

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

France will hold the presidency in March. France and Germany, the Council president in April, will hold a “joint presidency” covering both months.

There will be one open debate on [combating the financing of terrorism](#), during which a resolution may be adopted.

The Council is expected to carry out a visiting mission to [Mali](#). A briefing on the visiting mission and a ministerial meeting on Mali with the participation of Malian Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga are scheduled shortly after the delegation returns.

Regarding other African issues, there will be briefings, followed by consultations, on [South Sudan \(UNMISS\)](#), the [DRC \(MONUSCO\)](#), and the [Great Lakes Region](#). Consultations are also anticipated on [Libya \(UNSMIL\)](#) and the 1970 Libya sanctions regime. The Council is scheduled to adopt resolutions renewing the mandates of UNMISS, MONUSCO, and [UNSOM \(Somalia\)](#).

The Council will be briefed on [Yemen](#) on the implementation of resolution 2452, which established the [UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement \(UNMHA\)](#). It will also receive the monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, the political process and the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Other Middle East issues that will be considered include:

- [Israel/Palestine](#), the regular monthly meeting;
- [Lebanon](#), an update on the implementation of resolution 1701, which called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi’a militant group Hezbollah and Israel in 2006; and
- [UNDOF in the Golan Heights](#), the quarterly report and most recent developments.

Two meetings are anticipated on European

issues: Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is expected to brief the Council on [UN-EU cooperation](#) in maintaining international peace and security; and Slovakian Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, the current Chairperson-in-Office for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), will brief on [OSCE](#) activities.

Council members anticipate a briefing on [Haiti \(MINUJUSTH\)](#), most likely from Special Representative and head of MINUJUSTH, Helen Meagher La Lime, and will also consider the most recent report on the implementation of resolution 2410—which set a timeline for the gradual draw-down of formed police units—and political and security developments in the context of the 15 April expiry of MINUJUSTH’s mandate.

In a change of practice, the Council will hold its quarterly meeting on [Afghanistan \(UNAMA\)](#) as a briefing, followed by consultations, rather than in debate format, prior to renewing the mission’s mandate later in the month.

The Council is also expected to adopt a resolution renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the [1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee](#).

A briefing of the [1540 Sanctions Committee](#) is also anticipated during the month.

There will be an informal interactive dialogue on the Middle East region. Arria-formula meetings are anticipated on [women’s participation in peace processes](#), on [Crimea](#), and on [criminal justice and human rights](#).

Council members will continue to follow closely developments in [Venezuela](#) and may meet on this and other issues not on the programme as needed.

27 February 2019

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In Hindsight: Security Council Annual Report to the General Assembly

Under the UN Charter, the Security Council's only clear obligation to the UN General Assembly is to submit an annual report for its consideration, as set out under Article 24(3). For nearly three decades, the annual report has been criticised by the UN membership. The Council has, however, made efforts to address some of the problems.

During the Cold War, the annual reports were often published with a delay—at times, the wait was several years. Interest in the annual report grew with the dramatic increase in the Council's activity in the early 1990s. After the report covering 16 June 1991 to 15 June 1992 was submitted only in June 1993, too late to be discussed during the main part of the 47th session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution agreeing to hold a substantive debate on the annual reports from the Security Council (A/RES/47/233).

In subsequent General Assembly debates, members raised matters pertaining to the content, format and timing of the report. The format of the annual reports—at the time, prepared entirely by the Secretariat—had changed little since 1946, and was largely a compendium of Council documents, communications received, and meetings held. It contained no analysis.

In a June 1993 note by the president, the Council proclaimed that it would adopt the report in public and circulate its early draft to interested member states (S/26015). A June 1997 note by the president announced that “the report of the Council for future years will be changed, taking into account views expressed on the existing format” (S/1997/451). The changes included an earlier deadline—30 August—for the Secretariat to submit the draft in order that it could be adopted by the Council in time for a discussion during the main session of the General Assembly. Yet member states continued to complain that it remained a catalogue of documents and meeting dates, still lacking analysis and offering scant insight into how the Council worked.

After extensive discussions on the format and on including an element of analysis the Council issued a note by the president in 2002 entirely focused on the annual report (S/2002/199). In it, the Council again acknowledged that it had reviewed the report's format having taken into account the views expressed during the debate on the report at the 56th session of the General Assembly. Henceforth, the introduction

was to be an analytical piece capturing the year's most important moments, assessing the Council's ability to deal with problems at hand, and signalling difficulties and areas for improvement. In addition, the note said that starting in 2002, the introduction would be drafted by the delegation that held the July presidency—the first time that members of the Council would take an active part in the elaboration of the report. Members would adopt the introduction in a public session to allow for exchanges of views on the text. The body of the report, which would continue to be drafted by the Secretariat, was to be shortened significantly and made more informative.

The new format seemed to promise substantive changes. In 2002, the introduction was indeed analytical and quite concise. But the improvements were short-lived. In the following years the introduction became longer and lost its analytical edge. The only public debate the Council has held on its annual report also took place in 2002. Since then, it has been adopted in a short routine session with no discussion.

During successive annual General Assembly debates, members have continued to raise concerns about the annual report, especially its dearth of analysis. With ongoing calls for improvements, the Council's subsidiary body responsible for much of its working methods deliberations, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG), has discussed aspects of the annual report and introduced further modifications.

On the joint initiative of Lithuania and Russia, the IWG again revised the process for the elaboration of the annual report in 2015. The resulting note by the president, S/2015/944 of 10 December 2015, changed the reporting cycle to cover a calendar year, starting with 2017. Since 1947, the Council's annual report had covered a period of 12 months ending in June or July, relatively close to the start of the General Assembly session during whose main part it would be presented. The 2015 note moved the presentation of the report from the main part of the General Assembly's regular session to the following spring.

The note also specified that the introduction should be concise, not to exceed 10,000 words, and would continue to be prepared under the coordination of the July presidency. If the member holding the July presidency

were to leave the Council at the end of the year—and thus no longer be among its members during the drafting—“the task of coordinating the introduction of the report shall then devolve on the member of the Council next in English alphabetical order and who will not be leaving the Security Council that calendar year”. It stipulated, however, that the introduction should “be approved by all members of the Council who served on the Council during the reporting period” and that the report would “continue to be adopted at a public meeting of the Security Council, at which members of the Council who wish to do so may comment on the work of the Council for the period covered by the report”.

The most recent version of the comprehensive compendium of Security Council working methods—the so-called Note 507, which was updated in 2017 and issued as document S/2017/507—incorporated the 2015 document on the annual report with the addition of a few new elements, including a provision that the member drafting the introduction “may, when necessary, seek advice from other members of the Council. It may also consider organizing, where appropriate, interactive informal exchanges of views with the wider membership.”

Because of the transition to the new reporting period, there was no annual report to the General Assembly in 2016. The first report prepared under the new procedure (exceptionally covering 17 rather than 12 months) was adopted on 9 August 2017 and discussed by the General Assembly during the final weeks of its 71st session.

The experience of the first two years after moving to a calendar-year cycle with the aim of presenting the report to the General Assembly late in the session has been of much shorter, but also less focused, discussion in the General Assembly. Both in 2017 and 2018, the drafts were finalised considerably later than stipulated (the deadlines for circulating the drafts to Council members are 31 January for the introduction and 15 March for the body of the report). The Council adopted the drafts in August, pushing the General Assembly discussion to near the end of its session, with most delegations already gearing up for the opening of the next session. Once the Council succeeds in meeting its own deadline aspirations and, as intended, the General Assembly discussion is held during the spring, it will be easier to assess the impact of the revised process.

Status Updates since our February Forecast

Somalia

On 1 February, the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee met with its Panel of Experts to discuss their programme of work for the year. On 7 February, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed Council members on her 30-31 January visit to Somalia.

Mercenaries

On 4 February, the Security Council held a high-level debate on “Mercenary activities as a source of insecurity and destabilization in Africa” (S/PV.8456). Equatorial Guinea circulated a concept note in preparation for the debate (S/2019/97). President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea presided. UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Moussa Faki Mahamat (by VTC), Chairperson of the AU Commission, briefed. Other than Council members, the CAR, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Rwanda and Sudan participated in the debate.

Children and Armed Conflict

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict met on 4, 5 and 8 February to negotiate its conclusions on the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2018/969). On 12 February there was an Arria-formula meeting on the protection of children affected by armed conflict in contexts where humanitarian space is shrinking, with a specific focus on the CAR, organised by Belgium, the CAR, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and France, in partnership with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba. In her introductory remarks, Gamba highlighted the child protection provisions, which were included in the recent peace agreement signed in the CAR and provided data on recent attacks on humanitarian personnel and infrastructure which shrank humanitarian space. The briefers were Ambassador Ambrosine Kpongo (the CAR); Nathalie Ben Zakour Man, Senior Child Protection Adviser in MINUSCA; and Hichem Khadhraoui, Director of Operations, Geneva Call. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buysverve (Belgium) moderated.

Crime at Sea

On 5 February, the Security Council held a debate on transnational organised crime at sea (S/PV.8457). Equatorial Guinea circulated a concept note ahead of the meeting (S/2019/98). Equatorial Guinea’s Minister

for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Simeón Oyono Esono Angue, chaired the meeting. Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission Florentina Adenike Ukonga and the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Yury Fedotov briefed.

Sudan (Darfur)

On 7 February, the Security Council adopted resolution 2455 extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until 12 March 2020 (S/PV.8458). The resolution expressed the Council’s “intention to establish clear, well identified, and measurable key benchmarks that could serve in guiding the Security Council to review measures on the Government of Sudan”. On 25 February, the Council was briefed by Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita on UNAMID and the Secretary-General’s 90-day report (S/2019/44). Assistant Secretary-General of the UN Development Programme Mourad Wahba and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco also briefed. The briefing was followed by consultations.

Kosovo

On 7 February, Special Representative and head of UNMIK Zahir Tanin briefed the Council on the Secretary-General’s latest report (S/2019/102) and recent developments in Kosovo (S/PV.8459). Leading up to the meeting, the Council was unable to agree on a programme of work for February due to disagreement among members on whether Kosovo should be discussed during the month. The US, together with the EU members, objected to holding the meeting in February in line with their common position that the Council should reduce the frequency of meetings on Kosovo. Russia and some other members strongly opposed this, however. A compromise was reached on a note by the president (S/2019/120) which stated that, in addition to the 7 February meeting, the Council will hold briefings on Kosovo in June and October 2019 and that as of 2020 the briefings will be held twice a year (in April and October).

Women, Peace and Security

On 8 February, there was an open Arria-formula meeting in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on the preventive impact of criminal accountability for conflict-related sexual- and gender-based violence. The meeting was organised by Germany, in partnership with

Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, France, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, South Africa and the UK. The meeting was chaired by Katarina Barley, the Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection of Germany.

Military Staff Committee

On 8 February, the Military Staff Committee discussed the UN Intelligence Policy Framework and the work of MINUJUSTH. On 22 February, it discussed the work of MINURSO and UNISFA.

Ukraine

On 12 February, the Council held a meeting on the situation in Ukraine (S/PV.8461). Russia requested the meeting to mark the anniversary of the “Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements”, also known as the Minsk II agreement, adopted on 12 February 2015. Assistant Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Miroslav Jenča; Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller; Chief Monitor of OSCE Special SMM Ertuğrul Apakan; and Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Martin Sajdik briefed. The discussion was marked by the longstanding divisions among permanent members on this issue. Russia accused Ukraine of not adhering to the Minsk agreements and escalating tensions in eastern Ukraine. On the other hand, the US and the EU members emphasised the Russian role in the conflict and its violations of the international law. The members agreed on the importance of upholding the Minsk agreements and the need to implement all its provisions.

Central African Republic

On 13 February, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the signing of the Global Peace Agreement in the CAR (SC/13701). On 21 February, Departing Special Representative and head of MINUSCA Parfait Onanga-Anyanga briefed the Council (S/PV.8467) on the latest MINUSCA report (S/2019/147). Ambassador Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security; Koen Vervaeke, the European External Action Service Managing Director (via VTC); Ambassador Gbolíé Desiré Wulfran Ipo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Côte d’Ivoire, which chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee; and Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), chair of the Peacebuilding Commission’s CAR configuration, also addressed the Council. On

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22 February, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee discussed the Panel of Experts' "progress update" with its coordinator.

Iraq

On 13 February, the new Special Representative and head of UNAMA, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, briefed the Council on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2019/101) and recent developments in Iraq (S/PV.8462). She expressed concern over the slow pace of completing the process of formation of the new government and called on Iraqis to focus on addressing the immediate needs of the country and refrain from factional politics. On 19 February, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2019/1) welcoming the cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the return of missing Kuwaiti property, including national archives (S/PV.8463).

DPRK (North Korea)

The 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee held two meetings, on 13 and 21 February, to discuss the final report of the Panel of Experts. On 25 February, the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), briefed Council members in consultations on the work of the committee during the past three months.

Visiting Mission

Council members undertook a visiting mission to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau from 14 to 16 February co-led by Council president Equatorial Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. In Côte d'Ivoire, Council members held meetings with Ivorian Foreign Minister Marcel Amon-Tanoh and with Vice President Daniel Kablan Duncan to take stock of Côte d'Ivoire's ongoing transition from peacekeeping to peace consolidation since the departure in 2017 of UNOCI. This was followed by a roundtable discussion with the resident coordinators of the UN's Ivorian and Liberian country teams to consider the experiences and best practices on the transitions of UN peacekeeping operations to non-mission peacebuilding settings in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. In Guinea-Bissau, Council members encouraged political actors, including President José Mário Vaz, to keep to the 10 March date for legislative elections, which were delayed twice last year, and indicated that the presidential election should also be organised during 2019. Members further stressed

the importance of the legislative elections in order to begin institutional reforms, which Bissau-Guinean political parties committed to doing in a stability pact signed the day before the Council's arrival. Members also used the visit to consider the Secretary-General's proposed plan to reconfigure and then withdraw the mission by the end of December 2020. On 26 February, the Council was briefed by the co-leads of the visiting mission.

Counter-Terrorism

Council members issued a press statement on 14 February condemning the terrorist attack in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Iran, on 13 February, in which 27 people were killed and 13 others wounded (SC/13703). On 21 February, Council members issued a press statement condemning the 14 February suicide bombing in Jammu and Kashmir, noting that over 40 Indian paramilitary forces had died and dozens had been wounded in the attack, for which Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility (SC/13712).

Guinea-Bissau

The Council visited Guinea-Bissau from 15 to 16 February. On 28 February, the Council adopted a resolution renewing the mandate of UNIOGBIS for one year. The resolution sets out that the reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS as a streamlined good offices mission (as proposed by the Secretary-General in a 5 December 2018 special report [S/2018/1086]) should begin after the current electoral cycle and by 31 December. Earlier in February, the Secretary-General submitted his report on Guinea-Bissau and the activities of UNIOGBIS (S/2019/115). The Guinea-Bissau 2048 Sanctions Committee met on 7 February, receiving a briefing from Pierre Lapaque, Representative of the UNODC Regional Office for West and Central Africa, on drug trafficking and transnational organised crime in Guinea-Bissau and the region.

Burundi

On 19 February, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Michel Kafando, briefed the Council on Burundi (S/PV.8465). Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), the chair of the Burundi configuration of the PBC, and Permanent Observer of the AU to the UN Fatima Kyari Mohammed also participated in the meeting, which was followed by consultations.

Israel-Palestine

On 20 February, the Security Council held a briefing, followed by consultations, on the Middle East (Israel/Palestine) (S/PV.8466). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefed the Council (via VTC). He reviewed developments on the ground and said that a heavy toll is being exacted on Palestinian society by unilateral measures, unceasing violence, and financial pressures. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller also briefed on this issue for the first time in several months. She urged progress toward a political solution and for member states to increase support for the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan.

Eritrea

On 21 February, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed Council members in consultations on Eritrea-Djibouti relations, including on the 18 February letter from the Secretary-General to the president of the Council on the issue (S/2019/154).

"Silencing the Guns" Open Debate

On 27 February, the Council held a high-level open debate on the AU "Silencing the Guns by 2020" initiative. It was chaired by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea Simeon Oyono Esono Angue. It followed an Arria-formula meeting held in October 2018 on this issue. Equatorial Guinea held the meeting to address several questions on AU-UN cooperation for this initiative, such as how to preserve gains made and how to strengthen tools to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts. There was a wide range of participation by UN member states.

Venezuela

On 26 February, the Council held a briefing on Venezuela.

Cyprus

On 27 February, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the 26 February meeting between Cypriot leaders and progress on confidence building measures (SC/13722).

Myanmar

At press time, the Council was expecting a briefing followed by consultations on 28 February on the situation in Myanmar from Special Envoy Christine Schraner Burgener, who visited the country at the end of January.

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council expects to examine the progress achieved in the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali on the basis of a Secretary-General's report, in line with resolution 2423 of 28 June 2018. The Council is also expected to carry out a visiting mission to Mali and hold a ministerial meeting back in New York with Secretary-General António Guterres and the participation of Malian Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) expires on 30 June. The sanctions regime expires on 31 August, followed by the expiry of the mandate of the Panel of Experts on 30 September.

Key Recent Developments

March is a critical time for the Council's consideration of the situation in Mali and the mandate of MINUSMA. In resolution 2423, the Council expressed its intent, in the absence of significant progress in the implementation of the peace agreement, to request the Secretary-General to provide options for a potentially significant modification of MINUSMA's mandate when the current mandate expires. The areas in which the Council is expected to assess progress are:

- the holding of presidential elections, which took place in July and August 2018;
- the decentralisation of state administration;
- the operationalisation of the interim administrations in northern Mali;
- the cantonment and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes, as well as an inclusive and consensual security sector reform;
- the full operationalisation of mixed patrols by government forces and armed groups in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu;
- the socio-economic development of northern Mali; and
- the equal and meaningful political participation of women.

Briefing the Council on 16 January, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita highlighted recent progress, including the

launch of an accelerated DDR process and the establishment of ten district-level interim administrations in the north, and emphasised the importance of maintaining positive momentum. She also highlighted outstanding challenges, including lack of consensus regarding territorial reforms, the increased political polarisation since the July 2018 election that renewed the mandate of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, and the security situation in vast areas of the country. 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."

In addition to the dynamics in the north, the security situation in the centre of Mali remains critical. Inter-communal violence among ethnic groups—particularly Fulani, Bambara and Dogon—persists. Terrorist groups often take advantage of these tensions to increase recruitment and enhance their own legitimacy in their communities. Furthermore, the limited presence of the Malian state is manifested in the conduct of military operations but not through the provision of basic services. While MINUSMA is scaling up its presence in the centre, the situation there lacks an overall political framework, such as that outlined by the agreement for northern Mali.

The visiting mission may include meetings with the EU, which is a significant actor in Mali. In addition to the deployment of the EU Training Mission and the EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) and its financing of humanitarian and development activities there, the EU channels international voluntary contributions to reimburse MINUSMA for its support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Council members previously visited Mali in February 2014, March 2016 and October 2017. The regional dimension of the crisis is also expected to feature in Council discussions, particularly given the increased reach of terrorist organisations beyond the Sahel and into coastal West Africa.

MINUSMA continues to be targeted by terrorist organisations. In January, ten

Chadian peacekeepers died after an attack on the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok, and two Sri Lankan peacekeepers were killed in an attack on a convoy in Mopti. On 22 February, three Guinean peacekeepers were killed in an attack against the vehicle in which they were travelling near Siby (region of Bamako).

The humanitarian situation in Mali remains precarious, owing to intensified armed conflict, crime and severe flooding. Security incidents, both direct attacks against humanitarian actors and the presence of explosive devices along roads, have continued to constrain humanitarian access in the northern and central regions.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 February, the independent expert on human rights in Mali, Alioune Tine, said in a statement that the human rights situation in Mali "is a cause of grave concern as security and humanitarian conditions in central and northern areas continue to worsen". Serious and recurrent violations and abuses of human rights, such as extrajudicial executions, abductions, torture, ill-treatment and illegal detention, are committed with impunity, including in areas which were not affected a few months ago, and Tine said there is "an urgent need for an effective military response, with well-equipped and well-trained men, acting in full compliance with human rights standards". During its 40th session, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an interactive dialogue on 19 March with Tine and to consider his report (A/HRC/40/77).

Key Issues and Options

The Council has raised the tone in expressing its frustration with the lack of implementation of the 2015 agreement. Ahead of the visiting mission, Council members could discuss how they can support the political process bilaterally and multilaterally in order to convey a unified message in their meetings with the parties in Mali. To do so, the Secretariat, the mission leadership and Algeria, which chairs the main follow-up mechanism to the agreement, could be invited to participate in an informal interactive dialogue. Despite its prominent political role, Algeria has participated only once in a Council meeting on Mali, in January 2017. Council members could encourage its participation in briefings under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2432 (30 August 2018) renewed the targeted sanctions regime on Mali and the mandate of the Panel of Experts. S/RES/2423 (28 June 2018) renewed MINUSMA's mandate for one year. S/RES/2391 (8 December 2017) outlined the ways in which MINUSMA is expected to support the G5 Sahel Joint Force and described how the UN will be reimbursed for its assistance. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/1174** (28 December 2018) was on the situation in Mali. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8445** (16 January 2019) was a briefing on Mali by Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita. **Security Council Press Statements SC/13714** (23 February 2019) condemned the attack in which three Guinean peacekeepers were killed near Siby (region of Bamako). **SC/13678** (25 January 2019) condemned the attack perpetrated against a MINUSMA convoy near Douentza (region of Mopti), in which two peacekeepers from Sri Lanka were killed and several others injured. **SC/13672** (20 January 2019) condemned an attack on the MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok, in which ten peacekeepers from Chad were killed and several others injured. **SC/13667** (16 January 2019) was on the progress of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Mali

On 20 December 2018, the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee imposed a travel ban on three individuals associated with armed groups for their destabilising activities in Mali. The listings were proposed by France, based on information included in a confidential annex to the August 2018 report of the Panel of Experts. As Council members consider increasing political pressure on the parties, they could assess the impact of the three December 2018 designations and whether the use of sanctions is effective in targeting those hindering the implementation of the agreement while preserving the parties' engagement in the process.

The north of the country remains the focus of the agreement and its implementation, but

in their visiting mission Council members could also prioritise discussing the impact of the conflict dynamics in the centre of the country on Mali as a whole, as well as the broader region.

Council and Wider Dynamics

During the negotiations of resolution 2423 in June 2018, the US unsuccessfully pushed for a shorter renewal of MINUSMA's mandate in order to pressure the parties to achieve results. The US has taken this approach with the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei, which have been renewed for six months at a time. All other Council members supported maintaining the regular 12-month renewal,

but language was added requesting the March report—six months after the inauguration of President Keita—to examine progress on the implementation of the agreement and holding out the possibility of a reconfiguration of the mission after the mandate's expiry in June. While all Council members have expressed frustration at the pace of implementation, it is unclear which positions they will take on the prospect of a reconfiguration of the mission, particularly given the US focus on budgetary issues when discussing peace operations.

France is the penholder on Mali, and Ambassador José Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) chairs the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee.

Counter-Terrorism

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council will hold an open debate on the financing of terrorism, during which a resolution may be adopted.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Resolution 1373 was adopted in 2001 in response to the 11 September terrorist attacks in the US. This was the first comprehensive resolution imposing obligations on all states to respond to the global threat of terrorism. It requires states to criminalise terrorist acts, penalise acts of support for or in preparation of terrorist offences, criminalise the financing of terrorism, freeze the funds of persons who commit or attempt to commit terrorist acts, and strengthens international cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism. Resolution 1373 also established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) to monitor its implementation.

Since 2001, the Council has adopted further resolutions relating to financing and assisting terrorist acts. In resolution 2178 of 24 September 2014, the Council decided that states must prevent and eliminate funding

for the travel and activities of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Resolution 2396 of 21 December 2017 further elaborated on this with respect to FTFs returning to their home countries. Additionally, resolution 2347 of 24 March 2017 highlighted the links between the illicit trade in cultural property and the financing of terrorism.

Peru organised an Arria-formula meeting on “Enhancing synergies between the United Nations and regional and subregional organisations to address the nexus between terrorism and transnational organised crime” on 9 April 2018. On 8 May, the Council adopted a presidential statement calling on states to “prevent terrorists from benefiting from the financial proceeds of transnational organised crime” and recalling states’ “obligations to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism for any purpose”.

While there has been success in limiting the funds available to groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida, these and other groups are finding new ways to finance their activities and bypass existing mechanisms.

Against this backdrop, on 25 and 26 April

2018, France hosted a conference in Paris on the financing of terrorism, titled “No Money for Terror”, with more than 70 countries and 15 international and regional organisations participating. The final statement of the conference expressed the commitment to implement existing Council resolutions effectively and enhance cooperation and coordination of technical and financial assistance for states lacking capacity in this field.

New forms of financing terrorist activities were also addressed, and these were front and centre in an Arria-formula meeting co-hosted by France, Indonesia and Peru, with the assistance of Australia and Tunisia, on “Preventing and Countering the Financing of Terrorism” on 31 January. The panellists were Tom Keatinge, the director of the Centre for Financial Crime and Security Studies at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI); Michèle Coninx, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED); Guillaume Michelin, Substitut du Procureur, Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris (via video teleconference); John Carlson of the Financial Action Task

UN DOCUMENTS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2396 (21 December 2017) addressed the threat of foreign terrorist fighters. S/RES/2395 (21 December 2017) renewed the mandate of CTED until 31 December 2021. S/RES/2347 (24 March 2017) was on protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. S/RES/2178 (24 September 2014) expanded the counter-terrorism framework by imposing obligations on member states to respond to the threat of foreign terrorist fighters. S/RES/1373 (28 September 2001) created obligations on states to suppress the financing of terrorism. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/9 (8 May 2018) expressed concern about the close connection between international terrorism and transnational organised crime. Secretary-General's Report S/2019/103 (1 February 2019) was the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8460 (11 February 2019) was a briefing on the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh).

Counter-Terrorism

Force (FATF), an international organisation that develops standards for suppressing the financing of terrorism and effectively implementing existing measures to combat terrorism (via video teleconference); and Jody Myers, vice president of global compliance risk assessment at Western Union.

The discussion revealed significant gaps in implementation of Council resolutions on the financing of terrorism by member states. The various ways in which terrorists fund their activities were also raised, including the abuse of legitimate businesses and not-for-profit organisations and the misappropriation of charitable funds, extortion of local populations, organised crime, and new forms of financial activity such as crowdfunding, mobile payment services and crypto-currency. The importance of engaging with the private sector was discussed, as was the need to develop and implement financial intelligence capabilities to trace money used for terrorism and also anticipate and prevent terrorist attacks.

On 11 February, Under-Secretary-General and head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov and Coninx briefed the Council on the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL. Regarding ISIL's financial strength, Voronkov said the report "notes that despite some loss of revenue because of territorial setbacks, ISIL could sustain its operations

through accessible reserves, in cash or investments in businesses, ranging between \$50 million and \$300 million." Coninx reviewed CTED's findings on the increased use of mobile payment services by terrorist groups and concerns about the possible exploitation of blockchain technology and the misuse of crypto-currencies for malicious, criminal or terrorist purposes.

Key Issues and Options

Lack of implementation of existing resolutions, first and foremost resolution 1373, is an ongoing issue. The Council may urge states to meet their current counter-terrorism obligations, particularly criminalising terrorism acts and the funding of those acts, as well as bringing perpetrators and funders of terrorism to justice, while respecting international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The Council may also choose to address the new forms and methods of funding used by terrorist groups and clarify the application of resolution 1373 to these new technologies. In this regard, it may touch upon the need for greater interaction with private actors to be able to source and track funds to prevent terrorism while respecting privacy laws.

The lack of capacity of some states to implement Council resolutions effectively because of insufficient resources and technology has been a controversial issue in the past.

An outcome may urge further resource- and technology-sharing between states, on top of information-sharing.

Council Dynamics

In general, counter-terrorism enjoys the support of all Council members; the importance of curbing the financing of terrorism, in particular, is a consensus issue. All agree on the importance of implementing obligations to suppress the financing of terrorism, but during negotiations on previous related resolutions, some Council members emphasised lack of capacity and resources as a reason for implementation gaps. They wanted to secure an obligation from developed countries for assistance in developing technologies such as biometric data collection, necessary for full implementation. Other countries were only willing to go as far as calling on states to provide mutual assistance.

Divisions may also emerge if a proposed resolution seeks to expand existing obligations or include new obligations on member states. Some Council members may be inclined to focus on the implementation of existing Council resolutions. In addition, different views on the importance of human rights while countering terrorism may lead to disagreement on the correct balance between oversight over private actors, such as non-profit organisations, and protecting the rights of those actors.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the situation in Haiti from Special Representative and head of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) Helen Meagher La Lime. It will also consider the most recent report on the implementation of resolution 2410 and political and security developments in the context of the 15 April expiry of MINUJUSTH's mandate.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in Haiti remains volatile. After violent protests in October, November and December 2018, a fresh wave of protests

started on 7 February after celebrations meant to mark 33 years since the end of the Duvalier regime. Among the underlying issues are claims of mismanagement, inflation, and embezzlement of money from a discounted oil program from Venezuela. Thousands have taken to the streets to demand the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse, with ensuing violence, looting, and property destruction. Living conditions have deteriorated as a result of disrupted transportation and trade. In addition to Port-au-Prince, demonstrations have been reported throughout the country, including in Cap-Haïtien and Les Cayes. At press time, at least seven people had died in the February

unrest. On 12 February, 78 detainees escaped from a prison on Tiburon Peninsula in southern Haiti during a protest in front of a police station and the adjoining prison.

President Moïse has dismissed calls to resign, insisting he was elected in free, fair, and legitimate elections, and offering instead to talk with opposition stakeholders to find a solution. Parliamentary and legislative elections are scheduled to be held in 2019. In an attempt to calm protesters, Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant announced on 16 February that there would be a 30 percent reduction in government expenses, as well as decreased privileges for government officials,

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2410 (10 April 2018) extended MINUJUSTH's mandate until 15 April 2019. S/RES/2350 (13 April 2017) renewed MINUSTAH's mandate and requested the Secretary-General to create benchmarks for a two-year exit strategy to a non-peacekeeping UN presence and led to the establishment of MINUJUSTH.

Haiti

such as allowances for telephones and foreign travel.

On 26 February, the Secretary-General transmitted his report on MINUJUSTH. The mission's core mandate is to assist the government in strengthening rule-of-law institutions, reinforcing national police capacities, and engaging in human rights monitoring, reporting and analysis. As requested in resolution 2350, the Secretary-General created 11 benchmarks in 2018 towards a non-peacekeeping UN presence, based on recommendations by MINUJUSTH and Haitian stakeholders. Any planning for the discussed withdrawal of the formed police units is linked to progress on these benchmarks.

The Council's most recent formal meeting on Haiti was in December 2018. La Lime, who took her post in August, briefed for the first time. She praised the efforts of the Haitian National Police (HNP) in handling the 2018 protests. She said MINUJUSTH continues to strive to implement its mandate, despite challenges. It assists rule of law institutions, increasing the capacity of HNP and promoting human rights in Haiti. She reported on the creation of a joint commission with Haitian stakeholders to remove decision-making bottlenecks and create a forum for discussions. She said Haiti is dedicated to improving human rights, including expanding the ability for human rights organisations to operate.

La Lime highlighted some remaining plans, such as replicating pilot programmes for reducing pre-trial detention countrywide, increasing the capacity of investigative mechanisms, tackling gang violence, and securing parliamentary approval of essential legislation such as a new criminal and procedural code. While not every benchmark will be achieved by the target date of 15 October, with careful and responsible planning, all options for reconfiguring the UN presence to a non-peacekeeping role are possible, she said.

On 21 February, at the request of France, Germany, and the US, La Lime briefed Council members on the February protests under "any other business" in consultations. After the meeting, the Council president read out elements for the press that urged all Haitian citizens to act peacefully, called on actors to engage in good faith, and reaffirmed the commitment of Council members to working with the people and the government of Haiti towards a more secure and prosperous future.

Key Issues and Options

The focus remains on tracking progress towards achieving the benchmarks necessary for the transition to a non-peacekeeping UN presence in Haiti. The Council will also continue to monitor the effects of the riots and any possible discussions between the government and members of the opposition.

Council Dynamics

Council members overall appear united in viewing developments in Haiti as mostly positive. It seems likely that in the near future MINUJUSTH will be replaced by a special political mission, and Council members will want to hear more details and recommendations, which are expected to be included in the Secretary-General's report. The Council appears anxious to have a smooth transition that considers the needs and desires of the host country while protecting the investment of the international community.

However, some differences remain. Council members have been particularly divided on the use of Chapter VII in MINUJUSTH's mandate. While the Council voted unanimously during the last mandate renewal, explanations after the vote revealed objections by Russia and China to using Chapter VII in a situation which they deem as posing no threat to international peace and security.

Council practice is that draft resolutions on Haiti are negotiated and agreed among the Group of Friends of Haiti, which comprises Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Peru, the US and Uruguay, before being circulated to all 15 Council members by the US as the penholder. During the last mandate renewal in April 2018, however, this practice was not followed. The US submitted the draft to the Group of Friends for comments only.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In March, 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

March marks the eighth anniversary of the beginning of the Syrian conflict. The humanitarian situation in Syria remains dire and has been exacerbated by harsh winter conditions, including torrential rains. Thousands remain trapped by ongoing hostilities in areas of the

Deir ez-Zor region held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and there are concerns about the well-being of civilians who have fled the area, including family members of foreign terrorist fighters.

The situation in Idlib remains critical. In January, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (a Council-designated terrorist group) took over control of most of Idlib from the National Liberation Front, the Turkish-backed coalition of moderate armed groups. Following an upsurge in attacks by government forces and in civilian casualties in Idlib, Turkey has reinforced the

12 ceasefire observation stations established as part of a deal with Russia in September 2018 to create a demilitarised zone. Divergences over the fate of Idlib became clear at a 14 February meeting of the presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey, the guarantors of the Astana process. Their joint statement stopped short of justifying a military offensive and merely agreed to effectively counter the attempts by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham to increase its control over the area as well as to take concrete steps to reduce violations in the Idlib de-escalation area.

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. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/157** (19 February 2019) was the bi-monthly report on the humanitarian situation in Syria. **Security Council Letter S/2019/91** (28 January 2019) was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8471** (26 February 2019) was a briefing by the OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Reena Ghelani on the humanitarian situation.

Syria

The situation in the north-east of Syria remains fragile after the December 2018 announcement by the US regarding the withdrawal of its troops. The US actively supports the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which includes the Kurdish YPG militia, and the US decision has introduced fresh uncertainty into efforts to prevent an escalation of violence between Turkey and the YPG, as well as counter-terrorism operations against ISIL and the fate of the territory currently controlled by the SDF in the north-east. While details of the withdrawal, including its timeline and conditions, remain unclear, the US has indicated that about 200 troops will remain in the north-east for some time.

After many delays, in early February the UN and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were able to reach the Rukban makeshift camp near the border with Jordan. The interagency convoy, which included 118 trucks with life-saving assistance, was one of the largest and most complex humanitarian missions since the beginning of the conflict. UNHCR considered conditions in the camp to be “desperate” and “catastrophic”. Once in Rukban, humanitarian partners stayed for nine days to make sure that assistance was not diverted and to conduct a survey of camp residents’ intentions. Despite the interest of many interviewees in returning home, they have been unable to do so until now. Some of the families have been at Rukban for more than four years.

Since taking office as Special Envoy for Syria on 7 January, Geir O. Pedersen has travelled extensively, including to Damascus to conduct consultations with the government and to Riyadh to hold discussions with the opposition’s Syrian Negotiation Commission. In a press encounter on 15 February, he emphasised that his mandate remains the terms spelled out in resolution 2254, which provides for a Syrian-led, UN-facilitated process to establish credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance, set a process for drafting a new constitution, and conduct free and fair elections. While he expressed his hope to convene as soon as possible a meeting of the constitutional committee in Geneva, which can be a “potential door-opener for the political process”, he highlighted that he also wants to work on other issues in parallel. He said there was a

need to step up work on confidence-building measures, including the situation of detainees, abductees and missing persons. Even though the Astana guarantors have established a working group to address these issues, and some dozens of prisoners have been swapped in November 2018 and in February, much work remains to be done. At press time, Pedersen was expected to brief the Council for the first time on 28 February, followed by consultations.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefed the Council on 6 February. 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.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 19 February, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement that the intensified ground-based bombardment of Idlib and surrounding areas by government forces and their allies in recent weeks has led to numerous civilian casualties and left some one million people, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people, in an extremely vulnerable situation. The bombardment of the “demilitarized buffer zone” that includes Idlib and areas of northern Hama and western Aleppo governorates started to escalate in December 2018 and has further intensified, the statement said. Bachelet called on “all parties involved, as well as external governments with influence, to ensure that the protection of civilians is held paramount in the planning and execution of all military operations in accordance with international law”. During its 40th session, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an interactive dialogue on 12 March with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria and to consider its report (A/HRC/40/70).

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 starts his tenure, 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.

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 and call on the guarantors to use their influence on the government to engage in good faith 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 longstanding grievances.

Following up on the 6 February consultations, Council members could invite representatives of the OPCW and the Syrian government to discuss their cooperation, including on outstanding issues.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council continues to be divided over the Syrian conflict, but the arrival of a new envoy provides an opportunity to reinvigorate the political process. Council members are also divided over whether there can be international support for the reconstruction of Syria, an issue that is expected to feature in the EU-hosted Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, which will take place in late March. In the past, the P3 and EU countries have argued that there can be no international support for funding development and long-term reconstruction in Syria until irreversible progress has been made in the political process.

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

OSCE Briefing

Expected Council Action

In March, Slovakian Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, the current Chairperson-in-Office for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is expected to provide a briefing to the Security Council on the activities of the organisation.

Background

The chairmanship of the OSCE rotates yearly, and on 1 January, Slovakia succeeded Italy in this function. “Briefing by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” has been a Council agenda item since 2001; since 2004, such briefings have been held annually in open chamber.

Slovakia has indicated that its chairmanship will be ambitious in promoting dialogue and trust, but also realistic in regard to challenges and complexities. It outlined the following priorities: preventing, mediating and mitigating conflict and focusing on the people affected; providing for a safer future; and effective multilateralism.

The situation in Ukraine has featured prominently in the work of each chairmanship since the start of hostilities in 2014. The OSCE has emerged as a leading organisation responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 2015 Minsk agreements concerning the conflict in eastern Ukraine, which the Council endorsed in resolution 2202. The OSCE

Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) currently maintains around 800 international monitors, most of whom are based in eastern Ukraine. The SMM gathers information about ceasefire violations and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. Furthermore, the OSCE participates in the work of Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), which serves as a forum for addressing implementation aspects of the Minsk agreements.

Given the OSCE’s prominent presence and access to information on the ground, the Council has occasionally sought briefings by OSCE representatives on the situation in eastern Ukraine. Most recently, Chief Monitor Ertuğrul Apakan of the SMM and Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Martin Sajdik briefed on 12 February.

During his 10 January address to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, Lajčák stressed that the situation in Ukraine will be among the main priorities during Slovakia’s chairmanship of the OSCE. In his first official visit upon assuming the role of Chairman-in-Office, Lajčák travelled to Ukraine and visited the areas in eastern parts of the country most affected by the conflict. During the visit, he called on the parties involved in the conflict to increase their efforts in finding a political solution.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) will provide international monitoring of the upcoming presidential elections in Ukraine, scheduled for 31 March. In February, the Ukrainian parliament

passed a law that bars Russian citizens from taking part in the ODIHR election observer mission in Ukraine. During his 17 February meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin, Lajčák regretted that Ukraine had undertaken such measures, which he said were not in line with OSCE commitments and not in the best interest of the organisation.

While the conflict in Ukraine occupies most of the OSCE’s attention, the organisation is also involved in conflict resolution and mediation in protracted conflicts in areas such as Transdniestria, Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia.

During its chairmanship, Slovakia will also focus on other issues, including promoting dialogue between regional and international partners; transnational threats such as violent extremism and terrorism; promoting sustainable development; effective use of youth perspectives in the work of the OSCE; cybersecurity; and addressing negative consequences of rapid technological changes.

In December 2018, the EU and the OSCE held the first high-level meeting of the two organisations, with the aim of improving cooperation on matters of common interest, such as conflict prevention and resolution, and peacebuilding. Much of the discussion centred around potential cooperation in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia—including some issues on the Council’s agenda. Both organisations agreed to formalise their relationship by holding annual high-level meetings.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council will renew the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) before its 15 March expiration. Prior to this, the Council expects a briefing, followed by consultations, on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report.

Key Recent Developments

The level of political violence in South Sudan has “dropped dramatically” since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the

Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on 12 September 2018, Special Representative and head of UNMISS David Shearer said during a press conference in New York on 5 February. However, ethnic violence continues, and clashes are ongoing in Central and Western Equatoria states between the government’s South Sudan People’s Defence Forces (SSPDF) and fighters of Thomas Cirillo’s National Salvation Front (NAS). Cirillo rejected the R-ARCSS on the basis of wanting a more federalist system with

administrative autonomy for the different regions. On 15 February, UNHCR said that thousands of people had fled into the Democratic Republic of the Congo to escape violence in Central Equatoria following clashes between the SSPDF and NAS.

The human rights, humanitarian, food security and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormous impact on civilians. There were over two million South Sudanese refugees and nearly two million internally displaced persons with

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE OSCE Security Council Resolution S/RES/2202 (17 February 2015) endorsed the 12 February 2015 “Package of measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements”. **Security Council Meetings S/PV.8461** (12 February 2019) was a briefing on the situation in Ukraine. **S/PV.8200** (8 March 2018) was a briefing by the 2018 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (Italy) to the Council. **S/PV.4964** (7 May 2004) was the first briefing by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (Bulgaria) to the Council.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2406 (15 March 2018) extended the mandate of UNMISS for one year. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2018/1103** (10 December 2018) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8431** (18 December 2018) was a briefing on South Sudan.

South Sudan

193,219 civilians in six UNMISS protection of civilians (POC) sites, as at 17 January. Since the signing of the R-ARCSS, some refugees have returned to South Sudan, and some people have started to leave UNMISS POC sites or have requested assistance to move back to their homes, Shearer said at the 5 February press conference.

On the implementation of the R-ARCSS, the most recent progress report of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission available at press time, which covers October through December 2018, noted that except for the Independent Boundaries Commission and the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Commission, all institutions and mechanisms required under the R-ARCSS have been established, but “much work remains to be done”, and funding and technical support are identified as major challenges. The report also notes particular concern over the slow pace of the cantonment, DDR and unification of armed forces, “which are critical before the Transitional Period commences” in May under the terms of the R-ARCSS. While opposition members are present in Juba and participating in the various mechanisms under the R-ARCSS, Shearer expressed concern at the press conference that the momentum in moving the process forward might slow. Opposition leader Riek Machar, currently based in Khartoum, has said he plans to return to South Sudan in May.

On 20 December 2018, the AU Peace and Security Council adopted a communiqué expressing support for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development’s (IGAD’s) decision to request the Security Council to review the composition and mandate of the Regional Protection Force (RPF), which is part of UNMISS. According to resolution 2406, the current UNMISS 17,000-troop ceiling includes the RPF at levels to be set by the Secretary-General but not exceeding 4,000 troops. IGAD has proposed that its members, namely Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, contribute troops to fill what it has identified as the RPF’s deficit of 1,695 troops as follows: 499 each from Kenya, Uganda and Sudan and 99 each from Somalia and Djibouti. (The RPF currently includes troops from Ethiopia and Rwanda.)

The Council was last briefed on South Sudan on 18 December 2018 by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

Jean-Pierre Lacroix; Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten; and Ambassador Joanna Wronecka of Poland, the chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee. Lacroix emphasised that “the peace process is not yet assessed as being fully sustainable and irreversible and will need positive engagement and compromise from the parties and continued reinforcement”. Patten told the Council that sexual violence “escalated dramatically in 2018”, despite the signing of the R-ARCSS. She said that her office, together with OHCHR, had submitted a confidential letter to the chair of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee with the names of three alleged perpetrators. Patten outlined four recommendations: first, that the government investigate all incidents of sexual violence and share the results with the UN; second, that the Council consistently apply sanctions for crimes of sexual violence, based on the stand-alone designation criteria on sexual violence set out in resolution 2428; third, that comprehensive services be provided to survivors; and fourth, that conflict-related sexual violence be addressed as a central aspect of R-ARCSS and any peacebuilding arrangements.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 March, during its 40th session, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an interactive dialogue with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan and to consider its report (A/HRC/40/69). The report concludes that despite the signing of the R-ARCSS, violations including rape and sexual violence continue to occur and may amount to international crimes, including war crimes. The Commission is expected to provide the High Commissioner for Human Rights with a confidential list of names of alleged perpetrators.

Women, Peace and Security-Related Developments

On 7 December 2018, the Security Council issued a press statement condemning “the heinous incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against women near Bentiu” in the northern Unity region of South Sudan. The statement said that according to reports, armed men in military and civilian clothing attacked more than 150 women and girls in government-controlled areas. The statement reiterated the Council’s willingness to impose targeted sanctions against the responsible individuals or entities. On 15 February, UNMISS and OHCHR published a joint report containing the findings of an investigation into these incidents by the UNMISS Human Rights Division, which determined that at least 134 cases of rape or gang rape and 41 cases of other forms of sexual and physical violence occurred between September and December 2018 near Bentiu. Of

these 175 cases, 111 victims were women and 64 were girls (some of whom were as young as eight). According to the report, there are reasonable grounds to believe that these attacks were carried out primarily by armed elements of the pro-Taban Deng faction of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO [TD]) and the government’s SSPDF. The report urged the committee that was established by President Salva Kiir on 19 December 2018 to carry out a prompt, effective and impartial investigation to identify the perpetrators of these attacks and hold them accountable. The response of UNMISS to these incidents included increasing patrols in the area and facilitating the deployment and work of a mobile court in Bentiu to hear cases involving serious crimes, including sexual violence, the report said. The Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security met on 28 February to discuss South Sudan.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council to consider is what changes are necessary to the mandate of UNMISS. The most likely option is for the Council to renew the mandate for one year, maintaining core elements such as the protection of civilians, monitoring and verification of human rights violations, and facilitation of humanitarian access.

In doing so, the Council might consider including language on some of the following:

- increasing the flexibility of the mission’s political strategy and responsibilities to support the peace process and regional efforts, which could include providing advice and technical support towards implementation of the R-ARCSS;
- increasing the effectiveness of protection efforts beyond POC sites and the role of UNMISS in facilitating the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons;
- reviewing the RPF’s mandate and troop levels to adapt to the current political and security environment, including IGAD’s proposal to contribute troops; and
- emphasising its willingness to consider imposing targeted sanctions against individuals who meet the designation criteria of “planning, directing, or committing acts involving sexual and gender-based violence in South Sudan” as set out in resolution 2428.

Council Dynamics

Given the fragile and evolving situation in the country, Council members believe that the protection of civilians, the facilitation of humanitarian access, and human rights

South Sudan

monitoring should remain core elements of the UNMISS mandate. As many members share concerns over the need to sustain momentum in implementing the R-ARCSS and the need for durable peace, it is likely that they will be in favour of language explicitly authorising UNMISS to provide advice and technical support in this regard.

At the 18 December 2018 briefing, many

members expressed concern over the humanitarian situation and high levels of displacement, and several condemned continuing incidents of sexual violence, including Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, France, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, the UK and the US. Regarding proposals for IGAD member states to participate in the RPF, Russia in particular welcomed the initiative while others such as France and the UK said

certain conditions should be met, such as the need for any forces deployed to be under a unified UN chain of command and comply with UN peacekeeping standards.

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

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council is expected to hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on Afghanistan and to extend the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, is expected to brief.

The mandate of UNAMA expires on 17 March.

Key Recent Developments

The October 2018 parliamentary elections were marked by widespread disruptions and irregularities, and exposed a range of vulnerabilities within the Afghan electoral system. After consulting stakeholders, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) postponed the presidential elections from April to July to address outstanding problems. In a statement, UNAMA urged the IEC to take corrective measures and implement necessary reforms, noting that mismanagement of the presidential elections would be unacceptable.

On 12 February, the Afghan government fired all twelve commissioners of the IEC and the Electoral Complaints Commission (EEC), which were blamed for widespread irregularities and disorganisation during the parliamentary elections. IEC is tasked with supervising all aspects of the elections while EEC reviews complaints and reports irregularities during the elections. Among other requirements, members of both commissions, who are appointed by the president, cannot be members of any political party. At press

time, no appointments had been made.

Over the past several months, representatives of the US and the Taliban have held several rounds of talks on a possible withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. The US special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, announced on 28 January that a framework agreement with the Taliban had been reached. The announcement came following six days of talks in Qatar between the US and Taliban delegations. The framework agreement envisions a phased withdrawal of US and international troops in exchange for the Taliban's assurance that it would not host terrorist organisations on Afghan territory. The Taliban is estimated to control around 18 percent of the Afghan territory while also contesting another 26 percent with the government. The talks left uncertainty on several other issues, however, chief among them the question of the Taliban's participation in future Afghan governments. The Taliban still refuses to engage in direct talks with the government, whose legitimacy it does not recognise.

While there has been no agreement on specific timelines, Khalilzad seemed to have indicated that he is hopeful that a deal could be reached before Afghanistan's July presidential elections.

In a separate political process in Moscow, the Taliban delegation met on 5 February with prominent Afghan political opposition actors, led by former president Hamid Karzai. The Afghan government criticised the Taliban for not engaging in direct talks with

the government, emphasising that a political solution must be the result of an inclusive Afghan-led process.

Acting US Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan on 11 February, during which he met with the Afghan leadership, including President Ashraf Ghani. Shanahan assured the government that the US maintains a strong interest in the security of Afghanistan and the wider region. Addressing the question of a possible troop withdrawal, he said that the Pentagon has not been instructed to draw down the US military presence in the country.

On 14 February, Pakistan announced that it would host the next round of talks between the Taliban and US negotiating teams. The talks did not take place, however; the US has indicated that it did not receive any formal invitation from Pakistan while the Taliban claimed its delegation could not travel because of UN Security Council travel restrictions.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 March, during its 40th session, the Human Rights Council expects to consider the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights (A/HRC/40/45).

Women, Peace and Security-Related Developments

The Secretary-General's December 2018 report on Afghanistan expressed concern about the prevalence of violence against women and girls, which causes "profound human suffering, inflicts

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2405](#) (8 March 2018) renewed the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2019. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2018/15](#) (23 July 2018) was on the electoral process following the conclusion of voter registration on 18 July for parliamentary and district council elections in 2018 and for the 2019 presidential elections. [S/PRST/2018/2](#) (19 January 2018) emphasised the importance of advancing regional, interregional and international cooperation to achieve stability and sustainable development in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region. [Secretary-General's Report S/2018/1092](#) (7 December 2018) was the report on Afghanistan. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8426](#) (17 December 2018) was the latest quarterly debate on Afghanistan. [Security Council Press Statements SC/13655](#) (3 January 2019) condemned the terrorist targeting of Afghan security forces in northern Sar-e-Pul Province and Balkh Province on 31 December 2018, which left 27 dead and 20 injured.

Afghanistan

grave harm on families and inhibits the full participation of women in public life.” The report welcomed the establishment by the government of a technical committee to review the Elimination of Violence against Women Law of 2009 and expressed hope that this would result in stronger legal protection from violence for all Afghan women and girls.

Issues and Options

Key issues for the Council include how it can help the mission to support the organisation of the presidential elections and how the mission can play a constructive role with regard to the peace talks with the Taliban. The Council could furthermore consider adopting a presidential statement encouraging a free, fair and transparent electoral process

and urging the new IEC to implement the necessary reforms. Regarding the peace process, the Council could request that Khalilzad brief members in an informal interactive dialogue on the framework agreement. This would be an opportunity for members to learn more about the agreement and solicit insights from Khalilzad, an Afghanistan-born former US ambassador to the UN (2007 to 2009), on how the Council can best support negotiating efforts in the future.

Council Dynamics

Long-standing concerns remain in the Council about the difficult security, political and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the under-development of the country. Members

recognise the importance of holding fair, transparent and inclusive presidential elections as a means of promoting political stability in Afghanistan. At the most recent UNAMA debate on 17 December, the US said that Khalilzad’s appointment in September 2018 sent “a clear message” that the US believes that peace is possible in Afghanistan. During the debate, a number of other members—Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait and the UK—expressed support for Khalilzad’s efforts. Equatorial Guinea, France and Russia continue to express concerns about the connection of drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan to terrorism.

Germany and Indonesia are co-penholders on Afghanistan, and Indonesia chairs the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee.

EU-UN Briefing

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council will hold its annual meeting on strengthening the partnership with the EU under its agenda item on cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security. Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, will brief the Council.

Background

Cooperation between the UN and the EU has evolved over the years and has continued to grow in importance. Recognising this, the Council has had a practice, starting in 2010, of holding annual briefings (except in 2012 and 2018) on cooperation between the two organisations. In 2014, the Council endorsed this relationship when it adopted a presidential statement on EU-UN cooperation. Since 2013, Council members have also met annually with members of the EU Political and Security Committee.

The EU members of the Council have made a concerted effort to coordinate their positions and present a unified front on some issues on the Council’s agenda, such as Kosovo, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela. Another practice that has emerged recently has been

for the EU members of the Council (including incoming and recently departed members) to make joint statements at the Council media stakeout presenting the EU position on specific Security Council issues.

In another effort to enhance this coordination, Mogherini met with the foreign ministers of current EU members of the Council on 28 January in Brussels. She emphasised bringing the EU’s views on peace and security and on the importance of multilateralism to the Council.

The briefings on cooperation between the EU and the UN usually follow a consistent format. Mogherini is likely to emphasise the areas of cooperation between the two organisations, present the EU’s main foreign policy priorities and objectives, and address some of the ongoing crises that occupy the agenda of both the EU and the Council.

The EU has maintained a strong interest in finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria and has led major humanitarian efforts in the region. It has announced plans to organise a third Brussels conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region. At the Brussels conference last year, donors pledged \$4.3 billion for humanitarian assistance. Mogherini has emphasised that eventual EU

funds for post-conflict reconstruction in Syria will be directly linked to the UN-led political process.

In the context of peacekeeping, the cooperation between the EU and the UN is most evident in Africa, where the two organisations work alongside one another in several countries. The EU provides training for security forces and assists in security sector reform in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia. The EU also provides salaries for the UN-authorized AU Mission in Somalia. Member states of the EU are the largest collective contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget, providing over 30 percent of total contributions.

The EU has emphasised its commitment to preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement which places limits on Iran’s nuclear programme and provides sanctions relief. In May 2018, the US unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA which the Council had endorsed in 2015 in resolution 2231. In January, France, Germany and the UK announced the creation of a Special Purpose Vehicle which would facilitate legitimate financial transactions with Iran. The EU members of the Council have maintained a unified position on the importance of preserving the JCPOA as long as Iran continues

UN DOCUMENTS ON EU-UN COOPERATION [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2437](#) (3 October 2018) renewed the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. [S/RES/2231](#) (20 July 2015) endorsed the JCPOA. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2014/4](#) (14 February 2014) was on cooperation between the UN and the EU, highlighting the EU’s comprehensive approach to maintenance of international peace and security. [Security Council Meetings S/PV.8200](#) (8 March 2018) was a briefing by the 2018 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (Italy) to the Council. [S/PV.7935](#) (9 May 2017) was a briefing on cooperation between the UN and the EU.

EU-UN Briefing

to adhere to its provisions.

In addition, Mogherini is likely to discuss the Middle East peace process, the situation

in Libya, the humanitarian situation in Iraq, cooperation with other regional organisations, transnational crime, climate change, and

sustainable development, among other issues.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council will renew the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Before that, a briefing on the Secretary-General's latest report and consultations with the head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui, are likely.

MONUSCO's mandate expires on 31 March 2019.

Key Recent Developments

Felix Tshisekedi was inaugurated as president on 24 January in what some are calling the first peaceful transfer of power in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) history. Since then, he seems to have been accepted by the region and the international community, although the only head of state to attend the inauguration was Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta. In early February, Tshisekedi attended the AU heads of state summit and travelled around the region. At the summit, he held bilateral meetings with Paul Kagame of Rwanda, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini. The EU and the DRC have also reached an agreement for the EU's ambassador to return to Kinshasa after he was expelled by former President Joseph Kabila last December. During a visit to the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, Tshisekedi called for thousands of DRC exiles to return to the country.

It remains to be seen how the new government will act. In his AU speech, Tshisekedi called for the return of the rule of law following the elections, an end to corruption, and increased control by the DRC of its own resources. However, in the parliamentary election, the pro-Kabila Front for Congo (FCC) coalition won 337 seats; opposition party Lamuka, fronted by Martin Fayulu in the presidential election, received 102 seats; and

Tshisekedi's Heading for Change coalition won 46 seats, posing real questions as to whether Tshisekedi will be able to achieve his agenda when his party is in the minority. With Prime Minister Bruno Tshibala due to submit the government's resignation soon, the new government is expected to be fully formed by April.

Meanwhile, opposition candidate Fayulu, whom several international and national groups considered the actual winner of the election, wrote to the AU calling for another round of elections in six months. Legislative and provincial elections in fact still need to be held in Beni, Butembo and Yumbi in March after being postponed because of government concerns about Ebola and the security situation. In mid-January, Internet access was restored after being suspended on 31 December 2018.

Apart from political developments, a major concern has been the Ebola situation. At press time, over 800 people had been infected, resulting in at least 546 deaths, and about 80,000 people had been vaccinated. DRC Health Minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga has praised the vaccination effort and believes it has contained the outbreak. Other organisations, however, remain worried about the continued spread of the disease. Médecins Sans Frontières has reported a surge of cases since 15 January. Given the suspension of healthcare activities during the electoral season because of security and capacity considerations, the numbers of registered cases may be increasing simply because these activities have resumed. On 8 February, two Médecins Sans Frontières staff members active in Ebola prevention were abducted in the Masisi health zone in North Kivu. While the staff members were returned unharmed, safety fears remain, and field operations were suspended at press time.

In January, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that there was evidence of a massacre in

December 2018 in which at least 890 people were killed in four villages in Yumbi territory, Mai-Ndombe province, in the west of the country, apparently in clashes between the Banunu and Batende communities. On 13 February, the DRC army announced it had arrested 15 people for alleged complicity in the killings. On 12 February, the spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said there had been a rise in refugees coming into the DRC from South Sudan, with approximately 5,000 having arrived in north-east Ituri province border towns.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee met in a briefing on 1 February with UN member states from the region. The meeting provided an opportunity for those countries to comment on the Panel of Experts report.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 19 March, the Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue during its 40th session on the oral update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on developments in the human rights situation in the Kasai region, as well as the report by the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in the DRC before, during and after the December 2018 elections (A/HRC/40/47).

Women, Peace and Security-Related Developments

The Secretary-General's January report on MONUSCO noted that conflict-related sexual violence continued during the reporting period, including an increase in sexual violence in Ituri Province perpetrated by both the Force de résistance patriotique d'Ituri (FRPI), often in the form of gang rape and in association with the looting of villages. There were also reported incidents of rape by the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo in Djugu, Ituri Province. In Tanganyika Province, an upsurge in ethnically motivated conflict-related sexual violence was documented, and a worrying trend of mass rapes by certain factions in northern Shabunda continued, the report said. The report also noted that MONUSCO paid greater attention to involving

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions 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 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 through legal channels.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

women in countering the Ebola outbreak and addressing the specific needs of women.

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Council in March is the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate. Given that the electoral process is almost over, the existing mandate will need to be adjusted. Resolution 2409 of March 2018 requested the Secretary-General to support the electoral process and report on such efforts to the Council. Given the continued fragile situation after the elections, some members may propose a short mandate renewal, with few changes at this time. Several months from now, once the electoral process is finalised and there is a new government in the DRC, MONUSCO's position could be re-evaluated.

If the latter type of mandate renewal occurs, the resolution is likely to include a request for an independent or strategic review to better prepare for an eventual withdrawal, exit strategy, or modification of MONUSCO.

The last strategic review took place in 2017, and there are some questions whether its conclusions remain applicable today.

Council Dynamics

The Council met three times on the situation in the DRC in January but did not meet in February. Having since moved on from responding to December's elections, it will be interesting to see if the divisions that were apparent then resurface for the mandate renewal. Some members do not want to reconfigure the mission in an uncertain environment. On the other hand, the fact that MONUSCO and its predecessor, the UN Mission in the DRC, have been in place since 1999, has led some to call for an exit strategy and eventual drawdown.

At the end of January, France led an experts-only mission to the DRC with the Council's European members, the US, and South Africa. The purpose of the trip was to better understand the situation on the ground

and gather information ahead of the mandate renewal. The members visited several cities in the DRC, among them Kinshasa, Goma and Beni. At the conclusion of the visit, the experts from those states appeared to agree that the situation in the DRC remains unpredictable and that a mandate change would be inadvisable until a new government is formed. Some expressed optimism that this may be a new era of cooperation between the UN and the government of the DRC.

There has not been a press statement about the situation in the DRC since 15 January before the Constitutional Court's ruling on the validity of the elections, but it seems unlikely that another press statement would be agreed upon now because of divergences by Council members on how to characterise the elections.

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

Libya

Expected Council Action

In March, Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations by the Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salamé, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany, Ambassador Jürgen Schulz, who chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

The mandate of UNSMIL expires on 15 September, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee expires on 20 February 2020.

Key Recent Developments

February marked the eight-year anniversary of the Libyan revolution, but a political settlement remains elusive. Briefing the Council on 18 January, Salamé emphasised that the political deadlock "has been underpinned by a complex web of narrow interests, a broken legal framework and the pillaging of Libya's great wealth."

On 16 January, clashes erupted in Tripoli

between two militias, the Kaniyat/7th Brigade and the Tripoli Protection Force. This violence was the worst violation of a ceasefire brokered with the support of UNSMIL in September 2018. According to the Ministry of Health, 16 people died during the episode. On 21 January, tribal leaders from the nearby town of Bani Walid brokered a truce which provided for the withdrawal of both militias, a prisoner swap, and the exchange of bodies of deceased fighters. In the absence of a reconstituted Libyan army or sustainable security arrangements, the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) continues to rely mostly on militias for its security.

The security situation in the south remains critical. The presence of criminal groups and Libya's porous borders have added to existing grievances over the lack of economic opportunities and general neglect. This situation has led to attacks against water pipelines and oil facilities, including the seizure of the Al-Sharara oil field in December 2018 following

protests by oil field guards and the local population over revenue allocation. The militia known as the Libyan National Army (LNA), led by Khalifa Haftar, advanced its positions in the south with the aim of expanding its influence in the area. It eventually regained control of the El-Sharara oil field and reportedly handed it over to the Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation in February. As part of the southern offensive, there have been clashes between the LNA and militias affiliated with the internationally recognised GNA.

In the coming weeks, UNSMIL intends to facilitate a national conference that is meant to build on a series of nationwide consultations convened by the private diplomacy organisation Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue during 2018. The event is expected to provide an opportunity for Libyans to decide how the nation should proceed to the end of the transition. In his January briefing, Salamé urged members of the various Libyan institutions to see the upcoming conference "as

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2441 (5 November 2018) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee as well as the measures related to the illicit export of crude oil from Libya until 15 February 2020. S/RES/2434 (13 September 2018) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 15 September 2019. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/19** (7 January 2019) was on UNSMIL. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8448** (18 January 2019) was the latest briefing by Salamé. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13651** (27 December 2018) condemned the terrorist attack on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tripoli. **Sanctions Committee Documents S/2019/5** (2 January 2019) was a letter appointing six experts to serve on the Panel of Experts. **S/2018/1176** (28 December 2018) was the annual report of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

Libya

a patriotic concern that transcends partisan and personal interests”.

One of the desired outcomes of the conference is agreement on the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections as well as a constitutional referendum. In addition to security and logistical considerations, guarantees that the results will be accepted and respected by all are needed. Local elections in some 70 municipalities are expected to take place in March, but the High National Elections Commission has warned that the elections cannot be held unless additional funding is made available for that purpose.

The humanitarian situation in Libya remains fragile. In addition to access restrictions, limited funding of the UN Humanitarian Response Plan impedes the work of humanitarian actors. An 18 December 2018 report of UNSMIL and OHCHR concluded that migrants and refugees “suffer unimaginable horrors during their transit through and stay in Libya”. These include “unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and unlawful deprivation of liberty, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, slavery and forced labour, extortion and exploitation by both State and non-State actors”. According to UNHCR, 15,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe from Libya in 2018, a seven-fold reduction compared to the previous year, while interception by the Libyan Coast Guard increased drastically. OHCHR and UNSMIL maintain that Libya cannot be considered a place of safety for disembarkation following rescue or interception at sea, given the considerable risk that those who have been returned will be subjected to serious human rights violations and abuses.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 17 January, Schulz, the chair of the 1970 Libya

Sanctions Committee, briefed the Council. This was the first briefing by the chair of the committee since September 2018, although these briefings usually take place every two months. As a general practice, all members of the committee agree on the statement delivered by the chair to the Council. There was no briefing in November 2018 because the committee could not reach agreement over how to refer a visit to Libya earlier that month by then-chair Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden). Later in the year, the committee was able to agree on language about the visit in its annual report, which was also used in Schulz's briefing: “While the approved terms of reference had indicated Tripoli and Beida as the two destinations to be visited, the Committee only visited Tripoli in November, owing to the closure of Beida Airport. The Chair intends to visit all areas agreed in the terms of reference as soon as possible subject to logistical and security arrangements”.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 March, during its 40th session, the Human Rights Council expects to consider the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Libya, including the implementation of technical assistance and capacity-building and efforts to prevent and ensure accountability for violations and abuses of human rights (A/HRC/40/46).

Women, Peace and Security-Related Developments

The Secretary-General's January report noted that women and girls were arbitrarily detained and deprived of their liberty, for their family affiliation or for “moral crimes”, including in facilities without female guards exposing them to the risk of sexual abuse. The report welcomed the commencement of work by the Women Support and Empowerment Unit under the Presidency Council, adding that the “advancement of gender equality and women's full and effective participation in political and economic life in Libya is paramount for advancing peace and security.” The report also called on all Libyan actors to implement Security Council resolution 1325.

Key Issues and Options

The successful organisation of the national conference and a political agreement on the holding of elections in the coming months is critical for the Council and its support for Libya's transition. At the appropriate time and in support of Salamé's work, Council members might consider a visiting mission to Libya and neighbouring countries to convey a unified message to key stakeholders. As Council members consider increasing pressure on major political actors, they could issue a presidential statement threatening those hindering the political process with sanctions, while attempting to preserve their engagement in the dialogue. Council members could also target with sanctions those involved in grave human rights violations, including, but not limited to, human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Members are generally supportive of UNSMIL's role in the stabilisation of Libya but have divergent views on how best to achieve this goal. Regarding the elections, whose timing was a source of tension among members in 2018, it seems that members are now more united in looking towards a date in spring 2019, as suggested by Salamé as part of a recalibrated UN Action Plan. Although the Council has repeatedly called upon member states to cease support for and official contact with parallel institutions in Libya, some countries, including Council members, have ignored this call.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, and Schulz, Germany's Deputy Permanent Representative, chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council expects a briefing on the implementation of resolutions 2451 and 2452 by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

The 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee

has planned a visit to the region at the end of the month. Resolution 2456, adopted on 26 February, extended for an additional year the Yemen financial and travel ban sanctions, reaffirmed the provisions of the targeted arms

embargo, and renewed the mandate of the committee's Panel of Experts.

Key Recent Developments

Implementing the Stockholm Agreement,

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2456 (26 February 2019) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for an additional year. S/RES/2452 (16 January 2019) established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) for an initial period of six months. S/RES/2451 (21 December 2018) endorsed the agreements reached during consultations held in Sweden. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8464 (19 February 2019) was a briefing on Yemen. Security Council Press Statements SC/13713 (22 February 2019) called for the immediate implementation of the Phase 1 redeployment of forces from the Hodeidah agreement. SC/13690 (4 February 2019) stressed the critical importance of the parties' fulfilling their commitments made in Sweden.

Yemen

reached between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebels at UN-brokered consultations in Sweden last December, has remained difficult, with only limited progress. The Stockholm Agreement set out three different arrangements: a deal to avoid a battle for the key port city of Hodeidah, an executive mechanism to implement a prisoner exchange agreement, and a statement of understanding on the city of Taiz.

From 3 to 6 February, the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), which is chaired by the UN and oversees the agreement on Hodeidah, held its first meeting in nearly a month, bringing together the committee's Yemeni government and Houthi representatives on a UN vessel anchored off Hodeidah. Discussion centred around UN proposals to conduct the mutual redeployment of forces from the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Saleef and Ras Issa. Following the third day of meetings, General Michael Lollesgaard took over on 5 February as RCC chair and as head of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), succeeding General Patrick Cammaert.

On 16 and 17 February, the RCC held its fourth meeting, reaching an accord for implementing the first phase of the mutual redeployment of forces set out in the deal on Hodeidah. In a first step, Houthi forces would redeploy from the ports of Saleef and Ras Issa. In a second step, the Houthis would redeploy from Hodeidah port and both parties would withdraw forces from critical parts of the city of Hodeidah associated with humanitarian facilities. This would include opening up the Red Sea mills, which hold sufficient grain stocks to feed 3.7 million people for one month but which have been inaccessible since October. At the RCC meeting, the parties also agreed, "in principle", on the second

phase of redeployments, which entail the full withdrawal of forces from Hodeidah city, though further consultations were required with the leadership of each side.

Following a 19 February briefing and consultations on Yemen, a Council press statement three days later stressed the "critical importance" of the parties' implementing their commitments in the Stockholm Agreement. It called for "the immediate implementation" of the first phase of the redeployment of forces.

A 26 February high-level pledging conference in Geneva raised \$2.6 billion for the 2019 Yemen humanitarian response plan, which OCHA says will require \$4.2 billion.

Key Issues and Options

Advancing implementation of the Stockholm Agreement remains an immediate issue. This includes fulfilling the new commitments on Phase 1 troop redeployments, and reaching an agreement to implement Phase 2 redeployments. Deploying UNMHA and scaling up the presence of other UN entities has also been a challenge. Moreover, there has not been tangible progress yet in implementing the prisoner exchange, which is overseen by a supervisory committee chaired by the Office of the Special Envoy and the ICRC, nor in creating more humanitarian access to Taiz as envisioned in the statement of understanding on that city. Violence has decreased in Hodeidah, but other frontlines, in particular Hajjah governorate, have seen continued fighting. If the sides remain at an impasse in implementing the commitments regarding Hodeidah, an option is for the Council to adopt a presidential statement to exert greater pressure on the parties to follow through on those commitments.

Resuming talks on a framework for a comprehensive political solution is another key

issue. A new round of consultations has been on hold until further progress is made in fulfilling the Hodeidah agreement. However, Griffiths recalled the importance of restarting such talks during his last briefing. Upon the parties agreeing on a negotiating framework, one option for the Council would be to adopt a resolution endorsing this framework, as Griffiths has proposed.

The humanitarian crisis remains a critical issue, with 24 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, including over 10 million people at risk of famine, according to the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Yemen of OCHA and the UN Country Team. Members are likely to reiterate their public calls for the parties to facilitate humanitarian access, including the Red Sea mills and by re-opening the Sana'a-Hodeidah main highway.

Council Dynamics

Members appear united in wanting the parties to fulfil their commitments under the Stockholm Agreement. Two press statements were issued in February to maintain this pressure. Kuwait is part of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition that backs the Yemeni government and tends to champion coalition positions. It has sought to facilitate political efforts, hosting peace talks for three months in 2016 and providing aircraft to transport the Houthi delegation to the consultations in Sweden in December 2018. Belgium, Germany, Peru and Poland have been among members that have sought to highlight issues around the humanitarian crisis and international humanitarian law. The US often raises concerns about the role of Iran, which it views as having a destabilising effect on the region.

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

Great Lakes

Expected Council Action

In March, Said Djinnit will brief the Council for the last time as Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, before being succeeded

by Huang Xia.

Recent Developments and Dynamics

The Council continues to be seized of several

country issues in the Great Lakes region. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), elections were held on 30 December 2018 after a two-year delay. Provisional

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2454 (31 January 2019) renewed sanctions on the CAR until 31 January 2020. 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. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/147** (15 February 2019) was on MINUSCA. **Security Council Meetings S/PV.8467** (21 February 2019) was a briefing on the CAR. **S/PV.8465** (19 February 2019) was a briefing on Burundi. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13701** (13 February 2019) welcomed the signing of the Global Peace Agreement in the CAR.

Great Lakes

results were announced on 10 January, declaring Felix Tshisekedi, head of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, the winner of the presidential election ahead of rival opposition candidate Martin Fayulu and former Interior Minister Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary from then-President Joseph Kabila's party. Despite protests from the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), which observed the elections and claimed that Fayulu was the clear winner, Tshisekedi was inaugurated on 24 January.

Notwithstanding questions surrounding the election results, Council members seem to have taken the view that the best way forward is to engage with the new president and his government. Ahead of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) mandate renewal at the end of March, France led an expert-level visit to the DRC in January that included European members, the US, and South Africa. At the conclusion of the visit, some of the experts were of the view that the situation in the DRC remains unpredictable and that a mandate change would be inadvisable until a new government is formed in April.

The security situation and human rights violations in the DRC continue to be of concern. On 16 January, the Office of the UN

High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement that according to credible sources, at least 890 people were killed between 16 and 18 December 2018 in four villages in Yumbi territory, Mai-Ndombe province, in clashes allegedly between the Banunu and Batende communities. (For more see the DRC brief in this *Monthly Forecast*.)

On the Central African Republic (CAR), the Council adopted resolution 2448 on 13 December 2018, renewing the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2019. On 31 January, in resolution 2454, the Council renewed the sanctions on CAR until 31 January 2020. The resolution further expresses the Council's intention to establish, no later than 30 April, benchmarks that could serve as a potential basis for the Council to lift the arms embargo currently placed on the government of the CAR.

A Global Peace Agreement was signed by the CAR government and 14 armed groups, which still control vast parts of the country, on 6 February under the auspices of the AU-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. On 13 February, Council members issued a press statement welcoming

the signing. The agreement was discussed during the briefing on the latest MINUSCA report on 21 February.

On Burundi, the political situation—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. The future of the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue, which has yet to produce results, is unclear after its facilitator, Benjamin Mkapa, provided his final report concluding his work in December 2018 to the official mediator, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.

On 19 February, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Burundi, Michel Kafando, and the Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), briefed the Council, followed by consultations. During the meeting, some Council members, including China and Russia, suggested that Burundi be removed from the Council's agenda as the security situation is stable. Others, such as the UK, argued that given the political situation and human rights violations, the Council should continue to be seized of the issue.

Lebanon (1701)

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council expects to receive the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701, which called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a militant group Hezbollah and Israel in 2006. Briefings are expected from Ján Kubiš, newly appointed Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and possibly from a representative of the Department of Peace Operations.

The mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expires on 31 August.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General announced the appointment of Kubiš as the new Special Coordinator for Lebanon on 9 January. Pernille Dahler Kardel had served as the acting

Special Coordinator following the departure of Sigrid Kaag in October 2017. Kubiš formally assumed his post on 11 February and subsequently held a series of meetings with high-level government officials.

On 20 January, Lebanon hosted the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, after which the participants issued a joint statement calling for the creation of an Arab free trade zone and international support for countries hosting refugees. Lebanon bears the burden of hosting over one million Syrian refugees, and it has continually called for their return after the Syrian government took control of most of the country's territory.

After eight months of talks between the major political parties, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced on 1 February the

formation of a government of national unity. The Council welcomed this development in an 8 February press statement and emphasised the urgency of implementing structural reforms and fulfilling commitments made during the major international donor conferences for Lebanon in 2018.

Hezbollah and its allies made major gains at the May 2018 parliamentary elections while Hariri's Future Movement lost almost half of the seats it had held in the legislature. This development provided Hezbollah with a better negotiating position in talks, led by Hariri, on forming the new government. Hezbollah has leveraged its increased representation to influence the appointment of the important post of health minister, whose ministry has a substantial budget and receives foreign aid. The new

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2433 (30 August 2018) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for another year. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) increased UNIFIL by 15,000 troops and expanded its mandate. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/1029** (15 November 2018) was on the implementation of resolution 1701. **Security Council Letter S/2018/1182** (31 December 2018) contained the Secretary-General's recommendations for improving the management of UNIFIL's civilian resources. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13696** (8 February 2019) welcomed the formation of the national unity government in Lebanon.

Lebanon (1701)

health minister, Jamal Jabbak, is not a member of Hezbollah but is believed to have close ties with the group's leadership.

The new government faces several immediate challenges, most notably the mounting public debt and a lack of sufficient economic growth. Furthermore, Lebanon is under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to initiate fiscal adjustments to address government debt, and another set of reforms is required for Lebanon to access loans pledged during the 2018 Paris donor conference. Within days of its formation, the new government approved a set of economic reforms that it said could be difficult, but also necessary, to avoid further worsening of the country's socio-economic conditions.

UNIFIL head and force commander Major General Stefano Del Col chaired the monthly tripartite meeting on 13 February with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the Israel Defense Forces to discuss the situation along the Blue Line, the border demarcation between Israel and Lebanon. Noting that the situation had been calm over the past month, he commended the parties for their cooperation.

In December 2018, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the Council with a set of recommendations to improve the management of UNIFIL civilian resources, as requested by resolution 2433. He suggested that UNIFIL and the Special Coordinator optimise coordination

of their political, public information and security strategies; ensure increased coordination in the provision of support to the LAF; and rationalise resources. The Special Coordinator is responsible for managing UN activities and all political aspects of the mission. The force commander, who is also the head of UNFIL, is mainly responsible for peacekeeping issues and the operational requirements of the mission.

Key Issues and Options

The situation in UNIFIL's area of operations has remained generally calm. The Council remains concerned, however, that more than a decade after the adoption of resolution 1701, there has been little progress towards implementing its main objectives, including a permanent ceasefire.

A principal problem for the Council is that Hezbollah and other non-state actors still maintain significant amounts of weaponry. This inhibits the government's ability to exercise full authority over its territory, poses a threat to Lebanon's sovereignty and stability, and contravenes its obligations under resolutions 1559 and 1701. A related issue is Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian civil war and the movement of arms from Syria to Hezbollah.

Council Dynamics

The Council continues to demonstrate unity in its support for Lebanon's sovereignty,

territorial integrity and security and for the country's efforts to insulate itself from the damaging effect of the Syrian conflict. The Council has also recognised the decisive role of the LAF in responding to security challenges.

Members are divided, however, in their view of the security dynamics in the region and the role of the mission. This has been particularly evident during the mandate renewal negotiations over the past two years. The US has continued to emphasise the threat posed by Iran, Hezbollah, and the proliferation of weapons in southern Lebanon and has promoted a more active role for UNIFIL in confronting these threats. The US has also raised concerns over the growing influence of Hezbollah in the new Lebanese government.

On the mission's configuration, the US has strongly advocated for a reduction of UNIFIL's Maritime Task Force, leading towards its eventual termination. Most other members, however, share the view that the mission's mandate and tasks should remain unchanged. These members are cautious about drastic changes in the mission's mandate because of their potential impact on the fragile calm that has been maintained in southern Lebanon for over a decade.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

Expected Council Action

In March, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the activities of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due out in March, and on the most recent developments.

The mandate of UNDOF expires on 30 June.

Key Recent Developments

UNDOF was established following the conclusion of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces

Agreement between Israel and Syria, which ended the Yom Kippur war, and is mandated to maintain the ceasefire between the parties and supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces as well as the so-called areas of separation and limitation.

The Secretary-General's 6 December 2018 report, covering the period from 15 September to 20 November, said that despite several violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974, the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was largely being maintained. The report noted that by August 2018, conflict had largely ceased in the areas formerly held by various non-state armed groups as the government of

Syria regained control. Some military activity was reported as part of the Syrian security forces' efforts to clear the remnants of war from the area. According to the report, UNDOF also observed an increase in Syrian armed forces' presence in the area, particularly in staffing a number of checkpoints. The Council stressed in resolution 2426 of June 2018 that there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of operations, which also relates to the Russian military police noted in the report as being present occasionally in the area of separation.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued to fire across the ceasefire line and

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2450 (21 December 2018) renewed the mandate of UNDOF until 30 June 2019. S/RES/2426 (29 June 2018) renewed the mandate of UNDOF until 31 December 2018. Secretary-General's Report S/2018/1088 (6 December 2018) was the latest report on UNDOF, which contained recommendations from the independent review.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

into the area of separation, according to the report. UNDOF personnel also continued to observe crossings by unidentified individuals between Lebanon and the Bravo (Syrian) side and from the Bravo side to the Alpha (Israeli) side on a daily basis. The individuals crossing were usually described in the report as shepherds and farmers. The Secretary-General's report noted that the number of people crossing the southern part of the area of separation decreased once a hospital providing humanitarian assistance to people from the Bravo side was closed by the IDF in August 2018.

On 15 October 2018, the Qunaytirah crossing point, which had been closed since 2014, was reopened. UNDOF had been unable to help with humanitarian crossings while the point was closed, but reiterated in the Secretary-General's report that it now remained ready to facilitate crossings. On 11 February, the Syrian state-run SANA news agency reported that Israel had fired missiles on parts of the city of Qunaytirah. At press time, the Israeli military had not responded to queries, but the incident was widely covered in the region's press.

Two UNDOF peacekeepers were lightly injured in August and October 2018 in Camp Faouar by stray bullets, according to the Secretary-General's report. UNDOF has not determined the origin of the shots nor their intended target. UNDOF made further progress towards a limited return to operations on the Bravo side in accordance with a phased UNDOF plan, namely on phase two: preparations for the reoccupation of observation posts. On 30 October, UNDOF's Observer Group Golan was able to establish temporary observation posts near three empty former posts. UNDOF's mechanised infantry company has conducted more than 80 protected patrols since such patrols resumed on the Bravo side in February 2018, as well as several assessment visits to parts of the area of separation. UNDOF still considers there to be significant threats to UN personnel in the area of UNDOF operations. The report highlighted that on 12 and 13 September, UNDOF personnel worked in the area of the Bravo and Charlie gates at the Qunaytirah crossing to remove mines, unexploded ordnance and other remnants of war.

An independent review of UNDOF was conducted in September and October 2018. The review analysed the conditions of the mandate, particularly the "assumptions that underpin" it and "the conditions for its successful implementation". The review's conclusions, highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, said that UNDOF plays an important role in maintaining communications with the IDF and Syrian authorities and that this function should remain. The review found that UNDOF had de-escalated tensions in several incidents. It recommended trying to find further opportunities to build trust between the parties. Regarding UNDOF's eventual return to the Bravo side, the review urged the use of new observation technologies and noted that there would need to be significant reconstruction of the posts that had been abandoned.

The Council renewed UNDOF's mandate in a unanimous vote on 21 December 2018 in resolution 2450.

Key Issues and Options

Ongoing issues for the Council are the numerous violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974 and UNDOF's ability to implement its mandate, including the deployment of appropriate technologies as recommended. Given Syria's reassertion of control over areas of separation and the reopening of the Qunaytirah crossing point, UNDOF may be getting close to an eventual full return to the Bravo side. The return of the situation to pre-2014 conditions may cause the Council to consider requesting the Secretary-General to resume a six-month reporting cycle instead of 90 days, as had been the practice until December 2012.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council remains largely united on this issue, as evidenced by the unanimous reauthorisation of the mandate in December. Negotiations on the draft were relatively straightforward and technical. There was little apparent disagreement by members, and no states felt the need to give explanations of their votes.

Russia and the US are the co-penholders on UNDOF.

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