SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT
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February 2019

Monthly Forecast

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30 January 2019
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Overview

Equatorial Guinea will have the presidency in February. It will organise a high-level debate on "Mercenary activities as a source of insecurity and destabilization in Africa", with the Central African sub-region as a focus. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea is expected to preside. President Obiang will also chair an open debate on the AU initiative "Silencing the Guns in Africa". A debate on transnational organised crime at sea is also planned.

The Council will undertake a visiting mission to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau in February. A briefing on the visiting mission is scheduled shortly after the delegation returns. Later in the month the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

The other mandate renewal expected this month is for the Panel of Experts of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. Also anticipated are a briefing and consultations on UNAMID in Sudan and on the peacekeeping mission (MINUSCA) in the CAR and the 2127 CAR sanctions regime.

The Council is expected to follow developments in Yemen closely and is likely to be briefed by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths during the month. It is also expected to renew the Yemen sanctions regime before its expiry at the end of February.

Other Middle East issues that will be considered are:

- Iraq, an update on the activities of UNAMI;
- Israel-Palestine, the regular monthly meeting; and
- Syria, the monthly briefings on chemical weapons and the humanitarian situation, and an update on the political situation.

Other meetings include a briefing by Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, and Michèle Coninsx, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on the Secretary-General's strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

The Council is expecting a briefing on UNMIK (Kosovo) and another on the activities of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

Meetings may also be added on Burundi, the DRC and Myanmar during the month. Members are also anticipating three Arria-formula meetings: on children and armed conflict, peacekeeping and women, peace and security.

In Hindsight: The Security Council in 2018

The fractured state of Council relations, particularly among the permanent members, was reflected in the difficulty of obtaining consensus on Council resolutions. This is not entirely new: the number of vetoed and non-consensus resolutions has been rising for eight years. In 2018, three resolutions were vetoed, while four tabled drafts failed due to insufficient votes. A lower number of resolutions was adopted—54, against 61 in 2017—of which nine had fewer than 15 votes in favour.

There were four procedural votes, a number not seen since the early 1990s; the heightened recourse to these votes, on whether a Council meeting can take place as proposed, is one indicator of difficult dynamics. Twenty-one Arria-formula meetings were held, compared with 17 in 2017: the most since the Council began using this informal meeting format in 1992. The number of meetings, and the hours spent there, reflect a busy Council, although the total number of meetings and decisions declined compared to 2017.

One new situation was added to the Council's agenda when the UK called for a meeting on the use of a nerve agent in Salisbury, the United Kingdom.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) closed its doors. The mandate of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group was terminated when the Council decided to lift the sanctions imposed on Eritrea, and a new Panel of Experts on Somalia was established.

As in previous years, Africa featured prominently in the Council's work, accounting for 50 percent of country-specific or regional situations and about 70 percent of resolutions and presidential statements. Among the most frequently discussed African situations were the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Sudan. The Council also paid close attention to the Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, and Mali and the Sahel.

Council divisions continued to affect issues in the Middle East. As the Syria conflict entered its eighth year, the Council held 34 public meetings in 2018 on different aspects of the situation but with little change in Council dynamics. Difficulty agreeing on culpability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria and on how the Council should respond led to one veto and to two draft resolutions that fell short of the nine votes needed for adoption. On the humanitarian situation in Syria, largely through the efforts of the penholders, Kuwait and Sweden, the Council was able to adopt one resolution renewing the cross-border delivery of aid, and another demanding a month-long humanitarian pause for the delivery of aid following an escalation of the conflict in February.

Israel/Palestine issues were discussed monthly, with an uptick in meetings in April and May, a period of deadly violence at the border between Gaza and Israel. There was a failed attempt to adopt a resolution on the protection of civilians in Gaza. A draft by Kuwait garnered ten votes in favour, one veto by the US and four abstentions. A US draft, initially presented as amendments to the Kuwaiti text, received an affirmative vote only from its sponsor, with 11 members abstaining and three voting against.

Yemen, too, continued to occupy the Council's attention. There were 15 meetings, with two resolutions and one presidential statement adopted, and one draft resolution vetoed. Disagreement over including language on Iran's non-compliance with the Yemen sanctions regime led to a Russian veto of a draft text to renew that regime. Instead, a Russian draft based on the previous year's resolution was adopted. Conversely, the Council was able to show unity by adopting a resolution in December 2018 that authorised an advance team to monitor and provide support to the recent Hodeidah Agreement.

Trends in 2018

An increase in non-consensus resolutions on a broader range of issues

The year's nine non-consensus resolutions reflected Council disagreements not only on traditionally divisive issues such as chemical weapons in Syria and Israel/Palestine, but also on some peacekeeping and sanctions mandate renewals. Of the nine non-consensus resolutions, four pertained to the renewal of three missions—in the CAR, Haiti and Western Sahara—that have been on the Council's agenda for many years. This was the first non-consensus mandate renewal for missions in the CAR and Haiti. The mission in Western Sahara, which had a non-consensus renewal in 2016, saw two non-consensus renewals in 2018. This comes at a time when the reform of peace operations has been at the forefront of discussions in the UN. Of the three non-consensus resolutions on sanctions renewals, two were on South Sudan, both adopted with nine votes in favour and six abstentions, reflecting differences at a time when some members felt that the peace process was at a critical juncture and that additional sanctions would be counterproductive. The lack of unanimity on a resolution renewing the Libya sanctions regime stemmed from concerns on the part of Russia and China about language on sexual and gender-based violence. Council members were also unable to find unanimity on resolutions on the renewal of the mandate of the prosecutor of the international residual mechanism for tribunals and the delivery of cross-border aid in Syria.

The three vetoes were cast over chemical weapons in Syria, on Israel/Palestine and, for the first time, on Yemen sanctions. In addition, of the four resolutions not adopted because of insufficient affirmative votes, one was on the protection of civilians in Gaza, and the other three related to chemical weapons in Syria.

Using Working Methods: Procedural Votes

There were four procedural votes last year. The last time the Council invoked so many procedural votes was in the early 1990s, when the procedural vote was used regularly over Palestine's participation in meetings. Between 2006 and 2013, there were no procedural votes at all. Between 2014 and 2016, it was used sparingly, with only one procedural vote yearly in connection with a meeting on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In 2017, there were three: one on holding the DPRK human rights meeting and two related to the Syria Joint Investigation Mechanism (one on postponing a meeting and the other on the sequence of voting on draft resolutions). In 2018, procedural votes were required for a proposed briefing on Syria by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, for a Myanmar briefing by the chair of the Human Rights Fact-Finding Mission, and for two issues related to Ukraine—one over a particular briefer, the other on an agenda item proposed by Russia. Only the Myanmar briefing went forward, while the other proposals were blocked by the procedural vote.

Decrease in Council Outputs; Public Meetings Remain High

After a five-year period that saw a steady increase in decisions, a downward trend was observed last year. The Council adopted 75 decisions, down from 88 in 2017. It adopted 54 resolutions, seven fewer than the year before, while presidential statements dropped from 27 to 21. Formal meetings remained at comparable levels—288 in 2018, and 296 in 2017, while the hours spent in meetings rose very slightly, from 673 in 2017 to 678 In 2018, the Council continued to devote about 56 hours a month to meetings. Almost all of its meetings were public: at 275, this was the second-highest number in the Council's history, after the 2017 meeting count of 282. The 13 private meetings in 2018 were one fewer than 2017. Consultations continued to fall, dropping to 120 from 137 in 2017. This can be attributed partly to an increased tendency for the Council not to go into consultations (a closed meeting) following a briefing where all 15 members have delivered statements in public. There were 87 press statements, which are not formal decisions of the Council, after 93 in 2017, continuing a fall from a peak of 138 in 2014. The number of visiting missions went from five in 2017 to three last year.

The reduction in meetings and outcomes can be attributed to several factors,

including the closing of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire in 2017 and UNMIL in 2018, both of which had annual mandate renewals and were discussed regularly in the Council. Another factor was the more stable situation on the Korean peninsula: in 2017 there were 12 public meetings and seven consultations on the DPRK compared to three public meetings and no consultations in 2018, all of them regular briefings by the chair of the sanctions committee. The Council also had fewer meetings on situations that had been more volatile in 2017, including Burundi, the DRC and Myanmar.

The Rise of the E10

In the face of acute divisions among the permanent members, the ten elected members (E10) emerged more strongly as a cohesive group despite their political differences, enhancing their contribution to the substantive work of the Council. Elected members played a significant role in pushing the Council to address humanitarian issues in Syria and Yemen. They were also strong proponents of a number of thematic issues, including children and armed conflict, conflict prevention, climate change, hunger and conflict, peace operations, peacebuilding, and women, peace and security. On many of these issues, elected members worked together to negotiate successful outcomes and integrate themes into country-specific situations. Collectively, they strove to advance equitable distribution of labour and burden-sharing in the context of chairing subsidiary bodies and penholdership.

Status update since our January *Forecast*

Afghanistan

On 3 January, Council members issued a press statement condemning the terrorist attack in northern Sar-e-Pul Province and Balkh Province on 31 December 2018, targeted at the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, resulting in at least 27 security forces killed and 20 injured (SC/13655). On 30 January, the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee held joint informal consultations with the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, receiving a briefing on their Monitoring Teams' December 2018 visit to Afghanistan. The meeting was followed by informal consultations of the 1988 Committee also focusing on the visit

Somalia

On 3 January, Special Representative and head of UNSOM Nicholas Haysom briefed the Council (S/PV.8440) on the latest Secretary-General's report on Somalia (S/2018/1149). Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia, and head of the AU Mission in Somalia, also briefed. On 5 January, Council members issued a press statement expressing their regret at Somalia's decision to declare Haysom persona non grata (SC/13657). On 16 January, Council members issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack in Nairobi the previous day and paid tribute to Kenya's role in the fight against terrorism, particularly its role in AMISOM, fighting against Al-Shabaab (SC/13666).

UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel

On 10 January, the Council was briefed (S/PV.8442) by Special Representative Mohamed Ibn Chambas on the Secretary-General's latest report on developments in West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of UNOWAS (S/2018/1175).

Children and Armed Conflict

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict met on 14 January to introduce the report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2018/969) and on 28 January for a first reading of its Syria conclusions.

Mali

On 16 January, the Council was briefed on the situation in Mali by Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali, Kamissa Camara, participated in the meeting (S/PV.8445). The basis for the discussion was the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1174). After the meeting, Council members issued a press statement expressing "a significant sense of impatience with parties over the persistent delays in the full implementation of key provisions of the agreement" (SC/13667). On 20 January, Council members condemned an attack against the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok, which resulted in 10 peacekeepers from Chad killed and several others injured, in spite of the robust response from MINUSMA (SC/13672). On 25 January, Council members condemned the attack perpetrated earlier that day against a MINUSMA convoy near Douentza (region of Mopti), which resulted in two peacekeepers from Sri Lanka killed and several others injured (SC/13678).

Libya

On 18 January, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Ghassan Salamé, on the situation in Libya. Jürgen Schulz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany, briefed in his capacity as chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee on the activities of the committee.

Israel/Palestine

On 22 January, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on the Middle East (Israel/Palestine) (S/PV.8449). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefed the Council via video teleconference. Mladenov urged continued attention to "dangerous dynamics" on the ground, especially highlighting the impact of Israeli settlements. He also stressed the importance of intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts.

Colombia

On 18 January Council members condemned a terrorist attack at the General Police Academy in Bogotá the day before (SC/13671). On 23 January, the Council received a briefing from Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (S/PV.8450). The meeting was chaired by Miguel Vargas, the Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic, and included the participation of the Foreign Minister of

Colombia, Carlos Holmes Trujillo. The discussion focused on the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1159). On 24 January, Council members issued a press statement reiterating their full and unanimous support for the peace process in Colombia and sharing the assessment set out in the report of the Secretary-General (SC/13676).

Cyprus

On 23 January, Special Representative and head of UNFICYP briefed Council members in consultations on the latest developments and most recent Secretary-General's report on Cyprus (S/2019/37). On 30 January, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2453 which extended the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

On 24 January, Special Representative and head of UNRCCA Natalia Gherman briefed Council members in consultations about areas of focus and concern of the UNRCCA, including counter-terrorism, organised crime, transboundary water management, and youth engagement in the five Central Asian states.

Women, Peace and Security

On 24 January, Germany, Peru and the UK co-hosted an Arria-formula meeting entitled "What's next for Women, Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa: The Potential of National Action Plans" (S/2019/39). Focused on the examples of Iraq and Lebanon, briefings were given by Suzan Aref from Iraq, human rights activist and founder and Director of the Erbil-based "Women Empowerment Organisation"; Lea Baroudi from Lebanon, Director and co-founder of "MARCH", an organisation dedicated to promoting gender equality and civil rights in Lebanon; Nada Makki, from the Office of the Lebanese Minister of State for Women's Affairs; and Åsa Regnér, the Deputy Executive Director of UN Women.

Climate and Security

On 25 January, the Security Council held an open debate focused on addressing the impact of climate-related disasters on international peace and security (S/PV.8451). A concept note (S/2019/1) was prepared by the Dominican Republic, whose foreign minister, Miguel Vargas, chaired the meeting. Over 70 Council and other member states participated. Briefers included: Rosemary Di Carlo, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator (via telephone); Pavel Kabat, Chief Scientist of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); and Lindsay Getschel, Research Assistant at the Stimson Center's Environmental Security Program.

Venezuela

On Saturday, 26 January, the Security Council held a meeting on the situation in Venezuela during which it was briefed by Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo (S/PV.8452). The briefing was requested by the US, and several member states participated at foreign minister-level, including US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the foreign minister of Venezuela, Jorge Arreaza.

Working Methods

On 28 January the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions held a meeting to discuss its work plan for 2019. Draft presidential notes on various aspects of implementation of the comprehensive compendium of Council working methods, "Note 507" (S/2017/507) were circulated by the chair.

Guinea-Bissau

Expected Council Action

In February, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), which expires on 28 February. Prior to this, the Council will undertake a visiting mission to Guinea-Bissau, followed by a briefing on the mission. (For more information, see our brief on the Security Council's visiting mission.)

Key Recent Developments

Organising legislative elections has remained a priority in trying to move Guinea-Bissau beyond a political crisis that has now lasted three and a half years. The elections were delayed twice in 2018.

On 19 December 2018, Guinea-Bissau concluded its voter registration. The next day, President José Mário Vaz issued a decree setting 10 March as the date for the legislative elections. Vaz's announcement complied with a call by the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) during a 12 December ministerial mission to Bissau that the date of the legislative elections be determined before the 22 December ECOWAS summit of heads of state and government. At this summit, West African leaders mandated the chairman of ECOWAS to impose sanctions, on the basis of recommendations from the president of the ECOWAS Commission, against political stakeholders and others who obstruct the smooth conduct of the electoral process.

On 7 January, the National Electoral Commission announced that the election campaign for the 10 March poll would run from 16 February to 8 March. After the vote, the Supreme Court of Justice will consider possible complaints from 14 to 17 March, with the definitive results to be announced on 19 March.

On 8 January, the Guinea-Bissau public school teachers' unions signed an agreement with the government to resume classes after a four-month strike over payment of salary arrears, which kept schools closed.

Regarding UNIOGBIS, the Secretary-General submitted a special report to the

UN DOCUMENTS ON GUINEA-BISSAU **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2404 (28 February 2018) extended the mandate of UNIOGBIS for a year while removing all tasks related to rule of law and security institutions. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2018/1086 (6 December 2018) was the special report on the strategic assessment of UNIOGBIS. S/2018/771 (16 August 2018) was on Guinea-Bissau and the activities of UNIOGBIS. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8438 (21 December 2018) was a briefing on Guinea-Bissau. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/13650 (27 December 2018) stressed that legislative elections should take place prior to the presidential elections foreseen in 2019.

Council on 6 December 2018 on a strategic assessment on the mission. The report highlighted that the mission's ability to implement its mandate has been hindered by a lack of national leadership and political will. It proposed a phased reconfiguration and then withdrawal of UNIOGBIS, which with its predecessor mission, the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, has been present since 1999.

According to the report, UNIOGBIS should continue in its current role through mid-2019 to support upcoming elections. The assessment found that the mission has been valued by interlocutors on the ground, who say that in the current politically sensitive electoral cycle, the joint presence of UNIOGBIS and the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (the 600-person military force deployed by ECOWAS) is "critically needed". During the second half of 2019, UNIOGBIS should be reconfigured into a streamlined good offices mission and develop a transition plan, according to the assessment. The third phase would see tasks transferred to the UN country team, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and international partners, with the mission exiting by 31 December 2020. The Secretary-General has already directed UNOWAS to increase its engagement in Guinea-Bissau and, after UNIOGBIS leaves, could encourage ECOWAS and the international community to remain attentive to Guinea-Bissau's implementation of ongoing reforms and issues of drug trafficking.

The Council last met on Guinea-Bissau on 21 December 2018, holding a briefing and consultations with Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun on the electoral process and the Secretary-General's special report. While widespread violence was unlikely, Zerihoun said, "Guinea-Bissau risks lurching from one political crisis to another unless decisive steps are taken by the government to meet the new election date". On 27 December, Council members issued a press statement stressing that legislative elections should take place prior to the presidential election foreseen in 2019. It noted members' intention to deliberate on the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's special report in negotiating the next UNIOGBIS resolution in February 2019.

Developments in the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)

At the 21 December Council meeting, Ambassador Mauro Vieira (Brazil), chair of the PBC's Guinea-Bissau configuration, emphasised the PBC's potential role in helping develop and support any transition plan for UNIOGBIS.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is Guinea-Bissau's keeping to the current electoral calendar, starting with the holding of legislative elections as scheduled on 10 March, since their continued delay undermines constitutional provisions and risks provoking further political instability. There have been concerns about the government's commitment to timely elections, especially relating to Vaz who, according to the Secretary-General's August 2018 report on Guinea-Bissau, is thought to want to combine the legislative elections with the presidential election in May. The political crisis has pitted Vaz against the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), to which he belongs, and he has often aligned himself with the second largest party, the Party for Social Renewal (PRS) and a group of dissident members of the PAIGC.

Besides the elections, other processes that should occur according to the Conakry Agreement—brokered by ECOWAS in 2016 to end the crisis and advance reforms—include agreeing on a stability pact and undertaking a review of the constitution. On 17 January, the Organizing Commission of the National Conference for Peace and Development delivered a draft stability pact to Vaz, intended to break the cycle of successive governments over the last three-and-a-half years. The constitutional review is especially important to clarify the powers of the president and prime minister, disputes over which were one of the causes of the political crisis.

During the visiting mission, Council members may reiterate several messages to Bissau-Guinean authorities and political actors, including the need to conduct credible elections without further delays and to complete the constitutional review before the presidential election. They may further emphasise that implementation of the Conakry Agreement is the primary framework for peacefully resolving the political crisis, maintaining political stability and building sustainable peace.

Considering the proposals from the Secretary-General's special report are a further key issue. For the mandate renewal, the Council may decide to reconfigure UNIOGBIS into a streamlined good offices mission during the second half of 2019, and signal that UNIOGBIS should exit by the end of 2020, as proposed by the Secretary-General. In this regard, the Council could request that the UN develop a peacebuilding plan in consultation with national and international interlocutors, including the PBC, that identifies tasks that could be assumed by other UN and international entities, resources required and potential capacity gaps.

Another option is to make the reconfiguration and withdrawal of UNIOGBIS contingent upon achieving benchmarks, particularly the completion of the electoral cycle and the formation of a new government. This could be done through setting such benchmarks in the resolution, or mandating a short renewal period, allowing the Council to assess the situation in June (when the electoral process, in a best-case scenario, should be completed) and then work out the details regarding potential changes to UNIOGBIS.

Council Dynamics

On Guinea-Bissau, the Council tends to follow the lead of ECOWAS, seeking to support its decisions or agreements. In Bissau, representatives from ECOWAS, the AU, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), the UN and the EU often act together to defuse tensions. Members maintain concerns that transnational criminal organisations and drug traffickers or terrorist groups in the region can exploit the political instability. Despite the military's having refrained from interfering in the political crisis, members remain attentive to this risk given Guinea-Bissau's history, including a military coup after the first round of the 2012 presidential election.

On UNIOGBIS' future, Council members have appeared generally supportive of the assessment's recommendations in December 2018. Some have cautioned that the electoral cycle should be completed before deciding on UNIOGBIS' reconfiguration and exit.

Côte d'Ivoire is the penholder on Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea chairs the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee. Equatorial Guinea, which holds the Council's

February presidency, has been active on the issue. As chair of the committee, the country's ambassador, Anatolio Ndong Mba, travelled to Guinea-Bissau in June 2018 and has said that after the presidential election, the committee would revisit the question of whether to maintain the sanctions regime imposed following the April 2012 coup.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In February, the Council is likely to be briefed on the implementation of resolutions 2451 and 2452 by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

It is also expected to renew the Yemen sanctions regime which expires on 28 February 2019. The mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) expires on 16 June.

Key Recent Developments

Implementing the Stockholm Agreement, reached during consultations in Sweden in December by the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebels, has been difficult with only limited progress.

On 22 December, a UN advance team led by General Patrick Cammaert, which was authorised by resolution 2451 adopted the day before, arrived in Yemen to begin monitoring and supporting the Stockholm Agreement. Soon after his arrival, Cammaert activated the Re-deployment Coordination Committee (RCC) that the parties had agreed in Sweden would supervise implementation of the "Hodeidah agreement". The Hodeidah agreement is one of three agreements that together make up the Stockholm Agreement. It established a governorate-wide ceasefire in Hodeidah and agreement for the mutual redeployment of forces from Hodeidah city and the ports of Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Issa that have been under Houthi control.

The Hodeidah agreement—in effect since 18 December 2018—has been hobbled by mutual allegations of ceasefire violations and the challenge for the RCC, which includes representatives of the Yemeni government and the Houthis, to determine operational details for its implementation. Following two meetings of the RCC in late December and early January, Cammaert as its chair has had to meet separately with Yemeni government and Houthi representatives, after the Houthis did not attend a third RCC meeting scheduled on 8 January in government-held territory. The initial deadline set in Sweden for completing the redeployment of forces by 8 January was not met.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock and Griffiths (via video teleconference) briefed the Council on 9 January. Griffiths said that although there has been some violence, the parties were largely adhering to the ceasefire. Lowcock said that despite the agreements in Sweden, the humanitarian situation remained "catastrophic". Cammaert addressed Council members via video teleconference during closed consultations, apparently emphasising that the timelines set out in the Hodeidah agreement had not been realistic.

On 16 January, the Council adopted resolution 2452, establishing the UNMHA for an initial period of six months. The new special political mission, comprising up to 75 monitors, is mandated to lead and support the functioning of the RCC and to monitor the parties' compliance with the ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate and the mutual redeployment of forces. UNMHA will work in close collaboration and coordination with other UN entities operating in Yemen, including the Office of the Special Envoy, the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN Country Team, and the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism, all of which are envisioned as having roles in support of the Hodeidah agreement, including providing management backing to Yemeni port authorities and the collection of port revenues. Cammaert was appointed to head UNMHA, with the mission reporting to the Secretary-General through the Special Envoy's Office and the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

While the situation in Hodeidah was calmer compared to the heavy fighting prior to the Stockholm Agreement, elsewhere in Yemen the conflict escalated by mid-January. On 10 January, the Houthis attacked a government military parade at Al-Anad air base using a drone that exploded above the ceremony. The attack killed at least six soldiers and wounded several Yemeni government and military officials. On the evening of 19 January, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which supports the government, conducted some of its most intense airstrikes in months on Sana'a. Two days earlier, on 17 January, an armoured vehicle in Cammaert's convoy was hit by a bullet as it was leaving a meeting with Yemeni government representatives. The UN said it did not have information on the source of the fire.

On 31 January, Council members were briefed in consultations by Griffiths and Cammaert via video teleconference. Lowcock provided an update on the humanitarian situation. That same day, the UN announced that Cammaert was stepping down from his position, and would be replaced by Major General Michael Anker Lollesgaard of Denmark, former Force Commander in the UN Multidimensional Stabilisation Mission in Mali in 2015 and 2016.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 18 January, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee met with the Panel of Experts to discuss the panel's recently-submitted final report. Discussion was apparently less controversial than last year (when the panel found that Iran was in non-compliance with the targeted arms embargo against the Houthis), as the final report did not contain any new conclusions on arms supplies in violation of resolution 2216. It did identify what was likely a donation of fuel, loaded from ports in Iran, for the benefit of an unnamed individual on the sanctions list, with revenues from the fuel's sale in Yemen helping finance the Houthi war

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2452 (16 January 2019) established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). S/RES/2451 (21 December 2018) endorsed the Stockholm Agreement. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2019/69 (21 January 2019) was on the implementation of resolution 2451. S/2019/11 (4 January 2019) was on the implementation of resolution 2451. S/2018/1173 (28 December 2018) was on the implementation of resolution 2451. **Security Council Letter** S/2019/28 (31 December 2018) was the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a UN mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement.

effort.

Women, Peace and Security

The first meeting of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security in 2019 will be on Yemen, as announced by IEG co-chair Germany during the 9 January briefing.

Key Issues and Options

The Hodeidah agreement's implementation remains a key issue. Challenges have included the need for the parties to agree on implementation modalities, including for monitoring troop withdrawals and establishing new deadlines for the redeployment of forces; the parties also have different interpretations regarding the "local security forces" that are to take over security responsibilities in Hodeidah city and the ports, according to the agreement. According to the Secretary-General, the difficulties reflect a lack of trust and reluctance to make operational concessions outside of a comprehensive political agreement. Scaling up the UN presence has also been flagged as a challenge, including identifying accommodation for the UNMHA personnel and other UN entities, in addition to threats that have been directed at the UN.

Implementing the Hodeidah agreement is also critical for a new round of consultations to proceed. In Sweden, the parties agreed to a follow-up round of consultations during January, but will not do so without progress on the Hodeidah agreement. There has also been little progress advancing the other components of the Stockholm Agreement—a prisoner exchange and the establishment of a joint committee in Taiz, a city that has seen some of the most intense fighting during the war.

Yemen's humanitarian crisis, including the risk of a major famine, remains a key issue for the Council, involving monitoring restrictions on access, protecting critical infrastructure, and advancing measures to stabilise the economy. A high-level donor conference will be held in Geneva on 26 February for OCHA's 2019 humanitarian response plan for Yemen, which calls for $4 billion.

Council action around the political process and humanitarian situation is likely to depend on developments on the ground. It could seek to adopt a statement reaffirming the importance of the parties' remaining committed to the Stockholm Agreement, including the Hodeidah agreement, while expressing support for the Special Envoy's efforts to advance a political process.

For the sanctions renewal, a potentially contentious issue may be over referring to Iranian non-compliance with the arms embargo, as previously concluded by the panel. As was ultimately done last year, the Council may adopt a strictly technical resolution renewing sanctions for a further year, without mentioning specific states. Another option is including a condemnation of Iran for non-compliance with resolution 2216, though a draft resolution doing so last year was vetoed by Russia, which disagreed with the panel's conclusions.

Council Dynamics

Resolutions 2451 and 2452 adopted since the 13 December 2018 Stockholm Agreement were, with the exception of the annual sanctions renewals, the Council's first resolutions on Yemen since April 2015. One effect of these resolutions is that they provide for the first written reporting on Yemen to the Council from the Secretary-General.

Kuwait, as a member of the Saudi-led coalition, tends to champion its positions. It has sought to facilitate political efforts, hosting peace talks for three months in 2016, and last December provided aircraft to transport the Houthi delegation to the consultations in Sweden. New member Germany hosted an international conference on the Yemen peace process on 16 January and has indicated its interest in keeping attention on the humanitarian situation. Peru and Poland were part of a group of elected members last year that often coordinated their positions on humanitarian issues or when they perceived Council products as lacking balance.

The US has sought to have the Council condemn Iran for supplying weapons to the Houthis. Recently, it took the position during negotiations on resolution 2451 that if such a reference to Iran were not included, it could not support the resolution going beyond issues directly related to the Stockholm Agreement. That led to the watering-down of the section on humanitarian issues. Conversely, singling out Iran is a red line for Russia.

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

Impact of Mercenary Groups on Regional Peace and Stability

Expected Council Action

In early February, there will be a high-level debate on "Mercenary activities as a source of insecurity and destabilization in Africa". It is anticipated that the Central African sub-region will be a focus of the discussion. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea is expected to preside. UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission, are expected to brief. No formal outcome is anticipated.

Background and Developments

The international legal and normative foundation against mercenary activities includes the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries and the 1977 Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa. The 1989 convention—which has 36 state parties and entered into force in 2001—affirms that the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries are "offences of grave concern to all States" and maintains the need to "develop and enhance international cooperation among States for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of such offences". The 1977 convention states that the activities of mercenaries pose a "grave threat…to the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and harmonious development of Member States

UN DOCUMENTS ON MERCENARY GROUPS **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8156 (11 January 2018) was on peace consolidation in West Africa. **General Assembly Documents** A/73/303 (6 August 2018) was a report of the Working Group on Mercenaries in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 16. A/HRC/RES/33/4 (29 September 2015) renewed the mandate of the Working Group on Mercenaries.

of the Organization of African Unity" (the predecessor organisation of the AU), that they constitute "a crime against peace and security in Africa", and that mercenaries shall be punished "by the severest penalties" of state parties "including capital punishment". Thirty-two of the AU's 55 states have ratified the 1977 Convention, which entered into force in 1985.

In 1987, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the predecessor of the Human Rights Council (HRC) created the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination. In 2005, the commission ended this mandate and created the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the rights of people to self-determination, composed of five independent experts. The HRC has renewed the mandate several times. The working group is mandated by the HRC to work toward strengthening the international legal framework for the prevention and sanction of the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries; to study and identify the sources and causes of mercenary activities; and to monitor these activities and those of private military and security companies. According to OHCHR, the working group "transmits communications to Governments and other actors with regard to specific allegations of human rights violations" pertaining to mercenaries and private military and security companies; conducts country visits and reports on these visits to the Human Rights Council; and produces annual reports for the General Assembly and Human Rights Council on relevant thematic issues.

In its most recent report to the General Assembly, the working group described its activities in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which focuses on the promotion of peaceful societies, justice and good governance. The report noted the "debilitating impact of non-State actors such as mercenaries, foreign fighters and PMSC [private military and security contractors] on the overall sustainable development agenda".

The report, which focused considerable attention on the impact of mercenaries in Africa, said that "porous borders and movement of foreign fighters and mercenaries…contribute to the ongoing conflict" in the Central African Republic, where armed groups have nearly made the "State helpless to provide the needed support and security for its people" and where armed foreigners have entered the country to traffic in weapons. With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, it described how some young people, including children, who were recruited to fight in the conflicts in 2002 and 2011 "were reported to have become mercenaries subsequently on the basis of their extensive training and involvement in warfare".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how mercenary activities have a negative impact on international peace and security and undermine national sovereignty in a way that weakens the capacity of states to protect their people. In this regard, the debate could provide an opportunity to explore what role the Council can play in conjunction with member states, regional and sub-regional organisations, and UN entities such as the working group on the use of mercenaries to tackle the security challenges associated with mercenarism.

Another issue is how to galvanise attention and action around this issue, similar to what has been done by the UN, including the Security Council, with regard to countering global terrorism. An option is for the Council to consider this issue on a more regular basis, perhaps in an annual meeting. Another alternative would be to hold an Arria-formula meeting with members of the working group on the use of mercenaries and other experts to explore the impact of mercenaries in specific country and regional cases on the Council's agenda, and how the Council can address this problem more effectively in relevant outcomes. The Council could also consider the negative impact of mercenaries, where relevant, when it determines the designation criteria for targeted sanctions.

Council Dynamics

A number of Council members recognise the threat posed by mercenaries to international peace and security. However, only three current Council members (Belgium, Equatorial Guinea, and Peru) are parties to the 1989 International Convention; Equatorial Guinea acceded to the treaty on 21 January 2019. The Convention reflects the view that foreign mercenaries can have a negative impact on conflict situations. One concern of some members has traditionally been that their own nationals accused of mercenary activities could face legal proceedings in other countries. For example, when Belgium acceded to the International Convention, one of the reservations it made was that, "No provision of the Convention should be interpreted as implying, for Belgium, an obligation to extradite Belgian nationals.

The threat posed by mercenaries is of particular importance to the government of Equatorial Guinea, which is making the debate a signature event of its Council presidency. In December 2017, just before it entered the Council, the country reported that mercenaries from the Central African Republic, Chad and Sudan had attempted to overthrow the government. In an 11 January 2018 Council meeting on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the country's ambassador, Anatolio Ndong Mba, referred to the incident, noting the importance of "vigilance and control of groups that sow insecurity and instability in several countries, on the part of the international community and the United Nations".

Maritime Crime

On 5 February, the Security Council is scheduled to hold a debate on transnational organised crime at sea. Equatorial Guinea's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Simeón Oyono Esono Ague, is expected to chair. The Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, Florentina Adenike Ukonga, and the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),

UN DOCUMENTS ON MARITIME CRIME **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2016/4 (25 April 2016) was on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8433 (19 December 2018) was on drug trafficking in West Africa. S/PV.7675 (25 April 2016) was on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Yury Fedotov, are expected to brief. No outcome is anticipated.

Key Recent Developments

Equatorial Guinea circulated a concept note describing the purpose of the debate as focusing on the root causes of transnational organised crime at sea and inviting Council members to discuss means of prevention and enhanced cooperation in this regard, including by addressing the linkages between terrorism; piracy; and human, weapons and drugs trafficking in this context.

The debate seeks to build on the Arria-formula meeting held on 13 June 2018 on maritime crime as a threat to international peace and security, which was convened by Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, the Netherlands and the US, jointly with UNODC. The concept note said the meeting would allow member states to address "the common and interlinked emerging crimes at sea, including piracy and armed robbery, arms and drug trafficking, fisheries crime, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons".

The Council has considered the issue of piracy off the coast of Somalia for over a decade and each year reauthorises international naval forces to fight piracy in that area. The Council has also addressed piracy in the Gulf of Guinea since 2011. Following an April 2016 open debate on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, the Council adopted a presidential statement expressing concern over the threat posed by piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea. It also noted the links between piracy, armed robbery at sea and transnational organised crime.

On 19 December 2018, the Council held a meeting on drug trafficking in West Africa as a threat to stability, with Fedotov briefing. The Council had previously discussed drug trafficking and its threat to stability and peace and security five years earlier, in December 2013. Fedotov highlighted "new, alarming trends in drug trafficking in West and Central Africa, with disruptive and destabilizing effects on governance, security, economic growth and public health" and referred to linkages among terrorism, illicit drugs and other forms of crime.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues include:

- addressing the root causes of maritime crime;
- considering how preventing and countering maritime crime can contribute to preventing conflicts and sustaining peace in post-conflict environments;
- considering how to improve international and regional cooperation in preventing, investigating and prosecuting maritime crime; and
- identifying gaps in the legal frameworks governing maritime crimes.

Council Dynamics

Council members recognise that the broad range of peace and security threats related to maritime crime require coherent and effective multilateral approaches, given the transnational implications of this issue. Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea, which are on the Gulf of Guinea, have particular interest in the issue, given the significance of these threats to their respective sub-regions.

Following the June 2018 Arria-formula meeting held at the initiative of the Netherlands, Council members negotiated a draft presidential statement on maritime crime for several months, but were unable to reach consensus on a text, and it is unlikely that the draft will be revived at this time.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In February, the Council will receive the monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, the political process and the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Key Recent Developments

The beginning of 2019 has been marked by increased regional tensions involving Syria. The 19 December 2018 announcement by US President Donald Trump regarding the withdrawal of US troops from Syria has contributed to this. The US actively supports the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which includes the Kurdish militia YPG, and the US decision has introduced fresh uncertainty into efforts to prevent an escalation of violence between Turkey and the YPG, counter-terrorism operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as well as the fate of the territory currently controlled by the SDF in the northeast. Along with Idlib, the northeast is one of the main areas outside Syrian government control. The decision sparked the resignations of the US Secretary of Defence and the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL. Trump initially indicated that the US would withdraw its forces rapidly, but following considerable pressure from members of Congress and key US allies, he and senior officials have said the withdrawal will happen more slowly. At press time, the details of the withdrawal, including its timeline and conditions, remained unclear.

Tensions between Syria and Israel have escalated in recent weeks. On 20 January, Israel conducted airstrikes against Iranian and Syrian military targets throughout the country. The attacks reportedly killed 21 people, including 12 Iranian soldiers. A statement from the Israeli Defence Forces described the attacks as a response to the firing of a surface-to-surface missile aimed at the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights by Iranian forces stationed near Damascus, and said that this proved that "Iran is attempting to entrench itself in Syria", thus endangering regional stability.

The situation in Idlib remains critical. In September 2018, Turkey and Russia agreed to establish a demilitarised zone 15 to 20 kilometres wide along the contact line between

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2449 (13 December 2018) renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line aid delivery. S/RES/2401 (24 February 2018) demanded that all parties cease hostilities in Syria. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) was on chemical weapons. **Security Council Letters** S/2018/1166 (27 December 2018) was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. S/2018/1138 (19 December 2018) was a joint statement by the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia and Turkey on Syria. S/2018/732 (23 July 2018) included an interim report regarding the Douma 7 April 2018 incident. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8434 (20 December 2018) was the last briefing by de Mistura. S/PV.8423 (13 December 2018) was the meeting at which resolution 2449 was adopted.

armed groups and government troops. The zone, which was aimed at preventing a military offensive, also facilitated the separation of forces of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (a Council-designated terrorist group) from other rebel groups. On 11 January, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham took over control of most of Idlib from the National Liberation Front, the Turkish-backed coalition of moderate armed groups.

The humanitarian situation in Syria continues to be dire, and has been exacerbated by harsh winter conditions, including torrential rains. On 13 December 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2449, drafted by Kuwait and Sweden, which renewed for a year the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. Through this authorisation, which was renewed with the abstention of China and Russia, UN actors and implementing partners have been able to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance across the border to millions of people by notifying the Syrian government, rather than awaiting its authorisation. However, many humanitarian challenges persist, including the vulnerability of some three million people in Idlib, the fate of thousands of people who remain trapped by ongoing hostilities in ISIL-held areas in Deir ez-Zor and those who have fled the area, and difficulties in securing sustained humanitarian access, including to areas under government control. Efforts to reach 40,000 people stranded in harsh conditions in the makeshift camp of Rukban near the border with Jordan in December 2018 were unsuccessful.

Despite international pressure, efforts—ongoing since January 2018—to form a credible, balanced and inclusive constitutional committee had not yielded results by the end of the year. The constitutional committee is expected to comprise 150 people, one-third each from the government, the opposition, and civil society. The Syrian government refused to accept the UN-prepared list of civil society participants. After several failed attempts, the guarantors of the Astana process—Iran, Russia and Turkey—agreed on a civil society list at an 18 December 2018 ministerial meeting, but this version was not acceptable to the UN. Briefing the Council on 20 December 2018, then-Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura said that the list represented significant joint input but that the UN did not feel comfortable accepting all its 50 names as meeting the necessary criteria of credibility and balance. During his briefing, de Mistura identified several elements regarding the constitutional committee that it should be possible to agree on, including having a balanced co-chairmanship arrangement and a 75 percent voting threshold. Geir O. Pedersen took office as the new Special Envoy for Syria on 7 January. Since taking office, he has had several meetings with the Syrian government, the opposition and relevant regional and international players involved in Syria.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefed the Council on 8 January. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continues to have concerns regarding the limited cooperation of the Syrian government in addressing the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified in Syria's initial declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile. In the coming weeks, Council members expect to receive the report of the OPCW fact-finding mission regarding the alleged chemical weapons attack that took place in Douma (Eastern Ghouta) on 7 April 2018. According to a 23 July interim report, no nerve agents or their degradation products were detected, but chlorinated organic chemicals were found in samples from two locations, along with residues of explosive.

Women, Peace and Security

The Syrian Women's Advisory Board continues to be included in regular consultations with the Special Envoy. According to the latest Secretary-General's report on the humanitarian situation in Syria, the group called for credible participation of women in the yet-to-be-established constitutional committee, as well as overall strengthened participation of women in the political process. During his 20 December 2018 final briefing to the Council, de Mistura said that one of the co-chairs of the constitutional committee should be a woman, considering that women represent over half of the Syrian population.

Key Issues and Options

Given the crucial role of Russia, Turkey and Iran on both the political and humanitarian fronts, Council members could seek an informal interactive dialogue with their representatives to have a more action-oriented discussion regarding current and future efforts to avert a full-fledged military offensive in Idlib.

Council members continue to be profoundly divided over Syria, and some question whether any effort on the political process is likely to yield results, considering the Syrian government's emphasis on regaining territory and consolidating control. As Pedersen initiates contacts with relevant actors, Council members could hold an informal and frank discussion to consider how, individually and collectively, they can best support the prospects of a political process based on resolution 2254, which in December 2015 laid out the steps toward a political solution in Syria.

The issue of detainees, abductees and missing persons has not attracted much attention in the Council and is mostly considered under the rubric of confidence-building measures being discussed by the Astana guarantors. With little progress on this front and the Syrian government's release of thousands of prisoner death notices, the Council could hold a meeting on this matter.

A new concern is that the recent takeover of most of Idlib by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham could be used to justify a military offensive by the Syrian government and its allies.

The Council could request a briefing from the Secretariat to focus on the potential for instability in north-eastern Syria, call on the actors involved to exercise restraint, and support good-offices efforts to address long-standing grievances.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The potential for regional instability connected to the Syrian conflict has not featured prominently in Council discussions, which have mostly focused on three dimensions of the crisis: the political process, the humanitarian situation, and the use of chemical weapons. It remains to be seen whether developments on the ground will make this discussion unavoidable or if any Council members would like to pre-emptively request a meeting specifically on this question.

As the government consolidates its territory, some Arab countries—including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain—have started to reinstate their diplomatic presence in Damascus, and Jordan upgraded its level of representation in the Syrian capital. Diplomatic relations between most of these countries and Syria had been severed at the beginning of the crisis in 2011.

Among the areas Russia focused on in the negotiations on resolution 2449 were the inclusion of references to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the need to increase the international

community's assistance to Syria. Inclusion of this language has been systematically opposed by the P3 and other like-minded countries, which argue that there can be no international support for funding for development and long-term reconstruction until irreversible progress has been made in the political process.

Belgium, Germany and Kuwait are co-penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria.

Sudan (Darfur)

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to review and renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee by 12 February, in advance of its expiration on 12 March, as set out in resolution 2400. The Council will also be briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), as requested in resolution 2429.

The mandate of UNAMID expires on 30 June.

Key Recent Developments

According to the Secretary-General's most recent report, covering 4 October 2018 to 3 January, the security situation in Darfur remains relatively stable except for intermittent clashes between government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid in the Jebel Marra area. Intercommunal violence and human rights violations declined during the reporting period, with the relative stability in most parts of Darfur reportedly leading some internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their places of origin. The root causes of conflict, however, remain unaddressed, the report said. There has been some recent progress in the Darfur peace process, including the signing on 6 December 2018 of a pre-negotiation agreement for the resumption of the peace process, but implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) itself remained slow, according to the report.

The troop reduction and reconfiguration of UNAMID in accordance with resolution 2429 is proceeding as scheduled, including the relocation of mission assets to Central Darfur; the repatriation of military personnel, reducing the mission's military strength from 8,735 to 5,470 by 31 December 2018; and the redeployment of the formed police units, as set out in the Secretary-General's report. Five team sites have been closed and three others have been handed over to the mission's formed police units.

On 19 December 2018, multiple protests took place across Sudan, sparked by food and fuel shortages and the government's announcement that it would end bread subsidies. The demonstrations have spread to several parts of the country, with protestors calling for President Omar al-Bashir, who has ruled the country for nearly three decades, to step down. Sudanese security forces have reportedly responded to protesters by using live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas, as well as arresting protesters and opposition figures. The government said on 24 January that the official death toll since 19 December was 29 people, while human rights organisations and opposition groups have said the number is much higher, with many more injured.

Several actors have expressed concern over the situation. On 28 December 2018, the Secretary-General issued a statement appealing for calm and restraint, calling on the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into the deaths and violence, and emphasising the need to safeguard freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. On 8 January, the US, UK, Norway and Canada issued a joint statement saying the government of Sudan's "actions and decisions over the coming weeks will have an impact on the engagement of our governments and others". On 11 January, a spokesperson of the European External Action Service said in a statement that the "actions of the government of Sudan…will have an impact on our bilateral phased engagement".

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 10 January, the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee was released. According to the report, "the resumption of significant clashes" across Jebel Marra has led to casualties, new displacement, a humanitarian crisis and human rights abuses. The report noted that conflict-related sexual violence continues in Darfur and that the return of IDPs has proved difficult. The report also found continued challenges in the implementation of the sanctions regime. Regarding violations of the arms embargo, the report found that the government of Sudan continued to transfer military equipment into Darfur without seeking the committee's approval, as required by resolution 1591. As for the travel ban and assets freeze of the four designated individuals, the report said the government of Sudan has not submitted its implementation report. The report also noted that most of the Darfuri armed groups have consolidated their presence in Libya, where they derive income from mercenary activities, smuggling and other criminal actions.

On 17 January, Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, briefed the Council on the committee's work. She referred to the 24 October 2018 briefing to the committee by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten. According to a 15 November 2018 committee press statement, Patten "informed the Committee on the ongoing patterns of sexual violence in Darfur as well as the progress made by the government of Sudan to address them". Wronecka also referred to the 14 December 2018 briefing of the committee by the Panel of Experts on its final report. (For more details, see our What's In Blue story of 16 January.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 January, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement that "credible reports of the use of excessive force, including live ammunition, by state security forces against protestors across Sudan over the past month are deeply worrying". The statement said that according to information received, security forces have also followed some protesters into several hospitals and fired tear gas and live ammunition. Bachelet called on the government to protect the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. She also noted that

UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2429 (13 July 2018) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019. S/RES/2400 (8 February 2018) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Sudan. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2018/19 (11 December 2018) was on UNAMID and the Secretary-General's proposed benchmarks and indicators. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2019/44 (14 January 2019) was the 90-day report on UNAMID. S/2018/912 (12 October 2018) was the 90-day report on UNAMID, containing the proposed benchmarks and indicators of achievement for the exit of the mission. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8446 (17 January 2019) was a briefing on the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. **Sanctions Committee Document** S/2019/34 (10 January 2019) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

fact-finding committees had been established by the government and the National Commission of Human Rights and urged any investigations to be conducted promptly and transparently, with a view to accountability.

Women, Peace and Security

The threat of sexual violence in Darfur remains "significant", according to the Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMID. This impedes the ability of women to move freely in and out of IDP camps for livelihood activities. Most cases of conflict-related sexual violence occurred in Jebel Marra, notably during clashes involving Sudanese government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid. The report said that the protection of women in that region is still a "major challenge" for UNAMID.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts. Another issue is to consider reviewing the sanctions measures on Darfur, as signalled in resolution 2400. An option is for such considerations to be informed by the final report of the Panel of Experts. Another option is to consider expanding the regime's designation criteria to include the commission of acts of rape or sexual violence, as recommended by Patten during her 24 October 2018 briefing to the committee.

A key issue that Council members will want to follow closely is the effect on the security situation of further troop reductions and implementation of the mission's revised priorities as set out in resolution 2429, including on human rights reporting and intercommunal mediation efforts.

A related issue is to monitor progress made on the proposed benchmarks and indicators of achievement for the exit of the mission set out in the Secretary-General's report of 12 October 2018. The Council took note of these in its 11 December 2018 presidential statement "to help guide the Security Council's considerations on the future of UNAMID's mandate". An option would be to invite Joint Special Representative and head of UNAMID Jeremiah Mamabolo to brief on these issues as well as on next steps in the implementation of the DDPD.

Council Dynamics

There continue to be differences amongst Council members in assessing the overall situation in Darfur as well as in their positions on the sanctions regime, as was again made apparent during the discussion following the 17 January briefing. Council members China, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait and Russia presented more positive assessments of the situation in Darfur and expressed support for reviewing the sanctions regime with a view to lifting sanctions. Other members including Belgium, France, Germany, Peru and the UK raised serious concerns and expressed support for including sexual violence as a new listing criterion for targeted sanctions, which Russia expressly opposed. Some members–including France, Germany, the UK and the US–also raised concern over the recent widespread protests in Sudan. Russia said these events fall outside the scope of the Council's consideration of the issue and that raising them "constitutes interference in the country's internal affairs".

The UK and Germany are co-penholders on the issue; Poland chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Kosovo

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Growing tensions between Belgrade and Pristina marked the end of 2018 and have continued this year. In December, Kosovo's parliament approved a series of laws that initiated the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), which had until then addressed non-military tasks, into a more traditional army.

These developments prompted an emergency Council meeting on the situation in Kosovo on 17 December 2018, following a request by Serbia. Presidents Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia and Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo attended the meeting. Vučić condemned the move by the Kosovo authorities and emphasised that formation of a Kosovo army violates resolution 1244, which gave international troops led by NATO the responsibility for ensuring security in Kosovo. Thaçi said that the actions taken by Kosovo were in line with international law and were within Kosovo's rights as a sovereign and independent state. Among Council members, Russia defended the Serbian position and said that the creation of a Kosovo army poses a threat to peace and security in the region. The US reiterated its support for Kosovo and stressed the need to coordinate its actions with NATO and ensure outreach to minority communities during the transformation of the KSF. Council members were generally united in calling on both parties to avoid exacerbating tensions and to engage in dialogue.

After a failed bid to secure membership of Interpol in November, Kosovo imposed a 100 percent tariff on imported goods from Serbia as of 21 November 2018, responding to what it perceived as a campaign by Serbia against its bid to join the police organisation. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini has called on Kosovo to reverse its decision on tariffs. The US, Kosovo's main ally, also urged it to rescind the tariffs and avoid further escalation of tensions. Kosovo's prime minister, Ramush Haradinaj, has said publicly that the tariffs will be maintained until

UN DOCUMENTS ON KOSOVO **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/1244 (10 June 1999) authorised NATO to secure and enforce the withdrawal of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces from Kosovo and established UNMIK. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2018/981 (1 November 2018) was the report on UNMIK. **Security Council Letter** S/2018/1111 (14 December 2018) was a request by Serbia for a Council meeting to address the situation in Kosovo. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8427 (17 December 2018) was an emergency meeting on the situation in Kosovo called by Serbia.

Serbia recognises Kosovo. Thaçi has ,called on Haradinaj to heed the US's advice and abolish the tariffs, thus exposing some divisions within Kosovo over this issue. The row over tariffs has continued, and at press time the policy remained in place.

Over the course of the past two months, the prosecutor's office of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) has conducted interviews with some former senior commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KSC, a special court based in The Hague that operates under Kosovo law and is staffed by international judges, was set up to investigate alleged war crimes committed by the KLA during the conflict in Kosovo in the 1990s. The prosecutor's office is expected to issue its first indictments this year.

Key Issues and Options

Given the volatility in relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the Council is primarily concerned with reducing tensions and maintaining stability in Kosovo. The Council will continue to monitor the implications of the decision by Kosovo's legislature to initiate the transformation of the KSF into a regular armed force and whether this will have implications for resolution 1244.

The Council will follow developments related to the possible final agreement between Belgrade and Pristina, including the potential for territorial adjustments; such an agreement could affect neighbouring countries and possibly re-ignite ethnic tensions in the region. Dialogue on this agreement stalled amid growing tensions between Belgrade and Pristina in recent months.

The EU has been the main facilitator of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue which resulted in the 2013 Brussels agreement on normalisation of relations between the two. At the core of the agreement is the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities in northern Kosovo. While there was progress in some areas, an issue for the Council remains the lack of implementation of main aspects of the agreement and what role, if any, UNMIK might play in facilitating its implementation.

Notwithstanding the recent tensions, several Council members, and the P3 in particular, have continued to question the usefulness of the current quarterly reporting cycle and have also called for downsizing the mission in light of the overall relative stability on the ground. A growing number of Council members share these views, and an option for the Council would be to consider formal proposals for changing the reporting cycle, and possibly changing the format of the meeting to consultations. In addressing the effectiveness of the mission, the Council could request the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of UNMIK.

Council Dynamics

Despite the recent developments that drew the Council's attention to Kosovo, it remains a low-intensity issue for the Council and is followed closely mainly by members with a specific interest in the region. One of the factors that has contributed to this is the preeminence in Kosovo of regional organisations, including the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Deep division among permanent members has continued to characterise the Council's consideration of the Kosovo issue. France, the UK and the US recognise Kosovo's independence and tend to be supportive of Kosovo's government, while China and Russia do not recognise its independence and strongly support Serbia's position. A simmering issue is that the P3 and the EU members of the Council have become more outspoken in advocating a lengthening of UNMIK's reporting cycle and, with this, less frequent meetings on Kosovo. Presiding over the Council in August 2018, the UK took concrete steps to this end by removing the quarterly Kosovo meeting from the programme of work (POW). This also demonstrated that there is a substantial support among members for lengthening the reporting cycle. Russia and China opposed the omission of Kosovo from the August POW, but it appears that they would not have been able to secure the necessary support to challenge the decision through a procedural vote.

The US has been the most vocal proponent of a drawdown and eventual withdrawal of UNMIK, citing the level of stability in Kosovo. The US has also asserted that the mission is overstaffed and over-resourced for its limited responsibilities, and that these resources could be put to better use in more pressing situations on the Council's agenda.

Given the ongoing emphasis on reviewing UN peacekeeping operations with the aim of reducing costs and increasing efficiency, the issue of modifying UNMIK's mandate is likely to become more prominent. Alone among missions regularly discussed by the Council, UNMIK's mandate is open-ended. Any attempt to change it would require a new resolution, which Russia would strongly oppose and most likely block.

Counter-Terrorism

Expected Council Action

In February, Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), and Michèle Coninsx, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), are expected to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da'esh), followed by consultations.

UN DOCUMENTS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2379 (21 September 2017) established an investigative team to collect, store and preserve evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq. S/RES/2368 (20 July 2017) renewed and updated the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) & Al-Qaida sanctions regime. Through an annex to the resolution, eight individuals or organisations were added to the sanctions list. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2018/21 (21 December 2018) said that the Council's review of the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime, as required by resolution 2368, concluded that no adjustments were currently necessary to the regime. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2018/770 (16 August 2018) was the seventh report on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security. **Security Council Letter** S/2018/1031 (16 November 2018) transmitted the first report of the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8437 (21 December 2018) was the meeting at which presidential statement S/PRST/2018/21 was adopted. S/PV.8412 (4 December 2018) was the Council's first briefing by Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. S/PV.8330 (23 August 2018) was a briefing by Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the UNOCT; Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; and Joana Cook, senior research fellow with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at King's College London.

Counter-Terrorism

Background and Key Recent Developments

Under the terms of resolution 2368 of 20 July 2017, the Secretary-General submits a strategic-level report on ISIL to the Council biannually. In his August 2018 report, the Secretary-General found that ISIL has continued to transform itself into a covert global network, with a weakened yet enduring presence in Iraq and Syria and with regional affiliates worldwide. Briefing the Council on the report on 23 August, Voronkov emphasised that although ISIL has suffered significant losses, it remains a serious and significant concern.

On 4 December 2018, the Council received the first briefing by Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team for Accountability of Da'esh (UNITAD), established in resolution 2379 of 21 September 2017 to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable for crimes it committed in Iraq. UNITAD formally began its work on 20 August, and the first group of UNITAD staff deployed to Baghdad on 29 October. In his briefing, Khan outlined the preparatory work being done by UNITAD to implement its mandate and its key priorities as it prepares to begin its work in early 2019. (For more on UNITAD, see our Iraq brief.)

Resolution 2368 required the Council to review the implementation of measures under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) & Al-Qaida sanctions regime regarding ISIL, including asset freezes, travel bans and arms embargoes on the listed individuals and entities. Accordingly, on 21 December 2018, the Council adopted a presidential statement in which it said that upon review, no further adjustments to the regime were necessary at that time. The short statement also said that the Council would continue to evaluate the regime's implementation, making adjustments as needed.

After the statement's adoption, Ambassador Carl Skau (Sweden) took the floor on behalf of his country and France, Kuwait, the Netherlands and the UK in support of the Office of the Ombudsperson assisting the ISIL Sanctions Committee. He described the Office as critical to the respect for due process rights of those on the sanctions list, and therefore for the efficiency of, and compliance with, the sanctions regime. Skau expressed support for strengthening the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsperson and affirmed the importance of safeguarding its independence. He welcomed continued discussions among member states about how to ensure respect for due process standards across sanctions regimes.

At press time, On 30 January, the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions Committee, was scheduled to meet the Monitoring Team assisting it, on the team's visit to Afghanistan in December 2018.

Beyond the Council, US President Donald Trump announced on 19 December 2018 that the US would withdraw its forces fighting ISIL in Syria, saying that the group had been defeated. The modalities and timing of the pull-out remained unclear at press time. On 16 January, a suicide bombing claimed by ISIL in Manbij, northern Syria, killed four US soldiers and wounded three others, with a total of 19 people killed in the attack. (For more details, see our Syria brief.)

Iraq

Expected Council Action

In February, the Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, is scheduled to brief the Council for the first time since officially assuming her position on 17 December 2018. She will be briefing on the latest Secretary-General's report on UNAMI, the most recent developments in the situation, and the latest Secretary-General's report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

UNAMI's mandate expires on 31 May 2019.

Key Recent Developments

Following the 12 May 2018 parliamentary elections and 2 October 2018 election of Barham Salih as president (a Kurdish politician who has held regional and federal office before), independent Shi'a politician Adel Abdul Mahdi was named prime minister by Salih. The formation of the Iraqi government continues. As at late January, the cabinet positions of the ministers of defence and the interior remain open.

On 16 December, Hennis-Plasschaert arrived in Baghdad. In a UNAMI press release, she named post-conflict recovery and the well-being of the Iraqi people as priorities for UNAMI, which will work towards these in the security, humanitarian, political, economic and development fields. She has met high-level government counterparts, including president Salih, prime minister Mahdi, foreign minister Ali Al-Hakim and the speaker of the House of Representatives (the Iraqi parliament), Mohamed al-Halbousi.

Iraqi government forces defeated the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in December 2017 after three years of fighting that resulted in massive destruction and the internal displacement of over two million people. In September 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2379, which requested the Secretary-General to establish an investigative team to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable for crimes it committed in the country by collecting, storing

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2421 (14 June 2018) extended the mandate of UNAMI for ten months. S/RES/2379 (21 September 2017) established an investigative team to collect, store and preserve evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq. **Secretary General's Reports** S/2018/976 (31 October 2018) was the 20th report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. S/2018/975 (31 October 2018) was on UNAMI. **Security Council Letter** S/2018/1031 (15 November 2018) was from the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, transmitting the first report on the activities of UNITAD. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8412 (4 December 2018) was the first briefing by Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. S/PV.8396 (13 November 2018) was the latest briefing on Iraq and the final briefing by the outgoing Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of UNAMI, Ján Kubiš. **Sanctions Committee Documents** SC/13658 (8 January 2019) was a press release on the removal of three entities from the sanctions list. SC/13670 (18 January 2019) was a press release on a meeting of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee with a high-level Iraqi delegation for a discussion about the recovery of Iraqi financial assets abroad, handling of delisting requests, and delisting of Iraqi entities. S/2018/1127 (14 December 2018) was from Joanna Wronecka, chair of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee, transmitting the annual report of the committee.

and preserving in Iraq evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. On 31 May 2018, the Secretary-General appointed Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the UK as Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). Support for UNITAD is part of UNAMI's mandate.

On 4 December 2018, Khan gave his first briefing to the Council, based on his first report on the activities of UNITAD. In his briefing, Khan addressed UNITAD's "guiding principles", such as the independence and impartiality of the mechanism, while working in line with the principles of the UN Charter, UN policies and best practices. As pointed out in his report, the focus of UNITAD will be on those ISIL members who bear the greatest responsibility among the leadership as well as regional and mid-level commanders. Key priorities in the next few months will be completing the work on UNITAD's premises in Baghdad, finalising its Standard Operating Procedures and recruiting staff. One-third of the members of the investigative team are to be Iraqi, with the recruitment process aiming at balance in gender, ethnic and religious representation.

The report further lays out the complex operating environment for UNITAD, considering that ISIL is still active in Iraq, some of the affected areas are not under the full control of the Iraqi government, and some require the removal of explosives. A steering committee composed of members of the Iraqi government and law enforcement bodies is charged with coordinating cooperation between the Iraqi government and UNITAD. Due to the ongoing government formation, the composition of the steering committee has been changing. UNITAD is currently focusing on a number of core activities, such as collection of existing evidence, identifying gaps and field-based investigations. Negotiations between UNITAD and the Iraqi government on the modalities of UNITAD's engagement in the field are ongoing.

At a later point, evidence will be analysed, preserved and stored, to be used for proceedings in Iraq and other states, upon request by these states and following approval by the Council. The Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly, responsible for adopting the UN budget, endorsed UNITAD's request for $21.5 million. The next report is due in May.

In a joint report published on 6 November 2018, UNAMI and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights detailed the discovery of 202 mass graves since 2014 in areas formerly controlled by ISIL, with the expectation of more such discoveries. At the end of December 2018, another mass grave was discovered in northern Iraq, where residents described past extrajudicial killings by ISIL.

Regarding the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, the then-head of UNAMI, Jan Kubiš, reported in his final briefing to the Council on 13 November 2018 that there had been progress on the repatriation of Kuwaiti property from Iraq. This was welcomed by the Secretary-General in a statement on 14 November, calling it "an important step towards the full normalization of relations between the two countries".

The UN's 2018 humanitarian response plan for Iraq of $568.7 million was funded at 92.5 percent at $525.9 million, representing the highest coverage of all UN humanitarian response plans in 2018.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 9 January, the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee held its first meeting since 2005. Members met with a high-level delegation from Iraq, discussing the recovery of Iraqi financial assets abroad, handling of delisting requests, and delisting of Iraqi entities. According to the annual report on the work of the committee, 20 entities were delisted in 2018 via written procedure, bringing the number of listed entities down to 149.

Women, Peace and Security

Hennis is the first woman to lead UNAMI, joining the two female Deputy Special Representatives, Marta Ruedas (head of the development and humanitarian support component) and Alice Walpole (political, electoral and constitutional support). During the Council's 13 November meeting on Iraq, a few Council members pointed out that no women had been considered for cabinet positions during the government formation process so far and called upon the Iraqi government to ensure women's representation at the highest decision-making level.

Issues and Options

The Council will continue to follow Iraqi progress in forming a government, and a formal Council product to express support for the new government is an option. The Council could consider conducting a visiting mission to Iraq to get a better understanding of current challenges on the ground.

As chair of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee, Poland could seize upon the momentum and political will of Council members and the Iraqi government to advance the delisting of entities and follow-up on concrete proposals on the unfreezing of Iraqi assets.

As for efforts to hold members of ISIL accountable for international crimes, the Council will continue to monitor developments regarding the investigative team. Some members, especially those opposed to the death penalty, continue to have concerns about the possibility that evidence shared by the team might be used in criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed. This may continue to affect member states' willingness to contribute to the trust fund established by the Secretary-General, which currently consists of contributions made by the UK and Qatar, with the Netherlands having pledged earmarked contributions supporting witnesses and victims.

Council Dynamics

Council members are unanimous in their support for UNAMI. Both the new composition of the Council since 1 January and how Hennis-Plasschaert, the new head of UNAMI, will work in Iraq and with Council members will influence the Council's engagement on that file.

Considering that Kuwait is currently an elected member of the Council, a formal Council product on the Iraq-Kuwait file may be a possibility at some point.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general, and the UK is the penholder on Iraq-Kuwait issues. Poland is the chair of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee.

Council Visiting Mission

Expected Council Action

During February, Security Council members are expected to undertake a visiting mission to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea are co-leading the mission.

Background and Recent Developments

The visit to Guinea-Bissau comes ahead of legislative elections scheduled for 10 March which were delayed twice last year amidst a political crisis that has now lasted three and a half years. (For more on Guinea-Bissau and the mandate renewal of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau [UNIOGBIS], see the brief on Guinea-Bissau.)

The visit to Côte d'Ivoire will take a retrospective look at the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) which closed in 2017, 13 years after it was established and six years after post-electoral violence in 2011 led to the deaths of approximately 3,000 people.

At a 5 December 2018 Council debate on post-conflict reconstruction chaired by Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara, the Security Council discussed Côte d'Ivoire's successful emergence from the crisis. According to President Ouattara, Côte d'Ivoire based its post-conflict strategy on what it calls three processes: the restoration of the economy; security sector reform along with the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former fighters; and reconciliation. Annual gross domestic product growth from 2012 to 2017 surpassed 8 percent. Over 65,000 combatants were disarmed and reintegrated, facilitated by the creation of two million jobs since 2012.

On 6 August 2018, the government granted amnesty to 800 individuals for offences related to the 2011 post-electoral crisis. This included pardoning former first lady Simone Gbagbo, who had been sentenced in March 2015 to 20 years in prison. In September 2018, ICC judges began a review of whether Simone Gbagbo could still be tried at the ICC. On 15 January, the ICC acquitted former President Laurent Gbagbo and his supporter, politician and former Minister for Youth Charles Blé Goudé, of responsibility for crimes committed during the post-electoral violence. On 18 January, ICC appeals judges delayed the release of Gbagbo and Goudé until the completion of an appeal of the ruling, which could come as soon as 1 February.

Côte d'Ivoire has faced challenges, including mutinies that broke out in 2017 in several cities among elements in the military who demanded better pay and working conditions. There are political tensions ahead of the 2020 presidential election, and the country also remains alert to the threat posed by terrorist groups in the region.

Guinea-Bissau has been in political crisis since August 2015, barely more than a year after restoring constitutional order following a 2012 coup d'état. Council members visited Guinea-Bissau in March 2016, stressing that the situation needed to be resolved through dialogue, and in accordance with national laws and the constitution. In October 2016 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brokered the Conakry Agreement to resolve the crisis and advance reforms to reduce future instability.

Last February, ECOWAS imposed sanctions against 18 individuals, including the son of President José Mário Vaz, for obstructing implementation of the Conakry Agreement. These sanctions were lifted in July 2018 following the appointment of a "consensus" prime minister (in the words of the Conakry Agreement), Aristides Gomes, the formation of an inclusive government, and Vaz's decision to schedule legislative elections for 18 November 2018. Due in part to logistical challenges with voter registration, these elections did not take place as scheduled, and on 20 December 2018, Vaz issued a decree setting 10 March as the new date for the legislative elections.

At a 22 December ECOWAS summit, West African leaders threatened to impose sanctions on those who obstruct the current electoral process. Council members issued a press statement on 27 December 2018, stressing that legislative elections should take place prior to the presidential election foreseen in 2019. There had been, and remains concern that the government, and in particular President Vaz, would like to combine the legislative elections with the presidential elections, currently scheduled for 19 May, thus delaying the legislative elections even further. The statement by Council members followed a 21 December Council briefing and consultations on the electoral process and a special report of the Secretary-General that proposed reconfiguring UNIOGBIS and ending the mission by 31 December 2020.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue during the visit to Côte d'Ivoire will be to consider the experience of transitions from mandated UN missions to non-mission settings. In addition to government representatives and civil society, Council members plan to meet with the UN Country Team, and possibly the country teams of Liberia and Sierra Leone, to discuss their recent transitions and understand current challenges. The visit also provides an opportunity to demonstrate support for the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) which was requested by the Council to make available its good offices, as necessary, to the Ivorian government and the UN Resident Coordinator following UNOCI's closure. UNOWAS has taken on similar responsibilities in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Guinea-Bissau part of the visiting mission is meant as a conflict-prevention initiative. The continued delay in the legislative elections has undermined constitutional provisions and risks provoking further political instability. Council members may reiterate to authorities and political actors the need to conduct credible elections and refrain from further delays. They may also stress to the parties the need to complete the constitutional review before the presidential election. The review of the constitution, a process set out in the Conakry Agreement, is intended, in particular, to clarify the powers of the president and prime minister, disputes over which are one of the causes of the current political crisis.

The mission will also provide an opportunity for members to assess the situation on the ground ahead of decisions they may take regarding the Secretary-General's proposals to reconfigure and draw down UNIOGBIS when the Council renews its mandate later in February. Likewise, it will contribute to members' considerations regarding the future of the 2048

UN DOCUMENTS ON CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND GUINEA-BISSAU **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2284 (28 April 2016) extended the mandate of UNOCI for a final period until 30 June 2017. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2018/1086 (6 December 2018) was on the strategic assessment of UNIOGBIS. S/2018/958 (29 October 2018) was on lessons learned about the role of UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8438 (21 December 2018) was a briefing on Guinea-Bissau. S/PV.8413 (5 December 2018) was a debate on post-conflict reconstruction. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/13650 (27 December 2018) stressed that legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau should take place prior to the presidential election foreseen in 2019.

Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee, established following the April 2012 coup d'etat.

Council Dynamics

Côte d'Ivoire has been interested in sharing lessons of its successful emergence from conflict, and as UNOWAS penholder it is supportive of the work of the regional office, which has worked closely with ECOWAS. In general, members view UNOWAS as an effective conflict-prevention tool. Regarding Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea (which chairs the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee) has taken a broader interest in the situation and is eager for the Council to play a more active role in helping the country emerge from the current political crisis. Council members remain concerned that political instability could be exploited by drug traffickers and terrorist groups in the region.

Côte d'Ivoire is the penholder on Guinea-Bissau and UNOWAS.

Burundi

Expected Council Action

In February, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Michel Kafando, is scheduled to brief the Council on the situation in Burundi in accordance with resolution 2303 of 29 July 2016, which requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council on Burundi every three months. Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), the chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, may also brief; at press time, however, it was unclear if the meeting would take place.

Key Recent Developments

The security and political situation in Burundi—which deteriorated sharply after April 2015 when Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would run for a controversial third term later that year—remains unsettled. While the Burundian government maintains that the security situation is good throughout the country, serious human rights abuses continue to be committed daily with impunity, mainly by the government and the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of Nkurunziza's party.

The overall level of oppression and state control over Burundian society has increased, manifested by arbitrary deprivations of life, enforced disappearances, cases of torture, and arbitrary detention on a massive scale. Furthermore, these actions are taking place in an environment where freedom of expression, association and assembly is virtually non-existent.

Against this backdrop of oppression and severely limited freedoms, controversial constitutional amendments were approved by a 73 percent majority in a referendum on 17 May 2018. The amendments remove references to the Arusha Accord, which put an end to civil war and ethnic violence in 2000 and established the basis for the current constitution. They provide for a possible future review of the ethnic quotas—a key element of the Arusha Accord—of 60 percent Hutu and 40 percent Tutsi in the executive branch, the parliament and the judicial branch, as well as the military. The amendments also extend the presidential term to seven years from the previous five and specify that the two-term presidential limit is to be counted from the adoption of the amendments, thus opening the door for Nkurunziza to run for re-election in 2020, although he announced on 7 June 2018 that he would not do so. In an end-of-the year address to the public on 31 December 2018, Nkurunziza said that the new constitution "consolidates national sovereignty and places Burundi in the hands of God".

Since the referendum, Burundi has started preparations for the 2020 elections, which it says it will fund without external assistance. The preparations include discussions about a draft electoral code. Concerns about inclusivity in these discussions were raised after several opposition leaders were not invited to a 4 January meeting convened by Minister of the Interior Pascal Barandagiye about the draft.

Burundi suspended 30 foreign NGOs in January after they failed to comply with a recent controversial law which tightens financial oversight over them and requires them to hire 60 percent ethnic Hutu staff and 40 percent ethnic Tutsi staff.

The inter-Burundian dialogue between the government and opposition parties—which has been held outside Burundi, led by the East African Community (EAC), with little progress thus far—last convened in Arusha between 25 and 29 October 2018 after months of delay. The facilitator of the dialogue, former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa, submitted a report to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the official mediator of the dialogue, with recommendations for a roadmap for credible elections in 2020, including dialogue with the exiled opposition. Nkurunziza rejected the report and any concerns about Burundi's political situation in a letter to Museveni on 4 December 2018. Museveni replied on 8 December, saying that developments related to the third presidential term had disrupted peace in Burundi and undermined the Arusha Accord, which was guaranteed by the EAC, among others. An EAC heads of state meeting on Burundi, which had been postponed twice since November 2018, has now been set for 1 February.

In January, Burundi's parliament approved a plan to move the country's capital from Bujumbura to Gitega in a process that will take a few years. Nkurunziza first announced this plan in 2007, saying that Gitega is more centrally located. Some in the opposition see this as an attempt to move political institutions from Bujumbura, known to be an opposition stronghold.

Kafando last briefed the Council on 21 November 2018. Lauber also briefed as chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Burundi configuration.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 September 2018, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue during its 39th session with the Commission of Inquiry on

UN DOCUMENTS ON BURUNDI **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2303 (29 July 2016) decided to establish a UN police component in Burundi of 228 officers for an initial period of one year. **Security-General's Report** S/2018/1028 (15 November 2018) was the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Burundi. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8408 (21 November 2018) was a briefing by Michel Kafando, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Burundi, on the latest Secretary-General's report on Burundi.

Burundi

Burundi, established by HRC resolution 33/24 on 30 September 2016, and considered its report (A/HRC/39/63). The report concluded that the serious human rights violations documented in the first year of the Commission's mandate, including crimes against humanity, persisted in 2017 and 2018. These included cases of summary execution; enforced disappearance; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; sexual violence; and violations of civil liberties such as the freedom of expression, association, assembly and movement. The report found that state entities "are most often implicated in these violations" and perpetrators operate in an overall climate of impunity. One of its recommendations is that the HRC submit the report to the Security Council.

On 28 September 2018, the HRC adopted resolution 39/14, extending the Commission's mandate for another year and requesting a final report at its 42nd session in September, with oral updates at its 40th and 41st sessions in March and June, respectively. It also urged the Burundian government to authorise the Commission to conduct country visits. The resolution recalled the Security Council's resolutions 2248 and 2303 and its presidential statement of 5 April 2018. It was adopted with 23 votes in favour, seven against and 17 abstentions. Security Council members also on the HRC voted as follows: Belgium, Germany, Peru and the UK in favour; China against; and Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa abstained.

Key Issues and Options

The post-referendum political situation heading into elections in 2020 and the lack of progress in the EAC-led mediation remain serious concerns that the Council will need to monitor closely. An option would be to adopt a presidential or press statement, noting Nkurunziza's commitment not to run for president in 2020, urging the EAC to intensify efforts to revive the dialogue and calling on Burundi to allow for an inclusive electoral process.

Another major issue is the continued lack of accountability for human rights violations, including possible crimes against humanity, over the last several years in Burundi. One possible way to address some of these issues would be to impose targeted sanctions against those obstructing a genuine political dialogue and those responsible for human rights violations.

Council Dynamics

Council members agree that the continued viability of the Arusha Accord as a basis for stability in Burundi is important. Burundi, for its part, remains entrenched in its opposition to the international community's involvement in its political affairs, most recently manifested by its rejection of efforts by Mkapa, the inter-Burundian dialogue facilitator. The Council has been unable to find a fresh avenue to re-engage with Burundi over the political situation thus far.

Despite the political concerns, some Council members continue to question the need to keep Burundi on the Council's agenda, viewing the situation as an internal issue that lacks a pressing international peace and security dimension. An attempt by France to discuss Burundi under "any other business" in January was not welcomed by several Council members, including the African members, as they saw no security issue warranting discussion at that time. At press time, it was uncertain whether the meeting on Burundi would take place given the disagreement among Council members. If not, it may happen in March under the French presidency of the Council.

This difference in views also manifested itself with respect to the Secretary-General's reporting on Burundi. Those questioning the need to discuss Burundi, such as Russia and African members of the Council, prefer that the Secretary-General not produce written reports prior to briefings on Burundi, while other members disagree. The November 2018 report was in written form; however, this has been done sporadically due to the differing views.

France is the penholder on Burundi.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In February, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, the Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), will brief the Council on the MINUSCA report, due on 15 February. The chair of the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee Ambassador Léon Houadja Kacou Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) will also brief.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) is dismal. Self-proclaimed self-defence groups, loosely connected to some members of the largely Christian anti-Balaka movement, have continued to operate in south-eastern CAR, targeting Muslims. Ex-Séléka armed factions, which are largely Muslim, have retained, if not strengthened, their positions and influence in their respective strongholds and continue to benefit from illicit taxation and illegal exploitation of natural resources. The government, led by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, remains largely unable to establish state authority outside a few urban areas, thus undermining the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the population.

The 14 December 2018 report of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee noted that ex-Séléka leaders have opposed the ongoing redeployment of the CAR Forces Armées Centrafricaines (FACA) in their areas of influence, asserting that this should only be done after the signing of a comprehensive agreement.

Humanitarian workers continue to be at risk in the CAR. On 5 January, a humanitarian worker was killed in Batangafo town, Ouham prefecture. In 2018, 396 incidents against humanitarian personnel and assets were recorded, compared to 337 incidents in 2017. Against this backdrop of violence, 2.9 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, half of whom are children; that total represents more than 63 percent of the population.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2448 (13 December 2018) extended the mandate of MINUSCA and the authorisation to use all means to provide operational support to MINUSCA until 15 November 2019. S/RES/2446 (15 November 2018) extended the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 December. S/RES/2399 (30 January 2018) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 January 2019 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 28 February 2019. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8422 (13 December 2018) was the meeting at which the Council renewed the mandate of MINUSCA. **Sanctions Committee Document** S/2018/1119 (14 December 2018) was the final report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic pursuant to Security Council resolution 2399 (2018).

On 13 December 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2448, renewing the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 November 2019. This followed a "technical rollover" of the mission for a period of one month in resolution 2446 of 14 November. Resolution 2448 authorises MINUSCA to enhance planning, technical assistance and limited logistical support for the redeployment of vetted CAR security forces trained by the EU Military Training Mission (EUTM), in accordance with the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy. The resolution clarifies that this should be carried out "by reallocating approved resources".

In accordance with the recommendation of the Secretary-General, MINUSCA will support the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, led by the AU and in which 14 armed groups participate, and will collaborate with the African Initiative to ensure that the mission's political and security strategies promote a coherent peace process that connects both local and national peace efforts.

During the negotiations, Russia insisted that the text reflect its expanding role in training and arming the CAR security forces as well as a Russian-brokered meeting in Khartoum between anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka representatives, which ended with a 29 August declaration of commitment to peace in the CAR through the establishment of the "Central African Forum" as a framework for communication. Though several Council members were adamant that the African Initiative be referred to as "the only framework for a comprehensive political solution", the resolution refrains from stating the need to avoid parallel initiatives, as was the case in earlier resolutions, but rather calls for "strengthen[ed] coordination of all efforts and initiatives under the leadership of the African Union" to reflect Russia's concerns without specifically mentioning the "Central African Forum" initiative. It also refers to coordination with EUTM "and other international partners, including France, the Russian Federation and the United States" in security sector reform.

Russia and China abstained on the vote. Russia said that resolution 2448 failed to welcome "peace initiatives that align with and contribute to" the African Initiative and that it does not reflect the Russian contribution to security in the CAR by training the FACA, while bolstering the contribution of the EUTM.

Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Council members on 21 January about his recent visit to Bangui. He informed them about the start of open-ended negotiations between the CAR government and armed groups, which were set to take place in Khartoum on 24 January, as part of the AU initiative, and have been ongoing at press time. Lacroix and AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smaïl Chergui have been attending the talks.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The final report of the Panel of Experts states that armed groups nominally committed to the African Initiative continue to commit gross violations of human rights and have yet to take concrete steps towards disarmament. Ex-Séléka factions continue to acquire illicit trafficked weaponry and to resist state authority in areas under their control.

On 21 January, the sanctions committee met with the CAR minister of defence, Marie-Noëlle Koyara. Koyara briefed Council members on weapons storage facilities in the CAR and reiterated CAR's long-standing request that the arms embargo on the country be lifted. On 29 January, the committee held a meeting with representatives of neighbouring countries to discuss the panel's final report.

At press time, the Council was scheduled to adopt a resolution to renew the sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts on 31 January.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The independent expert on human rights in the CAR, Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum, visited the country from 15 to 25 January. The visit focused on assessing the protection and promotion of the rights of children, youth and women, as well as the level of consultation in the peace and reconciliation process and any achievements in the area of transitional justice since her last visit in June 2018. In March, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold a high-level interactive dialogue on human rights in the CAR during its 40th session.

Issues and Options

Following the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate, the Council will monitor its implementation, including progress in assisting the CAR in expanding state authority to more parts of the country and MINUSCA's assistance to the EUTM-trained FACA deployment.

Progress on the political track and support for the African Initiative are central issues, and under resolution 2448, MINUSCA is to play a more significant part in its facilitation. A related issue revolves around the armed groups and their commitment to the political process. A credible threat of sanctions might provide an incentive for armed groups to commit to reconciliation, and sanctions against those responsible for attacks against civilians, MINUSCA and humanitarian workers might also help to curb violence. Furthermore, targeting actors that enable the economic activities of armed groups may further pressure them to a seek a reconciliation.

In addition, as the Council considers the option of easing the arms embargo on the CAR security forces, as requested by the CAR, the sanctions committee will need to monitor the effects of this possible shift.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The negotiations over MINUSCA's mandate renewal proved difficult and exposed differences of views between the permanent members. Russia's insistence that its political role and military assistance to the CAR be reflected in Council outcomes creates a new dynamic, reflecting Russia's increasing interest in the region.

Russia's more vocal stance and the positions of several current elected Council members have also manifested themselves in the Council's position over lifting the arms embargo on the CAR. In the past, and despite the explicit position of the CAR government, the P3, along with several other Council members, were of the view that limited progress in security sector reform did not allow for lifting the arms embargo. This position faced little pushback from other Council members. More recently, some Council members have expressed the view that that the CAR's wishes should be respected Though a resolution on renewing the sanctions regime, including the arms embargo, had yet to be adopted by press time, this shift in positions has played a significant role in the negotiations over the draft resolution.

Holding the latest African Initiative meetings in Khartoum, which previously hosted the Russian-sponsored talks, may alleviate concerns over competing reconciliation efforts, at least for the time being. While Council members are hoping that these talks are a pathway to a peace agreement, there are still serious concerns over the genuine commitment to reconciliation of participating armed groups.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Côte d'Ivoire chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In February, the chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany) is due to provide his first briefing in this capacity. Ahead of the briefing, the committee is likely to discuss the final report of its Panel of Experts, although the report is not expected to be formally presented to the Council until March.

Key Recent Developments

Diplomatic efforts through 2018 led to several significant breakthroughs on the Korean peninsula, resulting in an overall decline in tensions and the halting of missile-testing activities by the DPRK.

Republic of Korea President Moon Jae-in and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un held three summits and made commitments towards further improving relations between the two countries. In June, US President Donald Trump and Kim held the first US-DPRK summit and signed a joint declaration pledging to work on building new relations, striving to achieve lasting peace on the peninsula, and working towards the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Besides some symbolic moves, the DPRK has yet to take concrete steps towards denuclearisation.

On 18 January, the DPRK's main negotiator, Kim Yong-chol, held talks in Washington with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and later with President Trump. The White House announced the same day that the second US-DPRK summit would take place at the end of February. At press time, however, neither side had provided further details about the summit. In a press conference on 18 January, UN Secretary-General António Guterres encouraged the negotiations between the US and the DPRK and emphasised the need to develop a clearly defined roadmap for denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

In his annual January address to the media, Moon called on the DPRK to take tangible steps towards denuclearisation to justify sanctions relief. He also emphasised that the US would have to realise that it would have to take reciprocal denuclearisation measures. In his new year's national address, Kim noted that his country had stopped testing and producing nuclear weapons. He stressed, however, that further actions on denuclearisation would be contingent on the willingness of the US to provide sanctions relief.

In December 2018, the Council broke with the practice of holding an annual meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK because of a lack of sufficient support by members. Each year since 2014, the discussion of the agenda item "the situation in the DPRK" has required a procedural vote in order to be included on the programme of work. In December, however, proponents could not gather nine members to sign the letter requesting the meeting. (Council decisions of a procedural nature need nine affirmative votes for a decision to be adopted, and the veto does not apply.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

The special rapporteur on human rights in the DPRK, Tomás Ojea Quintana, visited the South Korean capital, Seoul, from 7 to 11 January. In a statement on 11 January, he said that despite the positive developments of the past year, it was "regrettable" that the human rights situation on the ground remains "unchanged" and continues to be "extremely serious". He also expressed concerns about the system of political prison camps and urged the DPRK government to allow him to visit the country. He repeated a call made to the Security Council to supervise the implementation of its sanctions regime with a view to ensuring that it is not detrimental to the people of the DPRK. In March, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an interactive dialogue with the special rapporteur.

Key Issues and Options

While tensions on the Korean peninsula declined dramatically during the last year, the security situation remains sensitive and warrants the close attention of the Council, whose primary issue continues to be maintaining stability in the region. Given that major diplomatic breakthroughs took place outside its purview, the Council has only played a limited role in this process. The future role of the Council on this issue will largely depend on how the broader geopolitical events develop.

A persistent issue for the Council, which is likely to become more prominent this year, is keeping the right balance between applying sanctions and simultaneously exploring the diplomatic track. In this context, the Council could consider modifying sanctions in an effort to encourage more substantial diplomatic engagement by the DPRK.

There is a growing concern among some members about the negative effects of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK. The Council could consider seeking assistance from OCHA in getting more information on humanitarian exemptions. Another option would be to consider adding to the monitoring panel assisting the sanctions committee an expert on humanitarian issues who could analyse the impact of sanctions on the civilian population.

The ongoing dire human rights situation in the DPRK remains an issue. Although there was insufficient support among members to discuss this in 2018, an option would be for the Council to hold a meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK in the near future. The Council's composition in 2019 could make it possible to garner the nine votes required to hold the meeting, should there be a procedural vote.

Council Dynamics

In the latter part of 2018, the Council became more active in trying to address the implementation of sanctions on the DPRK. This has resulted in growing tensions among permanent members and exposed the rift between the US and Russia, in particular. The US has accused Russia of violating the sanctions on the DPRK by engaging in the illicit trade of petroleum products through ship-to-ship transfers. The tensions were further exacerbated over the midterm report of the Panel of Experts. The US blocked the publication of the midterm report in September 2018, claiming that Russia interfered in the work of the Panel, pressuring it to modify the report to conceal Russian violations of the sanctions regime.

While most Council members remain cautious in their optimism about the DPRK's denuclearisation—it seems that only a few members were eager to adopt an outcome

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2407 (21 March 2018) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 24 April 2019. S/RES/2397 (22 December 2017) further tightened sanctions on the DPRK. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2017/16 (29 August 2017) condemned the launch of a missile over the territory of Japan and urged the DPRK to comply with previous Council resolutions and presidential statements. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8363 (27 September 2018) was a ministerial-level meeting on efforts to denuclearise the DPRK. S/PV.8362 (26 September 2018) was a high-level meeting on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. S/PV.8353 (17 September 2018) was a briefing on the implementation of sanctions on the DPRK. **Sanctions Committee Documents** S/2018/1148 (21 December 2018) was the annual report of the sanctions committee.

that would welcome the relative success of the inter-Korean and US-DPRK summits in 2018—they continue to support diplomatic efforts between the US and the DPRK as well as between the two Koreas. Some members are starting to question whether a new approach is needed in the Council's relationship with the DPRK, including a greater response to positive developments through Council outcomes and other possible means of showing support for serious dialogue on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Most members would still want to see more concrete measures towards denuclearisation before considering any outcome. Council members might be more open to considering this option, should the anticipated diplomatic efforts this year result in substantial progress.

Some members, in particular China and Russia, are becoming increasingly interested in considering some form of sanctions relief for the DPRK. Russia has continued to call for easing the sanctions as a reward for positive actions by the DPRK. It also emphasised that further sanctions-tightening would have negative consequences on the humanitarian situation and other areas not related to denuclearisation. Some members seem to be open to exploring ways to exempt some inter-Korean joint projects from sanctions.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK, and Germany chairs the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

Open Debate on Silencing the Guns in Africa

Expected Council Action

In February, under the agenda item "Cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations", the Security Council will hold an open debate on the AU initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat are expected to brief. Equatorial Guinea intends to present a draft resolution endorsing the AU initiative, to be adopted during the debate.

Background

According to Equatorial Guinea's concept note, it aims for the high-level open debate to discuss the challenges of creating a conflict-free Africa through eliminating all wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts, and preventing genocide, as well as how the UN-AU partnership can make tangible progress in this regard.

The AU Heads of State and Government adopted the programme for silencing the guns by 2020 as part of the May 2013 Solemn Declaration marking the AU's 50th anniversary. Since the declaration's adoption, the AU has periodically held meetings and workshops on progress. It has also adopted the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns to address implementation. In July 2018, the Council and the AU Peace and Security Council held their third annual informal meeting and discussed how reinforced cooperation could assist in ending conflict.

In its concept note for the open debate, Equatorial Guinea blames continued challenges on governance deficits, the global economic slowdown, commodity prices, high rates of unemployment, mismanagement of ethnic diversity, and competition over power and resources. Equatorial Guinea also attributes the increased risk of relapse in post-conflict countries to weak state institutions.

Equatorial Guinea stresses the importance of establishing ownership of the master roadmap by affected member states through active participation and addressing root causes of conflict. The concept note also says that the AU members need to strengthen all existing preventive diplomacy tools and fully implement the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). It seeks better cooperation at the sub-regional, continental and international level, and urges the Council to mobilise the necessary support.

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia, as well as South Africa and the AU, held an Arria-formula meeting in October 2018 on silencing the guns. During this meeting, the Permanent Observer of the AU noted that despite great strides in mediation and prevention tools, much remained to be strengthened: coordination and harmonisation of various policies of the AU; systematic involvement of all relevant local, national, regional, and international stakeholders; addressing root causes; and mobilisation of necessary funds.

Council members who spoke at the Arria-formula meeting all welcomed the opportunity for greater cooperation and coordination between the AU and UN, while some stressed the need to support African solutions for African problems. Some called for sustainable and predictable financing for AU operations. Several speakers noted the detrimental impact of small arms and light weapons trafficking and are likely to reiterate during the open debate their desire for common efforts to fight trafficking. Other possible topics may be the need for inclusion, especially of women, in conflict prevention and how some believe the mismanagement and exploitation of natural resources leads to and sustains conflict.

Council Dynamics

At the October 2018 Arria-formula meeting, Côte d'Ivoire announced that it would present a draft resolution on silencing the guns during Equatorial Guinea's presidency in February. This idea was supported in statements by other speakers, including Kuwait and incoming member Germany, and may be an outcome option. Negotiations might be difficult, however, because of differences in positions on issues such as financing of AU proposals, inclusion of language related to women's involvement in peace processes, and the role of the Council in supporting an AU initiative.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In February, the Council will continue to follow the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). While no meeting was scheduled at press time, the Council may request to be briefed on the political situation and implementation of election benchmarks by the Special Representative and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Leila Zerrougui.

MONUSCO's mandate expires on 31 March 2019.

Key Recent Developments

After being delayed since the end of 2016, presidential, legislative and provincial elections were held in most of the DRC on 30 December 2018. The exceptions were Beni, Butembo and Yumbi, where the government announced postponement until March due to concerns about Ebola and the security situation. The elections were held after a difficult campaign period, with violent clashes at rallies and a decrease in political space.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced results on 10 January. The provisional results showed opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi, of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress party, as the winner of the presidential election with 38.57 percent of the vote, ahead of rival opposition candidate Martin Fayulu of the Commitment for Citizenship and Development Party. Emmanuel Shadary, the candidate of current President Joseph Kabila's party, Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie, placed third. At the same time, Kabila's coalition, the Common Front for Congo, received a super-majority in the legislative elections: as many as 350 out of 500 seats.

Since the elections, significant tensions and contradictory statements from national, regional, and international stakeholders have added to the sense of uncertainty. Almost immediately after the election, CENI and the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), which deployed about 40,000 electoral observers, disagreed publicly on the election tallies. Several media organisations undertook independent analyses and have called the declared results fraudulent, naming Fayulu the clear winner.

The Council discussed the issue on 11 January. Members heard briefings from Zerrougui, CENI, CENCO, the AU's permanent observer, and Zambia's minister for foreign affairs as the representative of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). On 15 January, the Council released a press statement welcoming the peaceful holding of the elections, noted the announcement of provisional results by the CENI, and stressed the need for those concerned to take actions in line with electoral law and to preserve the generally peaceful climate.

In the wake of fraud allegations, both SADC and the AU held emergency meetings on 17 January. Both then released statements, but they differed. SADC called for all disagreements with results to be resolved in line with the DRC's constitution and laws. The AU communiqué called for the DRC to halt any election announcements and said it would dispatch a high-level delegation to Kinshasa.

The situation evolved further after the DRC Constitutional Court confirmed CENI's provisional results on 19 January. Fayulu continued to publicly contest the results. In response, both the AU and SADC released statements noting the decision by the Constitutional Court and calling for unity, peace, and stability. The AU decided to postpone the high-level delegation's visit and will discuss the political situation in the DRC at a summit in February instead. The US State Department said on 23 January that it welcomed the certification of Tshisekedi as President, signalled commitment to working with the new government, and called on stakeholders to address reports of electoral irregularities. On 24 January, Tshisekedi was sworn in as president in a generally calm ceremony. On 30 January Council members received an update on political developments from Leila Zerrougui, who briefed in consultations under "any other business."

As political developments unfolded, the security situation remained difficult. According to the 4 January report of the Secretary-General, armed groups committed violence in the east, the Force de Resistance Patriotique de l'Ituri armed group remains active, and some parts of the Kasai region continue to face militia attacks. The Kasai problems were worsened by the return of an estimated 300,000 Congolese citizens expelled from Angola in October 2018, and up to 200 a day since that first wave. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of attacks on population centres. In Beni in October 2018, the local population held several protests to denounce violence against civilians and call for more protection from national security forces and MONUSCO.

The DRC Ebola epidemic is the second-largest known outbreak. Approximately 700 people have been reported as infected since last August, and over 400 have died. In December 2018, UNICEF said more than one-third of those infected were children. Tackling the outbreak has been made more difficult because of the poor security situation, continued use of rape as a tool of war, and distrust of health workers. In Marabo, Ituri province, violent protests erupted over a proposal to build an Ebola treatment centre, and rumours spread against the vaccination attempt of local high schoolers. Nevertheless, the vaccination campaign continues throughout the infected areas, and over 59,000 people have been vaccinated. World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus visited affected areas over the New Year. WHO offices in Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda have begun to increase preparedness and operational readiness because of the possibility of further spread. Regarding the humanitarian situation, the Secretary-General reported that the UN's response was severely hampered because the appeal in 2018 was only 24 percent funded.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee is scheduled to be held on 1 February to discuss the midterm report of the Group of Experts. The committee is tentatively discussing a visit to the DRC in the latter half of 2019.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 7 January, the special rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kaye, released a statement

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2424 (29 June 2018) renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2019 and the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2019. S/RES/2409 (27 March 2018) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 31 March 2019. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2019/6 (4 January 2019) covered the period from 2 October to 31 December 2018. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8443 (11 January 2019) was a briefing from the Special Representative and head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui; President of CENI Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo; Permanent Observer of the AU Fatima Kyari Mohammed; President of CENCO Monseigneur Marcel Utembi; and Joseph Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation of SADC. **Security Council Press Statements** SC/13663 (15 January 2019) noted the announcement by CENI of provisional results of the presidential and provincial elections, welcomed the subsequent peaceful and stable situation, and encouraged any disputes to be dealt with along legal channels. SC/13648 (22 December 2018) was on the delay of elections in the DRC to 30 December. **Security Council Letter** S/2018/1144 (20 December 2018) was from the DRC government explaining the one-week election postponement.

calling on the DRC government to restore internet services in the country after all primary telecommunications were shut down ahead of the announcement of the election results. "A general network shutdown is in clear violation of international law and cannot be justified by any means", Kaye said. On 16 January, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights released a statement saying that according to allegations from credible sources, at least 890 people were killed between 16 and 18 December 2018 in four villages in Yumbi territory, Mai-Ndombe province, in the west of the country, apparently in clashes between the Banunu and Batende communities. According to the statement, most of the population of the affected villages has reportedly been displaced, including an estimated 16,000 people who sought refuge by crossing the Congo River into the Republic of Congo. The UN Human Rights Office and national judicial authorities have launched investigations into the incidents, the statement said. In March, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's oral update and report on the DRC.

Key Issues and Options

Initially, the Security Council faced the question of how involved it should be in the dispute over the election results. Given that several media and civil society groups decried the elections as fraudulent, there was some expectation that the Council might issue a press statement or hold a meeting; with Tshisekedi's inauguration, however, there seems to be less sense of urgency for immediate Council action. The Council is likely to follow developments closely and may issue a presidential or press statement once the new DRC government is formed.

An outstanding issue is the arrangements for the March vote by 1.25 million voters in Beni, Butembo and Yumbi where elections were postponed for security and Ebola-related reasons. The Council could hold a meeting in February to consider this matter.

Council Dynamics

The Council has remained engaged in following elections-related developments in the DRC, with two meetings and a press statement in January. Divisions surfaced in members' reactions to the elections and claims of fraud. New member Belgium has long historical ties to the DRC as the former colonial power and appears to be taking a cautious yet prominent role, along with France as the traditional Council lead on the DRC. Both France and Belgium have publicly criticised the provisional results. However, on 22 January, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini met with AU members in Brussels and called for the new DRC president to be a unifying force. The EU members on the Council could therefore be expected to align their positions. Meanwhile, South Africa, joining China and Russia, views this as an internal and sovereign issue. South Africa has issued statements in favour of the formation of a DRC government as a result of the 2018 elections.

Some in the Council may look ahead to mandate renewal negotiations in March, particularly an eventual exit strategy for MONUSCO. MONUSCO and its predecessor MONUC have been in place since 1999. Events in the coming weeks, including the security situation in the east, are likely to have an impact on Council members' thinking. The DRC government, under President Kabila, has called for preparations for MONUSCO's exit. It remains to be seen how President Tshisekedi may act.

France is the penholder on the DRC, and Kuwait chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

Myanmar

Expected Council Action

The Council anticipates a possible briefing in February on the situation in Myanmar from Special Envoy Christine Schraner Burgener, who visited the country at the end of January. There may also be interest in hearing from UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, who are both planning to visit Myanmar in the coming weeks.

Key Recent Developments

In consultations on 16 January, Council members were briefed on Myanmar by Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Grandi, and Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific for the UN Development Programme Haoliang Xu. Fighting between armed separatists and the national security forces has been ongoing for several months, but the 4 January attack on four military border posts by the Arakan Army, a separatist group demanding greater autonomy for Rakhine State, signalled an escalation of the violence.

On 24 October 2018, Marzuki Darusman, chair of the fact-finding mission of the Human Rights Council (HRC), briefed the Security Council on the mission's report. Among its findings was that Myanmar security forces had committed what amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity in their treatment of several ethnic and religious minorities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States and that there was sufficient information regarding the treatment of the Rohingya ethnic group in Rakhine State for senior officials in the Tatmadaw to be investigated to determine their liability for genocide.

The meeting had been requested on 16 October by nine members of the Council—Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, the US and the UK. On 18 October, Bolivia, China, Equatorial Guinea and Russia responded with a letter to the president of the Council expressing their objection to such a briefing on the grounds that there was no precedent for a briefing from an HRC special mechanism on a country-specific issue, and that it was not within the mission's mandate. The provisional agenda was put to a vote, and received nine votes in favour, three votes against, and

UN DOCUMENTS ON MYANMAR Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/22 (6 November 2017) addressed the situation in Rakhine. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2018/296 (29 October 2018) was on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar. **Security Council Letters** S/2018/956 (22 October 2018) was to the Secretary-General, objecting to a briefing by the Chairperson of the Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission. S/2018/926 (16 October 2018) was from nine Council members, requesting a briefing by the Chairperson of the Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8381 (24 October 2018) was the briefing by the Chairperson of the Human Rights Council's Fact-Finding Mission. **Human Rights Council Document** A/HRC/39/64 (12 September 2018) was the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

three abstentions. In the briefing, Darusman stressed the importance of accountability and urged the Council to impose sanctions against those responsible for serious crimes under international law. He also called for the Council's support for an independent inquiry into UN involvement in Myanmar since 2011.

Burgener visited Myanmar from 19 to 28 January. During her visit she met with government ministers, Rakhine State government officials, political parties, humanitarian agencies, and civil society. Among the issues covered were plans to develop the state and freedom of movement in Rakhine State. She also visited displacement camps that have housed Rohingya Muslims since 2012 and visited refugee camps in Sittwe. She also met representatives of the Tatmadaw.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a statement on 18 January, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee expressed alarm over escalating violence in northern and central Rakhine state and in Chin state. Since November 2018 the Myanmar military has been engaged in heavy fighting, resulting in deaths and injuries to civilians and the displacement of 5,000 people, the statement said. Lee called for full and unfettered humanitarian access to the region following a 10 January order by the Rakhine State government blocking humanitarian activities of international agencies in several areas.

Issues and Options

Key issues include:

- the lack of appropriate conditions for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh;
- restricted access in Rakhine state, affecting the provision of humanitarian aid;
- the need for full implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the Myanmar government, UNDP and UNHCR, as well as of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on the Rakhine State, which was established at the request of the State Counsellor of Myanmar, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and mandated to make recommendations to improve the situation in Rakhine State; and
- addressing accountability issues.

The Council could consider a visiting mission, possibly of a sub-group of its members, to assess developments since its visit in April-May 2018. It could also consider a resolution setting out a regular reporting cycle which could provide for more regular Council oversight.

A briefing by Burgener and others who have visited the region can inform the Council of the impact of the increased instability in Rakhine state on efforts to repatriate Rohingya refugees and on the national peace process, which are of concern to members. Briefers will also be able to provide an update on any progress made in the implementation of the trilateral MOU.

An issue is the Myanmar government's reluctance to work with the Council. Whether it might be useful to have greater involvement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in working with the Myanmar government on humanitarian assistance and repatriation of refugees may be worth consideration.

Council Dynamics

Council members appear open to hearing from the Special Envoy and others who have recently visited Myanmar. However, agreement on a robust product may be more difficult. In December 2018, Council members were negotiating a draft resolution on Myanmar that would have set out a regular reporting cycle on the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission and progress in investigations of alleged human rights violations. However, China and Russia did not engage on the resolution, and the UK, the penholder on Myanmar, decided in late December not to table the draft for a vote. While it is not off the table, it is unclear when the UK, which has pursued a policy of incremental pressure on this issue, will take it up again.

It is too early to say how the change in the Council's composition might affect support for its more active engagement on Myanmar. While China is seen as having the potential to play a key role, given its geographic proximity and its more active role in the peace process, its position has been that the Council should not get too involved, and it is likely to continue to advocate a bilateral approach to the repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh.

Among those who joined the Council in January, Indonesia is in the unique position of being a member of ASEAN, which includes Myanmar. It brings a deep understanding of the Myanmar situation to the Council, but its association with ASEAN could also be a complicating factor. Indonesia and Kuwait are also members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which has called for the protection of the rights of the Rohingya.

Lead Roles within the Council in 2019: Penholders and Chairs of Subsidiary Bodies

The tables below have been updated to reflect the Security Council penholders and chairs of subsidiary bodies as of January 2019. These tables do not include all agenda items of which the Council is currently seized but do include items with regular outcomes or where a subsidiary body has been established. For the full list of the agenda items, please refer to the latest summary statement by the Secretary-General of matters of which the Security Council is seized and the stage reached in their consideration (S/2019/10). The list of chairs of subsidiary bodies is contained in a 2 January note by the Council president (S/2019/2).

In recent years, the penholder system and the process of appointing subsidiary body chairs have been increasingly frequent topics of discussion among Council members. The penholder role refers to a member of the Council that leads the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on a Council agenda item in which they have an interest. Leadership within the Council in drafting resolutions has been normal practice since its inception, but the penholder system is a more recent development. It was not until 2006, with France, the UK and the US (known as the P3) leading in the drafting and negotiating of outcomes regarding nuclear threats in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, that the penholder "system" started emerging as a distinct practice. More recently, the penholder system has been the domain and

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practice of the permanent members of the Council, particularly the P3, whereas chairmanships of the subsidiary bodies have been held by elected members. Though leadership in the subsidiary bodies have almost always been the elected members—the process by which they are appointed was for decades opaque and controlled by the permanent members. This exclusivity and the unequal distribution of penholdership roles amongst members of the Council are just two reasons why the issue of burden-sharing has become a more frequent point of discussion when addressing working methods.

Patterns of leadership in drafting resolutions on certain issues existed for years, but elected members played active roles on different files and drafting was not the exclusive domain of permanent members. By around 2010, however, the P3 had become penholders on most situation-specific issues on the Council agenda and all the new situations added more recently. There was no formal decision or process for these assignments and the term "penholder" did not appear in a Council-agreed document until 2014. A note by the president of the Council on improving the "efficiency and transparency of the Council's work" (S/2014/268) acknowledged that all members can serve as a penholder, affirmed members' commitment to enhancing the participation of all Council members in the drafting of outcomes, and signaled the intention to consult with non-Council membership when drafting. In 2017, the updated version of the comprehensive guidelines for Council working methods, known as "Note 507" (S/2017/507), incorporated the provisions of the 2014 note and also said that "[m]ore than one Council member may act as co-penholders, when it is deemed to add value, taking into account as appropriate the expertise and/or contributions of Council members on the subjects". In practice, however, the penholder system remained unchanged, and several members, both on the Council and not, continued to express their concerns during annual open debates on working methods.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council of 13 November 2018, the permanent representatives of 15 countries, both elected and incoming Council members—Belgium, Bolivia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, South African and Sweden—stressed their conviction that a more equal distribution of work among all members, including through co-penholderships, would improve the overall effectiveness of the Council (S/2018/1024).

In contrast to the penholder system, the subsidiary bodies created by the Council have in recent years exclusively been chaired by non-permanent members. In 2016, a change in the date of electing new Council members created an opportunity to address the need for change in the appointment process of subsidiary body chairs. Japan, chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions at the time, drafted a note aimed at improving the various aspects of new members' preparation during the period between election and the beginning of their term, including the selection and preparation of chairs of subsidiary bodies. Initially reluctant, the P5 eventually agreed to establish a more transparent and collaborative appointment process. The resulting note called for an informal consultation process on appointments to be "undertaken in a balanced, transparent, efficient and inclusive way". The process was also to be "facilitated jointly by two members of the Security Council working in full cooperation". This was incorporated into the 2017 "Note 507" which also elaborated a set of measures aimed at enhancing the transparency of subsidiary organs, as well as improving the preparation of chairs and increasing the interaction and coordination among subsidiary organs and the Council.

In the November 2018 letter regarding Council burden-sharing, the elected members highlighted the connection between the penholdership and the chairing of sanctions committees. They said the Council ought to "make better use of the expertise that the Chairs of sanctions committees develop on the situations discussed in their respective committees and should consider promoting their role as penholders and the automaticity of their role as co-penholders on the related dossiers."

In an effort to achieve better burden-sharing, Germany, which chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, joined the UK as co-penholder on issues concerning Libya sanctions as of early 2019. In addition, Germany decided that its deputy permanent representative, rather than its permanent representative, will serve as chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee. Historically, permanent representatives have held the position of chairs of subsidiary bodies; however, this has been Council practice rather than the result of Council decisions. Having deputy permanent representatives chair subsidiary bodies may lead to a better burden-sharing within individual missions thus enhancing their effectiveness while on the Council.

COUNTRY SITUATION	CURRENT PENHOLDER IN THE COUNCIL
Afghanistan	Germany and Indonesia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Rotating on a monthly basis among members of the Contact and Drafting Group (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK, the US and current elected Council members Belgium and Poland).
Burundi	France
Central Africa (UNOCA/LRA)	UK
Central African Republic	France
Central Asia (UNRCCA)	Russia
Colombia	UK
Côte d'Ivoire	France
Cyprus	UK
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	France

Lead Roles within the Council in 2019: Penholders and Chairs of Subsidiary Bodies

COUNTRY SITUATION	CURRENT PENHOLDER IN THE COUNCIL
DPRK (Non-proliferation)	US
Golan Heights (UNDOF)	Russia and the US
Guinea-Bissau	Côte d'Ivoire
Haiti	US in consultation with the Group of Friends of Haiti (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Peru, the US, Uruguay and Venezuela)
Iran (Non-Proliferation)	US
Iraq	US on Iraq; UK on Iraq/Kuwait
Lake Chad Basin	UK
Lebanon	France
Liberia	US
Libya	UK; the UK and Germany on Libya sanctions
Mali	France
Middle East (Israel/Palestine)	The US is often seen as the lead, but recent proposals on this issue have been drafted by various other Council members.
Somalia	UK; US on piracy
Sudan/South Sudan	US
Sudan (Darfur)	UK
South Sudan	US
Syria	Belgium, Germany and Kuwait lead on humanitarian issues
Ukraine	There is no clear penholder for Ukraine. Both Russia and the US have drafted texts and other members have been active in calling for meetings on the issue.
Yemen	UK
West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)	Côte d'Ivoire
Western Sahara	US
Thematic issue	
Children and Armed Conflict	Belgium
Counterterrorism (1267 1989 and 2253)	US
Counterterrorism (1373)	US
Counterterrorism (1566)	US
ICTY and International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals	Peru
Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (1540)	Indonesia
Peace and Security in Africa	N/A
Peacekeeping	UK
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict	UK
Women and Peace and Security	UK on women's participation and protection (resolution 1325); US on sexual violence in conflict (resolution 1820)
Working Methods	Kuwait

Lead Roles within the Council in 2019: Penholders and Chairs of Subsidiary Bodies

COUNTRY SITUATION	CHAIR OF THE RELEVANT COUNCIL SUBSIDIARY BODY
Afghanistan	Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee
Bosnia and Herzegovina	N/A
Burundi	N/A
Central Africa (UNOCA/LRA)	N/A
Central African Republic	Léon Houadja Kacou Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee
Central Asia (UNRCCA)	N/A
Colombia	N/A
Côte d'Ivoire	N/A (The 1572 Côte d'Ivoire Sanctions Committee was dissolved on 28 April 2016.)
Cyprus	N/A
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	Mansour Alotaibi (Kuwait), 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee
DPRK (Non-proliferation)	Christoph Heusgen (Germany) 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee
Golan Heights (UNDOF)	N/A
Guinea-Bissau	Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea), 2048 Guinea-Bissau Committee
Haiti	N/A
Iran (Non-Proliferation)	N/A
Iraq	Joanna Wronecka (Poland), 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee
Lebanon	Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea), 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee
Liberia	N/A (The 1521 Liberia Sanctions Committee was dissolved on 25 May 2016.)
Libya	Jürgen Schulz (Germany) 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee
Mali	José Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee
Middle East (Israel/Palestine)	N/A
Somalia	Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) 751 Somalia-Eritrea Sanctions Committee
South Sudan	Joanna Wronecka (Poland), 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee
Sudan	Joanna Wronecka (Poland), 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee
Syria	N/A
Ukraine	N/A
Yemen	Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru), 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee
West Africa, including the Sahel	N/A

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COUNTRY SITUATION	CHAIR OF THE RELEVANT COUNCIL SUBSIDIARY BODY
Western Sahara	N/A
THEMATIC ISSUE	
Children and Armed Conflict	Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict
Counterterrorism (1267 1989 and 2253)	Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh)/Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee
Counterterrorism (1373)	Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru), 1373 Counterterrorism Committee
Counterterrorism (1566)	Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru), 1566 Working Group
ICTY and International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals	Gustavo Meza-Cuadra (Peru), Informal Working Group on International Tribunals
Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (1540)	Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) 1540 Committee
Peace and Security in Africa	Jerry Matthews Matjila (South Africa) Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa
Peacekeeping	Léon Houadja Kacou Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations
Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict	UK, Protection of Civilians Informal Expert Group
Women and Peace and Security	Germany and Peru co-chair the 2242 Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security
Working Methods	Mansour Alotaibi (Kuwait), Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions

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