

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

There will be two high-level briefings during New Zealand's September presidency: one on the [Middle East](#), with a Syria focus, chaired by New Zealand Prime Minister John Key, and the other on [counter-terrorism and aviation security](#), chaired by New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully.

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

In September, members will be closely following developments in [South Sudan](#) and will undertake a visiting mission to Juba with possible stops in the region early in the month. Later in the month, the Council will consider the Secretary-General's report on UNMISS, which is expected to include detailed information on the regional protection force authorised in resolution 2304 in August.

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

- [Liberia](#), the renewal of UNMIL;
- [Libya](#), discussion on UNSMIL and an update on the 1970 sanctions regime;
- [Somalia](#), an update on UNSOM's and

AMISOM's activities; and

- [Sudan](#), the quarterly briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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

- [Golan Heights](#), the quarterly briefing on UNDOF; and
- [Israel/Palestine](#), the regular monthly meeting.

Regarding Asian issues, the Council will have its regular quarterly discussion on [UNAMA](#) in Afghanistan.

There will also be a briefing on the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding measures to prevent [attacks on health care](#) in armed conflict.

It is possible that the Council will adopt a resolution proposed by the US marking the 20-year anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The Council will also be closely following developments in [Burundi](#), [Guinea-Bissau](#) and [Yemen](#).

At the end of the month, the Council will have a "wrap-up" session on its work in September.

## In Hindsight: The Story of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism in Yemen

Among the several controversies surrounding the Yemen conflict, there is one that has received relatively little attention. The creation of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) to facilitate commercial shipping to Yemen, a country that in the pre-war period relied on foreign imports for 90 percent of its food, is another example of the difficult relationship between the UN and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition fighting on behalf of the Yemen government. It also demonstrates the Security Council's reluctance to insist on the proper

implementation of its own resolution.

Soon after it began airstrikes in Yemen on 26 March 2015, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition imposed a naval and aerial blockade. Ships seeking entry into Yemeni ports required government authorisation and had to be inspected by coalition forces, delaying or preventing goods from entering. Vessels endured waits of up to four to six weeks before receiving a permit to enter, in particular those trying to reach Hodeidah port. The delays and uncertainty for shipping companies, along with a surge in insurance costs, further

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## In Hindsight: The Story of the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism in Yemen (con't)

reduced the number of vessels shipping goods to Yemen. The situation was exacerbating the unfolding humanitarian crisis caused by the war, because Yemen depends very heavily on imports. Prior to the conflict, in addition to importing 90 percent of its food, it imported 85 percent of medical supplies and the majority of its fuel; this dependency could not be addressed by humanitarian aid alone. By June 2015, only 15 percent of pre-crisis imports were entering Yemen. Fuel was becoming unavailable for generators to keep hospitals open or to run water pumps. The UN began warning about the risk of famine.

The coalition argued that it was enforcing the arms embargo established by the Council in resolution 2216 against Houthi rebels and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The measures, however, went far beyond the resolution's mandate, which only authorised inspections when there were "reasonable grounds" to believe cargoes were in violation of the embargo. The resolution further required that states report all inspections to the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee. The coalition submitted only one inspection report of several air cargos in June 2015.

Council members bemoaned the impact of declining imports on the civilian population, but as a whole, the Council did not call out the coalition for its failure to properly comply with resolution 2216. It fell to the Secretariat to address the situation. In May 2015, the position of regional humanitarian coordinator for the Yemen crisis was created to address the complicated humanitarian response and to resolve the commercial shipping issue. Amer Daoudi, who had a background in logistics at the World Food Programme and before that in commercial shipping, was appointed to the post. He would take on the task of creating UNVIM, though it seems the US was closely involved in the initial idea.

Establishing UNVIM would require the cooperation of the government and coalition, and Daoudi would need to obtain their agreement. Briefing the Council on 28 July 2015, OCHA head Stephen O'Brien said the mechanism "has long been proposed and is still urgently needed". O'Brien noted that negotiations were continuing. An agreement was struck by 6 August 2015, when Yemen's transport minister sent the

Secretary-General a letter formally requesting UNVIM's establishment.

On 25 August 2015, Daoudi briefed the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee on how UNVIM would function. Shipping companies would have to notify UNVIM of all planned deliveries to Yemeni ports not under government control, and after reviewing information about the shipment, it would either clear vessels to proceed or flag them for inspection. Daoudi told the committee that UNVIM was expected to be ready in three weeks. But it would take another eight months—until 5 May 2016—for UNVIM to begin operations.

Delays in obtaining from donors the \$8 million needed to start the mechanism contributed to the hold-up. UNVIM was unusual for a humanitarian mechanism, so it proved more complicated, particularly for the US, to release its contribution. Funding was finally secured in December 2015.

Daoudi also probably underestimated the political sensitivities surrounding UNVIM. Despite agreeing to UNVIM's establishment, officials in the Yemeni government and the coalition seemed reluctant to see it become operational and give up their control. In discussions about UNVIM with Daoudi, the Saudis expressed particular concerns over dual use of fuel and about how Iran might thwart the mechanism. Around this time, as was widely reported, Saudi Arabia was also seeking restrictions that aid money it had pledged to OCHA not be used in areas controlled by the Houthis.

On 22 December 2015, OCHA Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang told the Council that UNVIM was expected to be operational in mid-January. But by then, the Yemeni government had a new transport minister following a cabinet reshuffle and more consultations were needed. It was also during this period that Daoudi had a falling out with the Saudis. On 17 January, he was refused entry into Saudi Arabia.

The UN announced UNVIM's launch in February. But continuing disagreements played out at the Council's 3 March briefing, when Yemen's ambassador, Khaled Alyemany, said the government opposed UNVIM's being based in Djibouti. He claimed that the government had not been consulted on this location; the confusion has been attributed

to the change in transport ministers. Meetings of the UNVIM steering committee, made up of the UN, Yemeni government and the coalition, in order to sign off on the operation were not organised until late April. Meanwhile, after temporary improvements in late 2015, imports were again in steep decline by early 2016.

During this entire process, some countries sought to convince Yemen and the coalition to accept UNVIM. The Council, however, mostly limited itself to stressing in its press statements on Yemen the need for commercial supplies to enter the country. Ambassador Raimonda Marmokaite (Lithuania), as 2140 Committee chair, highlighted in her October 2015 briefing the failure of states to report inspections and, speaking about UNVIM at the Council's December debate on Yemen, said "any further delays are unacceptable". Those were the sharpest public rebukes. Only about a week before UNVIM became operational, in its 25 April presidential statement on Yemen peace talks, did the Council call on states to facilitate UNVIM's full implementation without further delay.

Once it took off, UNVIM seems to have had a positive impact. Food imports during July were at pre-crisis levels, though fuel deliveries remained low at a quarter of needs. The Yemen Panel of Experts' 27 July midterm report said that since UNVIM's establishment, disruptions to commercial shipping appear to be minimal. By 30 August, UNVIM had processed 195 vessels, conducting 10 inspections which were reported to the 2140 Committee. The main impediments to imports are now attributed to reduced capacity of ports due to damage from the war.

UNVIM was conceived of as a remedy to the coalition blockade and over-zealous application of the arms embargo. It was a pragmatic solution, with potential to be a model for addressing future situations in which implementation of arms embargos might interfere with commercial shipments vital for the survival of the civilian population. But its drawn-out establishment of a year is a reminder that in politically complex situations, pragmatic solutions need political will and close attention to be able to take shape and play their intended role.

# Status Update since our August Forecast

## Children and Armed Conflict

On 2 August, the Security Council held an open debate on children and armed conflict (S/PV.7753) focused on the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/360). Among the topics highlighted in both the report and the debate were the impact of extreme violence and displacement of children. The Secretary-General, his Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, and Executive Director of UNICEF Anthony Lake briefed the Council. Sixty-nine delegations delivered statements during the debate. The concept note (S/2016/662) for the debate noted the achievements over the last 20 years and highlighted key developments in the children and armed conflict agenda in 2015 and 2016.

## DPRK (North Korea)

On 3 August, during consultations, Council members received a briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tayé-Brook Zerihoun at the request of Japan, the Republic of Korea and the US on the two ballistic missile launches conducted on 2 August by the DPRK. On 24 August, they received a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman on the DPRK's launch of a ballistic missile from a submarine on 23 August. The 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee met on 26 August to consider implementation of resolution 2270 and discuss the mid-term report submitted by its panel of experts. In a press statement issued later that day, Council members condemned the 2 and 23 August ballistic missile launches, as well as launches conducted on 9 and 18 July, as grave violations of the DPRK's international obligations under relevant Council resolutions (SC/12494). They called on UN member states to redouble their efforts to implement the measures imposed by the Council on the DPRK, in particular those contained in resolution 2270. On 30 August, the chair of the Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Román Oyarzun (Spain), briefed Council members in consultations on the Committee's work.

## Yemen

On 3 August, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, briefed Council members in consultations on peace talks in Kuwait. Following

the meeting, members were unable to agree to press elements. Three days later the talks concluded without an agreement and fighting soon intensified. On 5 August, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee met with the Yemen Panel of Experts to consider the Panel's "midterm update", which was circulated in a report to committee members on 27 July. Of the Panel's three recommendations, committee members subsequently approved two of them while taking note of the recommendation to issue an implementation assistance notice regarding information to include in member states' reports of interdictions. On 25 August, following a meeting of foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the UK, the US and the Special Envoy in Jeddah, US Secretary of State John Kerry announced an agreement on a "renewed approach to negotiations" that would "simultaneously" address security and political tracks. On 31 August, the Special Envoy briefed the Council on the details of the new initiative, which was followed by consultations.

## Central African Republic

On 5 August, the coordinator of the Panel of Experts of the 2127 Central African Republic Sanctions Committee briefed members on the Panel's mid-term report. Also on 5 August, Zainab Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence, briefed members, emphasising the important role of the UN and humanitarian actors in ending impunity with regard to sexual violence in the Central African Republic. On 23 August, the Committee imposed targeted sanctions on Ali Kony and Salim Kony, deputies in the Lord's Resistance Army.

## Secretary-General Appointment

Council members held straw polls on 6 and 29 August in the process to select the next Secretary-General. The candidates were undifferentiated as between the elected and permanent members. By the second straw poll two candidates had withdrawn, leaving ten candidates to be voted on in the third straw poll. In the second straw poll, the number of "discourage" votes went up by 64 percent, while the number of "encourage" votes dipped by 23 percent and the number of "no opinion expressed" ballots fell by 24 percent. In the third straw poll, there was no change in the "encourage" votes, the number

of discourage votes went up by 13 percent, and no opinion expressed votes decreased by 25 percent.

## Mali

On 8 August, Council members condemned the terrorist attacks that occurred between 5 and 7 August against MINUSMA in the northern region of Kidal, killing one peacekeeper and injuring another six (SC/12473).

## Counter-Terrorism

On 8 August, the 1267/1989/2253 Al-Qaida/ISIL Sanctions Committee considered the latest reports by the Ombudsperson (S/2016/671) and the Monitoring Team (S/2016/629). The Committee also received the Monitoring Team's quarterly oral assessment of the implementation of resolutions 2199 and 2178. On 22 August, Council members condemned a terrorist attack at a wedding ceremony in the city of Gaziantep in Turkey on 20 August, during which at least 54 people were killed and over 200 injured (SC/12484). They also condemned the terrorist attacks that took place over the prior week in Turkey, during which several Turkish police officers and civilians were killed.

## Ukraine

On 11 August, Council members held consultations on the situation in Ukraine at the initiative of the Ukrainian delegation. Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine) briefed Council members on rising tensions between Ukraine and Russia over the alleged acts of sabotage and terrorism in Crimea committed by Ukrainian forces. Yelchenko denied the accusations made by Russia while blaming Russia for its attempt to escalate the tensions in eastern Ukraine. Russia condemned Ukraine for alleged offensive actions and for obstructing the Minsk agreement. Yelchenko noted that Ukraine would initiate another meeting on Ukraine, with briefers from the OSCE and DPA, if the situation on the ground deteriorated.

## Sudan/South Sudan

On 11 August, Council members held consultations on Sudan and South Sudan. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, briefed. Following the meeting, they issued a press statement welcoming the signing on 8 August of the Roadmap Agreement

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## Status Update since our September *Forecast* (con't)

by opposition groups and commending the government of Sudan for having signed the agreement on 16 March (SC/12474).

### Guinea-Bissau

On 19 August, the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee met to discuss the Secretary-General's 16 August report on the Guinea-Bissau sanctions regime (S/2016/720). The report recommended maintaining the sanctions regime as a signal to spoilers regardless of political or institutional affiliation and adjusting the measures and designations as necessary; establishing a panel of experts; establishing benchmarks to lift sanctions; and reviewing current individuals subject to travel ban sanctions for their role in the 2012 coup to determine whether they still meet the designation criteria. On 30 August, the Council held a briefing followed by consultations on Guinea-Bissau (S/PV.7764). Modibo Touré, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, briefed on the Secretary-General's 2 August report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau (S/2016/675). Also briefing were Deputy Permanent Representative Luis Bermúdez of Uruguay, which chairs the Committee and Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) as chair of the PBC Guinea-Bissau country-configuration.

### Lebanon

On 22 August, a meeting of troop-contributing countries to UNIFIL was held. On 24 August, Council members met in consultations to discuss the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate. On 30 August, the Council adopted resolution 2305, which renewed UNIFIL's mandate for an additional year and requested the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of UNIFIL by February 2017.

### Non-Proliferation

On 23 August, the Council held an open debate on the challenges in addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related materials (S/PV.7758). The meeting was chaired by Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. The Council was briefed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Emmanuel Roux, Special Representative of INTERPOL to the UN; Gregory Koblenz, Director of the Biodefence Graduate Programme of George Mason University and Kim Won-soo, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Malaysia circulated a concept note ahead of the meeting (S/2016/712).

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 16 August, Council members issued a press statement condemning the killing of at least 50 civilians on 13 August in the area of Rwangoma village, North Kivu Province of the DRC, by suspected members of the Allied Democratic Forces (SC/12477). On 24 August, the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee briefed Committee members on its programme of work.

### Kosovo

On 25 August, Zahir Tanin, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, briefed Council members on recent developments and the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2016/666). Tanin emphasised the need to renew efforts on the implementation of the existing agreements between Belgrade and Pristina. Tanin also informed Council members about the latest developments related to the impasse in the Assembly of Kosovo concerning the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. Ivica Dačić, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, addressed the Council, and Vlora

Çitaku, Kosovo Ambassador to the US, also made a statement (S/PV.7760).

### Liberia

On 25 August, Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNMIL, briefed the Council on the latest UNMIL report (S/2016/706) as well as recent developments (S/PV.7761). Joakim Vaverka (Sweden), Chair of the PBC Liberia Configuration, also briefed. Zarif devoted significant attention on the government of Liberia's assumption of UNMIL's security responsibilities on 30 June. While commending the successful transition, Zarif called on the Liberian government to implement pending legislative and institutional reforms. In his briefing, Vaverka said that the Commission would continue to promote national reconciliation, security sector development and the rule of law. In addition, Vaverka added that the Commission would pay special attention to the preparation of the 2017 presidential and legislative elections.

### Colombia

On 26 August, Council members were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Mission in Colombia, Jean Arnault, on the recommendations included in an 18 August report of the Secretary-General on the size, operational aspects and mandate of the UN Mission in Colombia (S/2016/729).

### Western Sahara

On 26 August, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations El-Ghassim Wane briefed Council members in consultations on the situation in Western Sahara. The briefing was requested by Venezuela in light of allegations by the Polisario that Morocco had traversed the berm in Al Guargarat, just north of the Mauritanian border, in violation of the ceasefire signed between both parties in 1991.



## Expected Council Action

New Zealand's Prime Minister, John Key, will preside over a high-level Security Council meeting on Syria aimed at ensuring the peace process gets back on track. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will brief at the meeting, which is set for 21 September. At press time no outcome was envisaged. Council members will also receive their regular monthly briefings on the humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks.

On the chemical weapons track, the UN-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical weapons (OPCW) Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), the body mandated to determine responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, issued its final report in late August. At press time, it was unclear how the Council might respond in September to the report's conclusions or whether the JIM's mandate would be renewed.

In addition, the Security Council is expected to meet to follow up resolution 2286, which condemned attacks on health care workers and facilities and demanded compliance with international humanitarian law. While resolution 2286 is not country-specific, it is relevant to Syria in light of escalating attacks against medical facilities there, in particular by government airstrikes (for more details on this briefing, please see the relevant brief in this issue of the *Monthly Forecast*).

## Key Recent Developments

On 7 July, Syrian government forces and allied militias—backed by Russian air strikes—took control of Castello Road, severing the opposition's final supply route into eastern Aleppo. Opposition forces, including Al Nusra Front, launched a counter-offensive on 31 July to break the siege and open a route to eastern Aleppo by fighting through densely populated southern areas of the city. In response, aerial bombardment of opposition-held areas has escalated, and on 16 August Russia, for the first time, launched an attack in Syria from Iran. Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch has said there is compelling evidence that incendiary weapons are being used by Syria, including in attacks in which Russian aircraft are participating.

On 8 August, France, New Zealand, Ukraine, the UK and the US co-hosted an Arria-formula meeting on the siege of Aleppo. Council members heard from three civil society speakers with intimate, on-the-ground knowledge of the situation in Aleppo. Abdullah Kawhla—representing the White Helmets, which rescues civilians trapped or injured by the conflict—delivered a pre-recorded video briefing from Aleppo. Dr. Zaher Sahloul and Dr. Samer Attar, both of whom work with the Syrian American Medical Society and who had recently returned from Aleppo, spoke about the increasing medical crisis the city is facing. Clarissa Ward, a correspondent for Cable News Network, provided her analysis of the fight for Aleppo, from where she too had recently returned, and what it could mean for the trajectory of the Syrian civil war. The meeting was open to all member states and the media, and it was webcast on UNTV—the first time for an Arria format meeting.

The next day, Council members held consultations on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria, with briefings by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and OCHA head Stephen O'Brien. De Mistura had few positive developments to report regarding the resumption of talks, in light of the battle for Aleppo, and the difficulties between Russia and the US over a proposal to cooperate on counter-terrorism in Syria in exchange for a renewed nationwide cessation of hostilities and a formula for a political transition. De Mistura's deputy, Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, reported on 4 August that not much had been accomplished in July to get the talks back on track, largely due to the intensification of the military activities. O'Brien reported that the encirclement of eastern rebel-held Aleppo put it at risk of becoming another besieged area and by far the largest in Syria. He reiterated his call for a weekly 48-hour pause in fighting to allow humanitarian aid to reach Aleppo.

O'Brien first asked the Council to support the UN's call for a 48-hour pause during a 25 July Council briefing. In press comments following that meeting, Japan, as president of the Council, said that there

was overwhelming support among Council members for a weekly 48-hour humanitarian pause. However, Council members were unable to agree to issue a statement to this effect given the direct role Russia plays in supporting the government offensive. There was another attempt to respond to the crisis in Aleppo following O'Brien's 9 August briefing. The UK circulated a draft press statement to express support for "recurring substantial pauses in fighting to ensure sustained humanitarian deliveries...to Aleppo can commence safely and effectively". It seems over three days of negotiations Russia insisted on language that the humanitarian situation had deteriorated due to terrorist activity. In the end, consensus could not be reached and the statement was not issued.

O'Brien briefed the Council again on 22 August and was unable to convey any significant progress in humanitarian access to Aleppo since his 9 August briefing. The Secretary-General's report on the humanitarian situation said an estimated 250,000 to 275,000 people in opposition-held eastern Aleppo are at risk of besiegement, and called yet again for a weekly 48-hour pause in fighting. On 24 August, New Zealand, Egypt and Spain circulated a press statement that called on all parties to adhere to regular 48-hour pauses to the fighting to allow the UN to provide humanitarian assistance to all those in need and urged all stakeholders to rapidly reach agreement on the necessary operational modalities. At press time and following input from several Council members, the statement was on hold as members awaited the outcome of ongoing talks between the US and Russia.

Apart from the Security Council, there were discussions in August between Russia and the UN on Russia's unilateral 28 July proposal to open "humanitarian corridors" for civilians and rebels to leave Aleppo. The High Negotiations Committee (HNC), the Riyadh-based opposition umbrella group, condemned Russia's proposal for humanitarian corridors, characterising it as a euphemism for forced displacement. The same day that Russia announced its initiative for humanitarian corridors, O'Brien released a statement saying that he was aware of the

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2268 (26 February 2016) endorsed the cessation of hostilities. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2235 (7 August 2015), S/RES/2209 (6 March 2015) and S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) were on chemical weapons. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2016/738 (24 August 2016) was the JIM's final report. S/2016/714 (16 August 2016) was on the humanitarian situation. S/2016/678 (2 August 2016) was on chemical weapons. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.7757 (22 August 2016) was a briefing on the humanitarian situation.

**USEFUL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** Video: *Aleppo Under Siege: Syria's Latest Tragedy Unfolds* - Security Council Arria-Formula Open Meeting (8 August 2016) - <http://webtv.un.org/watch/aleppo-under-siege-syrias-latest-tragedy-unfolds-security-council-arria-formula-open-meeting-8-august-2016/5075899474001>

## Syria (con't)

proposal and noting the critical need for the security of any such corridors to be guaranteed by all parties. The statement added that people should be able to use such corridors voluntarily and that no one should 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.

On 3 August, de Mistura transmitted to Russia a UN position paper that outlined the conditions that needed to be met for UN humanitarian agencies to possibly be involved with “humanitarian corridors” in Aleppo. It seems the paper included many of the points that OCHA had already announced publicly regarding the need to ensure the humanitarian nature of such corridors, as well as detailing operational and protection considerations that needed to be present for the UN to be willing to engage—especially concerns regarding detention. Issues around detention are of particular importance in light of the incident in early 2014 when, during a UN-monitored evacuation from Homs, men and boys were separated from their families and detained by the government. Subsequently, international monitors faced difficulty in ascertaining the whereabouts of these men and boys. Amnesty International has recently reported that almost 18,000 people have died in government prisons since the beginning of the conflict in 2011. It seems Russia responded on 15 August that the UN position paper could be used as a basis for further discussion but that some elements, such as security screening of evacuees, required further work.

On 18 August, in a rare display of frustration, de Mistura suspended the meeting in Geneva of the International Syria Support Group’s (ISSG) humanitarian task force, which Russia and the US co-chair. It seems he did so because it was clear ten minutes into the meeting that the co-chairs had not sufficiently bridged their differences; meanwhile, the fighting in Aleppo continued to escalate, and there had been no humanitarian access to the city in July or August. In comments to the press, he again reiterated the UN’s call for a 48-hour pause.

On 25 August, Daraya’s Civil Council and the Free Syrian Army leadership struck a deal with the Syrian regime stipulating that the government evacuate residents of the

town. Daraya, a suburb of Damascus, had been besieged and frequently bombarded by the government forces since August 2012. A week earlier, reports emerged that the last remaining hospital in Daraya was hit with barrel bombs filled with a napalm-like substance in a days-long bombing campaign by the regime. The UN was not involved in the deal. O’Brien and de Mistura both voiced concerns, warning that civilians should be evacuated only if their safety could be guaranteed and it was on a voluntary basis.

On chemical weapons, Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo briefed Council members on 30 August. 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). The Director-General’s report also included information that samples taken by the DAT at several Syrian facilities indicated undeclared chemical weapons activities at multiple locations. These discrepancies and lack of sufficient cooperation from Syria led the OPCW to conclude that Syria’s declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete. Virginia Gamba, the head of the JIM, also briefed, presenting the Mechanism’s final report on the nine cases it investigated: eight related to allegations of the government’s use of chemical weapons and one related to an alleged use of chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The JIM’s final report concluded that the Syrian regime used chlorine gas against its own population in Talmenes on 21 April 2014 and in Sarmin on 16 March 2015, both in Idlib province. It also found that ISIL used mustard gas in Marea on 21 August 2015. Attacks in Kafr Zita in Hama governorate on 18 April 2014, Qmenas in Idlib governorate on 16 March 2015, and Binnish in Idlib governorate on 14 March 2015, merit further investigation, the report said.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 August, the special rapporteur on the right to health released a statement reporting that in areas besieged by the government or its allies, humanitarian agencies cannot deliver assistance without a cumbersome approval procedure subject to rejections and delays. Armed groups also

deny convoys’ access to areas they put under siege, and there are reports that ISIL executes those caught smuggling food into such areas. Medical facilities in besieged areas routinely lack personnel and equipment, while the government frequently prohibits medical supplies on convoys or removes them in transit.

In what appears to be an unprecedented move, the Secretary-General sent a letter on 15 August to the Security Council (S/2016/708) transmitting the Syria Commission of Inquiry’s 21 June oral update to the Human Rights Council and the Commission’s 16 June report on ISIL crimes against the Yazidis (A/HRC/32/CRP.2). Since March 2015, Human Rights Council resolutions on Syria have included the decision to transmit all reports and oral updates of the Commission to all relevant bodies of the UN for appropriate action, including the Security Council. In 2015, no report was formally transmitted to the Security Council. In 2016, prior to the 15 August letter, a 19 April letter (S/2016/358) drew the Security Council’s attention to the Commission’s 11 February report and provided its document symbol but did not transmit the actual report.

On 16 August, the Commission released a statement on the urgent need to protect civilians, including a reported 100,000 children, living in eastern Aleppo. The statement said the attacks against Aleppo appeared to form the prelude to a siege, designed to capture the city through an already documented strategy of “surrender or starve.” More than 25 hospitals and clinics have been destroyed in Aleppo by aerial bombardment since January, and two million civilians currently lack access to running water. The statement reiterated the UN’s position on the requisite conditions to set up humanitarian corridors. The Human Rights Council will consider the Commission’s latest report during its 33rd session in September (A/HRC/33/55).

### Key Issues

With Syria in the fifth 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.

Regarding chemical weapons, the conclusions of the JIM report and the determination by the OPCW that Syria’s declared chemical weapons arsenal cannot be considered accurate and complete means that the Council is in a position to consider whether Syria is in breach of resolutions 2118, 2209 and 2235.

### Options

The ISSG and resolutions 2254 and 2268 have identified roles for the Council in the

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## Syria (con't)

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, no matter how tenuously, options are limited for other Council members to inject new thinking or energy to help resolve the situation.

Regarding chemical weapons, if the Council is able to determine that Syria has violated resolutions 2118, 2209 and 2235 then it has the option to pursue the “further measures” cited in all three resolutions, an implicit threat of sanctions. Council members may also request to be briefed on recent allegations of the regime’s use of incendiary weapons in rebel-held areas.

### 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, particularly in Aleppo, then it will be close to impossible for UN mediation between the government and the opposition to resume.

Some Council members have observed that the ambitious talks in July between Russia and the US about counter-terrorism cooperation in Syria in exchange for a renewed nationwide cessation of hostilities and a formula for a political transition have been whittled down in August to talks focused on an Aleppo ceasefire. Expectations of a breakthrough between Russia and the US to lower violence and resuscitate the political track have been severely reduced to hopes that the two states can agree on terms for a 48-hour pause in fighting by those they are supporting.

At press time, it was too early to gauge

whether there was broad support in the Council for pursuing “further measures” against Syria with the OPCW and JIM reports pointing to non-compliance with resolutions 2118, 2209 and 2235. However, most Council members feel certain that if such a draft resolution were tabled for a vote it would be vetoed by Russia.

Four of the P5 members (France, Russia, the UK and the US) are involved militarily in the Syrian war to varying degrees. In August, China—the fifth permanent member—reported its willingness to strengthen cooperation with the Syrian government, following Rear Admiral Guan Youfei’s visit to Damascus to meet with Lieutenant General Fahd Jassem al-Frej.

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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## South Sudan

### Expected Council Action

In early September, the Council is expected to conduct a visiting mission to South Sudan and another state in the region, which had yet to be determined at press time. Also in September, the Council will consider the Secretary-General’s report, which is expected to include detailed information on the regional protection force authorised in resolution 2304 in August. As per the resolution, if the Secretary-General reports that the Transitional Government of National Unity is impeding efforts to make the force operational or obstructing the implementation of the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Council may consider “appropriate measures”—including an arms embargo and additional targeted sanctions—within five days of receiving the report.

### Key Recent Developments

The August 2015 peace deal was dealt a serious blow by the violence in Juba from 7 to 11 July, which pitted President Salva Kiir’s forces

against those supporting First Vice President Riek Machar. The fighting claimed the lives of approximately 300 people. In the course of the fighting and in its immediate aftermath, some 36,000 people fled to facilities belonging to the UN and aid organisations. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein reported at least 217 cases of sexual violence in Juba between 8 and 25 July by the parties to the conflict, including rape and gang rape. Some of the murder and rape victims were apparently targeted by Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) forces because of their Nuer ethnicity. SPLA troops looted UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agricultural Organization warehouses, seizing food for more than 220,000 people in the WFP warehouse alone.

On 11 July, South Sudanese troops attacked the Terrain Compound, a facility where foreign aid workers stay in Juba. During the assault, one Nuer journalist was assassinated, several foreign nationals were raped or beaten and cash and other belongings were

stolen. Phone and text messages to UNMISS requesting help received no response. A US citizen freed early in the attack fled to a UN base seeking help, but claimed that UNMISS troops from China, Ethiopia and Nepal refused to go to the compound. After several hours, the government dispatched forces to the scene who appear to have stopped the violence. On 16 August, the Secretary-General announced his decision to initiate “an independent special investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding” the events at the Terrain Compound “and other grave cases of sexual violence committed in Juba...and to evaluate the Mission’s overall response.” The findings of this investigation, which will be made public, are expected to be finalised by late September.

The fighting in Juba was quelled only on 11 July, when Kiir ordered a cessation of hostilities to take effect at 6 p.m. that day and Machar reciprocated Kiir’s call in a radio broadcast. In the following days, Machar went into hiding, citing fears for his life and

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UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2304](#) (12 August 2016) authorised the Regional Protection Force. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7754](#) (12 August 2016) was the meeting at which resolution 2304 was adopted.



## South Sudan (con't)

announcing that he would return to Juba only after an international security force was deployed. On 21 July, Kiir issued an ultimatum to Machar saying that he would dismiss him if he did not return to Juba within 48 hours. 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.

Since the events of 7-11 July, the political, security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan has deteriorated. Machar has not returned to Juba; at press time, he was reportedly in Khartoum, Sudan. Fighting has occurred in the Equatoria region and in Unity and Jonglei states between Kiir's forces and those supporting the opposition. On 8 August, OCHA reported that more than 69,000 South Sudanese had fled to Uganda during the prior month. There are now 1.6 million internally displaced persons in the country, while some 900,000 have fled to neighbouring states since the start of the civil war in December 2013. Approximately 4.8 million South Sudanese are severely food insecure, with 250,000 children severely malnourished.

The region has remained engaged in the South Sudan crisis. On 5 August, the heads of state and government of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Plus—which included the states neighbouring South Sudan, as well as Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa—issued a communiqué calling on the UN Security Council to revise the UNMISS mandate to include the establishment of a regional protection force in light of the violence against civilians in South Sudan. On 11 August, the AU Peace and Security Council issued a communiqué endorsing the IGAD Plus communiqué, including the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

On 11 August, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping El Ghassim Wane briefed Council members at the request of Russia under “any other business” on the situation in South Sudan. Some members had expected a briefing on operational details regarding the deployment of a regional protection force, but Wane focused his remarks on restrictions imposed on UNMISS and the political situation in the country. The briefing came one day after the Secretary-General sent a letter to the Council outlining

the deteriorating security, humanitarian and human rights situation in South Sudan and appealing to the Council to take action to address the impediments faced by UNMISS in conducting its mandate.

On 12 August, the Council adopted resolution 2304. In addition to extending the mandate of UNMISS until 15 December, it raised the troop ceiling of the mission to 17,000, including the authorisation of a regional protection force of 4,000 troops for an initial period ending on 15 December. The newly authorised force, which will report to the UNMISS force commander, is to be responsible for “providing a secure environment in and around Juba...and in extremis in other parts of South Sudan as necessary”. It will have a three-fold mandate: to facilitate movement into, out of and around Juba; to protect key facilities in Juba, including the airport; and to “promptly and effectively engage any actor that is...preparing attacks, or engages in attacks, against” UN facilities (including protection-of-civilians sites), UN personnel, humanitarian actors or civilians.

While the government has given its support to a regional protection force “in principle”, it continues to express ambivalence about the force's deployment, viewing it as an infringement on its sovereignty. The government expressed concerns in a 9 August letter to the Council that South Sudan could be relegated “to the status of a protectorate of the United Nations”. Following the adoption of resolution 2304, South Sudanese Ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal complained that the force had been authorised even though South Sudan had not been consulted about its “modalities...including its composition, mandate, armament, deployment, timing and funding”. He noted that the 5 August IGAD Plus communiqué had called for agreement by South Sudan and the troop-contributing countries on these issues. Three days later, Kiir said in a 15 August address to the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (i.e. the parliament) that the government had yet to reach a conclusive decision on the force described in resolution 2304.

On 24 August, under “any other business,” the US proposed the idea of a visiting mission to South Sudan in early September. None of the members objected to the proposal, and most members were favourably inclined to it; some advocated a stop in a

neighbouring country to engage with key officials in the region.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a 4 August statement that preliminary UN investigations into the five days of fighting that began in Juba on 7 July and its aftermath revealed that government security forces carried out killings and rapes and looted and destroyed properties. He said that information received by UN human rights officers suggests that hundreds of fighters and civilians were killed during the initial fighting, with some civilians killed in crossfire between the fighting forces while others were reportedly summarily executed by government (SPLA) soldiers, who appear to have specifically targeted people of Nuer origin. Sexual violence continued after the initial fighting subsided, and more than 100 women and girls are reported to have been raped or gang-raped on the road leading out of Juba towards Yei. The High Commissioner expressed concern about allegations that some peacekeepers may have failed to assist women and girls who were reportedly raped and assaulted near their positions. He took note of UNMISS measures to address this situation and urged strong action in those instances in which UN military personnel failed in their duty to protect civilians. “The severity of the recent violence, and the very dangerous ethnic undertone, call for urgent action by the Security Council”, he said. According to the statement, the High Commissioner's Office provided the Security Council on 2 August with a written update of the Human Rights Office's preliminary findings.

The three-person Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, established on 23 March for one year, is scheduled to visit South Sudan and Ethiopia in September to hold meetings with government officials, opposition leaders, civil society and South Sudanese citizens as well as intergovernmental organisations and regional leaders. The Commission will present a report to the Human Rights Council in March 2017.

### Key Issues

The key issue for the Council is the need to prevent South Sudan from descending once again into full-blown civil war. The Council will need to consider how it can best support implementation of the peace agreement, given events in the country since 7 July, and what steps should be taken if the agreement, which is teetering on the verge of collapse, no longer provides an effective framework for bringing peace to South Sudan.

Another important issue is the difficult relationship between UNMISS and the Council on the one hand and South Sudan on the other hand, and how this affects the



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## South Sudan (con't)

implementation of UNMISS' mandate. Obstacles imposed on the mission's operations have inhibited UNMISS' ability to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access. In addition to having their freedom of movement constrained, UN staff and their humanitarian partners have faced harassment and physical violence.

Council members are grappling with several fundamental issues related to the regional protection force that it has authorised. These include the force's composition, the timeline for its deployment, whether and how the government can be persuaded to cooperate with its deployment and where the force's troops will stay. The host government's ambivalence about the force could enhance perceptions that UNMISS is violating South Sudan's sovereignty and in turn further jeopardise the safety and security of UN staff and their partners in the country.

Regarding the Council visiting mission, a key issue will be ensuring that the Council presents a clear, unified message to the parties in South Sudan. This may pose some difficulty, given divisions among members on issues such as sanctions and the regional protection force.

### Options

In keeping with resolution 2304, one option would be for the Council to impose an arms embargo and additional targeted sanctions if South Sudan continues to obstruct implementation of the UNMISS mandate.

If the regional protection force is unable to deploy or faces insurmountable obstacles

upon its deployment, the Council could consider requesting member states with requisite military capacity to deploy a robust force to protect civilians that would operate 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.

During the visiting mission, the Council could emphasise clearly to the government of South Sudan that attacks on civilians and violations of the Status of Forces Agreement are unacceptable.

### Council Dynamics

Council members share concerns with regard to South Sudan about the faltering political process, violence against civilians, the growing humanitarian crisis and obstructions on the operations of UNMISS and its humanitarian partners. However, there are divisions regarding how to approach the situation, as reflected by the abstentions by China, Egypt, Russia and Venezuela on resolution 2304.

While appreciating the importance of host country consent for the regional protection force, some members underscore that the deployment of the force is needed to provide security and protect civilians, given the government's failure to do so. For example, while recognising that South Sudan has given its consent "in principle", the US nonetheless underscored the need to be "clear-eyed about the challenges that UNMISS and its new regional protection force are up against" and the responsibilities of the Council under Chapter VII "to take steps...to restore peace

and security". Similarly, New Zealand maintained in its explanation of vote on resolution 2304 that "consent to every aspect of a peacekeeping mission is not a requirement in a Chapter VII operation".

Other members—such as Angola, China, Egypt, Russia and Venezuela—emphasise more strongly the need for host country consent, for the sake of both practicality and principle. Among the points highlighted by these members is the importance of respecting South Sudan's sovereignty. These states have highlighted the need to work out the modalities of the force with the government, as called for in the 5 August IGAD Plus communiqué.

The issue of an arms embargo is also contentious in the Council. France, Spain and the UK maintain that the Council should implement an arms embargo immediately without waiting to see whether the government cooperates with the deployment of the force or improves its cooperation with the mission. The US has long been reluctant to support an arms embargo, although it indicated during the 12 August meeting that it was ready to support this measure "if the obstruction [by South Sudan] continues". Russia and other members have long opposed an embargo, and some, including even those who supported resolution 2304, were uncomfortable with linking a peacekeeping resolution to the threat of sanctions. Egypt has said that this linkage amounts "to a virtual act of extortion".

The US is the penholder on South Sudan, while Senegal chairs the South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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## Liberia

### Expected Council Action

The mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) expires on 30 September. The Council is expected to adopt a resolution in September renewing the mission's mandate in its current configuration for a period of three months, pending the recommendations of the Secretary-General's assessment mission due in November.

### Key Recent Developments

Over the course of the year, the UN has continued its gradual disengagement from Liberia. In May, the Council lifted its remaining sanctions, an arms embargo on non-state actors, and terminated the Liberia sanctions regime, which had been in place since 2003. As mandated by resolution 2239, on 30 June, UNMIL formally transferred security responsibilities to Liberian authorities.

Resolution 2239 also called on the

Secretary-General to conduct an assessment mission to Liberia and provide the Council with recommendations by November on the future of the UN mission. By the end of the year, the Council is likely to evaluate the effects of UNMIL's drawdown and decide whether and when to withdraw UNMIL, and on the transition to another form of UN presence in Liberia.

At the height of its engagement in Liberia following the end of the conflict in 2003,

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**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/2016/706** (12 August 2016) was on UNMIL.

## Liberia (con't)

UNMIL numbered more than 15,000 uniform personnel. Subsequent to the 30 June transfer of security responsibilities, UNMIL's presence was reduced to 1,235 military and 507 police personnel. This relatively small UN contingent will continue to support, within its capacities, the Liberian government in protecting civilians should the security situation deteriorate. Furthermore, until at least mid-2017, the quick reaction force within the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire will stand ready to provide support to UNMIL in case of a serious threat to peace and stability in Liberia.

The security situation has remained relatively stable following the transition of security responsibilities to Liberian authorities. Leading up to the transfer, there was noticeable anxiety among the general population regarding UNMIL's drawdown. Some in the political opposition and in civil society groups have continued to express concerns about the readiness of Liberian authorities for the transition, and especially for ensuring security during the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for October 2017.

The Liberian government has already started to prepare for the 2017 legislative and presidential elections. Current Vice President Joseph Boakai and opposition candidate Alexander Cummings have declared their intent to run for the presidency. In addition, 23 political parties have been registered, while more than 20 other political parties await approval to register.

Following the end of the conflict in 2003, Liberia held presidential elections in 2005 and 2011, and current President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected both times. There will be no incumbent at the 2017 elections because the Constitution bars the president from serving more than two terms in office. Sirleaf stated on multiple occasions that she would not pursue a run for the presidency in 2017. In July, with her support, Sirleaf's Unity Party formally nominated Boakai as its candidate for the 2017 elections. Since its deployment in 2003, UNMIL has played a crucial role in all presidential and legislative elections. The 2017 elections are potentially risky, given that they will mark the first democratic handover of the presidency at a time when the Liberian authorities will be in sole charge of providing security in the country.

The fallout from a May report exposing bribes to Liberian officials by a UK mining company has continued to impact the political climate in Liberia. The report, published by the NGO Global Witness, exposed alleged corruption on the part of a number of senior government officials, including Alex Tyler, the speaker of the House of Representatives. Following an investigation launched by Sirleaf, several of those involved, including Tyler, have been arrested and indicted on various charges of corruption. The representatives in the legislature remain split between those who support Tyler and those who demand his resignation. The corruption scandal has also negatively affected the relationship between the executive and the legislature and has prevented progress on various reforms.

On 25 August, the Council held consultations on UNMIL, with a briefing by Farid Zarif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia. In his briefing, Zarif devoted significant attention to the 30 June transition of security responsibilities. While commending the government on achieving this important milestone, Zarif called on the Liberian government to implement outstanding legislative and institutional reforms. Zarif noted that UNMIL started adjusting its own engagement following the security transition which has necessitated a review of the nature and form of the future support and cooperation between Liberia and UNMIL. In this regard, Zarif informed the Council that there are ongoing consultations between the UN and Liberian government on the revised institutional framework for such cooperation.

### Key Issues

Maintaining stability in Liberia remains the core issue for the Council, given the ongoing drawdown of the mission and the 30 June transfer of security responsibilities from UNMIL to Liberian authorities, and the potential for destabilisation leading up to or during the 2017 presidential elections.

### Options

The most likely option for the Council is to extend the mission's mandate in its current configuration for three months, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his latest report on UNMIL. This would ensure the

continuity of the mission pending the Secretary-General's recommendations based on the assessment mission. Resolution 2239 requires the Council to 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".

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Despite the Council's unanimous view that the UN mission should continue its drawdown towards an eventual withdrawal, some members seem to be wary regarding the timing of such actions. The overall security situation on the ground has remained relatively stable, even after the transition of security responsibilities from UNMIL to the Liberian authorities.

The Liberian government, however, is facing budgetary deficits that are almost certain to affect the allocation of funds to the transition process. In addition, a number of legislative and institutional reforms have yet to be implemented. Crucial legislation on police and immigration services and on fire-arms and ammunition control is still awaiting adoption. The government seems to be confident in its ability to maintain control of the security situation, but there is growing concern among Liberians regarding UNMIL's drawdown, given the potentially destabilising effects of the 2017 presidential elections. The P3 in general and the US in particular seem supportive of a more rapid drawdown of UNMIL. The US was also one of the main proponents of terminating Liberia's sanctions regime in May. The elected members seem to be in favour of UNMIL's drawdown in principle, 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 regarding possible termination of the mission.

The US is the penholder on Liberia.

# Afghanistan

## Expected Council Action

In September, the Council will hold its quarterly debate on Afghanistan, during which it will consider the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Tadamichi Yamamoto, who was appointed as the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Afghanistan and head of UNAMA in June, is expected to brief.

UNAMA's mandate expires on 17 March 2017.

## Key Recent Developments

The insurgency continues to take a heavy toll on the population and Afghan security forces. The Taliban's increased activity and military gains in the country—as well as activity by Al-Qaida and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—have been resisted by Afghan security forces with the assistance of NATO.

Several terrorist attacks occurred on 20 June. An improvised explosive device in a bazaar in Kishem district, in Badakhshan province, killed ten civilians, including five children, and injured 36 others. In Kabul, a suicide attack on Nepalese and Indian contractors and an improvised explosive device targeting a provincial council member resulted in at least 27 killed and 48 wounded. The Council condemned these attacks in a press statement. On 23 July, Council members issued a press statement condemning the terrorist attack that occurred earlier that day in Kabul, resulting in at least 80 people killed and more than 230 wounded, for which local affiliates of ISIL claimed responsibility. On 25 August, Council members condemned in a press statement a terrorist attack that occurred on 24 August in Kabul, targeting students of the American University of Afghanistan, which resulted in at least 13 people dead and 50 people injured.

In August, the Taliban made significant headway in the key northern district of Baghlan. They have also continued to advance in Helmand Province in the south over the last few months.

On 12 August, the US announced that the head of the ISIL Afghanistan branch, Hafiz Saeed Khan, had been killed in a US airstrike

in the eastern Nangarhar province on 26 July.

Reconciliation talks between the Taliban and the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), which consists of Afghan, Chinese, Pakistani and US officials, remain dormant. The new Taliban head, Haibatullah Akhundzada, recently said that a Taliban delegation had visited China on 18–22 July. It appears that Taliban hesitancy to fully engage and Afghan-Pakistan tensions are at the core of the current deadlock.

The Afghan government power-sharing arrangement between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah is at a critical impasse. The arrangement calls for parliamentary elections and constitutional reforms by the end of September, but Afghan stakeholders have yet to reach agreement on these issues. This has caused public tensions between the two leaders, raising concerns over future Afghan governance prior to the donor conference scheduled in Brussels in October.

On 6 July, US President Barack Obama announced that the current US military presence of 8,400 troops would be maintained until the end of his term in January 2017. The US is the main contributor to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, which numbers roughly 13,000 troops. As expected, NATO and Afghan officials issued a declaration on Afghanistan during the NATO summit held in Warsaw on 8–9 July. In the declaration, NATO agreed to continue its financial support to the Afghan Security Forces until through 2020. NATO also agreed to sustain its support mission assisting Afghan forces beyond 2016.

The Council held its last quarterly debate on Afghanistan on 21 June. Briefing the Council for the last time, the then Secretary-General's Special Representative, Nicholas Haysom, reminded Council members that during the previous quarterly debate he had said that it would be an achievement for the Afghan national unity government not to collapse in 2016. While noting progress on some issues, he said it was critical for Afghanistan to secure medium-term financial and military support from the international community, lay a foundation for a viable peace process

and address the high level of violence and the lack of a set timetable for elections.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

The 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee held informal consultations on 1 June to meet with a representative of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (a security alliance between Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) about counter-narcotic efforts.

The Committee amended and added details to the listing of Taliban commander Shah Nawaz Rahmatullah on 21 July.

On 8 August, the Committee met with the Monitoring Team assisting the Committee and representatives of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime for updates on counter-narcotics efforts, including those of the Combined Maritime Force in the Arabian Sea (consisting of the forces of 26 NATO states and Thailand). Committee members also discussed possible updates to details pertaining to the assets of former Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, who was killed by a US drone strike in Pakistan on 21 May.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 25 July, UNAMA, in coordination with the UN Human Rights Office, released its mid-year report on protection of civilians in armed conflict, covering 1 January to 30 June. The report documents a record number of civilian casualties since counting began in 2009, with 5,166 civilians killed or maimed (1,601 killed and 3,565 injured) in the first six months of 2016, of whom almost one-third were children (388 killed and 1,121 injured). This represents an increase of 4 percent in the total number of casualties compared to the first six months of 2015 and is the highest half-year total since 2009. The total civilian casualty figure recorded by the UN between 1 January 2009 and 30 June has risen to 63,934 (22,941 killed and 40,993 injured).

During the reporting period, anti-government elements remained responsible for the majority (60 percent) of civilian casualties, but there was an increase in the number of civilians killed and injured by pro-government forces. Also during the reporting period, 157,987 Afghans were newly displaced, marking a 10 percent increase over the same period last year. The report also documents other serious human rights violations and abuses, including the deliberate targeting of women in the public sphere; use of children in armed conflict; sexual violence against boys and girls; attacks on educational and health facilities; abductions and summary executions; and the targeting of human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and judges.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2274](#) (15 March 2016) renewed the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2017. [Secretary-General's Report S/2016/532](#) (10 June 2016) was on UNAMA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7722](#) (21 June 2016) was the quarterly debate on Afghanistan. [Security Council Press Statements SC/12491](#) (25 August 2016) condemned the terrorist attack that occurred on 24 August in Kabul, which resulted in at least 13 people dead and 50 people injured. [SC/12457](#) (23 July 2016) condemned the terrorist attack that occurred earlier that day in Kabul, resulting in at least 80 people killed and more than 230 wounded, for which local affiliates of ISIL claimed responsibility. [SC/12413](#) (21 June 2016) condemned the 20 June terrorist attacks in Kabul and Badakhshan Province. [Sanctions-Related Document SC/12453](#) (21 July 2016) amended and added details to the listing of Taliban commander Shah Nawaz Rahmatullah.



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## Afghanistan (con't)

### Key Issues

An important issue for the next months is how the Council may encourage the political actors to meet the agreed electoral calendar.

The ongoing key issue has been how to address the deteriorating security situation, its negative impact on the country's stability and the toll the conflict is taking on the civilian population.

A related issue is whether it is possible to generate momentum for reconciliation efforts, given the continuing heavy fighting between the insurgency and government forces.

The link between drug production and trafficking and the insurgency is another ongoing issue.

### Options

The Council could adopt a resolution or presidential statement that:

- deplores the high number of civilian casualties and demands that all sides avoid killing and injuring civilians, recalling that

targeting civilians is a war crime;

- encourages efforts by the international community to support reconciliation in Afghanistan; and
- emphasises the importance of development assistance in promoting Afghanistan's stability.

The Council could also decide to visit Afghanistan to show its support for anti-insurgency, reconciliation and anti-corruption efforts and to learn how it can further assist efforts on the ground.

### Council Dynamics

There is widespread concern among Council members about the deteriorating security environment and the toll that the conflict continues to take on civilians. There are also concerns over the fragility of the power-sharing arrangements and the uncertainty of the electoral calendar.

Several Council members also recognise that after NATO pledged its continued

military support in Warsaw, the upcoming Brussels conference will be pivotal in continuing international support for Afghanistan.

Several Council members—in particular, France and Russia and, more recently, Egypt and Venezuela—have regularly raised concerns about the connection between drug production and trafficking and the insurgency. Russia, Egypt and Venezuela have also emphasised the increased activities of ISIL in Afghanistan as a major concern.

During the 15 March briefing on Afghanistan, Japan suggested a Council visiting mission to the country. Council members considered such a trip in July, but they eventually decided against it for security and logistical reasons. However, the idea may resurface in the future.

Spain is the penholder on Afghanistan, and New Zealand is the chair of the 1988 Sanctions Committee.

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## Libya

### Expected Council Action

In September, the Council is expecting a briefing by the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Martin Kobler, followed by consultations. The Council will also receive a briefing by the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Ramlan Ibrahim (Malaysia).

UNSMIL's mandate expires on 15 December, and the mandate of the Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts expires on 31 July 2017.

### Key Recent Developments

Since the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in December 2015 by participants in the UN-facilitated Libyan Political Dialogue, the failure of the Tobruk-based House of Representatives to endorse the Government of National Accord (GNA) has

critically hampered the political situation. On 22 August, the House rejected a cabinet list submitted on 15 February by the Presidency Council of the GNA. The House, reportedly in full quorum, also asked the Presidency Council to submit a new consensual list of proposed ministers. This requires agreement by all nine members of the Presidency Council, including two who boycotted it asserting that it is insufficiently inclusive. One of them, Omar al-Aswad, announced on 26 August his intention to re-join the Presidency Council.

Five months since its arrival in Tripoli, the Presidency Council has faced numerous challenges in the performance of its duties. On 16-18 July, the members of the Libyan Political Dialogue discussed with the Presidency Council the difficulties it was facing. At the meeting, participants identified several areas where progress by the Presidency Council was crucial: delivery of basic services,

implementation of security arrangements stipulated by the LPA, resumption of production and export of oil and bringing on board its two boycotting members. Kobler briefed Security Council members on these discussions on 22 July, and in a press statement they encouraged the Presidency Council to continue efforts to broaden the basis of its support and to take the necessary decisions to tackle Libya's challenges. By the time of the House vote, attempts to restore oil production (through reaching an agreement with the armed group known as Petroleum Facilities Guard) and take control of sovereign funds (by appointing a steering committee to run the Libyan Investment Authority) had sparked controversies and yielded limited results.

General Khalifa Haftar continues a military offensive aimed at evicting the Shura Council and its allies from Benghazi. On 20

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2298 (22 July 2016) provided for category 2 chemical weapons to be transferred and destroyed outside Libya. S/RES/2292 (14 June 2016) aimed at implementing the arms embargo. S/RES/2291 (13 June 2016) renewed UNSMIL's mandate. **Secretary-General's Report S/2016/627** (18 July 2016) assessed the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters in Libya and the region. **Security Council Letters S/2016/701** (10 August 2016) attached a letter from House speaker Agila Saleh expressing concerns that the Benghazi Defence Companies were planning to mount attacks in eastern Libya. S/2016/605 (11 July 2016) was from Agila Saleh, saying that all decisions issued by the Presidency Council are considered null and void without any effect until its endorsement by the House. S/2016/508 (2 June 2016) was from Libyan Ambassador Ibrahim Dabbashi, questioning the Secretary-General's report for equating the forces loyal to Haftar with other armed groups. **Security Council Press Statement SC/12456** (22 July 2016) encouraged the Presidency Council to continue efforts to broaden the basis of its support.

## Libya (con't)

July, three French soldiers who were supporting this offensive died in a helicopter crash, which led to the withdrawal of French special forces soon afterwards. (Although for some time most Council members have considered, at least nominally, the formation of the GNA as a prerequisite for counter-terrorism assistance, the presence of British and American special forces in eastern Libya has been previously reported.)

The offensive against Sirte, a coastal town under the partial control of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continues to advance, involving mostly Misrata-based militias nominally under the command of the GNA with aerial support by the US. (Since 1 August, the US African Command has carried out some 80 airstrikes against ISIL targets in Sirte.) An 18 July report by the Secretary-General—discussed two days later by the Council—highlighted how success against ISIL resulted in increased tensions among competing armed groups (such as the Libyan National Army led by Khalifa Haftar and Misrata-based militias).

The risk that chemical weapons might fall into the hands of terrorist groups motivated the adoption on 22 July of resolution 2298, which authorises the transfer of chemical weapons out of Libya in order to destroy them. On 27 August, some 400 tons of chemical weapons were transferred to a Danish ship in Misrata, on their way to Germany, where they will be destroyed.

The security situation and difficult socioeconomic conditions continue to impact vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrants and refugees. According to a displacement tracking matrix published in August by the International Organization for Migration, the number of IDPs across Libya has reached 348,000, in addition to 310,000 returnees and 277,000 migrants. The report also said that 2,742 deaths have been recorded in 2016 on the

central Mediterranean Sea route that connects Libya and Italy.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

On 14 June, the Council adopted resolution 2292, which provided legal grounds for the extension of the mandate of the EU's EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia to support the implementation of the arms embargo in the Mediterranean. The resolution provides a 12-month authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from Libya that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. It further authorises member states to seize and dispose of arms and ammunition found during these inspections. On 18 August, the Sanctions Committee updated its Implementation Assistance Notice Number 3 to inform member states of reporting requirements to the Committee when attempted or actual violations of the embargo are detected, and regarding the disposal of embargoed material.

### Key Issues

The overarching issue is to ensure a solution to the political deadlock that addresses the issues raised by those refusing to support the LPA without reopening all of its provisions. Bringing on board the two boycotting members of the Presidency Council and agreeing on a cabinet that can be endorsed by the House are urgent and related issues.

Mitigating the impact that current counter-terrorist operations, conducted by different armed groups, may have on the power dynamics on the ground and the efforts to bring together the different parties within the framework of the LPA are key issues. Exercising leverage by the external actors supporting these operations to encourage engagement in the political process and for the parties to conduct hostilities with respect for international humanitarian law is a related issue.

The potential for ISIL to disperse and increase its regional reach as a result of ongoing offensives against its strongholds is an urgent issue.

### Options

Options for the Council include adopting a presidential statement or resolution:

- reaffirming its support for the Presidency Council and calling on it to propose an inclusive cabinet;
- urging the House to consider the proposal swiftly and in good faith; and
- reiterating UNSMIL's good offices mandate in this context.

Council members could also visit Libya and the region to hold discussions with the parties, including spoilers, and regional stakeholders to overcome the political deadlock.

### Council Dynamics

Council members generally support UNSMIL's mediation efforts but have arguably failed to set a clear direction to reach and support a political settlement. Some Council members have emphasised the importance of a formal endorsement of the GNA by the House, while others have been interacting bilaterally with the Presidency Council of the GNA as the legitimate government of Libya. Several resolutions since December 2015 have called upon member states to cease support to and official contact with parallel institutions that claim to have legitimate authority, but it seems that this has not been respected by several Council members, including permanent members.

In December 2015, the Council mandated UNSMIL to support the establishment of the GNA and, as a result of the deadlock over this process, the Council renewed the same mandate with technical rollover resolutions in March and June. The Council could take advantage of the current impasse to collectively revisit (and agree on) its political strategy for Libya.

The UK is the penholder on Libya. Ambassador Ramlan Ibrahim (Malaysia) chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

## Expected Council Action

In September, the Council will consider the Secretary-General's 120-day report on Somalia. The Council is also expecting the AU to submit a report on the implementation of the AU Mission in Somalia's (AMISOM) mandate—the first such report to be received since 2013. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Michael Keating is expected to brief the Council, followed by consultations.

The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia's (UNSOM) mandate expires on 31 March 2017; AMISOM's mandate expires on 31 May 2017.

## Key Recent Developments

Somalia continues to prepare for elections later this year. The National Leaders Forum (NLF) held a meeting in Mogadishu from 2 to 9 August to finalise the pending issues on the implementation of the 2016 National Electoral Process. A communiqué issued following the meeting said that “due to the existing circumstances, it is not possible to hold elections within the remaining period of the term of office for the current government institutions of the Federal Parliament and the President”, which was set to end on 20 August. To avert an institutional vacuum in the constitutionally mandated institutions, the NLF authorised the current officials to remain in office until the results of the elections are announced. It endorsed a timetable for the upcoming elections, according to which voting for a new federal parliament will be held between 24 September and 10 October, and the president will be elected by the new parliament on 30 October. The communiqué also addressed the finalisation of the constitutional review, the transition away from the clan-based 4.5 voting system following this year's election (this system gives an equal share to each of the four major clans while a coalition of smaller clans gets half a share), the allocation of seats for women in parliament, the representation of minority communities, the electoral process and college for the various sub-clans inhabiting the Banadiri area, voting criteria and other issues.

On 19 August, the Council—which had said in resolution 2232 of July 2015 and

subsequent press statements that it expected no delay in the holding of elections planned for August—adopted a presidential statement in response to the new electoral schedule. While expressing its regrets about the delay in the electoral process, the Council welcomed the meeting of Somalia's NLF on the implementation of the 2016 National Electoral Process and the continued political and security progress in Somalia since 2012. The statement also underscored the need to maintain the momentum towards democratic governance, with an inclusive and credible electoral process in 2016 as a stepping stone to universal suffrage elections in 2020.

The Council noted the consensus decision of the NLF to extend the timeline for the parliamentary and presidential elections to allow for the implementation of the technical modalities that will facilitate an inclusive process, as envisaged by the National Consultative Forum in the Mogadishu Declaration of 16 December 2015. The statement regretted the delay of the original timeline and called on all Somali stakeholders to work constructively to implement the revised calendar. It also noted the NLF's decision to extend the current mandates of the federal institutions to respect this timeline. The statement welcomed the further provisions in the NLF communiqué, commended the establishment of an Electoral Dispute Resolution Mechanism, and emphasised the importance of adhering to the political roadmap between now and 2020, in particular in order to reach one-person, one-vote elections by 2020.

Speaking about the upcoming election, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia, Francisco Madeira, reiterated on 17 August that AMISOM will work together with the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF) to ensure that the electoral process is successful, and stressed that efforts would be intensified to defeat the Al-Shabaab rebel group, noting that the focus will be on clearing main supply routes and enabling residents to move freely.

Meanwhile, the security situation in Somalia remains troubled, with Al-Shabaab continuing to conduct terrorist attacks. Among such attacks recently was a double suicide car bombing targeting a government building

in Galkayo in central Somalia on 21 August that killed 27 and injured nearly 90 others, the single deadliest attack the group has carried out in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. On 26 July, two suicide bombers detonated explosives-packed cars outside the office of the UN mine-clearing agency and at a Somali army checkpoint in Mogadishu. Thirteen people were killed, including a protection officer working with the UN Refugee Agency. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for both attacks.

In a communiqué on the situation in Somalia and AMISOM adopted on 29 June, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) commended the efforts of the AU Commission for having convened the workshop that revised the AMISOM Concept of Operations (CONOPs) and took note of the meeting of the Military Operations Coordination Committee, held in Kampala on 22 June, which endorsed the recommendations of the revised CONOPs. In its communiqué, the PSC expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the revised CONOPs regarding AMISOM's identified priority tasks. These include support to secure the electoral process in coordination with the Elections Security Taskforce; more targeted and effective offensive operations by AMISOM and SNSF against Al-Shabaab; implementation of the Joint Technical Intelligence Committees to improve intelligence-sharing and management; and enhanced command and control by urgently filling structures of AMISOM's Strategic, Operational and Tactical headquarters with dedicated and qualified personnel. The communiqué also took note of the timelines of the AMISOM exit strategy presented by the AU Commission, which prioritises territorial recovery and consolidation by AMISOM and SNSF until October 2018, and a subsequent drawdown and transfer of security responsibilities to the SNSF from then until December 2020.

The PSC communiqué also emphasised the need to align the current political developments with efforts to create a capable, inclusive and effective SNSF and urged the UN Security Council to lift the arms embargo imposed on Somalia. Ending the embargo was a critical aspect of building capable

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2297 (7 July 2016) extended AMISOM's authorisation until 31 May 2017 with no major changes. S/RES/2232 (28 July 2015) extended the mandate of UNSOM until 30 March 2016 and reauthorised AMISOM through 30 May 2016. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2016/13 (19 August 2016) welcomed the meeting of Somalia's NLF on the implementation of the 2016 National Electoral Process and regretted the delayed electoral timetable. Secretary-General's Report S/2016/430 (9 May 2016) was on Somalia. Security Council Press Statement SC/12369 (23 May 2016) welcomed the electoral process set out in the 22 May decree issued by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.



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## Somalia (con't)

Somalia security institutions, the PSC said.

On 21 August, the Kenyan government said it would suspend its decision to close down the Dadaab refugee camp and send back Somali refugees until the situation in Somalia stabilises. Calling the camp an economic burden and breeding ground for terrorism, Kenya had announced in early May that it would close the site, which houses more than 326,000 Somalis, by the end of November.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 24 June, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted without a vote the outcome of the universal periodic review of Somalia, comprising the report of the Working Group (A/HRC/32/12), the views of the state concerning the recommendations and/or conclusions made and its voluntary commitments and replies presented before the adoption of the outcome (A/HRC/RES/32/109). The HRC will consider the report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia during its 33rd session in September (A/HRC/33/64).

### Key Issues

The most pressing issue currently is ensuring that Somalia adheres to the revised timeline for the limited 2016 electoral process and

conducts peaceful, transparent and inclusive elections, paving the way for one-person, one-vote elections in 2020.

Likewise, progress must be made towards the constitutional review process and completion of the federal state formation, with support from UNSOM.

It is also essential that effective measures be taken by AMISOM and the SNSF to address the security threat posed by Al-Shabaab, including through the implementation of AMISOM's priority tasks as outlined in the revised CONOPs, particularly in light of the upcoming elections. As a related issue, funding gaps for AMISOM operations continue to be a key concern.

### Options

The most likely option for the Council is to simply receive the September briefing. Given that the Council issued a presidential statement on Somalia in August, it seems unlikely that it would take further measures in September unless developments on the ground necessitate further action.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are united in supporting

Somalia's electoral and state-building processes, and in their support for AMISOM, as demonstrated by unified messages conveyed during the Council's visit to Somalia in May and the uncontested adoption of several recent Council outcomes on Somalia—including its 23 May press statement, 7 July AMISOM reauthorisation and 19 August presidential statement.

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

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

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## Sudan (Darfur)

### Expected Council Action

In September, Ambassador Rafael Ramírez (Venezuela), the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, is expected to provide the quarterly briefing to Council members on the Committee's work. The Committee will have to make a decision on a new slate of candidates for its panel of experts, once they are proposed by the Department of Political Affairs.

### Key Recent Developments

There has been no improvement in the prolonged humanitarian crisis facing Darfur. There are currently 2.6 million internally displaced persons in the region, while approximately "2.7 million people now face crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity", according to the 8 June special report on the UN/

AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) by the UN Secretary-General and the Chair of the AU Commission. Fighting in Jebel Marra displaced tens of thousands in the first half of 2016.

On 8 August, several rebel groups—Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North—and the opposition National Umma Party signed the "Roadmap for Ending the Conflict in Sudan." The roadmap calls for a cessation of hostilities, humanitarian access and a more inclusive national dialogue process. The government had signed it on 21 March, but the rebels had refrained from signing for several months out of concerns about government control over the national dialogue. In a press

statement issued on 11 August, members of the Council welcomed the signing of the Roadmap by the opposition groups and commended the government of Sudan for having signed it earlier this year.

Soon after the opposition signed the document, from 9 to 14 August, they met with government representatives in Addis Ababa. However, these talks failed to make progress, as they were mired in disagreements over security arrangements in Darfur and humanitarian access in the Two Areas (Sudan's Blue Nile and South Kordofan states). With regard to Darfur, the government had wanted detailed information on the location of rebel forces as a precondition to a cessation of hostilities; the rebels were reluctant to provide this information. With regard to the Two Areas, there were

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2296 (29 June 2016) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2017. S/RES/2265 (10 February 2016) renewed the mandate of the Sudan Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts until 12 March 2017. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2016/587 (1 July 2016) was the UNAMID quarterly report. S/2016/510 (8 June 2016) was the UNAMID special report of the Secretary-General and the AU Commission Chairperson. **Security Council Meetings** S/PV.7728 (29 June 2016) was the meeting at which resolution 2296 was adopted and included explanations of vote by China, Egypt, Russia, the UK, the US and Venezuela. S/PV.7716 (14 June 2016) was a UNAMID briefing. S/PV.7710 (9 June 2016) was the ICC Prosecutor's semi-annual briefing. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/12474 (11 August 2016) welcomed the signing of the Roadmap Agreement.

## Sudan (Darfur) (con't)

differences of view on routes for the delivery of aid, with the rebels requesting that some of the aid be delivered through Ethiopia.

The Council adopted resolution 2265 on 10 February, extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 12 March 2017. Shortly after the resolution was adopted, Russia placed a hold on the slate of experts proposed by DPA. (A hold means that the issue remains pending on the Committee's agenda but that a decision is not made, meaning that action cannot be taken on a proposal until the hold is removed or the proposal is rejected.) Two of the five experts proposed by DPA were members of last year's panel, which produced the 2015 final report that some members, including Russia, found objectionable, at least in part because the report argued that funds from the trade in Darfur gold were fueling conflict in the region.

On 19 August, Russia requested that its hold be extended. According to the Committee guidelines, a hold can be left pending for up to six months; after such time, it can be extended by up to three months "if the Committee determines, at the request of the Committee member concerned, on a case-by-case basis that extraordinary circumstances require additional time". However, several Committee members objected to the Russian request, which was declined as a consequence. On 25 August, the day before the hold was set to expire, Russia rejected the proposed panel, paving the way for DPA to put forward a new slate of candidates for the Panel.

The Sudan Sanctions Committee met on 8 July, receiving a briefing from Zainab Bangura, the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Bangura reported that sexual violence was a consistent characteristic of the Darfur conflict. She expressed concerns about restrictions on humanitarian access and impunity in Darfur.

On 14 June, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous briefed the Council on UNAMID. Ladsous described the lack of progress in finding a political resolution to the Darfur conflict while underscoring that intercommunal clashes remain "a major cause of insecurity in Darfur". He emphasised that continued government restrictions on access and freedom of movement significantly hampered UNAMID's operations. The Council adopted resolution 2296 on 29 June, renewing the

mandate of UNAMID for one year.

On 9 June, ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda provided the semi-annual Council briefing on the court's work with regard to Darfur. Bensouda asserted that the Council's inaction had made it possible for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who in 2009 was indicted by the court for war crimes and crimes against humanity and in 2010 for genocide, to travel internationally without being apprehended, in spite of the court's arrest warrants against him.

On 11 July, the ICC decided that Uganda and Djibouti, both state parties to the Rome Statute, had not complied with the court's request to arrest Bashir and referred the issue to the Security Council. Bashir was in Djibouti on 8 May for the inauguration of its president, Ismail Omar Guelleh. On 12 May, Bashir attended the inauguration of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in Kampala. During his inaugural address, Museveni disavowed his country's support for the court, referring to the ICC as "a bunch of useless people".

Bashir attended the AU summit in Kigali, Rwanda, in mid-July. Prior to his arrival, Rwanda's foreign minister, Louise Mushikiwabo, announced that her government would not arrest Bashir.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

The Human Rights Council (HRC) will consider the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review on Sudan during its 33rd session in September. The report contains 244 recommendations. Among them are calls to fully implement the Action Plan for the protection of children in armed conflict; extend a standing invitation to all special procedures and respond positively to pending visit requests; allow unrestricted humanitarian access to all areas affected by conflicts; and carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture and excessive use of force by state officials and other human rights violations, including sexual abuse. The HRC will also consider the report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan (A/HRC/33/65) and the Addendum on the mission to Sudan of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights (A/HRC/33/48/Add.1) during its 33rd session in September.

### Key Issues

The longstanding key issues are the violations of the Sudan sanctions regime and the continuing security, humanitarian and human rights crisis in Darfur.

A key issue for the Sanctions Committee is the fact that a Panel of Experts for 2016 has not been appointed. Under resolution 2265, the Panel was supposed to have provided a mid-term update on its work to the Committee by 12 August.

### Options

One option is for Ambassador Ramírez to report to the Council on Bangura's July briefing to the Sanctions Committee and to hold a discussion on candidates for a new panel of experts, if names are proposed to the Committee during the month.

Assuming the Committee agrees on the Panel's composition, the Council could adopt a resolution reauthorising the Panel to allow it to serve a full year. This would supplant resolution 2265, which renewed the Panel of Experts until 12 March 2017.

If consensus cannot be achieved on the candidates for a new panel, another option would be for the chair of the Committee to refer the matter to the Security Council. At that point, a draft resolution could be put forward to endorse the proposed slate of names to serve on the Panel of Experts.

### Council Dynamics

The 2015 Panel of Experts' analysis that the illegal trafficking in gold generates funds that support the conflict in Darfur was very contentious. While some members found this analysis useful, others disputed it, maintaining that the Panel was biased and that some of its claims were unsubstantiated. China, Egypt, Russia and Venezuela opposed the inclusion of language in resolution 2265 linking the trade in gold and other resources to potential insecurity in Darfur; this language was removed as a result. Some in this group expressed concerns that making such a linkage in the context of a Chapter VII resolution could bolster arguments for additional targeted sanctions, which they believe would be counterproductive.

Several Council members have been concerned for several months about the hold on the Panel of Experts. They recognise that even if a new Panel is appointed, the timeframe for its work this year will be limited.

The UK is the penholder on UNAMID, while the US holds the pen on Darfur sanctions and Venezuela chairs the sanctions committee.

# Protection of Civilians

## Expected Council Action

In late September, the Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding measures to prevent attacks on health care in armed conflict, as requested by resolution 2286 of 3 May. Briefers may include the Secretary-General and representatives of civil society, although this had yet to be confirmed at press time.

Press elements—or a press statement—could be a possible outcome of the meeting.

## Key Recent Developments

In recent years, attacks on health care workers and medical facilities have been a disturbing feature of armed conflicts in numerous conflict zones. In addition to the harm caused to health care workers and facilities, such attacks have a devastating impact on people in need, whose access to health care and humanitarian assistance is curtailed. On 3 May, the Council adopted resolution 2286 on the protection of health care in armed conflict—including medical workers, transport, equipment and facilities—and strongly condemned any attacks against medical personnel.

Since the adoption of this resolution, attacks in Syria, Yemen and Pakistan have highlighted the gravity of the problem. On 31 May, a bomb struck the Al-Ihsan hospital in Aleppo, Syria, wounding 45 people, while at least 10 people died when the Bayan hospital, also in Aleppo, was hit during an aerial bombardment on 8 June. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there have been 71 attacks on health facilities this year in Syria. In Yemen, a 15 August airstrike, reportedly by the Saudi-led coalition, hit the Abs Hospital in Hajjah, Yemen, killing 19 people and wounding 24. WHO has reported that more than 100 health facilities have been damaged in Yemen since the fighting there escalated in March 2015. According to MSF which supported the Abs Hospital—which was “partially destroyed” in the bombing—it was “the main medical facility...in the western part of Hajjah governorate”. Following this attack, MSF withdrew its staff from hospitals in northern Yemen's Sada and Hajjah governorates because of security concerns. In Pakistan, a suicide attack at the entrance to a

hospital in Quetta on 9 August claimed the lives of more than 70 people; those targeted appeared to be lawyers mourning the death of a colleague, whose body was in the emergency room of the hospital. A Pakistani branch of the Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant took responsibility for the attack.

Resolution 2286 was designed to convey a strong political signal about the unacceptability of violations of international humanitarian law arising from attacks against medical and humanitarian workers exclusively engaged in medical duties in conflict situations. Among other things, the resolution:

- strongly condemned attacks against medical and humanitarian personnel and impunity for such attacks; and strongly urged states and all parties to armed conflict to develop effective measures to prevent and address attacks on health care in armed conflict;
- underlined the role of education and training in international humanitarian law as a means to support efforts to halt and prevent such attacks;
- requested the Secretary-General to promptly provide the Council with recommendations regarding measures to prevent attacks on health care workers and facilities in armed conflict; and
- requested the Secretary-General to brief annually on the implementation of the resolution.

Immediately following the adoption of the resolution, the Council received a briefing on health care in armed conflict. The briefers included UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Peter Maurer, the president of the ICRC; and Joanne Liu, the president of MSF. All of them underscored the devastating human impact of attacks on medical personnel and facilities in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Ban said that “intentional and direct attacks on hospitals are war crimes” and that “denying people access to essential health care is a serious violation of international humanitarian law”. Maurer noted that “entire systems unravel under the attacks on health facilities and personnel”. Liu said that although the Council is responsible for protecting peace and security, “four of the five permanent members...have, in

varying degrees, been associated with coalitions responsible for attacks on health-care structures”, including in Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria. She exhorted the Council to “stop those attacks”.

The Council held an open debate on 10 June on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. Jean-Marc Ayrault, France's minister of foreign affairs and international development, presided. Ban and President Faustin-Archange Touadéra of the Central African Republic addressed the Council. Maurer briefed by video teleconference.

On 18 August, the Secretary-General submitted his recommendations for the protection of health care in armed conflict to the Security Council, as requested by resolution 2286. Among other things, the Secretary-General called for:

- adherence to international treaties;
- reinforcement of national legislation related to the protection of medical care in armed conflict;
- guarantees that medical personnel engaged solely in medical duties can act in accordance with medical ethics without being punished for doing so;
- adoption, review, revision and implementation of operational precautionary measures, including recording and mapping the location of medical personnel, facilities and equipment; and
- improvement in data collection, analysis and reporting.

## Key Issues

The key issue for the Council is whether it can play an effective role in implementing the Secretary-General's recommendations on the protection of health care in armed conflict and, as a result, have a concrete impact on country-specific situations in which medical workers and facilities are targeted. One complicating factor, as Liu noted in the 3 May briefing, is that several permanent members of the Council have been affiliated, to different extents, with coalitions involved in attacks on health care. A related question is how the Council can continue to maintain attention on this issue and ensure that its decisions appropriately reflect the imperatives

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2286](#) (3 May 2016) condemned attacks on health care in armed conflict. [Secretary-General's Report S/2016/447](#) (13 May 2016) was the 12th report on the protection of civilians. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.7711](#) (10 June 2016) was a debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. [S/PV.7685](#) (3 May 2016) was a briefing on the protection of health care in armed conflict. [Security Council Letter S/2016/722](#) (18 August 2016) contained the Secretary-General's recommendations on the protection of health care in armed conflict.



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## Protection of Civilians (con't)

of medical neutrality under international humanitarian law.

### Options

The Council could consider issuing a statement that:

- welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations and urges that they be implemented by all relevant actors;
- urges states to refrain from exporting weapons that might be used in ways that violate international law, including in attacks on health care;
- calls on the UN system to develop a

mechanism to collect data on attacks on medical workers and facilities across conflicts in a standardised way; and

- emphasises the importance of medical neutrality in relevant Council country-specific decisions.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

The protection of health care in armed conflict is an issue of growing concern to several Council members and the wider UN membership. This is largely because of the high number of aid workers who are subjected to violence, the damage to medical facilities in

numerous conflict settings and the negative implications of these attacks on the lives of civilians in need of medical care and humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, there seems to be a rising perception that parties to conflict in many contexts show little respect for international humanitarian law, which includes protections for aid workers.

Leadership on this issue has been taken by five elected members—Egypt, Japan, New Zealand, Spain and Uruguay—that served as penholders on resolution 2286, a resolution that was sponsored by 85 member states.

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## UNDOF (Golan Heights)

### Expected Council Action

In September, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will brief Council members in consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The Secretary-General's report is due 22 September. No outcome is expected.

UNDOF was established in 1974 to monitor the ceasefire between Israel and Syria. Its mandate expires on 31 December.

### Key Recent Developments

It has been two years since the spillover of the Syrian civil war into UNDOF's area of operations resulted in the relocation of most of the mission's peacekeepers from the Bravo (Syrian) side to the Alpha (Israeli) side of the ceasefire line in September 2014. The majority of personnel remain based on the Israeli side, restricting mission mobility and operational capacity. Some peacekeepers remain on the Syrian side at Mt. Hermon, which is strategically important to Israel. If there were no UNDOF security presence at that position, Israel could feel compelled to man it. That would be an especially difficult challenge to regional security and the 1974 disengagement agreement.

The June UNDOF report described the varying security environments in different sectors of the mission's area of operations. In the northern sector, the security situation had improved, and in the central sector, clashes between government forces and

armed opposition groups continued, albeit with decreasing intensity. In the southern sector, there was fighting between various armed opposition groups, particularly between Al Nusra Front (now known as the Fatah al-Sham Front) and the Free Syrian Army against the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade.

Given the improved security situation in the northern sector, the UN is planning a limited return to Camp Faouar, though the timing of any such redeployment to the Bravo side is highly contingent on having the proper operational and security environment in place. The Security Council welcomed the plan for phased redeployment, conditions permitting, in resolution 2294, which it adopted in June to renew UNDOF until the end of the year.

The June UNDOF report also reported that the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was largely maintained but that the situation remained volatile with a significant number of breaches of the ceasefire line. The forthcoming September report is expected to detail further violations that have occurred since the last reporting period. On three occasions, 22 August and on 3 and 25 July, Israeli forces targeted Syrian military positions after coming under fire from the Syrian side of the ceasefire line—probably a result of errant fire.

The situation in the Golan increases the possibility of escalating tensions not only between Israel and Syria but also between Israel and Lebanon and between Israel and Russia.

Tensions with Lebanon have been exacerbated because of the overt presence in the Golan of Hezbollah—the Tehran-backed Lebanese Shi'a militia fighting on the side of the Syrian regime. On 20 July, an Israeli jet reportedly struck Hezbollah positions in Quneitra—a town in the Golan held by Syrian forces and Hezbollah. Hezbollah denied being targeted by Israel, reporting instead that an Al Nusra rocket attack was responsible for the blast. Israel has a neutral policy vis-à-vis the Syrian crisis except in regard to Hezbollah. Israel neither confirms nor denies specific incidents of striking Hezbollah targets in Syria, but in December 2015 Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a rare public admission, said, "We [Israel] occasionally carry out operations in Syria to prevent that country from becoming a front against us".

Since Russia commenced airstrikes in Syria in support of President Bashar al-Assad in September 2015, Israel and Russia have made arrangements to avoid "unnecessary confrontations" of their respective forces operating in Syrian airspace. Since then, media reports have indicated that Russia has fired on Israeli military aircraft on at least two occasions, without specifying dates, locations or whether Israeli aircraft had been hit. Neither country has confirmed these reports. More recently, a Russian drone flew almost 4 kilometres into Israeli airspace near the Golan Heights on 17 July. Israel responded with two missiles and

## UNDOF (Golan Heights) (con't)

jet fire. The drone was not hit and returned to Syrian airspace. Russia told Israel that the drone had entered Israeli airspace by mistake.

### Key Issues

Considering the security situation in the Golan, the full return of UNDOF to the Syrian side seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. This is a significant issue in as much as it constrains the mission's ability to carry out its monitoring tasks.

A re-emerging issue, given plans for a partial redeployment to Camp Faouar, will be the safety and security of UN personnel.

The other primary concern for the Council remains the ceasefire violations. The presence of Syrian armed forces and heavy weapons in the area of separation monitored by UNDOF, Syrian airstrikes, Israeli airstrikes, the 17 July incident and artillery fire are all ceasefire violations. No military forces other than those of UNDOF are allowed in the area of separation.

### Options

The Council is somewhat constrained in its options for UNDOF. It was established as a Syria-based mission and how it operates, including the use of enhanced equipment or new technologies, is subject to the disengagement agreement, with any changes requiring agreement by Israel and Syria, which is

unlikely to be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, the Council could issue a statement to:

- reiterate the need for all parties to exercise restraint;
- urge Israel and Syria to allow the use of new technologies so UNDOF could better fulfil its observation tasks;
- urge Israel and Syria to allow the use of enhanced equipment to better enable UNDOF's force protection capabilities;
- urge Israel and Syria to agree to establish more UNDOF crossing points between the Alpha and Bravo sides, since the Quneitra crossing was lost to rebel groups in September 2014;
- urge Israel and Syria to agree to work with the UN on contingency arrangements for the extraction of UNDOF personnel if an extreme situation arises;
- urge Syria to expedite de-mining around Camp Faouar and give its assurances that patrol routes and supply lines will be secured; and
- urge Israel to allow UNDOF to establish more temporary observation posts on the Alpha side, given the mission's limited mobility there.

### Council Dynamics

The Council has generally agreed that UNDOF contributes to stability in the region in the

absence of a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. While there is recognition that the mission's observation function has been significantly curtailed following its September 2014 relocation to the Alpha (Israeli) side of the ceasefire line, its liaison function remains particularly important to avoid further negative security implications for the region.

Israel and Syria value UNDOF's presence and want to see the return of the mission to the Bravo side. While the security situation is still not conducive to the mission's full redeployment back to the Syrian side of the ceasefire line, Council members unanimously support the UN's plan for an initial and limited redeployment to Camp Faouar if sufficient security and operational conditions are met. Council members are aware that ensuring such conditions are in place prior to redeployment is particularly important to maintain the confidence of troop-contributing countries to UNDOF.

Council members remain concerned about armed clashes in the area of operations and about the tension between Israel and Syria along the armistice line, which has been exacerbated by the presence of Hezbollah and, in limited instances, confrontations with Russian aircraft.

Since June 2012, Russia and the US have been the co-penholders on resolutions renewing UNDOF.

## Notable Dates for September

REPORT DUE	REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN SEPTEMBER	REQUESTING DOCUMENT
29 August	OPCW report on the implementation of resolution 2118 (Syrian chemical weapons)	S/RES/2118
7 September	SG report on UNAMA (Afghanistan)	S/RES/2274
8 September	SG report on UNMISS (South Sudan)	S/RES/2304
8 September	SG report on UNSOM (Somalia)	S/RES/2275
8 September	AU report on AMISOM (Somalia)	S/RES/2297
20 September	SG report on the humanitarian situation in Syria	S/RES/2139
22 September	SG report on UNDOF (Golan Heights)	S/RES/2294
EXPIRY	MANDATE	RELEVANT DOCUMENT
30 September	UNMIL (Liberia)	S/RES/2239

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