRC, Iraq, Mali, and Somalia (AMISOM).

It appears that the quality of the briefings has improved in recent years. Furthermore, the presence of representatives from a wide array of UN entities to respond to queries and to contribute to the discussion has made the sessions more informative. Members have noted that the forum is a useful mechanism for discussing protection issues on a consistent basis.

However, some maintain that more might be done to further engage the participants and enhance the usefulness of the meetings. OCHA is currently exploring ideas to bring in additional voices, including from the field. Visits of relevant protection field officers to UN headquarters could provide opportunities to convene expert group meetings. Employing video-teleconferencing would be another option for enabling members to hear from relevant voices in the field, as the informal expert group on women, peace and security has done.

Another option is to expand the range of meetings to include country-specific situations in which the UN (or the AU) does not presently have peace operations, as well as pertinent thematic issues. In 2015, some interest was expressed in holding a meeting on the impact of Boko Haram on civilian populations, although scheduling difficulties prevented the meeting from taking place. The general practice of focusing on peace operations limits the scope of the group’s reach, as recent experience has demonstrated that protection concerns can be most dire in places without peace operations. For example, protection concerns were worse in northern Sri Lanka than nearly anywhere else in the world in 2009, and the conflict in Syria, where there was only briefly a military observer mission in 2012, has claimed

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more than 470,000 lives since 2011. Defining the scope of the expert group's work in relation to concrete needs rather than the form of the UN presence (i.e. a peace operation) would be consistent with the Secretary-General's recommendation in his most recent protection of civilians report, which encouraged "the Council...to consider broadening [the expert group's] agenda to encompass other situations of concern, including where peace operations are not deployed" (S/2016/447).

A further possibility is to allow agencies

other than OCHA to provide the main briefing at some of the meetings, depending on the protection issues most pertinent to the case under discussion. This is a sensitive matter that has given rise to contrasting views. On the one hand, some have argued that the expert group was established primarily as a humanitarian forum, providing an important avenue for OCHA to interact with Council members on the mandates of peace operations, which are managed by DPKO and the Department of Political Affairs. On the other hand, it is often

maintained that there is not a clear dividing line between different forms of protection—whether under the "humanitarian" rubric or otherwise—and that in crisis situations various protection approaches and strategies need to be integrated. Making the Executive Office of the Secretary-General the Secretariat for the expert group briefings could be one way of enabling the Council to explore the protection of civilians in a more holistic way and mitigate the effects of inter-system tensions.

## Status Update since our July Forecast

### Counter-Terrorism

On 2 July, Council members condemned the terrorist attack perpetrated in the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, for which ISIL claimed responsibility (SC/12432). On 5 July, Council members deplored the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the cities of Qadif, Jeddah and Medina in Saudi Arabia, for which ISIL claimed responsibility (SC/12435). On 14 July, Council members condemned the terrorist attack which took place in Nice, France (SC/12446).

### Iraq

On 5 July, Council members issued a press statement condemning a 3 July car bombing, claimed by ISIL, that killed hundreds in a largely Shi'a neighbourhood of Baghdad (SC/12434). On 15 July, Special Representative Ján Kubiš briefed the Council (S/PV.7738) and presented the Secretary-General's reports on UNAMI (S/2016/592) and on Iraq/Kuwait missing persons and property (S/2016/590). On 25 July, the Council adopted resolution 2299 renewing UNAMI for a year.

### Somalia

On 7 July, the Council adopted resolution 2297, which extended AMISOM's authorisation until 31 May 2017 with no major changes. On 20 July, the Chair of the 751/1907 Somalia-Eritrea Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela), briefed in closed consultations on the regular 120-day update on the work of the Committee.

### Haiti

On 7 July, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous briefed Council members under "any other business" on his recent visit to Haiti, aimed at conveying the sense of urgency for a swift conclusion of the electoral cycle there.

### DRC

On 7 July, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson briefed the Council (S/PV.7732) on the latest MONUSCO report (S/2016/579). On 15 July, Council members issued a press statement stressing the crucial importance of a peaceful and credible electoral cycle, in accordance with the constitution, and expressed their concern at increased restrictions of the political space in the DRC (SC/12449).

### Central African Republic

On 8 July, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous briefed the Council on the special report on the strategic review of MINUSCA (S/2016/565). The chair of the CAR configuration of the PBC, Omar Hilale (Morocco), also briefed. Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine), in his capacity as chair of the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee updated the Council on the recent activities of the Committee (S/PV.7734). On 23 July, the 2127 Committee met with the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura. On 26 July, the Council adopted resolution 2301, renewing the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 November 2017.

### Sudan (Darfur)

On 8 July, Zainab Bangura, the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, briefed the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. Bangura apparently reported that sexual violence was a consistent characteristic of the Darfur conflict. She also reported that restrictions on humanitarian access and impunity remained challenges in Darfur.

### Israel/Palestine

On 11 July, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefed Council members under "any other business" at the request of New Zealand to discuss the 1 July report of the Quartet on the Middle East (S/2016/595) and a US-drafted presidential statement on the report which was not adopted as consensus could not be reached. On 12 July, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Council at its quarterly open debate on the Middle East (S/PV.7736).

### West Africa and the Sahel

On 11 July, the head of UNOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, briefed (S/PV.7735) the Council on the Office's most recent report (S/2016/566). The briefing focused on the increasing terrorism threat to the region, the Boko Haram conflict in the Lake Chad basin, electoral developments across the region and progress in the merger of the UN Office for West Africa and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel. The following day, Senegal circulated a draft press statement, reflecting the range of issues discussed during the meeting.

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Some Council members suggested Senegal upgrade the text to a presidential statement. The statement was finally adopted on 28 July after explicit reference to human rights in The Gambia was dropped (S/PRST/2016/11).

### Western Sahara

On 15 July, at the request of Uruguay and Venezuela, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous briefed Council members under “any other business” on the status of MINURSO following the expulsion of civilian staff by Morocco in mid-March. On 26 July, Council members were briefed again in consultations by Ladsous and the head of MINURSO, Kim Bolduc. The 26 July briefing was pursuant to resolution 2285, which requested the Secretary-General to brief within 90 days on whether MINURSO has returned to full functionality and expressed “its intention, if it has not done so, to consider how best to facilitate this”.

### Iran

On 18, July, the Council held a briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme (S/PV.7739). Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 2231 (S/2016/589). Ambassador João Pedro Vale de Almeida (EU) addressed the Council on behalf of the EU in its role as the coordinator of the Joint Commission, which is responsible for overseeing the agreement’s implementation. Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain) briefed in his capacity as the facilitator for Council-related tasks in the resolution.

### Security Council Working Methods

On 19 July, marking the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Note S/2006/507, the first comprehensive compendium of Security Council working methods, Japan organised an open debate on this topic in which Council members, 31 member states and one observer participated (S/PV.7740). Japan, as chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural

Questions, circulated a concept note for the debate earlier in the month (S/2016/585). Japan said that the practical suggestions presented during the debate would feed into Council members’ deliberation within the Informal Working Group on updating Note 507. Many participants at the debate also welcomed the presidential note issued on 15 July concerning transitional arrangements for newly elected Council members (S/2016/619).

### Secretary-General Appointment Process

Over the month, Council members met informally with nine of the 12 nominated candidates for the position of ninth UN Secretary-General. (They had met with the other three candidates at the end of June.) On 21 July, Council members held the first straw poll to test the viability of the candidates. The president of the Council for July, Ambassador Koro Bessho (Japan), informed each candidate through his or her country’s permanent representative to the UN of how they had done, as well as the lowest and highest scores without attribution. He also informed the president of the General Assembly that the vote had taken place. Although the votes were not meant to be made public, the full results were reported in the media soon after the end of the straw poll.

### Libya

On 22 July, the Council adopted resolution 2298 providing for Libya’s category 2 chemical weapons to be transferred and destroyed outside of the country (S/PV.7743). Also on 22 July, head of UNSMIL, Martin Kobler, briefed Council members in consultations on developments in the political process and the challenges to the effectiveness of the Presidency Council. The Secretary-General’s report on the threat posed to Libya and neighbouring countries by foreign terrorist fighters recruited by or joining ISIL and Al-Qaida was also discussed (S/2016/627). After the meeting, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the 16-17 July meeting of the Libyan Political Dialogue and the Presidency Council on how to progress the implementation of the Libyan Political

Agreement and sought to address the provision of basic services, resumption of oil production and implementation of the security arrangements (SC/12456).

### Afghanistan

On 23 July, Council members issued a press statement condemning the terrorist attack that occurred earlier that day in Kabul, resulting in the death of at least 80 people killed and more than 230 wounded, for which local affiliates of ISIL have claimed responsibility (SC/12457).

### Cyprus

On 25 July, Council members were briefed in consultations by Special Representative Elizabeth Spehar and Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide. Spehar briefed on the latest UNFICYP report (S/2016/598) while Eide reported on the ongoing unification talks and presented the report of the Secretary-General’s good offices mission (S/2016/599). On 26 July, the Council adopted resolution 2300, extending UNFICYP’s mandate for six months.

### Boko Haram Affected-Areas

On 27 July, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and OCHA head Stephen O’Brien briefed the Council, at the request of the UK, on the humanitarian, political and security situation in the Lake Chad basin as a result of the Boko Haram conflict (S/PV.7748).

### Peacebuilding

On 28 July, Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida presided over a ministerial-level open debate on peacebuilding in Africa (S/PV.7750). The debate focused on institution-building as outlined in a concept note circulated earlier in the month (S/2016/586). The Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2016/12).

### Burundi

At press time, the Council was expected to vote on 29 July on a resolution that would establish a UN police component in Burundi for an initial period of one year to monitor the security and human rights situation in the country.

# South Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) modifying it to address the most recent crisis on the ground. At press time, the Council was poised to adopt a resolution that would briefly roll over the mandate of UNMISS before its 31 July expiry.

## Key Recent Developments

The South Sudan capital city of Juba was rocked by violence from 7 to 11 July, as forces loyal to President Salva Kiir engaged in heavy fighting with those supporting First Vice President Riek Machar, jeopardising the fragile peace deal signed in August 2015. According to reports, the fighting started when Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers stopped and attempted to arrest members of Machar's guard at a checkpoint in the Gudele section of Juba; Machar's guard members resisted the arrest and a shootout ensued, leading to the deaths of five SPLA soldiers. This was the first of several violent clashes over the next days, which involved the use of artillery, mortars and helicopter gunships. The fighting was only quelled on 11 July when Kiir ordered a cessation of hostilities to take effect at 6 pm that day and Machar reciprocated Kiir's call in a radio broadcast. By the time the ceasefire was declared, over 36,000 people had been displaced, at least 272 combatants and civilians had lost their lives and two Chinese peacekeepers had died. A local UNMISS staff member was also killed. On 22 July, the UN Refugee Agency said that 26,468 people, more than 90 percent of them women and children, had fled South Sudan and crossed into Uganda since the fighting started on 7 July.

In the first days of violence (which coincided with the fifth anniversary of South Sudan's independence on 9 July, celebrations for which had been cancelled by the government on 26 June), both the Security Council and the Secretary-General actively engaged with the situation amidst fears that the country could descend into full-scale civil war.

On the evening of 9 July, Council members issued a press statement in which they condemned the fighting in Juba on 7-8 July and urged the transitional government to take steps to end the fighting and reduce tensions.

On Sunday, 10 July, members held emergency consultations, called by the US, the penholder on South Sudan, during which they were briefed by Hervé Ladsous, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. An arms embargo, additional targeted sanctions and the reinforcement of UNMISS were among the potential options discussed by Ladsous and members to respond to the situation. Later that evening, Council members issued another press statement condemning the escalation of fighting in Juba. In the statement, members "expressed their readiness to consider enhancing UNMISS to better ensure that UNMISS and the international community can prevent and respond to violence in South Sudan," while encouraging "states in the region to prepare to provide additional troops in the event the Council so decides".

The AU Peace and Security Council condemned the outbreak of violence in an 11 July communiqué and, among other things, welcomed the convening on the same day in Nairobi of a ministerial meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on the situation in South Sudan.

At a press encounter on 11 July in UN headquarters, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon criticised the "failed leadership" of South Sudan, opining that "rarely has a country squandered so much promise so quickly." He urged the Security Council to take action on three fronts: impose an immediate embargo on South Sudan; enact additional targeted sanctions on leaders and commanders obstructing the peace agreement; and strengthen UNMISS to enhance its ability to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians. He announced that he would travel to Kigali "to participate in the African Union summit to consult with the Heads of State of IGAD and the region on how to restore and better secure the peace process and report to the Security Council within a week." He further discussed the situation with Council members on 12 July during the monthly lunch, and on 13 July the Council received another briefing on South Sudan from Ladsous, followed by consultations.

Addressing the AU summit in Kigali on 16 July, Ban told the leaders "there is a crisis and I am here because we need to urgently address it together." He restated his three

recommendations made to the Security Council and asked them for their support. While in Kigali, he conveyed similar messages in bilateral meetings with African leaders.

In a communiqué issued during the Kigali summit, IGAD Plus (the eight members of the organisation and several other regional actors) supported the Secretary-General's recommendation to reinforce UNMISS and called on the Security Council to revise its mandate to include the deployment of a regional protection force to separate the warring parties. This was subsequently supported by the AU. The two other of the Secretary-General's recommendations, regarding the arms embargo and expanded targeted sanctions, seemed not to have gained traction in Africa.

The fighting in Juba ceased following the 11 July presidential decree, but an acute conflict between Kiir and Machar became only more evident. In the days following their respective calls for the cessation of hostilities on 11 July, Machar went into hiding, citing fears for his life and announcing that he would return to Juba only after an international security force was deployed. Kiir expressed his opposition to an international force, and on 21 July issued an ultimatum to Machar saying that he would dismiss him from his post if he did not return to Juba within 48 hours. Machar remained in hiding, believed to be in the bush outside Juba. Through a presidential decree announced on 25 July, Kiir appointed Taban Deng Gai, a former chief negotiator for South Sudan's armed opposition, as First Vice President, replacing Machar.

According to media reports, on 26 July Kiir signalled his willingness to consider the deployment of a regional protection force during a meeting with Festus Mogae, the chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, a body overseeing the implementation of the August 2015 accord.

During the noon media briefing in New York on 27 July, the deputy spokesperson announced that UNMISS continued "to document deeply disturbing reports of sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, by soldiers in uniform and men in plain clothes against civilians, including minors, around UN House and in other areas of Juba. Since the start of the current violence in Juba, the

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2290 (31 May 2016) renewed the targeted sanctions until 31 May 2017. S/RES/2252 (15 December 2015) renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 31 July 2016. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7737 (13 July 2016) was a briefing on South Sudan. Security Council Press Statements SC/12441 (10 July 2016) condemned the escalation of fighting in Juba. SC/12431 (1 July 2016) expressed alarm at the fighting in Wau. Secretary-General's Report S/2016/552 (20 June 2016) was a report on South Sudan.

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## South Sudan (con't)

Mission has documented at least 120 cases of sexual violence and rape against civilians.”

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 July, the special rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs), Chalka Beyani, released a statement that condemned attacks on IDPs and civilians in South Sudan after fighting in the capital broke out. According to the statement, humanitarian workers had been stopped and threatened at checkpoints when trying to deliver assistance and were unable to reach the populations most in need while civilians, humanitarians and UNMISS staff alike had come under heavy fire in Juba.

In a 12 July press briefing, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern at reports of civilians being prevented from seeking refuge in UNMISS premises and, in some cases, being shot at while trying to do so. The spokesperson also strongly condemned the killing of two UNMISS peacekeepers the previous day and expressed concern that armed clashes had reportedly erupted the previous day in Central Equatoria State and in Eastern Equatoria State.

On 21 July, the special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, released a statement that urged the government of South Sudan to immediately release Alfred Taban, a prominent journalist and chief editor of the Juba Monitor. According to the statement, Taban was arrested on 16 July by National Security Services agents, one day after the publication of an editorial article in which he called for the removal of Kiir and Machar, criticising them for their unsuccessful implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement. According to Amnesty International, Taban “has been charged under articles 75 and 76 of the South Sudan Penal Code with ‘publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to Southern Sudan’ and ‘undermining the authority of or insulting the president.’” The detention of Taban was followed by the arrest on 23 July of Michael Christopher, the editor-in-chief of the independent Arabic-language daily al-Watan, reportedly for publishing inaccurate information. Attacks against journalists and media have been on the rise since December 2013, with

several journalists killed or detained without trial, and a number of newspapers ordered to shut down.

### Key Issues

The key and most pressing issue for the Council is the role it can play in preventing the UN’s newest member from descending once again into a full-blown civil war.

A long-standing issue, made more acute by the latest developments, is to ensure that UNMISS is better able to protect civilians both in the protection of civilians’ sites and elsewhere throughout the country.

An ongoing issue is improving the relations between UNMISS and the government.

### Options

One option for the Council is to take on board all three of the Secretary-General’s recommendations—strengthening of the mission, imposing an arms embargo and designating additional individuals for targeted sanctions—by including these elements in the resolution renewing UNMISS’s mandate.

Another option would be to initially focus on the creation of a special security force within UNMISS, with a stronger protection mandate and one allowing undertaking offensive operations, leaving the arms embargo as a possible next step in case of the government’s non-cooperation.

The Council could alternatively consider requesting member states with requisite military capacity to develop plans for a robust protection force to protect civilians that would be subject to the Council’s consideration. While operating under a separate mandate and chain of command from UNMISS, this force could be authorised by the Council and report to it on a periodic basis.

Regarding sanctions, an option would be for the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee to target with travel bans and asset freezes individuals that have played a particularly active role in undermining the August 2015 peace accord.

Undertaking a visiting mission to South Sudan before deciding on the final shape of the new UNMISS mandate is another option.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members share a sense of responsibility for the future of the UN’s newest member state, having contributed significantly to the political process leading up to its independence. But the initial momentum following the outbreak of violence in early July seems to have dissipated, and after a series of meetings and discussions, members went into a holding pattern for about two weeks, apparently waiting for the penholder to propose steps for Council action in a draft resolution renewing the mandate. With the renewed activity as the UNMISS mandate expiry was nearing, there seemed to be diverging positions on the possible approaches going ahead. Several members see the arms embargo as the most promising tool to address the situation. But some would like to see clear support for this measure coming from the region, which at the time of writing was not forthcoming. The US is keenly interested in focusing on the creation of a security force within UNMISS, contingent on securing the host country’s consent. In this context, however, several states are deeply concerned about recent reports of demonstrations, possibly coordinated by the government, against UNMISS.

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

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## Children and Armed Conflict

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Council is expected to hold an open debate to discuss the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict and its addendum. Malaysia, the chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed

Conflict and this month’s president, has circulated a concept note for the meeting noting the achievements over the last 20 years and highlighting key developments in the children and armed conflict agenda in 2015 and 2016.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and

the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, as well as the Executive Director for the UN Children’s Fund, Anthony Lake, and a civil society representative, are expected to speak.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2225 (18 June 2015) added abductions as an additional violation to trigger the inclusion of a party in the annexes of the Secretary-General’s annual report. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7466 (18 June 2015) was an open debate focused on the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict and the issue of abduction of children. Secretary-General’s Report S/2016/360 (20 April 2016) and S/2016/360/ADD.1 (24 June 2016) was the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict Documents S/AC.51/2016/1 (11 May 2016) was the Working Group’s conclusions on Afghanistan. S/AC.51/2015/1 (12 May 2015) was the Working Group’s conclusions on South Sudan.

# Children and Armed Conflict (con't)

## Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's annual report, which Council members received informally around 20 April, the date on the report, but which was only made public in early June, covers recent global trends in the impact of armed conflict on children in 2015 and provides updates on grave violations committed against children. The report included several new listings in its annexes for grave violations against children, including for the first time abductions, following the adoption of resolution 2225. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen was listed for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, marking the first listing of an international coalition. However, in an unusual turn of events, on 6 June, the Secretary-General decided to temporarily remove the coalition. It was reported that Saudi Arabia had suggested that it might cut its funding to UN entities, and the Secretary-General stated publicly that "it is unacceptable for member states to exert undue pressure". While the Secretary-General's spokesman said that the coalition had been removed pending conclusions of a joint review, the Saudi Arabia ambassador told the UN media that the coalition's removal was "irreversible and unconditional". On 8 June, the Saudi-led coalition sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting an overview of the methodology used to create the numbers in the report as well as information regarding the UN's sources and invited the UN to Riyadh to discuss the report.

On 14 July, the Secretary-General discussed the protection of children in relation to Yemen's armed conflict report during a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir in New York. A UN press release following this meeting said that the Secretary-General welcomed the coalition's readiness to take concrete measures to end and prevent violations against children, and hoped that the coalition would be able to "provide information on the concrete actions they have taken".

In other developments, on 27 March, Sudan became the last of the seven government armed forces listed in the Secretary-General's annexes to sign an action plan with the UN to end recruitment and use of children by security forces by the end of 2016. The Children, Not Soldiers campaign was launched in 2014 by the Special Representative and UNICEF to end the recruitment and use of children by national security forces by the end of 2016.

The report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping (C34), which met from 16 February to 11 March, included a section on children and peacekeeping that covered the role of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions. It requested a written briefing on the impact of consolidating protection functions on the implementation of mandated protection functions before the next session of the C34. The consolidation of protection functions was rolled out in three missions earlier this year.

Zerrougui briefed at the joint meeting of the South Sudan 2206 Sanctions Committee and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 14 March on the increase in grave violations against children as the situation in South Sudan deteriorated. She cited perpetrators, including the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA In Opposition, and called on the Committee to continue to investigate individuals and to pay attention to command responsibility in the context of grave violations against children. In addition, Zerrougui expressed support for the recommendations of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan for the establishment of accountability mechanisms.

## Developments in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

So far in 2016, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has only adopted conclusions on the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan. The conclusions on the report, which was published in May 2015, were adopted on 11 May. The Working Group had several rounds of negotiations on the conclusions to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic, but at press time there was no date for the adoption.

## Key Issues

A key issue is how to ensure that the open debate generates constructive suggestions for progress in the children and armed conflict agenda.

An issue in light of the removal of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition is the credibility of the protection of children and armed conflict mandate, particularly in relation to the listing of parties in the Secretary-General's annexes. There were already concerns about the integrity of the listing mechanism when the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas were originally listed in the draft report in 2015, for violations against children during the conflict in Gaza in 2014, but were removed before it was published.

A related issue is what can be done to refine the children and armed conflict mechanism so that it can better address some of today's conflict situations. When the monitoring and reporting mechanism was created ten years ago, violations against children in armed conflict situations were largely attributable to either government forces or non-state actors operating within the country, with a small number such as Al Shabaab and the Lord's Resistance Army requiring a regional approach. Neither the wide-reaching impact on children of armed groups espousing violent extremism, nor conflicts involving a coalition of state parties such as Yemen, were factors when the monitoring and reporting mechanism was set up.

A number of issues highlighted in the Secretary-General's report need further consideration by the Council, including the impact on children of displacement as a result of prolonged armed conflict in several regions and the sexual exploitation and abuse of children by uniformed and non-uniformed personnel in peace operations.

Difficulty in getting parties to implement action plans and to sign up to some of the newer triggers, such as attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions, is an ongoing issue.

The Working Group's productivity continues to be an issue. In 2015, it adopted only one set of conclusions (South Sudan), and so far this year it has only adopted conclusions on Afghanistan.

The effect of the consolidation of protection functions in UN missions on the ability of child protection advisers to implement the children and armed conflict mandate is a possible future issue.

## Options

An option for a more constructive open debate is to recommend that members focus on concrete suggestions for how to strengthen the children and armed conflict architecture, particularly in light of recent challenges.

Developing a more clearly defined process of working with parties that are close to being listed is an option to prevent the type of controversial removal of parties seen in the last two years. One possibility may be to offer these parties the opportunity to commit to actions that show they have taken steps to end violations. This would possibly lead to a decrease in violations against children as well as make it clear to parties that

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## Children and Armed Conflict (con't)

they are being seriously considered as candidates for listing.

In relation to the monitoring and reporting mechanism, an option is to request the Secretary-General to prepare a lessons-learned study of the mechanism's operation during the last ten years, with recommendations that might improve its functioning.

An option related to the consolidation of protection functions is to request the Secretariat to provide a briefing to the Working Group early next year on the impact of the consolidation.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

The overall dynamic in the Council has been generally constructive over the last year. This has not necessarily led to greater productivity because of delays in the drafting of conclusions and in the publication of the Secretary-General's reports. There has been a lack of strong leadership and new ideas from any of the members, making more innovative development difficult. Instead, the approach has been very much business-as-usual even in the face of possible threats to the children and armed

conflict mandate, such as the removal of the Saudi-led coalition, which was not taken up by the Working Group. Members might have been uncomfortable discussing the issue as two members of the coalition, Egypt and Senegal, are currently on the Council, and a number of other members have close ties to Saudi Arabia. However, some, for example Uruguay and Venezuela, have voiced their concern over the removal of the coalition from the annexes.

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## Sudan and South Sudan

### Expected Council Action

In August, Council members are expected to meet for the quarterly consultations on Sudan/South Sudan issues. At press time, no outcome was anticipated.

### Key Recent Developments

On 6 June, high-level Sudanese and South Sudanese officials met in Khartoum to discuss issues dividing the two countries. During the meeting, the parties agreed to continue negotiations on areas disputed by both countries and to refrain from supporting rebel groups on either side of the border. Since South Sudan achieved its independence in 2011, no progress has been made on these matters. The parties further affirmed that they would implement the Safe Demilitarised Border Zone (SDBZ) along their mutual border. The parties agreed on a centre-line for the SDBZ in October 2015, thus defining the boundaries of this buffer zone; however, they have done little to cooperate on implementation of the Joint Border and Verification Monitoring Mechanism established to conduct monitoring and verification activities along the border. The Secretary-General stated in his 15 April report on Abyei that aerial monitoring by the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has been hindered by South Sudan's restrictions on flight and landing permissions.

In early January, South Sudan requested that Sudan reduce transport and compensation fees on oil flowing from South Sudan through Sudan. A landlocked country, South Sudan must transport its oil through Sudan to

reach the outside world. Based on an August 2013 agreement, South Sudan pays Sudan a fixed fee of approximately \$25 per barrel for the shipment of oil. As world oil prices have declined, South Sudan's oil-derived income has diminished significantly, a contributing factor to the severe economic crisis the country is now experiencing. On 20 January, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir indicated a willingness to review South Sudan's request for a reduction in the transit and compensation fees. Nonetheless, after more than six months, Sudan has yet to agree to lower fees. Sudan, which lost 75 percent of its oil production when South Sudan became independent in July 2011, receives significant income from these fees. On 11 July, Hayat al-Mahi, chair of the energy committee in Sudan's parliament, expressed concern about damage to oil facilities if the recent outbreak of fighting in South Sudan were to spread to its oil-producing areas.

Heavy fighting occurred in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, from 7 to 11 July between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and those loyal to First Vice President Riek Machar, claiming more than 270 lives and displacing thousands. A ceasefire announced on 11 July appeared to be holding at press time, but the political crisis has deepened after Kiir dismissed Machar from his post and on 25 July appointed Taban Deng Gai, a former chief negotiator for South Sudan's armed opposition, as First Vice President. (For more information on the crisis in South Sudan, please see a separate brief in this issue.)

Refugees from South Sudan continue to

cross the border into Sudan in an attempt to escape conflict and hunger. According to OCHA, 79,571 South Sudanese refugees arrived in Sudan between 1 January and 3 July 2016. More than 230,000 refugees have come to Sudan from South Sudan since 15 December 2013, when the civil war in South Sudan began.

In recent months, both the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF)—an umbrella group consisting of Sudanese rebel movements in the Darfur region and Blue Nile and South Kordofan states—and the Sudanese government have announced unilateral cessations of hostilities. On 28 April, the SRF declared a six-month cessation of hostilities in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan; however, fighting continued in South Kordofan and Blue Nile through mid-June. The Sudanese government declared its own four-month unilateral cessation of hostilities, effective as of 18 June, in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. On 22 June, the Secretary-General's spokesman welcomed the announcements of the government and the SRF, saying "these commitments should ease the suffering of the people living in the affected areas". However, it should be noted that the time periods covered by these cessations of hostilities largely overlap with the rainy season in the two areas (generally from June to November), a time when roads are difficult to navigate and fighting is usually limited.

On 21 March, the government of Sudan signed a roadmap produced by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, calling for a cessation of hostilities in Darfur, South

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## Sudan and South Sudan (con't)

Kordofan and Blue Nile. The rebel groups and the opposition National Umma Party have not signed the roadmap. They are concerned that the government is attempting to include them in a national dialogue process designed to prop up the regime rather than initiate real political reform. The opposition forces further maintain that the roadmap legitimises the government's control over a non-inclusive and unfair national dialogue process. On 19 June, the government said it would not resume negotiations with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), the rebel group fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, unless it signed the roadmap.

### Key Issues

Key issues for the Council on Sudan/South Sudan include:

- how to encourage the two countries to negotiate in a meaningful way on security and economic issues, thus building on the commitments made during their 7 June meeting;
- how to bridge the gap between the government of Sudan and the opposition forces

with regard to a roadmap;

- how to induce the South Sudan leaders to overcome their internal conflicts and refocus their attention on the implementation, together with the government of Sudan, of the Joint Border and Verification Monitoring Mechanism; and
- how to renew efforts to address the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, which is entering its fifth year.

### Options

One option for the Council is to adopt a resolution or presidential statement that:

- encourages efforts by Sudan and South Sudan to resolve their dispute on oil transit fees;
- encourages the two countries to step up negotiations to reopen border trade, which would generate significant revenue for both;
- demands an end to support by both countries of rebel groups on either side of the border; and
- urges the Sudanese government and the SPLM-N to continue to engage in

dialogue on a cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access.

Members could also consider holding an Arria-formula meeting open to the wider UN membership and NGOs on the humanitarian situation and the need for access in South Kordofan and Blue Nile to ensure that attention on this issue does not wane.

### Council Dynamics

In recent months, the Council's attention on Sudan and South Sudan has been primarily focused on the crises in South Sudan and Darfur. Members recognise that the two countries are mired in and distracted by their own domestic crises, but in resolution 2287, which was adopted in May to renew UNISFA's mandate, they emphasised the need for them to engage more regularly through the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and other joint platforms related to border security. Deep divisions in the Council continue to stymie efforts to address the longstanding political and humanitarian crisis in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.

The US is the penholder on Sudan/South Sudan issues.

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## Kosovo

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Council is expected to hold its quarterly briefing on Kosovo. Zahir Tanin, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), will brief on recent developments and the latest Secretary-General's report. Serbia will probably participate at a high level, while Kosovo is likely to be represented by its ambassador to the US.

### Key Recent Developments

The overall political situation in Kosovo has remained stable, but political tensions between the government and the opposition parties have continued to undermine the normal functioning of Kosovo's institutions. The political crisis reached its peak during late 2015 and early 2016 when members of the opposition disrupted the work of the legislature on several occasions by activating tear gas

and smoke bombs in the chamber. In March, the three main opposition parties started their boycott of the work of the Assembly of Kosovo in an effort to voice their strong objection to several pieces of legislation which were pending approval of the Assembly. On 9 June, the largest opposition party, Self-determination, decided to end the boycott.

The border demarcation agreement with Montenegro is the most contentious issue currently dominating political debate in Kosovo. Signed during the 2015 EU-Western Balkans summit in Vienna, the agreement defines the official border between Kosovo and Montenegro. The government, led by Prime Minister Isa Mustafa, has continually repudiated the opposition's claims that Kosovo will lose part of its territory as a result of the agreement. Montenegro's parliament has already ratified the agreement, while the Assembly of Kosovo has yet to give its

approval. The ratification of such an agreement by Kosovo's legislature would require the support of a two-thirds majority, which means that the ruling government coalition would still need the support of some members of the opposition. Following a request by some legislators, the Assembly has agreed to discuss the agreement in a debate on 3 August, although no date has been set for the formal vote on the matter. The opposition is expected to participate in these discussions.

During her meeting with Kosovo president Hasim Thaci in Brussels on 22 June, Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, urged Kosovo to ratify the border demarcation agreement. Together with reform of the justice system and adoption of anticorruption measures, the implementation of the agreement is one of the key EU conditions for visa liberalisation measures for Kosovo citizens.

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UN DOCUMENTS ON KOSOVO [Security Council Resolution S/RES/1244](#) (10 June 1999) established UNMIK. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7693](#) (16 May 2016) was the most recent meeting on Kosovo.

## Kosovo (con't)

The opposition has been equally vocal in its resistance to the 25 August 2015 agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, which among other things, mandates the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities (ASM/CSM) in northern Kosovo. The opposition claims that the creation of these local self-governing units would increase the risk of secession. Though the agreement was signed almost a year ago, there has been little progress on actual implementation. In June, Kosovo President Hashim Thaci announced the formation of a working group that will be responsible for creating the ASM/CSM. The ruling coalition that controls the government has said that both agreements—on demarcation and the ASM/CSM—will be implemented despite some opposition in the Assembly. The government pointed out that the Constitutional Court has already upheld the legality of the agreement on the ASM/CSM, paving the way for implementation.

Though imminent, the formal establishment of the special court that will be charged with investigating war crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army during the conflict in Kosovo is still pending. In August 2015, the Assembly of Kosovo approved constitutional amendments that would allow the creation of the court. Consequently, the Netherlands announced that it would host the court in The Hague. Final approval for the court needs to be granted by the Dutch parliament, which at press time had not yet voted on the issue. The EU is expected to be the major contributor of funds to the court's budget, with individual countries likely to make additional contributions. The court, which will operate under Kosovo law with international judges, is expected to be fully operational by the end of the year.

Ahead of the expiry of the mandate of the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) on 14 June, the Kosovo government indicated that it would like the EULEX mandate to be extended for an additional two years. Since 2008, EULEX has provided support for Kosovo's legal institutions. It was also involved in monitoring some highly sensitive criminal cases and could directly take on cases involving organised crime and corruption. While requesting the extended presence of EULEX, the Kosovo government proposed that the mandate limit the scope of EULEX's activities to monitoring and advisory roles only. On 14 July, the Council of the EU

approved the extension of the mandate as proposed by Kosovo. On 17 June, the Assembly formally ratified the agreement between the EU and Kosovo to extend EULEX's mandate.

On 4 July, France hosted the third annual Western Balkans Summit, which gathered the leaders of prospective EU members from the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) as well as EU members Austria, Germany, France and Italy. As part of a five-year process started in Berlin in 2014, the main aim of the summit is to promote the EU's perspective and regional cooperation in the Balkans.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 13 July, UNMIK's Human Rights Advisory Panel (established in 2006 to examine complaints of alleged human rights violations committed by or attributable to UNMIK in Kosovo) published its final annual report, covering 1 January 2015 to 31 May, after completing its docket of 527 registered complaints. During the reporting period, the Panel adopted opinions on the merits of 88 cases: in 83 cases it found violations of human rights by or attributable to UNMIK, including violations of the right to life, the right to be free from inhuman and degrading treatment and the right to an effective investigation under the European Convention on Human Rights. The report highlights the lack of implementation of the Panel's opinions, especially with regard to UNMIK paying financial compensation to the complainants, as well as the lack of significant progress of continuing investigations by the EU Rule of Law Mission or by Kosovo law enforcement institutions regarding the Panel's cases related to abductions, disappearances and killings. The report concludes: "Now that the Panel has concluded its mandate, putting an end to an eight-year process of issuing admissibility decisions, opinions, and recommendations, the Panel is forced to proclaim this process a total failure.... Due to UNMIK's unwillingness to follow any of the Panel's recommendations and UNMIK's general intransigence, the...process has obtained no redress for the complainants."

### Key Issues

Amid ongoing political tensions between the government and the opposition, the main issue for the Council is maintaining stability in Kosovo.

Another issue is what role UNMIK could play in promoting the implementation of the existing agreements between Belgrade and Pristina.

The Council will closely follow the developments regarding the establishment of the special court for war crimes and subsequent

cooperation by the Kosovo authorities with the court.

### Options

Should the current political tensions between the government and opposition parties escalate and cause further disruption in the functioning of Kosovo's institutions, the Council could consider issuing a statement urging political actors to engage in dialogue as a way of resolving the outstanding issues.

The Council could also explore ways in which UNMIK could facilitate the implementation of the existing agreements between Belgrade and Pristina.

Given the gravity of allegations brought by the UNMIK's Human Rights Advisory Panel in its final report, the Council could consider seeking more information on the matter by inviting members of the Panel for a briefing or an informal interactive dialogue.

Looking ahead, should the agreements between Belgrade and Pristina be fully implemented, the Council could consider modifying UNMIK's mandate, including reducing its presence.

### Council Dynamics

Kosovo continues to be an issue of rather low intensity for the Council. This is mainly a consequence of the pre-eminence of other regional organisations in Kosovo, primarily the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The issue is only followed closely by a few Council members with a vested interest in the region, such as Russia, the US and EU members of the Council.

The profound division between the permanent members shapes the Council's dynamics on Kosovo. While France, the UK and the US recognise Kosovo's independence, China and Russia do not and remain strong supporters of Serbia's position. Some Council members have been supportive of lengthening the reporting cycle and consequently reducing the frequency of the meetings on Kosovo. However, the division between the permanent members is likely to stall any attempt to change the reporting cycle or alter UNMIK's mandate. Russia has been adamant in its opposition to altering UNMIK's mandate and the possibility of the mission's drawdown, citing instability in Kosovo, especially in recent months amidst the political crisis in Kosovo.

## Expected Council Action

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

Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura is expected to brief on the intra-Syrian political process in August (his July briefing did not take place). The talks were suspended in late April but may resume in August if Russia and the US reach agreement on military cooperation in Syria against Security Council designated terrorist group Al-Nusra Front. The US proposed this in exchange for a renewed nationwide cessation of hostilities and a formula for a political transition.

On the chemical weapons track, the final report of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), the body mandated to determine responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, is due.

## Key Recent Developments

The last time de Mistura briefed Council members on 29 June, he reported that the chances of resuming political talks were remote in the absence of a common vision between Russia and the US. He said that his office would work on bridging proposals to bring the parties closer together on the issue of political transition. It seems these bridging proposals may attempt to address some of the obstacles that have stymied intra-Syrian talks to date: how to devolve power from the presidency to a new government, in particular control over the security and intelligence apparatuses, and whether a political transition is more feasible via the formation of a new transitional governing body or a unity government.

US Secretary of State John Kerry met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on 14 July to discuss the US proposal for military cooperation to target Al-Nusra in exchange for ending attacks on other opposition groups, talks that would lead to a political transition and a renewed nationwide cessation of hostilities, including the requirement that the Syrian government ground its air force. For the US, this would be a departure from its current counter-terrorism operations in Syria, which almost exclusively focuses on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). While the US has carried out strikes against

Al-Nusra targets, they have been extremely limited. Al-Nusra is comprised mostly of Syrians and is regarded by many Syrian armed opposition groups as an effective anti-regime fighting force, which is why such opposition groups often seek to cooperate tactically with Al-Nusra. For Russia, agreement to the proposal would be a change from its military activity in Syria, which has targeted Western-backed opposition groups fighting the government. Aside from Russian air support to the government's Aleppo offensive, other recent examples include two strikes near the Jordanian border: a 12 July strike against a US-backed opposition group and a 16 June strike at the At-Tanf garrison which, according to media reports, also housed American and British special forces.

The US's greater openness to military and intelligence cooperation with Russia and the proposal's requirement that the Syrian government ground its air force are new aspects of Russian-US dynamics regarding Syria, but the push to define which groups operate in what territory is not new. On 11 February, when Russia and the US, as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), announced a nationwide cessation of hostilities (which subsequently failed to take hold), there was an agreement to delineate the territory held by ISIL and Al-Nusra Front, so that those parties and the areas they control would be excluded from the cessation of hostilities. Until now, however, there had been no progress on that task because of concerns that Russia would use such intelligence to target opposition groups rather than avoid them.

On 26 July, Kerry said he hoped to announce an agreement on the US proposal in early August. Several issues remain. One is that the proposal does not require the cessation of the regime's ground operations. Another obstacle has been a live issue since Russia and the US nominally agreed to the delineation task in February: there is significant concern that opposition groups that are not designated terrorist groups but may cooperate tactically with Al-Nusra or are located near Al-Nusra positions, particularly near Aleppo, will be subject to attack, placing any renewed cessation of hostilities on an uncertain foundation. There is also the perennial question about the role of President Bashar

al Assad in any transition process. As recently as 13 July, Assad said that Russia has never asked him to leave power and that he was not concerned that any deal between Russia and the US would force him from the presidency.

Also on 26 July, UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura met with Russian and US officials in Geneva to discuss the bridging proposals his office has been asked to prepare, and to get an update on the negotiations between Russia and the US on their proposed military and intelligence cooperation in Syria. De Mistura announced the possible resumption of intra-Syrian talks in late August. He added that agreement between Russia and the US on military cooperation was not a pre-condition for resuming talks but that such agreement would create a "positive environment surrounding the talks."

Meanwhile, government offensives, particularly against opposition-held Aleppo, have continued. After months of intensified air strikes, government forces, backed by Russian air strikes and Kurdish ground support, took control of Castello Road on 17 July, severing the opposition's final supply route into Aleppo. OCHA announced that this development left an estimated 200,000 to 300,000 civilians "closer to the line of fire and at risk of besiegement". Shelling and attacks against government-held areas of Aleppo have also increased as rebel-held Aleppo is encircled by government and allied forces.

The provision in the February cessation of hostilities agreement that neither side would attempt to gain additional territory has been largely ignored, as demonstrated by steady government offensives to advance on Aleppo, Idlib and the suburbs of Damascus prior to any resumption of talks. On 17 July, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), the Riyadh-based opposition umbrella group, said the government's advance on Aleppo could jeopardise political talks.

In a 25 July Council briefing, OCHA head Stephen O'Brien reiterated that eastern rebel-held Aleppo was at risk of becoming another, and by far the largest, besieged area in Syria. He called for a weekly 48-hour pause in fighting to allow humanitarian aid to reach eastern Aleppo. On 28 July, Russia and Syria announced they would open "humanitarian corridors" for civilians and rebels to leave

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## Syria (con't)

Aleppo. The HNC condemned the proposal and characterised it as a euphemism for forced displacement. The same day O'Brien released a statement noting his awareness of the proposal and that it is critical that the security of any such corridors is guaranteed by all parties. The statement added that people should be able to use such corridors voluntarily and that no one can be forced to flee by any specific route or to any particular location. It reiterated that international humanitarian law required humanitarian access for people to leave and for aid to come in. He reiterated his call for weekly 48-hour humanitarian pauses.

The issue of the Berm was also raised at the 25 July humanitarian briefing. The Berm is a desert area near the Jordanian border where 60,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are stranded with extremely limited access to food, water and shelter. The Jordanian border near the Berm has been closed, preventing aid from transiting into Syria to reach these IDPs and impeding these people from seeking refuge in Jordan.

On 18 and 19 July, US-led airstrikes in and near Manjib, the last ISIL-controlled area along the Turkish border, reportedly resulted in 75 civilian deaths, including 11 children. The US said it had received enough credible information to open an investigation.

On chemical weapons, Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo briefed Council members on 22 July. The meeting focused on the OPCW Director-General's report that described discrepancies in Syria's declared chemical weapons arsenal that had not been clarified by Syrian authorities, despite repeated visits to Syria over the course of two years by the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). In particular, the Director-General's report included information that samples taken by the DAT at several

Syrian facilities indicated undeclared chemical weapons activities at multiple locations.

### 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 oversight of the implementation 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 unless such talks pivot significantly in their favour. 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. In that context, some Council members view the bilateral negotiations between Russia and the US as a realpolitik necessity to lower overall levels

of violence. At the same time, some Council members are also concerned that even if Russia and the US agree on military cooperation and 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.

Regarding Aleppo, many Council members have held the view for some time that if rebel-held areas of the city fell to the government, it would deal a severe blow to the armed opposition's viability. Unlike previous months, when the situation in Aleppo received a great deal of attention from Council members, the government's retaking of Castello Road in July did not garner any Council attention outside of the regular monthly humanitarian meeting. In press comments following the 25 July humanitarian briefing, Japan, as president of the Council, said that there was overwhelming support among Council members for O'Brien's call for a weekly 48-hour humanitarian pause to fighting in eastern Aleppo. However, Council members were unable to agree on a statement to this effect. Most Council members believe this silence was in deference to the ongoing bilateral negotiations between Russia and the US.

No Council member has suggested that the 15 July coup attempt in Turkey and the subsequent purge of military, police, judicial and civil servants and the declaration of a state of emergency by Turkish authorities is anything other than an internal matter. Nevertheless, Council members are watching closely what the implications of the Turkish situation might be for Syria in particular and the region more broadly.

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.

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## DPRK (North Korea)

### Expected Council Action

In August, the chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain), is due to brief Council members

in consultations on the Committee's work.

### Key Recent Developments

Pyongyang has maintained its defiant posture following the Council's decision on 2

March in resolution 2270 to expand sanctions against the DPRK (for further details, please refer to our 26 February What's in Blue story). The DPRK has since conducted missile launches on 10 and 18 March, 27 and

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2276 (24 March 2016) extended the Panel of Experts' mandate. S/RES/2270 (2 March 2016) imposed additional sanctions on the DPRK. Security Council Press Statement SC/12418 (23 June 2016) condemned the medium-range missile launches conducted by the DPRK on 21 June. Security Council Letter S/2016/575 (25 June 2016) was a DPRK letter rejecting the Council's 23 June press statement.

## DPRK (North Korea) (con't)

28 April, 31 May, 21 June, and 9 and 19 July.

On 4 May, Oyarzun briefed Council members in consultations on the work of the 1718 DPRK Committee. There was also a discussion about the press statement proposed by the US on 29 April in response to the DPRK's failed missile launches on 27 and 28 April. While initially blocked by Russia, the press statement was issued on 1 June. Council members condemned the DPRK's failed missile launches on 27 and 28 April and 31 May, which they said were in grave violation of relevant Council resolutions. 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, which expanded sanctions on the DPRK, and to report on these efforts to the Council as soon as possible, while also welcoming efforts to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialogue.

At the request of the US and Japan, Council members held consultations on 22 June 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. After several recent failures, the DPRK successfully launched a Musudan intermediate-range missile with a strike range of 2,500 to 4,000 kilometres. The US and Japan said that, in addition, the DPRK unsuccessfully attempted to launch another Musudan missile the same day. The Musudan's range allows it to reach targets in the Pacific islands.

In a 23 June press statement, members strongly condemned the launches and reiterated the main elements of the 1 June press statement. DPRK sent a letter to the Council president on 25 June, rejecting the press statement as "devoid of impartiality and a product of a double standard".

At the end of June, the US, the Republic of Korea (RoK) and Japan conducted their first joint missile-tracking drill, off the shores of

Hawaii. The DPRK called the drill a "military provocation". On 8 July, the US and the RoK announced an agreement to install a battery of the US' Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defence system in RoK by the end of 2017. According to RoK officials, a DPRK submarine conducted a failed attempt to launch a ballistic missile on the following day.

The DPRK launched two short-range Scud missiles and one Rodong intermediate-range missile on 19 July, in what it called a simulation of pre-emptive strikes against the RoK and US military facilities on the Korean Peninsula.

China and Russia expressed their own reservations concerning the THAAD battery deployment, as its monitoring capabilities could potentially cover their territories.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

The 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee agreed on 25 May on a template intended to help member states prepare on a voluntary basis the national implementation reports requested by the Council in resolution 2270 to be submitted by 30 May. The template was circulated to all member states.

The Committee also met on 15 June to discuss implementation of resolution 2270. The Committee had before it 36 national implementation reports, about a third of which were based on the template agreed upon by the Committee. Committee members also exchanged views on the recent reports of missile launches by the DPRK.

### Key Issues

A key issue for the Council is the DPRK's growing threat to international peace and security as it continues to develop its nuclear and ballistic-missile capabilities.

Another main issue is whether the tightening of sanctions will achieve the stated objectives of preventing the DPRK from making further progress and inducing Pyongyang to engage with the international community on the issue of denuclearisation.

A further issue is the need to ensure effective implementation of the new sanctions by

all member states, while avoiding adverse humanitarian consequences or negative effects on legitimate livelihood activities, as specified in resolution 2270.

### Options

One option for the Council is to change the format of the chair's briefing from a closed to an open meeting—or conduct both—to provide a forum for Council members to publicly express their concerns about the DPRK's actions and remind member states about the importance of implementing resolution 2270.

At the Committee-level, the main option is to work closely with the Panel of Experts to assist states with implementation of the new sanctions measures and provide additional guidance, when needed, without delay.

A further option is to encourage more member states to submit national implementation reports, particularly by making use of the template adopted by the Committee.

### Council Dynamics

Council members appear united in their concern about the DPRK's continuing provocations and its nuclear and ballistic-missile tests and are closely monitoring the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Nevertheless, there are no signs yet of any changes in Pyongyang's positions or any readiness to stop its weapons programs and engage with the international community. Council members are therefore mostly focused on ensuring full implementation of the new measures by all member states.

One particular matter of concern for some member states is the apparently successful test of the Musudan missile on 21 June. Its successful launch is considered a stepping-stone for the further development of long-range ballistic missiles that will be able to reach the western US in the future.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

## Liberia

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Council is expecting a briefing from Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of

the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), on the Secretary-General's report, which is due 15 August, and recent developments. Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden), chair of the Liberia

configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, may brief as well.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBERIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2288 (25 May 2016) terminated the Liberia sanctions regime. S/RES/2239 (17 September 2015) authorised a further drawdown of UNMIL to 1,240 military personnel and 606 police by 30 June 2016. **Secretary-General's Report S/2016/169** (22 February 2016) was on UNMIL.

## Liberia (con't)

### Key Recent Developments

During the past several months, the Council's discussions on Liberia were mainly focused on the imminent drawdown of UNMIL. In September 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2239, which in addition to extending UNMIL's mandate until September 2016, set up guidelines for the continuing drawdown of UNMIL and set 30 June as the deadline for the Liberian authorities to take over security responsibilities from the UN mission. In addition, the resolution called for the Secretary-General to conduct an assessment mission to Liberia and to provide the Council with his recommendations by November 2016. In the upcoming months, the Council is likely to evaluate the effects of UNMIL's drawdown and ultimately decide on the mission's withdrawal, as well as its transition to another form of UN presence in the country.

In addition to the ongoing drawdown of UNMIL, the Council had been gradually easing sanctions on Liberia during the past several years. In September 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2237, which modified the sanctions regime by terminating the asset freeze and travel ban measures. In adopting resolution 2288 on 25 May, the Council lifted the remaining sanctions on Liberia, an arms embargo on non-state actors, and effectively terminated the Liberia sanctions regime, which had been active since 2003. Following the adoption, the Liberian representative noted that despite some contesting views about their usefulness, the sanctions played an important role in the post-conflict recovery and stabilisation of Liberia.

On 4 June, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held its annual summit in Senegal. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected the next chairperson of the organisation, succeeding Senegalese president Macky Sall. Following the election, Sirleaf outlined some of the main priorities during her leadership of the organisation, which include consolidating peace and security in the region and ensuring that ECOWAS members boost their efforts in fighting the surge of terrorism in the region. Sirleaf will also seek to promote economic development, including financial stability and greater trade integration between the members of ECOWAS.

On 30 June, UNMIL formally handed over security responsibilities to Liberian

authorities. Both the Liberian authorities and the UN characterised the transition as one of the most important milestones in recent Liberian history, given that UNMIL had ensured security in the country since 2003. Following the transition, the UN mission will still maintain 1,240 military and 606 police personnel, as mandated by resolution 2239. Although Liberia did not meet some of the benchmarks set by the UN before the transition, Sirleaf expressed her confidence that Liberian security forces are indeed ready to assume security responsibilities.

Both Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Zarif welcomed the transition of security responsibilities in Liberia. In addition to hailing the government for this milestone, Ban recognised the important role played by regional and sub-regional organisations and bilateral partners in supporting the consolidation of peace, security and stability in the country. Zarif said UNMIL would still maintain its presence in Liberia and noted that the Council would ultimately decide on the future of the mission based on the Secretary-General's recommendations of the assessment mission in November.

Some in the political opposition and civil society groups have been vocal in opposing UNMIL's drawdown. They claim that Liberian authorities are still not ready for the transition and for ensuring security during the upcoming presidential elections in 2017.

On 9 June, the World Health Organization declared Liberia Ebola-free for the fourth time since the initial outbreak, following the most recent flare-up in new cases reported in April.

### Underlying Problems

UNMIL played an important role in the presidential elections in 2005 and 2011 when Sirleaf was twice elected. Given that Sirleaf will not run for re-election in 2017, Liberia will undergo its first democratic handover of the presidency at a time when Liberian authorities will be exclusively entrusted with providing security in the country. Considering these circumstances, the 2017 presidential elections could potentially present a risk factor. In January, Sirleaf and Côte d'Ivoire President Alassane Ouattara sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting that UNMIL's mandate be extended until after the elections in 2017.

### Key Issues

The most prominent issue for the Council will be maintaining stability in Liberia, given the ongoing drawdown of the mission and the 30 June transfer of security responsibilities from UNMIL to Liberian authorities.

Following the recent surge in violent attacks in the region, the threat posed by terrorism is an increasingly pressing issue for the Council.

Looking ahead, the potential for destabilisation during and following the 2017 presidential elections could be an issue.

### Options

Although UNMIL's mandate does not expire until 30 September, the Council could adopt a resolution that would extend the mission's mandate in its current configuration until the end of 2016, pending the Secretary-General's recommendations based on the assessment mission due by 15 November. Resolution 2239 requires that the Council review by 15 December "Liberia's overall capacity to ensure security and stability after the conclusion of the security transition on 30 June 2016 and security conditions on the ground, to consider the possible withdrawal of UNMIL and transition to a future United Nations presence".

Alternatively, the Council could take no action in August.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Following the containment of the Ebola epidemic earlier this year and the decision to terminate the sanctions regime in May, the Council seemed to shift its focus exclusively towards the ongoing drawdown of UNMIL and eventual withdrawal of the mission. The Council showed its commitment towards scaling down the UN's presence in Liberia when it adopted resolution 2239, which mandated the transition of security responsibilities to Liberian authorities and the further drawdown of UNMIL.

Even though the Council seems unanimous in its view that the UN mission should continue its drawdown towards eventual withdrawal, some members seem to be more cautious regarding the timing of such decisions. While it assumed security responsibilities in June, the Liberian government is facing budgetary shortages that are likely to affect the allocation of funds needed for the

## Liberia (con't)

transition. There are also a number of institutional and legislative reforms that are yet to be implemented. Moreover, there is a growing apprehension among Liberians regarding UNMIL's drawdown, especially considering the potential destabilising effects of the 2017 presidential elections. The P3 in general and

the US in particular seem to be supportive of a more rapid drawdown of UNMIL. The US was also one of the main proponents of terminating Liberia's sanctions regime this May. The elected members are in principle in favour of an UNMIL drawdown, but more cautious than the P3. However, it seems

unlikely that elected members would directly oppose the lead of the US on this issue. The recommendations from the assessment mission, due in November, are likely to influence the course of the Council's actions towards possible termination of the mission. The US is the penholder on Liberia.

## Non-Proliferation

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Council is expected to hold a ministerial-level open debate on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors. Expected briefers include Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and representatives of inter-governmental organisations and civil society. Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman is expected to chair the open debate. At press time, it was unclear whether there would be an outcome.

### Background

On 28 April 2004, the Council adopted resolution 1540 with the stated aim of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—nuclear, chemical and biological—to non-state actors. The relevance of the 1540 architecture (namely the work of the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts) and the progress in the implementation of the legal obligations imposed by resolution 1540 are currently the object of a comprehensive review, prior to the renewal of the 1540 Committee's mandate, which expires in 2021. The review started in mid-2015 and has been a key focus of the 1540 Committee, led by its chair, Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain), and its Group of Experts.

Within the framework of the comprehensive review, the 1540 Committee held formal open consultations from 20 to 22 June. A background paper prepared by the Group of Experts ahead of the meeting highlighted the changes to the proliferation risk environment as one of the key challenges to the implementation of the resolution. This includes two important factors, namely the

evolution in the activities of non-state actors and, in particular, of the nature of the terrorist threat over the last five years, and relevant advances in the fields of science, technology and international commerce. These advances have made weapons cheaper and easier to access. In a 29 January report, the Secretary-General warned that there are indications that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) may be seeking to develop a long-term capacity to use more sophisticated weapons, including chemical and biological weapons, in suicide attacks.

The open debate organised by Malaysia is expected to provide an opportunity for member states to take stock of the general WMD proliferation threat; assess the implementation and effectiveness of existing measures aimed at preventing the proliferation of WMD, related materials and technologies to non-state actors; and explore possible actions and measures to address new threats and challenges. It is also expected to contribute to the efforts of the comprehensive review; its first draft report is due on 31 August in order to meet the 30 November deadline called for in resolution 1977.

### Key Issues

Issues identified by Malaysia as particularly relevant in addressing the proliferation of WMD, related materials and technologies to non-state actors include:

- identifying new threats or challenges faced by member states;
- discussing measures to strengthen the current international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, including

within and beyond the existing normative framework;

- reflecting on the effectiveness of cooperation between and among states, the UN and specialised agencies, including at the regional level;
- sharing best practices in implementing concrete aspects of the architecture; and
- sharing experiences for raising public awareness and engaging with non-traditional partners, including industry, academia and civil society.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are in agreement about the importance of resolution 1540 and the urgent need to enhance its implementation. On 22 July, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2298 providing for the transfer from and destruction outside Libya of Category 2 chemical weapons. The resolution was negotiated and adopted within 72 hours, an extremely speedy process by today's Council standards. Such urgency was motivated by the risk that these chemical weapons could fall into the hands of terrorist groups if not transferred and destroyed quickly and safely outside the country.

Despite general agreement, there are differences of view about the level of ambition for the comprehensive review. While Russia and China have advocated a cautious approach, Spain and other Council members, including the UK and the US, believe that the findings of the comprehensive review should be reflected in a strong outcome aimed at improving overall implementation.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1977 (20 April 2011) decided that the comprehensive review should be held before December 2016. S/RES/1540 (28 April 2004) established the 1540 Committee and its mandate and affirmed that proliferation of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery constitute a threat to international peace and security. Secretary-General's Report S/2016/92 (29 January 2016) was on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security, as well as the range of UN efforts to counter this threat.

# Yemen

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, is expected to brief the Council. Also during August, the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee is due to consider the mid-term report of the Panel of Experts.

## Key Recent Developments

Peace talks continued in Kuwait between the Yemen government and the Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite rebel group, and their allies in the General People's Congress (GPC). At a 30 June press conference, the Special Envoy announced the suspension of the talks, which had been ongoing for more than two months, in order for the parties to confer with their respective leaderships before resuming negotiations on 15 July. He said the sides had reacted positively to a roadmap that he had presented, which provides for implementation of resolution 2216 and the creation of a national unity government, but they remained divided over the "sequencing" of the steps. The Houthis have wanted agreement on a unity government before withdrawing and disarming, while the government wants them to take these actions first.

On 10 July, Yemen President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi threatened that the government would boycott the talks if the Special Envoy insisted on the creation of a unity government as part of a roadmap. Foreign Minister Abdul Malik al-Mekhlafi said the government would not return to the talks without "guarantees" and unless the Houthis recognise Hadi's legitimacy. After a one-day delay, talks resumed on 16 July. Host government Kuwait set a 15-day timetable for concluding the round. On 28 July, the Houthis and GPC announced they would establish a governing council to run the country. The Special Envoy said the decision threatened the talks.

The cessation of hostilities, which began on 10 April, remains in place. However, clashes have continued around Taiz, Ibb, to the east and northeast of Sana'a and along border areas with Saudi Arabia. Terrorist groups Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remain a threat, especially in the south, where attacks and assassinations have continued against government forces and officials.

These include ISIL-claimed attacks on 27 June against government forces that killed 42 people in Mukalla. On 8 July, a suicide car bomber attacked a checkpoint near a base in Aden, reportedly killing 25 soldiers.

On 2 June, the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict was made public. The report identified airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition as responsible for 60 percent of child casualties in Yemen during 2015 and for nearly 50 percent of attacks on hospitals and schools. As a consequence, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition was listed in the report's annex. The Houthis, which were already listed for recruitment of children, were also cited for killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals.

The report triggered strong reaction. Addressing the media on 6 June, Saudi Arabia's UN Ambassador, Abdallah Yahya Al-Mouallimi, claimed that the report's information was inaccurate and incomplete, while adding that the report's timing could only be counter-productive for the talks in Kuwait. Later that day, the Secretary-General announced that he was removing the Saudi Arabia-led coalition from the annex and that there would be a joint review with coalition members of the report's findings. At a press stakeout on 9 June, the Secretary-General acknowledged that he took this decision in the face of some member states' threatening to withdraw funding from UN programmes.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 2 May, the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) became operational. It was established to facilitate the flow of commercial goods into Yemen, while ensuring compliance with the targeted arms embargo set up in resolution 2216. Since then, UNVIM has approved all commercial shipments going to Yemeni ports not under government control and has provided to the 2140 Committee reports of cargoes that have been inspected. The Committee has also received accounts from member states of fishing vessels that were intercepted while transferring arms, believed to be for the Houthis.

Committee members were expecting to receive the Panel's midterm report in late July.

## Key Issues

How the Council can support efforts to advance peace talks and a political process

remains a key issue, which will largely depend on the outcome of the latest round of the Kuwait talks.

Adherence to the cessation of hostilities remains an important issue. This is connected to efforts to address the humanitarian crisis created by the war and issues involving protection of civilians. A related issue during August will be the Council's expected discussion of the Secretary-General's children and armed conflict report.

The threat posed by AQAP and ISIL amidst the security vacuum created by the war remains a key concern.

Within the 2140 Committee, issues include the enforcement of sanctions, such as reported violations of the arms embargo and the effectiveness of the UNVIM; information on violations of international humanitarian law and obstruction of humanitarian assistance; and how sanctions may be further used to support a peace process.

## Options

If progress emerges from the latest round of talks in Kuwait, the Council may adopt a statement or resolution backing the outcomes.

Alternatively, if the sides remain deadlocked, an option for the Council is to consider changing the current UN-brokered framework by including among the participants key member states or other Yemeni groups, while calling on the parties to display more flexibility for implementing security measures and forming a national unity government.

For the Committee, the main option will be to consider and agree on any recommendations in the Panel of Experts' mid-term report.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members agree that the conflict can only be resolved through political negotiations. They also share concerns over the humanitarian situation and the need for the parties to do more to uphold international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

Resolution 2216, adopted shortly after the start of the Saudi Arabia-led intervention, demanded that the Houthis withdraw from captured areas and relinquish seized arms. The resolution has since been widely viewed as one-sided and unrealistic in light of the

**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2266 (24 February 2016) renewed the Yemen sanctions measures for one year. S/RES/2216 (14 April 2015) established an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2016/5 (25 April 2016) welcomed the start of peace talks in Kuwait. Secretary-General's Report S/2016/360 (20 April 2016) was on Children and Armed Conflict. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7721 (21 June 2016) was a briefing by the Special Envoy.

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## Yemen (con't)

situation on the ground. The Yemen government's insistence that the Houthis implement these demands from over a year ago before discussing transitional governing arrangements limits the possibility of a compromise solution. The close relations of members, particularly the P3 and Egypt, with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries has restrained the Council's willingness to depart from resolution 2216 as a basis for resolving the conflict.

In general, the Council has relied on the Special Envoy's mediation efforts. The Council has provided occasional expressions of support for his initiatives to encourage the sides' cooperation while members have hoped for progress on a political process that the Council can support. Upon the start of the Kuwait peace talks in April, the Council adopted a presidential statement that was considered

useful to encourage the sides to engage beyond positions that the parties had taken based on resolution 2216. More recently, Council members could not reach consensus on a draft presidential statement ahead of the second round of the Kuwait talks. Egypt and Russia both broke silence procedures. Egypt, and at times Senegal, champion positions of the coalition, of which they are members. Russia, on the other hand, often seeks to highlight the perspective of the Houthis and to promote what it considers more balanced Council positions.

Members have also been reluctant to exert more pressure on the parties as long as the Special Envoy appeared optimistic that the sides were coming together. Now, after three months of UN-brokered talks in Kuwait that will possibly not yield any significant results, members may be more open to a change in

the Council's role.

Another important dynamic is the role of the Group of 18 Ambassadors to Yemen. This group includes P5 countries, Egypt, Japan and the Gulf states, which have pressured the sides to remain in negotiations. The Hadi-government depends on Saudi Arabia which hosts it and provides much of its military capacity, and ultimately must acquiesce to Saudi preferences. Kuwait, as host of the talks, has played a key role in bringing the sides together. But having provided the resources for this process, Kuwait says it cannot do so indefinitely and has established the 15-day timeframe for this second round.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Japan chairs the 2140 Sanctions Committee.

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## Lebanon

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council is expected to extend the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another year, ahead of its expiry on 31 August. This year's renewal marks the tenth anniversary of the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon and the adoption of resolution 1701 in 2006.

### Key Recent Developments

On 7 July, Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag briefed Council members on the latest Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701, covering the period from 26 February to 24 June. The report describes the situation along the Blue Line as being generally calm but notes that progress has remained limited on each party's outstanding obligations under the resolution and that there has been no progress towards a permanent ceasefire. Among the violations of resolution 1701 reported by the Secretary-General are the continuation of almost daily incursions into Lebanese airspace by Israel, and Israel's continuing occupation of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. The absence of progress the delineation of international borders in the Sheb'a Farms area, in spite of the

call made in resolution 1701, remains a source of concern, according to the report.

The Secretary-General expressed concern about the continuing presence of unauthorised weapons in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line and called upon the Lebanese government to take all actions necessary to ensure that there are no unauthorised armed personnel, assets or weapons in the UNIFIL area of operations. He noted that the situation along the Lebanese-Syrian border remained tense during the reporting period, with continued reports of cross-border movements of fighters and arms. The report described the overall security situation as fragile and vulnerable, particularly to terrorist attacks.

Also, according to the report, Israel continues to assert that Hezbollah maintains military infrastructure and equipment in southern Lebanon and that there are significant ongoing arms transfers to Hezbollah across the Lebanese-Syrian border. A 17 February letter to the Secretary-General from Israel claimed that Hezbollah had amassed an arsenal of more than 100,000 missiles and rockets, much of which Israel claims is located in civilian residential areas.

Lebanon sent letters to the Security

Council on 30 March and 23 May that contained statistical summaries of alleged Israeli violations of resolution 1701. On 15 July, Israel responded with a letter that stated that the Lebanese letters contained intentionally misleading accusations against Israel, annexing Israel's detailed response to Lebanese allegations of violations between February and April.

Meanwhile, Lebanon continues to be unable to elect a president to fill the vacancy left by Michel Sleiman, whose term ended on 24 May 2014. On 13 July, Lebanon's Parliament failed for the 42nd time to elect a president due to the lack of a quorum. For the same reason, joint parliamentary committees were unable to meet to resume talks on a new electoral law.

On 22 July, the Council adopted a presidential statement that reaffirmed its strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon; stressed that the election of a president, the formation of a unity government and the election of a parliament by May 2017 are critical to Lebanon's stability and ability to withstand regional challenges; and called on all parties to act responsibly, put Lebanon's stability ahead of partisan politics, and

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2236](#) (21 August 2015) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for one year. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2016/10](#) (22 July 2016) stressed the importance of Lebanon's electing a president by May 2017 in order to maintain stability. [Secretary-General's Report S/2016/572](#) (24 June 2016) was the latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701.

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## Lebanon (con't)

show the necessary flexibility and sense of urgency to apply mechanisms provided for by the Lebanese constitution with regard to the election. The Security Council commended the Lebanese government for the timely holding of local elections and further encouraged the authorities to move ahead within the set calendar for the next legislative elections.

The statement also condemned in the strongest terms acts of terrorism on Lebanese territory and affirmed that the preservation of Lebanon's stability is essential to regional stability and security. It encouraged regional partners to engage constructively in resolving the presidential vacancy and preventing the spill-over of regional crises into Lebanon, and the international community to continue supporting Lebanon's political and economic stability, including through the continued provision of assistance.

Major General Michael Beary of Ireland took up the post of UNIFIL head of mission and force commander on 19 July, replacing Major General Luciano Portolano of Italy, who

had served as force commander for two years.

### Key Issues

The main issue is that while—ten years after the adoption of 1701—the situation is relatively calm, there has been little progress on its key objectives, as detailed by the Secretary-General in his report.

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. In that context, the ongoing crisis in Syria, with Hezbollah's involvement on the side of the regime, and the flow of arms from Syria to Hezbollah remain of utmost concern.

Another issue is the inability of Lebanon to elect a president, which has paralysed the country's parliament and rendered it incapable of passing critical legislation. That has impaired Lebanon's ability to address the growing security, economic, social and

humanitarian challenges facing the country.

### Options

The main option is for the Council to renew the mandate of UNIFIL for an additional year.

Given that the Council has just adopted a comprehensive presidential statement outlining various concerns regarding Lebanon, a further Council outcome at this time seems unlikely.

### 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 the Lebanese Armed Forces play in responding to security challenges. The Council has also repeatedly expressed its united concern at the vacancy in the presidency and resulting political paralysis.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

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## Guinea-Bissau

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Council will receive a briefing on Guinea-Bissau from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Modibo Touré, followed by consultations. Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil), chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) Guinea-Bissau configuration, is also expected to brief.

Also in August, the 2048 Committee is expected to consider a Secretary-General's report on the Guinea-Bissau sanctions ahead of a Council review of the sanctions in September.

The mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) expires on 28 February 2017.

### Key Recent Developments

August will mark one year since President José Mário Vaz dismissed the government of Domingos Simões Pereira, triggering

Guinea-Bissau's ongoing political crisis.

On 7 March, the Council visited Guinea-Bissau. At the time, Guinea-Bissau was facing an impasse in the National Assembly over whether 15 dissident members of parliament from the majority African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) could retain their seats. In meetings with Vaz, Simões Pereira and others, members urged them to resolve the crisis through dialogue and on the basis of the country's laws and constitution.

On 5 April, the Supreme Court ruled that the 15 deputies could retain their seats. With this ruling, Prime Minister Carlos Correia was unable to have his national programme approved. On 12 May, Vaz dismissed the Correia government.

On 26 May, Vaz appointed Baciro Djá as prime minister. Vaz had named Djá prime minister in August 2015 after dismissing Simões Pereira, but Djá resigned when

the Supreme Court determined that the appointment was unconstitutional. This second appointment occurred after Vaz requested a proposal for a new government from the opposition Party for Social Renewal, which has formed a coalition in the National Assembly with the 15 dissident PAIGC deputies. Upon announcing the appointment, members of Correia's cabinet refused to leave the government palace, claiming they would only hand over their offices to a government nominated by the PAIGC, which remained the majority party. For two weeks, national guard forces surrounded the building. Following negotiations mediated by religious leaders and the international community, the stand-off ended on 9 June with the former government agreeing to leave the palace. On 15 July, the Supreme Court ruled that Vaz's latest appointment of Djá was constitutional.

Amidst these tensions, the heads of state

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON GUINEA-BISSAU** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2267 (26 February 2016) renewed UNIOGBIS's mandate for one year. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7714** (14 June 2016) was a briefing on Guinea-Bissau. **Security Council Press Statement SC/12405** (15 June 2016) expressed support for decisions taken at the 4 June ECOWAS summit.

## Guinea-Bissau (con't)

and government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) held their 49th ordinary session on 4 June. They renewed the mandate of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) for an additional year. This ended worries that ECOMIB, credited with deterring military interference, would withdraw at the end of June without new donor funding, which was offered by the EU. ECOWAS leaders further decided to dispatch a presidential mission to Guinea-Bissau, comprising the presidents of Guinea, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Thirdly, the ECOWAS Commission was requested to consult with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries to organise a meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau (ICG-GB). The presidential mission has yet to visit Guinea-Bissau and there has been no announced plan for holding an ICG-GB meeting.

Also in June, the International Monetary Fund suspended its loan programme to Guinea-Bissau due to the government's bail-out of two banks in July 2015. On 1 July, the government announced Guinea-Bissau's first three known cases of Zika virus.

Council members have discussed Guinea-Bissau several times since returning from their visit. They discussed developments on 13 May under "any other business" in consultations and again in consultations on 26 May, issuing press elements after both meetings calling for the sides to resume dialogue. On 14 June, Touré briefed the Council via video teleconference. The next day, members issued a press statement expressing support for ECOWAS's 4 June decisions and signalling their readiness to take necessary measures to respond if the situation worsened. On 25 July, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman visited Guinea-Bissau, meeting with Vaz, other key political actors, the Supreme Court president, civil society and the diplomatic corps.

### Developments in the PBC

On 16 May, the Guinea-Bissau country configuration issued a statement highlighting the need to mobilise resources for ECOMIB. On 9 June, it received a briefing from Touré and issued a statement supporting the outcomes of the recent ECOWAS summit.

Angola previously proposed that Patriota accompany the Council in Guinea-Bissau during its visiting mission. This was opposed by the US, it seems with backing of other permanent members.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 32nd session, the Human Rights Council considered the report of the special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Mónica Pinto, who visited the country from 10 to 16 October 2015 (A/HRC/32/34/Add.1). The report contains a number of conclusions, including that impunity is rampant, political instability is high and the crimes of the past are still to be addressed. The report also found that the treatment of cases does not always respect due process, and judicial delays often amount to a denial of justice; in addition, judges, prosecutors, lawyers and court staff are not adequately trained to discharge their professional functions and corruption is widespread, including among actors in the justice system. The report's recommendations include taking urgent measures to establish tribunals (foreseen in the country's constitution to settle "social disputes", whether civil or criminal) and the necessary corresponding prosecution offices; conducting a comprehensive review of domestic legislation to harmonise its content with the country's international obligations; and effectively investigating and prosecuting all serious human rights violations and politically motivated crimes.

### Key Issues

How the Council can support efforts to end the political crisis is a key issue.

The possibility of military interference remains a concern.

The impact of the political crisis on government services and socio-economic conditions is of increasing concern. Related to this is donors' withholding of pledges from the 2015 Brussels donor conference.

Within the 2048 Sanctions Committee, important issues will include any recommendations of the Secretary-General about how sanctions or the threat of sanctions might be used to address the crisis; the possible role of a panel of experts, such as to monitor donor aid and drug trafficking; and de-listing of individuals no longer meeting the sanctions criteria.

### Options

The Council could adopt a presidential statement:

- expressing continued concern over the ongoing political and institutional crisis;
- urging the deployment of the ECOWAS presidential mission;
- encouraging the ICG-GB to hold a meeting to strengthen the coherence of international diplomatic efforts;
- further encouraging the inclusion of key Bissau-Guinean political actors at such a meeting to agree on a stability pact; and

- commending the military for its continued non-interference.

### Council Dynamics

Senegal has been active in keeping the Council's attention on Guinea-Bissau. As its neighbour, Guinea-Bissau's stability is of paramount importance to Senegal, in particular to avoid the resurgence of conflict in the Casamance region. Angola, which is a member of the CPLP, also is keenly interested in developments. More broadly, the Council mission to Guinea-Bissau heightened members' concerns over the situation as it exposed the depth of divisions. They remain concerned about the risk of military interference, which would undo the international community's efforts, both political and financial investments, following the 2012 coup. Members are further concerned that such regional problems as organised crime, drug trafficking, piracy and terrorist groups may benefit from the political stalemate or a deterioration of the situation.

There is frustration among members that the Council's actions, which included the visiting mission, and the region's close engagement have been unable to end the stalemate. For some members, however, as long as this remains an internal political dispute, it is not necessarily an issue for the Council despite the presence of UNIOGBIS.

Other dynamics include different views on the use of sanctions, with some members likely to oppose any expansion of the regime. There are some diverging views over disbursing donor funds. Countries that made pledges at the Brussels conference in 2015 have withheld distributions, noting that conditions have greatly changed since then. This money also represents some of the international community's potential leverage. Some members, though, believe more should be done to disburse funds that can help the general population. A dynamic that has played out over the last two years has been efforts by several elected members to reduce references in the UNIOGBIS resolutions to drug trafficking. The P5 have opposed such changes. For that reason, this year's resolution renewing UNIOGBIS called on the Secretary-General to include in his reporting an assessment of progress towards combatting drug trafficking so that members would have a common understanding of the problem.

Senegal is the penholder on Guinea-Bissau. Uruguay is chair of the 2048 Committee.

## Notable Dates for August

REPORT DUE	REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN AUGUST	REQUESTING DOCUMENT
20 April	SG annual report on Children and Armed Conflict (S/2016/360)	S/RES/2225
27 July	OPCW report on the implementation of resolution 2118 (Syrian chemical weapons)	S/RES/2118
29 July	SG report on UNMIK (Kosovo)	S/RES/1244
15 August	Report of the UN-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism (Syrian chemical weapons)	S/RES/2235
15 August	SG report on UNMIL (Liberia)	S/RES/2239
16 August	SG report on the humanitarian situation in Syria	S/RES/2139
18 August	SG report on UNIOGBIS (Guinea-Bissau)	S/RES/2267
18 August	SG report to the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee on progress on the restoration of constitutional order and recommendations for the sanctions regime	S/RES/2267
MANDATES EXPIRE	RELEVANT DOCUMENT	
31 August	UNIFIL (Lebanon)	S/RES/2236

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Design Point Five, NY

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