

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

The “joint presidencies” of France and Germany continue in April as Germany assumes the Council presidency. The role of women in conflict situations, international humanitarian law and disarmament, all stated priorities of the “joint presidencies”, feature strongly in April’s programme of work.

The month will start with a briefing on strengthening respect for [international humanitarian law](#), presided over by German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. Anticipated briefers include ICRC President Peter Maurer, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, and Naz Modirzadeh, Director, Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict. Ahead of this briefing there will be an Arria-formula meeting on protecting humanitarian and medical personnel in conflict organised by France.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi is expected to provide a briefing on the current state of [refugees](#) worldwide and the displacement aspect of various conflicts on the Council agenda.

There will be three open debates: on [women in peacekeeping](#); on fighting and preventing [sexual violence in conflict](#) situations; and the quarterly open debate on [Israel/Palestine](#). Maas will preside over the debate on sexual violence in conflict during which the Secretary-General’s annual report on this problem will be presented. Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten are expected to participate, as are the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad and international human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. The open debate on peacekeeping will focus on the importance of and the need for increasing women’s participation in peacekeeping operations and integrating gender perspectives into the work of these operations, with a briefing by Guterres.

There will also be a briefing on the [Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#) ahead of the 2020 review conference chaired by Maas with expected briefings by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Yukiya Amano and Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu.

The Council is expected to renew the mandates of the UN missions in [Haiti](#) (MINUJUSTH) and in [Western Sahara](#) (MINURSO) in April. The Council will hold a debate on Haiti prior to the renewal of MINUJUSTH. There will be a TCC meeting and consultations ahead of the renewal of MINURSO planned for the end of the month.

Regarding African issues, the Council will discuss developments in relation to UNISFA in [Abyei](#) and [Sudan/South Sudan](#) relations. The Council is also expected to decide whether to extend UNISFA’s support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. There will be a briefing and consultations on UNAMID in [Darfur](#).

In addition to the quarterly open debate on [Israel/Palestine](#), Middle East issues that will be considered include:

- [Syria](#), the monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, the political process and the use of chemical weapons; and
- [Yemen](#), an update on the implementation of resolution 2452, which established the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA).

A briefing followed by consultations on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in [Colombia](#) is also anticipated.

Following the [visiting mission to Mali and Burkina Faso](#) in March, the Council will be closely watching developments there, as well as in [Burundi](#), [Myanmar](#) and the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#).

28 March 2019

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## In Hindsight: Chairing the Security Council's Subsidiary Bodies

In 2016, the General Assembly brought forward the election of Security Council members from October to June. This has, in turn, sparked moves to change the process and timing of appointing chairs of the Council's subsidiary bodies, of which there are now more than 20. With the end of the Cold War, during which period only two sanctions committees were set up (Rhodesia and South Africa), the Council in the early 1990s began establishing numerous sanctions committees and working groups. Elected members have chaired most of these bodies, appointed by permanent members (the P5) through an informal process that would unfold late each year and sometimes continue well into the following January (in 2010, until 31 January).

Not knowing in advance which subsidiary bodies a new member would chair left insufficient time to prepare—either to secure the right expertise within their teams, or even to have a proper handover from the exiting chair. Permanent members opposed several efforts aimed at changing the practice, but in 2016, the new election timetable prompted Council members to agree on several new practices for the incoming members' longer preparatory period, including an earlier and more consultative process of appointing the chairs of Council subsidiary bodies.

Now, two Council members—one permanent, the other the elected member chairing the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG), the subsidiary body dedicated to Council working methods—conduct consultations with the current and incoming Council members with the aim of having the appointments in place by the beginning of October. This process has been used three times, and the 1 October target has been missed each year. In 2016 and 2017, the appointments were finalised on 31 and 6 October, respectively, while in 2018 the appointments were agreed in late November. The lengthy 2018 process exposed some of the difficult dynamics accompanying the selection of chairs of subsidiary bodies. During this period, several of the elected members called for a different

distribution of labour within the Council, arguing that the P5 should share the burden of chairing the subsidiary bodies.

At present, all subsidiary bodies other than the Military Staff Committee, which is composed solely of P5 members, are chaired by elected members. This wasn't always the case. Permanent members have served as initial chairs of newly-established subsidiary bodies: the UK chaired the 1267 Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee in 1999 and the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee from 2001 to 2003; France chaired the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict from 2005 to 2008; and the US served as co-chair with Slovakia in 2006 of the Ad Hoc Committee on Mandate Review to conduct the review of Security Council mandates called for by the 2005 World Summit outcome document. Furthermore, several subsidiary bodies currently have permanent members serving as vice-chairs. Since 2007, Russia has been vice-chair of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, and, since 2011, of the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee. This has also been the case for the UK on the 1540 Weapons of Mass Destruction Committee since 2005, and for both France and Russia on the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee since 2008 and the 1566 Working Group since 2013. The UK has been the vice-chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations since 2013.

Before 2018, there had already been calls on the P5 to chair subsidiary bodies. In mid-2012, Portugal, as chair of the IWG, circulated a draft note by the president on the appointment of Council subsidiary body chairs, which said that the process “should ... ensure a balanced representation of all Council members as Chairpersons of subsidiary bodies”. After months of negotiation, the IWG agreed on a short note in December 2012 calling for a more inclusive process, but the reference to all members chairing subsidiary bodies was not retained, due to P5 opposition (S/2012/937). Neither this note, nor two other presidential notes on related

topics issued in 2014 and 2015, changed the process of the P5 matching elected members to subsidiary bodies.

In 2016, the first year of early elections to the Council, Japan as chair of the IWG decided that the IWG should consider how the newly elected members could best take advantage of the extended pre-Council period to prepare themselves for the demands of their two-year term, with the goal of issuing a presidential note on this matter by the June election.

Through many drafts of this note, the P5 resisted the proposal that the chairs of the subsidiary bodies would be decided through a process facilitated by the president of the Security Council. This issue eventually led to bilateral consultations between two members, New Zealand and the US. The compromise formula found in the note issued on 15 July was that the appointment of subsidiary bodies' chairs “will be facilitated jointly by two members of the Security Council in full cooperation.” The unwritten understanding was that the two members in question would be the chair of the IWG and one permanent member (S/2016/619).

In 2016 and 2017, the chairs' appointment process worked reasonably well. In 2018, the ten elected members and the five incoming delegations addressed a joint letter to the president of the Security Council highlighting, among other issues, “the need for fair burden-sharing and an equal distribution of work amongst all members of the Security Council, including its permanent members” (S/2018/1024). The letter had no immediate impact, but the IWG, currently led by Kuwait, took up this issue in early 2019 and has been discussing it at press time. Among the draft notes by the president that the group has been working on is one on the chairs' selection process that reaffirms the need for the process to be conducted in a balanced, transparent, efficient, and inclusive way, with better burden-sharing as part of the collective responsibility that would involve all the members in the leadership of the Council's subsidiary bodies.

## Status Update since our March Forecast

### Somalia

On 1 March, Council members issued a press statement, condemning the terrorist attacks of 28 February along the Mukkah Almukaramah road in Mogadishu, which killed and injured innocent Somalis (SC/13729). On 27 March, the Council renewed the mandate of UNSOM until 31 March 2020 (S/RES/2461).

### Counter-Terrorism

The 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee met on 6 and 14 March. On 22 March, the committee added an individual to its sanctions list. On 15 March, Council members condemned the terrorist attack that took place at Al Noor and Linwood Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand earlier that day, which resulted in at least 50 killed and many wounded. On 28 March, the Council held an open debate on combatting the financing of terrorism, with briefings by the Under-Secretary-General of the UN Counter-Terrorism Office, Vladimir Voronkov (via video teleconference) (S/PV.8496). The Council adopted a resolution on the topic (S/RES/2462).

### OSCE Briefing

On 7 March, Slovakian Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák briefed the Council in his role of OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (S/PV.8479). Lajčák presented three main priorities during Slovakia's chairmanship of the OSCE which include: preventing, mediating and mitigating conflict, focusing on the people affected; providing for a safer future; and effective multilateralism. The discussion at the meeting was mainly centered on the crisis in Ukraine given that the OSCE has a significant presence in the country and it is the organisation tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements. During the meeting Council members expressed their support for the work of the organisation and welcomed greater UN-OSCE cooperation.

### South Sudan

On 8 March, the Council received a briefing from Special Representative and head of UNMISS David Shearer (S/PV.8480). A civil society representative based in South Sudan also briefed. Council members held consultations following the briefing. On 15 March, the Council adopted resolution 2459 renewing the mandate of UNMISS for an additional year, by 14 votes in favour with Russia

abstaining (S/PV.8484). The resolution maintains the troop ceiling of 17,000 troops. Language was added specifying that "advice or technical assistance, within existing resources" can be a part of the mission's good offices efforts to support the peace process and also calling on the mission to "support the facilitation of the safe, informed, voluntary, and dignified return or relocation of IDPs from United Nations protection of civilian sites". Following the vote, statements were made by China, Kuwait, Russia and the US.

### Human Rights

On 11 March, there was an Arria-formula meeting on "human rights, accountability and justice: contributions to international peace and security", co-hosted by France and Peru. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Miguel de Serpa Soares, and former President of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia and currently of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals Theodor Meron, briefed.

### EU-UN Briefing

On 12 March, Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy briefed the Council on cooperation between the two organisations (S/PV.8482). She addressed the EU's involvement in and support for various peacekeeping operations in Africa and its support for the UN-led political process in Syria. Furthermore, Mogherini emphasised the importance of preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran and support for other non-proliferation efforts. During the meeting, Council members welcomed the cooperation between the UN and EU.

### Women, Peace and Security

On 13 March, there was an open Arria-formula meeting on the inequalities between women and men in political processes, co-hosted by France and Germany. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, and Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, briefed at the meeting. AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security Bineta Diop; Fatima Maïga of the Malian Coalition des femmes maliennes pour l'agenda Femmes, Paix et Sécurité; and Delphine Djiraïbe, a Chadian attorney and co-founder of the Chadian

Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights, also participated.

### Afghanistan

On 15 March, the Council unanimously adopted as a "technical rollover" resolution 2460 extending the mandate UNAMA for six months (S/PV.8485). Although Council members held several rounds of negotiations and bilateral meetings, no agreement could be reached on the original draft resolution after which the decision was made to pursue a technical rollover. The US and China were deadlocked on whether to maintain a reference to the Belt and Road Initiative in the context of welcoming regional economic cooperation. Ahead of the adoption, on 11 March, the Council held a briefing followed by consultations on the situation in Afghanistan (S/PV.8481). Briefers included Special Representative and head of UNAMA, Tadamichi Yamamoto; Afghanistan's National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib; and Deputy Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Network Storai Tapesh. The discussion during the meeting centred on, among other things, the political situation including the preparations for the 2019 presidential elections, ongoing negotiations on reaching a political solution, and security and humanitarian situation in the country.

### Crimea

On 15 March, Arria-formula meeting entitled: "A symbolic date: Fifth anniversary of the beginning of Russia's occupation of Crimea: A blatant violation of international law" was held. The meeting was organised by Council members Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, the UK, and the US, in partnership with Ukraine. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear first-hand accounts from civil society and experts on the latest developments with regard to Crimea. Briefers during the meeting included Sergiy Kyslytsya, Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine; Alim Aliev, Program Director of Crimean House; Ayla Bakkali, executive member of the World Congress of Crimean Tatars; and Ahtem Chyihoz, Vice Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar.

### Children and Armed Conflict

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict met on 15 and 18 March to continue negotiations on its conclusions on the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Syria (S/2018/969).

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## Status Update since our March Forecast

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 18 March, the Security Council received a briefing, followed by consultations, on MONUSCO (S/PV.8486). The Council was briefed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui and Anny Tenga Modi, Executive Director of Afia Mamaa, a civil society organisation. A representative from the DRC mission participated in the briefing. As of press time, Council members were negotiating a resolution on MONUSCO, whose mandate expires on 31 March.

### Libya

On 20 March, the Council was briefed by the Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Ghassan Salamé, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany, Ambassador Jürgen Schulz, who chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee (S/PV.8488). Salamé announced that the National Conference on the future of Libya will be held in April. On 26 March Council members issued a press statement welcoming Salamé's announcement that the National Conference will take place from 14-16 April 2019 in Ghadames, Libya (SC/13749).

### Mali and the Sahel

On 20 March, the Security Council held an informal interactive dialogue with the PBC on the Sahel. Germany, as the informal coordinator between the Council and the PBC, organised the meeting in preparation for the Council's visiting mission to Mali and Burkina Faso later in the month. The Chair of the PBC, Ambassador Guillermo Fernández de Soto (Colombia) and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernández-Taranco provided briefings. Côte d'Ivoire, France and Germany co-led a visiting mission to Mali and Burkina Faso from 22 to 24 March. The focus of the mission was to assess the implementation of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali, the operationalisation of the joint force of the G5 Sahel and the deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso. Upon returning to New York, on 27 March, the co-leads briefed the Council on the mission and on 29 March the Council held a ministerial meeting on Mali chaired by French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, featuring a briefing by Secretary-General António Guterres and with the participation of Malian Prime Minister

Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga. Separately, on 28 March there was a high-level meeting on the G5 Sahel at UN headquarters in New York.

### DPRK

On 20 March, the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee held a meeting during which committee members discussed the recommendations from the final report of the Panel of Experts (S/2019/171).

### Myanmar

Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten briefed Council members under "any other business" on 20 March on her visit to Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw from 5 to 8 February. She provided Council members with information on her meetings with Myanmar government officials and the follow-up to the joint communiqué signed on 8 December 2018 between the UN and the government of Myanmar to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

### Middle East and West Africa

On 21 March, Security Council members held an informal interactive dialogue on "Fostering dialogue and cooperation as a response to conflicts and common challenges in the Middle-East and North Africa" to explore ways to better take into account regional dynamics, root causes of conflict in the region, and common security challenges. France and Germany organised the meeting, which included briefings by Marie-Joëlle Zahar representing University of Montreal, the International Peace Institute and Folke Bernadotte Academy; Joost Hilterman, the Program Director, Middle East and North Africa at the International Crisis Group; and Mourad Wahba, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the UN Development Programme.

### Central African Republic

On 22 March, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee met with the Group of Experts assisting it, to discuss their programme of work for the year. On 26 March Special Representative and head of MINUSCA Mankeur Ndiaye briefed the Council under "any other business".

### UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 25 March, in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump signed a presidential proclamation recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. UN spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said on the same day that UN Secretary-General António Guterres considers "that the status of Golan has not changed." Council members cancelled previously scheduled consultations and held a briefing on 27 March to discuss this as well as the latest report of the Secretary-General on UNDOF, covering the period from 21 November 2018 to 14 March 2019 (S/2019/248). Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacekeeping Affairs, and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, briefed and representatives from Israel and Syria participated (S/PV.8495).

### Guinea-Bissau

On 26 March, Council members issued a press statement congratulating Guinea-Bissau for the peaceful conduct of legislative elections held on 10 March (SC/13746). Members recalled the importance of organising the presidential election within the legal mandated time frame in 2019, and called upon national authorities to expedite the review of the constitution.

### Great Lakes Region

On 26 March, outgoing Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Said Djinnit briefed the Council on the Secretary-General latest report (S/2019/229) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/PV.8491). The briefing was followed by consultations.

### Lebanon

On 27 March, the Council held consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701 which called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a militant group Hezbollah and Israel in 2006. Council members were briefed by newly appointed Special Coordinator for Lebanon Ján Kubiš; Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; and UNIFIL Force Commander Major General Stefano Del Col.

# Women, Peace and Security

## Expected Council Action

In April, the Council will hold an open debate on the Secretary-General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence. Germany's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, is expected to chair. Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten are expected to participate, as are the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Dr. Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad. International human rights lawyer Amal Clooney is also expected to participate as well as a civil society representative. Germany plans to circulate a concept note ahead of the debate. An outcome is possible.

## Key Recent Developments

At press time the Secretary-General was expected to submit his most recent report on conflict-related sexual violence, covering January to December 2018, which will provide the basis for the April open debate. Conflict-related sexual violence, as defined in the Secretary-General's annual reports, "refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict."

As in previous years, the report is likely to provide an overview of current and emerging concerns, focus on countries for which verifiable information is available, and provide country-specific strategic recommendations as well as overarching policy recommendations. Also, as in recent years, the report is expected to include an annex of a list of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, the majority being non-state actors. Last year's report detailed the removal of Côte d'Ivoire from the annex after no new cases of sexual violence by members of the Ivorian security forces were recorded in 2017. The report is also expected to cover country visits by Patten during 2018, including to Sudan from 18 to 25 February; Iraq from 26 February to 5 March; Guinea from 26 to 28 March; Bangladesh in May; and South Sudan from 3 to 7 July.

On 8 February, there was an open

Arria-formula meeting 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 concept note identified the objective as exploring how to more effectively integrate criminal accountability for sexual violence in conflict into the prevention agenda, including into conflict resolution, transitional justice and peacebuilding. The results of the discussion were intended to feed into the open debate and possible outcome. (See our What's in Blue story of 7 February for more details.)

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue is the role of the Council in enhancing prevention, early warning and accountability regarding sexual violence in conflict. Another issue is what the Council can do to ensure full implementation of the relevant resolutions as well as compliance by state and non-state parties.

The invited civil society speakers, Dr. Mukwege and Ms. Murad, may want to call the Council's attention to the issues of their respective focus and expertise, sexual violence related to conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Iraq (the latter during the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant occupation).

An option is for the Council to closely monitor the implementation of key resolutions and integrate the issue into relevant country-specific and cross-cutting thematic resolutions. Another option is to support engagement with state and non-state parties towards specific commitments on conflict-related sexual violence and to monitor their compliance, including through the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security.

A related issue is expanding designation criteria in all relevant sanctions regimes for situations where sexual violence is persistently perpetrated. The Council may also consider how to go beyond receiving briefings by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the submission of names of perpetrators of sexual violence to the relevant sanctions committees. This may include adopting targeted measures against

individuals. Further options are to strengthen the dedicated gender and conflict-related sexual violence expertise informing the work of sanctions committees and to invite the Special Representative to share information with sanctions committees, as appropriate.

In the context of the Secretary-General's focus on prevention, a further issue is how to give due consideration to the identified risk factors of sexual violence as early-warning indicators that could enable the Council better to fulfil its conflict prevention role.

Additional options are to use more consistently Council visiting missions to conflict situations to further highlight, where relevant, the issue of sexual violence, including the views of survivors, and to support the deployment of women's protection advisers in peacekeeping missions.

## Council Dynamics

Discussion of the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence has been a regular feature on the Council's agenda since 2009, but Council members continue to have divergent views on aspects of this thematic agenda, including how to incorporate it into the Council's sanctions regimes and how to advance and deepen efforts to integrate the women, peace and security agenda across all areas of the Council's work. China and Russia have typically resisted many elements that they interpret as an expansion of the women, peace and security agenda or perceive as infringing on state sovereignty or the responsibilities of other parts of the UN system. In this context, some Council members may be wary of a new outcome, given the continued need for implementation of resolution 2106 and other relevant resolutions on the issue, and whether proceeding with an outcome could potentially lead to acrimonious negotiations.

Some members have highlighted the importance of working closely with relevant sanctions committees to list perpetrators, and they may raise this issue in the open debate. Others have shown interest in focusing on how conflict-related sexual violence occurs in situations where there is also systemic gender-based discrimination, such as the exclusion of women from political life, economic marginalisation, and discriminatory systems in both formal and traditional justice systems.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2106 (24 June 2013) focused on accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, stressed women's political and economic empowerment, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council annually. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/250** (23 March 2018) was the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence for 2017. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8234** (16 April 2018) was the annual debate on sexual violence in conflict.

# Rule of Law/International Humanitarian Law/Protection of Civilians

## Expected Council Action

In April, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas is expected to preside over a briefing on strengthening respect for international humanitarian law. The anticipated briefers are International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Peter Maurer, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, and Naz Modirzadeh, founding Director of the Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict.

The meeting is scheduled to follow an Arria-formula meeting on protecting humanitarian and medical personnel, organised by France earlier on the same day.

## Background and Recent Developments

At the end of 2018, the scope of the challenges facing civilians in conflict-affected countries, including several on the Council's agenda, has remained significant. According to the Global Humanitarian Overview 2019 published by OCHA, at least "2 billion people worldwide live in areas affected by fragility, conflict and violence". More people are being displaced by conflict than in previous years, with the number of forcibly displaced people rising from 59.5 million in 2014 to 68.5 million in 2017. Natural disasters and climate change also have severe impact, with disasters affecting 350 million people on average each year and causing billions of dollars in damage.

OCHA expects that in 2019, nearly 132 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection, the majority because of the impact of conflict. One clear trend is the current protracted nature of humanitarian crises, with "nearly three-quarters of people targeted to receive assistance in 2018 located in countries that have been affected by a humanitarian crisis for seven years or more." One such situation, Yemen, significantly worsened in 2018. In 2019, some 24 million people in that country are expected to need humanitarian assistance and protection, making Yemen once again the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, according to OCHA. In Syria, an estimated 13 million people are likely to require humanitarian assistance and protection in 2019. As the Syria crisis enters its ninth year, there are more than

5.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

In addition, the use of siege and the denial of basic humanitarian needs, as form of warfare, have become increasingly common, including in these two countries, with appalling effects. On 24 May 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2417 on the link between armed conflict and food insecurity. The resolution strongly condemned the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, as well as the unlawful denial of humanitarian access, and urged all parties to protect civilian infrastructure critical to the delivery of aid and to ensure the proper functioning of food systems.

On top of the protracted nature of some conflicts with a humanitarian aspect, the environment for humanitarian action has worsened in recent years amid an increasing number of armed conflicts, according to the ICRC. It has noted that the characteristics of these armed conflicts have changed dramatically, a common thread being the increase in the number of parties involved in each conflict. In its report *The Roots of Restraint in War*, published in June 2018, the ICRC estimated that only one-third of conflicts today are between two belligerents. Almost half of the world's conflicts involved between three and nine parties, and 22 percent have more than ten belligerents, most of them non-state actors. According to the ICRC, this trend is detrimental to the delivery of humanitarian assistance as ensuring access becomes more complicated, involving armed actors that are uninformed or unwilling to abide by international humanitarian law.

In addition, in certain situations, some of the belligerents may be considered terrorist organisations by the host state or listed as such by the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, complicating humanitarian assistance that requires coordination with such groups in areas under their control.

The Council has addressed this issue repeatedly over the years. In resolution 1502 of 2003, the Council reaffirmed the need to comply with obligations set forth in international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Regulations, related

to the protection of humanitarian personnel. It urged those concerned to allow full unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance and to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel. The resolution further expressed the Council's determination to take appropriate steps in order to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

More recently, in resolution 2175 of 2014, it strongly condemned violence and intimidation against those involved in humanitarian operations, urged parties to armed conflict to allow complete and unhindered humanitarian access, urged states to ensure that they hold accountable those who commit crimes against humanitarian workers within their respective territories, and requested the Secretary-General to include in his reports on country-specific situations and other relevant reports information regarding the safety and security of humanitarian workers and to present recommendations about how to strengthen their protection. Resolution 2286 of 2016 emphasised the unacceptability of violations of international humanitarian law arising from attacks against humanitarian and medical workers and medical facilities.

Yet despite the existence of legal norms to protect humanitarian workers, they are at greater risk than ever before. Countries such as Syria, the Central African Republic and Mali are particularly dangerous for humanitarian workers while many other conflict areas considered safe in the past are becoming increasingly dangerous for humanitarian efforts. According to the September 2018 Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of UN personnel, 60 employees of NGOs working in cooperation with UN were killed from January 2017 to June 2018, 96 were injured, and 113 were abducted, each figure an increase from previous periods. Similarly, as at 18 March, the World Health Organisation had recorded 729 attacks on medical personnel or infrastructure since January 2018, causing 170 deaths and injuring over 900.

The Arria-formula meeting, which is

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2286 (3 May 2016) condemned attacks on health care workers and facilities in armed conflict. S/RES/2175 (29 August 2014) condemned violence and intimidation against those involved in humanitarian operations. S/RES/1502 (26 August 2003) condemned all violence against humanitarian and UN and associated personnel, recalled obligations to protect such personnel under international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law, and called for unimpeded humanitarian access. Security Council Letter S/2018/815 (31 August 2018) was from Russia addressed to the Secretary-General on the "Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations". General Assembly Document A/73/392 (24 September 2018) was the report of the Secretary-General titled Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of UN personnel. Other Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs-declaration-shared-commitments-unpeacekeeping-1812605e.pdf>)

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## Rule of Law/International Humanitarian Law/Protection of Civilians

supposed to be attended at the ministerial level, will focus on finding ways to support better implementation of existing obligations under international law and identifying best practices in this regard.

### Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue is whether, and how, thematic discussions about the protection of civilians can be translated into concrete measures to mitigate the suffering of civilians in armed conflicts around the world. In this sense, it is important for the Council to consider how the open debate can focus greater attention on, and galvanise support for, addressing the needs of civilians in conflict-affected countries.

Another issue is to see if there is a way to take advantage of the important anniversaries coming up in 2019 to strengthen follow-up and engagement on protection issues. The 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions is in August and this year's annual open debate on protection of civilians (expected in May) will mark the 20th anniversary of including protection of civilians on the Council's agenda.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

There is general awareness among Council members of the devastating impact that armed conflict has had on civilians in recent years. Beyond reaffirming existing commitments under international humanitarian law, Germany and France have initiated this briefing as part of their "twin presidencies" initiative in March and April, to highlight the current negative trends and the need for heightened attention to the issue, and to identify tangible ways of improving implementation of humanitarian obligations.

Despite general agreement on the overarching objective, divisions among members affect discussions and approaches towards the protection of civilians in the context of specific conflicts. The P3 and other members tend to stress accountability measures and sanctions as mechanisms for leveraging compliance with international humanitarian law whereas other members, such as China and Russia, tend to be more circumspect about using such enforcement measures in light of their emphasis on state sovereignty. China, Russia and the US (despite its general support for accountability

measures), as well as some other member states, have been particularly reluctant to use the power given to the Security Council in the ICC statute to refer situations to the Court and have pushed to minimise references to the ICC in Council outcomes.

Differences in perspectives have also surfaced with respect to the protection mandate of peace operations. For example, when Russia endorsed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations—initiated by the Secretary-General in 2018 and endorsed by 151 member states and four international organisations—it expressed its reservation over the paragraph saying that peacekeeping operations can contribute to international efforts to protect civilians and to promote and protect human rights.

In addition, political differences and alliances with opposing belligerents among Council members, particularly among the P5, have hindered the Council's ability to play an effective role in protecting civilians in conflicts on the Council's agenda, including in Syria and Yemen.

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## Non-Proliferation

### Expected Council Action

In April, the Council will hold a briefing under the agenda item non-proliferation, focused on supporting the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ahead of the 2020 review conference.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas is expected to chair the meeting. Briefings are expected from Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Yukiya Amano and Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu.

The Council may adopt an outcome during the meeting.

### Background

The NPT was opened for signature in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. The treaty's main purposes are the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and

ultimately complete nuclear disarmament. With 191 parties, the NPT is regarded as the most-observed treaty on disarmament matters. Since its entry into force, the state parties to the NPT have held review conferences at five-year intervals to review the operation of the treaty and address other related issues. The treaty was initially set to expire after 25 years but was made open-ended by the states parties during the 1995 NPT review conference. The Security Council meeting in April will provide an opportunity for Council members to emphasise the importance of the non-proliferation regime and express their commitment to the treaty's implementation.

The period since the 2015 NPT review conference has been marked by some significant developments on the non-proliferation front. Most notable were the decision of the US to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan

of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program and the intensified US-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) diplomatic engagement on denuclearisation.

Although the US withdrew from the JCPOA, other parties to the agreement have remained committed to its implementation. So far, Iran has continued to implement and verify its nuclear-related commitments under the agreement. Following its withdrawal, the US imposed a series of economic sanctions on Iran and has hindered the ability of Iran to access international financial and oil markets. In January, the EU launched a special trade mechanism that would facilitate legitimate trade between the EU and Iran and circumvent the US sanctions. In the absence of economic benefits granted by the JCPOA, Iran has threatened that it would stop adhering to the agreement and would consider withdrawing from the NPT.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2325 (15 December 2016) was on the 1540 Sanctions Committee. S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015) endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program. S/RES/1540 (28 April 2004) established the 1540 Sanctions Committee and its mandate and affirmed that proliferation of nuclear weapons and the means of delivery constitute a threat to international peace and security. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8362 (26 September 2018) was a summit-level meeting on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, chaired by US President Donald Trump. S/PV.8343 (6 September 2018) was an emergency session on the investigation into the nerve agent attack in Salisbury, the UK. **USEFUL ADDITIONAL SOURCES** *Non-Proliferation Treaty* and *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*

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## Non-Proliferation

In 2017, the Council demonstrated unity in reacting to the increase in ballistic missile testing by the DPRK when it adopted a series of resolutions toughening the sanctions on the country. The tensions on the Korean peninsula have decreased significantly during 2018 in light of renewed inter-Korean and US-DPRK diplomatic efforts. US President Donald Trump and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un have held two summit-level meetings while Kim and Republic of Korea President Moon Jae-in have met three times. The DPRK denuclearisation talks reached an impasse during the February US-DPRK summit; Trump broke off the talks after Kim offered only to dismantle nuclear facilities in Yongbyon in exchange for lifting economic sanctions on the DPRK. This was followed by media reports showing satellite imagery suggesting that the DPRK has resumed activity at some of its missile launch sites and missile production sites.

In February, the US announced that it would withdraw from the 1987 US-Russia Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, citing Russia's lack of compliance with

the treaty. Subsequently, Russia said that it would no longer adhere to provisions of the treaty. The goal of the INF was to prohibit testing and deployment of land-based missiles with a range between 310 and 3,420 miles. The treaty will formally end in August following a six-month withdrawal period unless the US and Russia resolve outstanding issues.

While addressing a UN conference on disarmament in Geneva on 25 February, the Secretary-General expressed his concern over the breakdown of international arms control mechanisms. He called on the US and Russia to engage in efforts to preserve the INF treaty and also to extend the New START treaty (a US-Russia treaty on reduction of strategic nuclear weapons) ahead of its expiry in 2021. In May 2018, the Secretary-General unveiled his disarmament agenda, called "Securing Our Common Future", which presents a set of practical measures on a range of disarmament issues, focusing on weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, and new battlefield technologies.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of overall non-proliferation efforts. Council dynamics have varied, however, in specific cases and situations that the Council has discussed. Following its withdrawal from the JCPOA, the US has been isolated in the Council on this issue given that most other members as well as the Secretary-General share the view that the agreement should be preserved. The Council has been unanimous in its support of recent diplomatic efforts on denuclearisation of the DPRK. Council members seem to hold varied positions on how the Council should balance the use of sanctions in light of ongoing diplomatic efforts. Some members, in particular China and Russia, are becoming increasingly interested in considering some form of sanctions relief for the DPRK while the US and most other members oppose this. The 2018 use of a nerve agent in Salisbury has unveiled another dynamic in the Council, pitting the UK and its allies against Russia.

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## Haiti

### Expected Council Action

In April, the Council is scheduled to hold a debate on the situation in Haiti with a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) Helen Meagher La Lime ahead of the expiration of MINUJUSTH's mandate on 15 April. At press time, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet is also scheduled to brief. A civil society briefer may also be included. The Council is expected to adopt a decision determining the nature of the UN presence following the end of the mandate of MINUJUSTH.

### Key Recent Developments

February was marked by violent protests throughout much of the country in which 34 people were reportedly killed. President Jovenel Moïse and Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant have both pledged to address the root causes of the protests, namely claims of

mismanagement, inflation, and embezzlement of money from a programme of discounted oil from Venezuela. The situation has since become calmer. Challenges remain in the form of mistrust between Moïse and Céant as well as Haiti's barely-functioning and fragmented parliament. According to the Secretary-General's latest report, in 2018 fewer than half of scheduled parliamentary sessions were held and only seven laws were adopted. On 18 March the Parliament passed a no-confidence vote against Céant and his government. Céant called it "illegal", and at press time a new prime minister had not yet been appointed.

On 1 March, the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council his report on MINUJUSTH, which included recommendations from the UN strategic assessment. The assessment was to recommend the appropriate time to close MINUJUSTH, which sectors the UN should continue to support, and an appropriate UN configuration post-MINUJUSTH.

The Secretary-General said in the report that he believes Haiti remains on a positive trajectory, with varying degrees of democratic functioning and institutional strengthening.

Council members received an update in consultations on 8 March from Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča. They discussed recent political and security developments as well as the upcoming mandate renewal. According to Jenča, all Haitian stakeholders agree that MINUJUSTH's mandate must end in October. The Secretariat was clear in its desire for a strong UN political presence to remain in Haiti with close cooperation amongst all UN entities. Members agreed to the press elements on the meeting that France conveyed at the media stakeout.

Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller briefed member states on 13 March on the humanitarian situation in Haiti and OCHA's Humanitarian Response Plan.

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## Haiti

Mamadou Diallo, the UN Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti, who also participated in the meeting, reported that 2.6 million Haitians will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2019. Mueller stressed that last year the appeal for Haiti was funded at just 13 percent, making Haiti the most underfunded crisis in the world; the shortfall in international support threatens Haiti's strong work towards a better future, she said.

### Key Issues and Options

The Council is expected to renew MINUJUSTH's mandate by 15 April, as resolution 2410 stipulated that the Council should consider "the withdrawal of MINUJUSTH and transition to a non-peacekeeping United Nations presence in Haiti beginning no sooner than 15 October 2019". What this will mean for the post-15 October period, however, is up for debate and a source of Council disagreement.

The Secretariat wants a smooth and orderly transition that maintains a strong UN political presence in Haiti. It considers a progressive approach important to a successful transition. As the Council now looks ahead to the period after mid-October, the three broad options appear to be a renewal of MINUJUSTH, the closure of MINUJUSTH with replacement by a special political mission (SPM), or the closure of MINUJUSTH with replacement by a strong UN Country Team (UNCT).

A likely option for the Council may be

to approve a six-month renewal of MINUJUSTH while simultaneously stipulating what will follow it, either in a separate resolution or as part of the renewal. This would be comparable to the transition of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to MINUJUSTH. The Secretariat will want to know ahead of time what comes next in order to make the transition as smooth as possible.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are united in supporting Haiti, though questions remain about the best way to do so. In consultations on 8 March, some members were apparently sufficiently worried in the wake of the February protests to suggest that the Council examine extending MINUJUSTH past October. Those members do not want to let Haiti slide back into bad habits, especially with upcoming elections scheduled for October. Some members stressed that human rights will need to remain in any next phase, which may be a source of Council disagreement. Several members have indicated the importance of continued UN support for rebuilding Haitian institutions.

More broadly, members supported the idea of an SPM, as suggested by the Secretary-General. Most seem in favour of a medium-sized SPM, while there has also been some support for a small SPM with a strategic advisory role. However, some members strongly believe that the situation in Haiti does not constitute a threat to international

peace and security, and that support can therefore be continued through a UNCT.

The status of the October elections is uncertain. There has been no progress on an electoral budget or law. Some members feel that while the Haitian National Police (HNP) will be able to provide electoral security, it will be necessary for the UN to maintain a presence for electoral and technical support. Some also want the SPM to be able to advise the HNP in planning electoral security. Members may be considering budgetary implications as they determine the future role of the UN, especially given the US initiative to streamline the cost of peace operations.

The situation in Venezuela remains a matter to watch. While there is no explicit link, Russia has said in several public sessions that the differing Western attitudes to Haiti and Venezuela are hypocritical. According to Russia, the US has not welcomed the protests in Haiti, while supporting those in Venezuela.

The US, as penholder, sometimes interacts during draft negotiations with the Group of Friends of Haiti, comprising Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Peru, the US and Uruguay. However, the level of interaction has varied from year to year.

At press time, no draft for the mandate renewal and post-MINUJUSTH plans had been circulated.

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## Syria

### Expected Council Action

In April, 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

As the conflict enters its ninth year, the humanitarian situation in Syria remains critical. After Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (a Council-designated terrorist group) took control of most of Idlib in January, there has been

an upsurge in attacks by government forces and in civilian casualties. The situation in the north-east of Syria remains fragile following the December 2018 announcement by the US regarding the withdrawal of its troops, with the potential for an escalation of violence between Turkey and the Kurdish YPG militia, which is part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). On 23 March, the SDF took over the village of Baghouz and declared victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). However, concerns persist

about the living conditions of civilians who had fled the area, including family members of foreign terrorist fighters.

Briefing the Council on 26 February, Reena Ghelani, the director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division, emphasised the need for sustained humanitarian access to the makeshift camp of Rukban near the border with Jordan. She said that although most residents have expressed their wish to leave the camp, they have ongoing concerns related to their safety and security. She reiterated that

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2449 (13 December 2018) renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) focused on the key elements of a political solution to the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) was on the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. Security Council Letters S/2019/201 (1 March 2019) was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8475 (28 February 2019) was Pedersen's first briefing to the Council on Syria. S/PV.8471 (26 February 2019) was a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

# Syria

any returns or relocations must be voluntary, safe, dignified and well-informed and must abide by core protection standards that comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefed the Council for the first time on 28 February and identified five goals for the period ahead:

- to begin and then deepen a sustained dialogue with the government and the opposition on building trust and confidence towards a safe, calm and neutral environment;
- to see more concrete action on detainees, abductees and missing persons;
- to engage a wide range of Syrians and involve them in the political process;
- to convene a credible, balanced and inclusive constitutional committee as soon as possible; and
- to help the international parties deepen their own dialogue towards a credible and sustainable political settlement of the conflict that can enjoy international support.

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed Council members on 6 March in consultations on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Members considered a 1 March report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) regarding the chemical weapons attack that took place in Douma (Eastern Ghouta) on 7 April 2018. The report concluded that the evaluation and analysis of all the information gathered by the FFM “provide reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place” and that “the toxic chemical was likely molecular chlorine”. Although the FFM is not mandated to assign responsibility, the report established that it is possible that two yellow industrial cylinders “were the source of the substances containing reactive chlorine” that caused structural damage in two locations (one of the cylinders was found on a rooftop terrace and the other passed through the ceiling of a different building and hit the floor). Although at this point no reaction is expected from the Council, the

recently created Identification and Investigation Team of the OPCW is expected to focus in the coming months on this and other cases of suspected use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict.

Separately, the OPCW and the Syrian government have held two technical meetings in recent weeks to discuss the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified by the OPCW in Syria’s initial declaration in 2013 of its chemical weapons stockpile.

On 12-14 March, the EU and the UN co-chaired the third Brussels conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region. At the conference, participants pledged \$7 billion for 2019 and close to \$2.4 billion in multi-year pledges for 2020 and beyond.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 40th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue on 12 March with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria and considered its report (A/HRC/40/70). The report details violations and the general absence of the rule of law affecting civilians throughout the country, including 6.2 million internally displaced persons and 5.6 million refugees seeking to return. Based on investigations conducted from 11 July 2018 to 10 January, the report finds that the current situation throughout Syria “undermines the feasibility of the return of internally displaced persons and refugees”. The report sets out ten recommendations to “effectively address the complex issue of returns”. On 22 March, the HRC voted 28 to 5 (with 14 abstentions) to extend the mandate of the Commission for one year (HRC/RES/40/L.7). The resolution expresses the HRC’s “appreciation to the Commission for its briefings to members of the Security Council, and recommends the continuation of future briefings”.

## Key Issues and Options

Given the crucial role of the Astana guarantors (Iran, Russia and Turkey) 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. With Pedersen still early in his tenure, Council members could organise a retreat to hold an informal and frank discussion with him 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 specifically to shed light on this little-discussed issue 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 Syrian government and its allies could use the recent takeover of most of Idlib by Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham to justify a military offensive.

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

Council members could invite the director of the OPCW to participate in an informal interactive dialogue on the work of the organisation on Syria.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council continues to be divided over the Syrian conflict. While the arrival of a new envoy provides an opportunity to reinvigorate the political process, Council dynamics on Syria continue to be characterised by polarisation, particularly among permanent members, on the three files through which the conflict is discussed: political, humanitarian, and chemical weapons.

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

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# Briefing by the High Commissioner for Refugees

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## Expected Council Action

In April, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi will brief the Council. The briefing will take place under the agenda item “Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”, which allows for a general briefing by the High Commissioner without tying it to a specific situation on the Council agenda. No outcome is expected.

## Background

Since the early 1990s, the Council has occasionally received briefings by the High Commissioner for Refugees about specific situations on the Council’s agenda, such as briefings by then-High Commissioner António Guterres on the Sahel in 2012 under the agenda item “Peace and Security in Africa” or on Syria in December 2015. It has received three briefings under the agenda item “Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”. The first such briefing was on 10 November 2000 when High Commissioner Sadako Ogata gave her final address to the Council before leaving her post. While it was Ogata’s 12th Council briefing, all of her previous briefings had been held under country-specific agenda items. On 8 January 2009, Guterres briefed the Council under this general agenda item during the presidency of France.

More than eight years passed until Grandi briefed the Council under the same agenda item on 2 November 2017. He surveyed the multitude of displaced people in various new crises as well as in protracted situations that had remained entrenched. He said that the sharp rise in forced displacement reflected declining international cooperation and capacity to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts. He added that when local situations

were neglected because of short-term and competing interests, they eventually expanded and became transnational crises.

After two years of consultations led by UNHCR with member states and other stakeholders, the General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees on 17 December 2018. The compact provides guidance for states and international organisations about how to support refugees and meet their needs in ways that benefit them as well as their host communities. Its objectives are to ease pressures on host countries, promote refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin in order to facilitate refugees’ safe return.

## Key Issues

Germany, the Council President for April, has opted to use this general agenda item to request that Grandi brief on any situations he wishes to address on the Council’s agenda. Grandi is expected to address the current state of refugees worldwide and the displacement aspect of various conflicts on the Security Council agenda, with a view to highlighting ways in which the Council can help alleviate the global refugee crisis and perhaps support the work of UNHCR.

The number of displaced people around the world is considered to be at its highest ever. According to UNHCR, there are currently 40 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum-seekers worldwide. More than 44,000 people are forced from their homes daily because of conflict or persecution. Numerous conflict situations on the Council’s agenda have a displacement component that Grandi may

address. In particular, 57 percent of refugees come from three situations on the Council’s agenda: Afghanistan, South Sudan and Syria.

Grandi visited Syria for the fourth time on 7 March to assess the massive humanitarian needs facing the population. An estimated 1.4 million IDPs returned to their homes in Syria in 2018. At the same time, more than 5.6 million Syrians live as refugees across the region, and 6.2 million remain internally displaced.

The protracted conflict in Afghanistan has resulted in nearly 2.5 million Afghan refugees, the second largest refugee population in the world after Syria, and 2 million IDPs. Speaking at the Geneva Conference on Afghanistan on 27 November 2018, Grandi noted that a solution to Afghan displacement “continues to be central to any debate about the future of Afghanistan”.

The civil war in South Sudan, which broke out in December 2013, has occasioned mass displacement, with over 2.2 million refugees in neighbouring countries and nearly 2 million IDPs.

Another situation of concern is Myanmar, where more than 745,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar fled to Bangladesh as a result of the violent acts of the Myanmar military forces after the 25 August 2017 attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on security posts, joining 200,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh displaced by previous cycles of violence. Grandi was scheduled to visit Rakhine state in Myanmar in January, but Myanmar authorities cancelled the trip. On 15 February, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration launched the 2019 Joint Response Plan (JRP) to meet the massive needs of the refugees, seeking to raise \$920 million.

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# Western Sahara

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## Expected Council Action

In April, Council members expect to hold consultations on Western Sahara and to renew the mandate of the UN Mission for the

Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) before it expires on 30 April. The Secretary-General’s Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, is expected to brief on his latest

activities and Colin Stewart, the Special Representative for Western Sahara and head of MINURSO, is expected to brief on the Secretary-General’s MINURSO report, due in early April.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON BRIEFINGS BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES** *Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8083* (2 November 2017) was a briefing by High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. *S/PV.6062* (8 January 2009) was a briefing by High Commissioner António Guterres. *S/PV.4219* (10 November 2000) was a briefing by High Commissioner Sadako Ogata. *General Assembly Document A/73/12* (13 September 2018) contains the Global Compact on Refugees.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON WESTERN SAHARA** *Security Council Resolution S/RES/2440* (31 October 2018) extended the mandate of MINURSO for a further six months. *Secretary-General’s Report S/2018/889* (3 October 2018) was on MINURSO. *Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8387* (31 October 2018) was the adoption and explanation of votes on MINURSO in which Bolivia, Ethiopia and Russia abstained. *Security Council Press Statement SC/13686* (31 January 2019) was a two-paragraph statement reiterating Council members’ support for the personal envoy and his efforts.

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# Western Sahara

## Key Recent Developments

Western Sahara has been the subject of territorial disputes since Spain withdrew in 1976. Initially both Morocco and Mauritania presented claims, but Mauritania renounced theirs in 1979. The independence movement is led by the Polisario Front. The UN has been actively involved in seeking a solution to this conflict since 1985. The Council established MINURSO in 1991, through resolution 690 (1991). Since then, there has been little progress and the referendum referred to in the mission's name has not taken place.

On 5 and 6 December 2018, Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria and Mauritania attended a roundtable meeting in Geneva. This was the first roundtable with the stakeholders since the last informal talks in 2012. The last formal round of negotiations was in March 2008. The attendees adopted a communiqué that noted, "Delegations took stock of recent developments, addressed regional issues, and discussed the next steps in the political process on Western Sahara". The year ended with a sense of momentum for the first time in several years.

On 29 January, members of the Council met in consultations to hear an update from Köhler on the Geneva meeting and his subsequent efforts. On 31 January, Council members issued a press statement, its first on Western Sahara since 4 February 2008. The statement expressed unified Council support for Köhler's efforts and welcomed the December roundtable and the participation of Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria and Mauritania. It also noted that a second roundtable was foreseen for the first quarter of 2019.

Throughout March, Köhler continued to work on the next stage of discussions. He held bilateral talks with stakeholders in Berlin and Paris in early March. After these discussions, a second roundtable was held on 21 and 22 March near Geneva. News reports ahead of the meeting said the aim of this stage was simply to deepen the exchange of ideas, and officials cautioned against expecting breakthroughs. In his statements after the roundtable, Köhler "encouraged delegations to explore good faith gestures and concrete actions that go beyond the roundtable." He said that the roundtable showed that all stakeholders want to create a better situation

for their constituencies. The participants issued a communiqué in which they agreed to continue discussions to find a mutually acceptable political solution but presented no concrete actions.

MINURSO's mandate was last renewed on 31 October 2018 through the adoption of resolution 2440.

## Key Issues and Options

Members want to see real progress on this nearly 30-year-old file. One area of concern is how to agree on confidence-building measures, which would be a logical next step in discussions. The parties' positions on a political solution remain mutually exclusive. The Polisario's position has been that the final status of Western Sahara can only be decided in a referendum that includes independence as an option, while Morocco has proposed that Western Sahara be an autonomous region within Morocco. Members will want to see the impact of the second roundtable, understanding that the situation remains difficult with these very different positions.

Concerning the mandate, it should be noted that the political process and the peacekeeping mission are two separate parts of the Western Sahara issue. The personal envoy—the post has existed since 1997—is appointed directly by the Secretary-General, and is not part of MINURSO; successive resolutions renewing MINURSO's mandate usually simply welcome and encourage the Special Envoys' efforts. The US has been arguing for tying the two mechanisms together for the purposes of determining whether MINURSO is fulfilling its mandate on the ground.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Against a backdrop of cautious optimism, the Council will have to decide how the recent rounds of discussion between the stakeholders affects MINURSO's mandate. The US has argued that without the political process, there should be no MINURSO, and was successful in 2018 in having two shortened six-month renewals of the mandate. The aim was to put greater pressure on the parties to restart the political process. However, this idea was controversial, and when it came to adoption Bolivia, Ethiopia, and Russia abstained (during the vote on the mandate renewal in April 2018 China, Ethiopia, and

Russia abstained). These members did not feel that the resolution adequately reflected their positions. Russia also said that the negotiating process of the draft was not positive. The US can be expected to pursue its 2018 approach, and may cite the increased dialogue as proof that this method of pressure is working to restart progress toward a reliable political process. However, given the ostensible positive momentum, France may want to return to one-year renewals of MINURSO. That was the practice since 2008, and France was the leading proponent for a 12-month extension during the last mandate renewal. This also reflects its staunch support for Morocco, which has not been keen to have the more frequent reporting and Security Council meetings on Western Sahara that result from the shorter mandate extensions. Even though France voted in favour of the last mandate renewal, it included in its statement after the vote that it would have preferred a year-long renewal.

South Africa, who joined the Council in January, has maintained its strong support for the Polisario Front position. The African Council members do not have a shared position on Western Sahara, with only South Africa having recognised an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, as proclaimed by Polisario in 1976.

Overall, Council members have been supportive of the efforts of the personal envoy, and any division over the mandate could be detrimental. His mandate rests on being able to establish trust amongst the parties, and having Council support is critical to his legitimacy in suggesting paths forward. Köhler has also been active in keeping the wider Group of Friends—countries with a particular interest in the issue—informed, which has not always been past practice.

The US is the penholder on Western Sahara. Resolutions are initially discussed among the Group of Friends, comprising France, Russia, the UK, and the US, joined by Spain, the former colonial power and a country that provides much logistical support to the Sahrawi in Tindouf. Spain also provides significant humanitarian support and remains worried about any reduction in financial aid by donors.

# Colombia

## Expected Council Action

In April, the Council will receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing.

The mandate of the verification mission expires on 25 September.

## Key Recent Developments

The implementation of the November 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia continues to face obstacles. Briefing the Council on 23 January, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, recognised the progress achieved, including the plan for "Peace with Legality" developed by the Colombian government, but stressed that what is now most urgently needed is the translation of existing plans into effective actions that change the realities on the ground. Council members echoed this in a press statement adopted the next day in which they called for quick work to translate plans into action in the areas most affected by the conflict.

An increasingly divisive issue is the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), the justice component of the transitional justice system established by the peace agreement. In February, President Iván Duque objected to several provisions of the statutory law of the SJP. Furthermore, Duque's party, the Centro Democrático, has announced a legal reform that would significantly modify the mandate of the SJP. On 11 March, the UN country team and the UN Verification Mission in Colombia issued a statement characterising as regrettable the fact that the SJP still lacks a solid legal framework guaranteeing its autonomous and independent operation. At a 13 March meeting in New York with Colombian Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Secretary-General António Guterres reiterated concerns expressed by the UN in Colombia with respect to the uncertainty surrounding the adoption of the statutory law and his hope for swift action to ensure that this legal foundation is put into place as soon as possible.

In recent months there has been an escalation of violence by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) armed group, including a

17 January attack against a police academy in Bogotá, which resulted in at least 21 deaths, and other deadly attacks since then, including against critical infrastructure. On 18 January, Council members issued a press statement condemning "in the strongest possible terms the terrorist attack". Except for a three-month bilateral ceasefire agreed with the government between September 2017 and January 2018, the ELN has remained active. Talks held in Cuba between the administration of then-President Juan Manuel Santos and the ELN were suspended in August 2018, and the current administration announced that they would not be resumed until the ELN released kidnapped hostages and unilaterally ceased to commit verifiable criminal acts.

Following the January attack, the government of Colombia requested that Cuba, which has continued to host an ELN delegation, hand over the members of the delegation to the Colombian authorities. The government, which characterises the ELN as a terrorist organisation, has said publicly that it does not consider itself bound by protocols put in place by the Santos administration to provide security guarantees to the ELN delegation in case of a rupture in the talks. At the 23 January briefing, high-level representatives of both Colombia and Cuba delivered statements, but did not address this issue.

Attacks against human rights defenders and community leaders continue. In addition to the ELN, other armed groups remain active, including former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) who are frustrated with shortcomings in the peace process and have taken up arms again, and the criminal group Clan del Golfo. The limited access to economic opportunities for former combatants continues to hamper the reintegration process. While there is now a governmental plan, "Peace with Legality", earlier Secretary-General's reports have underlined that economic reintegration is clearly lagging behind, including in regards to access to land for former combatants.

At the 23 January briefing, Ruiz Massieu identified a near-term challenge of defining the future status of the 24 Territorial Areas for Training and Reintegration, given that

some forms of government support, including health and education services and the provision of monthly allowances, are due to expire on 15 August.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 40th session, the Human Rights Council considered the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Colombia on 20 March (A/HRC/40/3/Add.3). The report, covering January to December 2018, described the human rights situation in Colombia with regard to democracy, security, development, civic participation and peace and highlighted some of OHCHR's activities in the country. It included OHCHR's assessment of the second year of implementation of the human rights aspects of the peace agreement and highlighted challenges related to defending human rights, fighting impunity and corruption, the upsurge of violence, and social and cultural rights, particularly in rural areas.

## Key Issues and Options

An important issue is ensuring that the peace agreement is implemented in its entirety under the new administration, given that it has taken a different approach from that of the administration of former President Juan Manuel Santos regarding agrarian reform, transitional justice mechanisms, and the cultivation of coca. Council members could follow up on the invitation conveyed by Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo in September 2018 and organise a visiting mission to Colombia to convey the Council's unanimous support for the agreement and reassure Colombians about the irreversibility of the process.

In addition to the need for clarity on the mandate of the SJP, the government's ability to develop and finance a strategy for reintegrating former FARC-EP members into society and to provide safety and security in areas previously occupied by the FARC-EP remain critical issues in the successful implementation of the agreement. Council members could encourage dialogue between representatives of the government and former FARC-EP members to overcome the trust deficit and discuss how outstanding issues can be addressed.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are unified in their support for the peace process in Colombia. Several

**UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2435](#) (13 September 2018) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. [Secretary-General's Report S/2018/265](#) (26 March 2019) was the 90-day report. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8450](#) (23 January 2019) was a briefing by Ruiz Massieu with the participation of Colombia and Cuba. [Security Council Press Statements SC/13676](#) (24 January 2019) encouraged the parties to accelerate efforts to secure the full political, legal, and socio-economic reincorporation of former FARC-EP members. [SC/13671](#) (18 January 2019) condemned the terrorist attack at the General Santander National Police Academy in Bogotá, which resulted in over 20 fatalities and left dozens injured.

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## Colombia

members have viewed engagement in Colombia as a rare bright spot for the Council as it struggles to play an effective role in several other conflict situations. While Council members have generally been deferential towards the government since the issue was first brought to the Council's agenda in January 2016, recent developments regarding the

SJP may test how critical Council members are willing to be in public and in private.

Diplomatic relations between Colombia and Venezuela, which have been tense over the latter's alleged support for the ELN, were broken off by Venezuela as a result of a 23 February crisis in which Colombia supported an attempt to deliver aid to Venezuela against

the wishes of its government. According to UNHCR, Colombia hosted 1,174,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants by the end of 2018 and is expected to host almost 2 million by the end of 2019.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

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## Women in Peacekeeping

### Expected Council Action

In April, there will be an open debate on women in peacekeeping. Secretary-General António Guterres and a civil society representative may brief.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

There is widespread recognition of the importance of increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations and integrating gender perspectives into the work of these operations. In 2017, Canada launched the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peacekeeping to work with interested member states to foster the meaningful involvement of women in peace operations through funding and technical assistance. A contact group supporting this initiative consists of Canada, Argentina, France, the Netherlands, Ghana, Norway, Senegal, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sweden, the UK and Uruguay.

At a high-level meeting on his Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative on 25 September 2018 on the margins of the General Assembly, Guterres told member states that active steps were being pursued to enhance the role of women in peacekeeping, noting that "more women in peacekeeping means more effective peacekeeping." The Secretary-General reiterated this point in his statement at the Council's "strengthening of peacekeeping operations in Africa" debate on 20 November 2018. Similarly, the A4P Declaration of Shared Commitments, agreed to by 151 member states, recommits its supporters to "increasing the number of civilian and uniformed women in peacekeeping at all levels

and in key positions" and to "integrating a gender perspective into all stages of analysis, planning, implementation and reporting."

The Security Council has also pronounced itself on the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping operations. Notable in this regard was the adoption of resolution 2242 in October 2015. The resolution urged the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs "to ensure the necessary gender analysis and technical gender expertise" throughout the life-cycle of missions. It further "welcome[d] the Secretary-General's commitment to prioritize the appointment of more women in senior United Nations leadership positions", as well as "efforts to incentivize greater numbers of women in militaries and police deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations". In this regard, it called on the Secretary-General "to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy, within existing resources, to double the numbers of women in military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations over the next five years". There is a dearth of women in UN peace operations; in October 2017, women constituted 28.3 percent of international staff serving in peace operations.

When the Council adopted resolution 2436 on peacekeeping performance in September 2018, the revised strategy for increasing women in peacekeeping operations had not been completed. Recalling resolution 2242, the peacekeeping performance resolution set a deadline of March 2019 for this strategy to be presented to the Council and requested that it ensure "the full, effective

and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peacekeeping". This strategy has recently been completed, and its key findings might be presented to the Council prior to or during the open debate.

### Key Issues and Options

The key issue is what the Council can do to encourage the increased participation of women in peacekeeping operations, including in specific roles and contexts. In this regard, the debate could provide an opportunity to consider what obstacles exist at the national and regional levels to increasing women's participation in peacekeeping and how these could be best addressed. Once the strategy is presented, an option for the Council would be to request regular updates on its implementation. To keep the momentum, a further option would be to ask UN Women and the Department of Peace Operations to brief the Council on ways in which increasing female participation in peace operations enhances their effectiveness. Another option would be for the Council to pursue a presidential statement or resolution that encourages member states to increase their contribution of female peacekeepers and support the Secretariat's efforts to recruit more women to serve in peacekeeping operations, including in leadership positions.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

The open debate on women in peacekeeping is one of the key events of Germany's presidency. The other open debate Germany is hosting in April is on sexual violence in conflict. The themes of these debates are

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2436 (21 September 2018) was on peacekeeping performance and requested the Secretary-General to present by March 2019 the revised strategy to double the number of women in military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations by 2020. S/RES/2242 (13 October 2015) welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General to prioritise the appointment of a greater number of women to senior leadership positions. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8407** (20 November 2018) was an open debate on strengthening peacekeeping operations in Africa.

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## Women in Peacekeeping

consistent with one of the priorities that France and Germany outlined for their “joint presidencies” for March and April: the role of women in conflict situations, including their protection and their empowerment.

The importance of women’s participation in peacekeeping operations is highlighted by a wide range of member states both on and off the Council. These members recognise

that women play a key role in integrating gender perspectives in peacekeeping operations, which enhances their effectiveness. During the Council’s most recent thematic debate on peacekeeping on 20 November 2018, which focused on strengthening peacekeeping operations in Africa, several member states—for example, Canada, Djibouti, Estonia, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway (speaking on

behalf of the Nordic countries), Peru, and the Philippines—noted the importance of women’s participation in peacekeeping operations. However, in spite of broad support for increasing the percentage of women in peacekeeping, some member states have concerns that they may have difficulty meeting goals set by the revised strategy, given the composition of their armed forces.

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## Sudan/South Sudan

### Expected Council Action

In April, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and on Sudan/South Sudan issues, followed by consultations. The Council is also expected to decide by 15 April whether to extend the mission’s support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), established in 2011 to conduct monitoring and verification activities along the Sudan-South Sudan border, as set out in resolution 2438.

The mandate of UNISFA expires on 15 May.

### Key Recent Developments

On 11 October 2018, the Security Council unanimously renewed until 15 April UNISFA’s support for the JBVMM. However, it decided that as of 15 April, UNISFA’s authorised troop ceiling would decrease by 541 troops (from the then authorised level of 4,500) unless the Council extends the mission’s support for the JBVMM. As in previous resolutions, since resolution 2352 adopted on 15 May 2017, it said this would be the final extension of such support unless Sudan and South Sudan “demonstrate measurable progress” in certain specified areas. In this regard, the resolution set out seven specific border-demarkation measures (see our *What’s In Blue* story of 11 October 2018). Resolution 2445, which extended UNISFA’s mandate until 15 May and reduced the troop ceiling from 4,500 to 4,140, adjusted the number of troops the mission would be reduced by from 541 to 557 if support for the JBVMM is

not extended in April (see our *What’s In Blue* story of 14 November 2018).

On 14 March, as requested in resolution 2438, Council members received a confidential note from the Secretary-General on border-demarkation progress, namely any steps taken in implementing the seven specific measures contained in resolution 2438. It apparently said that while there has been improvement in the JBVMM’s ability to fulfil its mandate as compared to previous years, challenges remain, including a lack of attention from both governments to its smooth operation.

On 8 March, the Secretary-General informed the Council of the appointment of Parfait Onanga-Anyanga as Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. The appointment followed the Secretary-General’s decision to expand the role of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, previously held by Nicholas Haysom until September 2018, to cover the Horn of Africa region.

The Council was last briefed on UNISFA and Sudan/South Sudan issues in consultations on 29 October 2018.

### Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council is whether to retain UNISFA’s support of the JBVMM. An option is to continue the mission’s support based on the comparative improvement in the JBVMM’s ability to fulfil its mandate. Another option is to retain the mission’s support for a shorter period as a means of putting pressure on the parties to intensify efforts to implement the JBVMM

fully and address the current lack of progress towards a political solution. This could take the form of a technical rollover of support for the JBVMM for one month until UNISFA’s mandate renewal in May. A further option is for the Council to take no action to extend the mission’s support for the JBVMM, which would result in UNISFA’s troop levels decreasing by 557 troops after 15 April, as set out in resolution 2445.

Another key issue for the Council to consider ahead of UNISFA’s mandate renewal in May is the appropriateness of the mission’s current mandate in relation to the situation on the ground and what modifications, if any, to make to the mandate and force structure. This assessment is likely to be informed by the Secretary-General’s report on UNISFA due by 15 April, as requested in resolution 2445.

### Council Dynamics

As in previous years, the Council’s focus on the situation in Abyei remains limited, largely overshadowed by its ongoing engagement on South Sudan and Sudan (Darfur). However, the upcoming renewal of UNISFA’s support for the JBVMM in April and the mission’s mandate in May present opportunities for Council members to direct attention to the issue.

Unlike previous negotiations on resolutions to extend UNISFA’s support for the JBVMM, the US in October 2018 did not initially seek either to reduce the mission’s authorised troop ceiling (as it did in April 2018) or to suspend the mission’s support

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2445 (15 November 2018) extended UNISFA’s mandate until 15 May 2019. S/RES/2438 (11 October 2018) extended UNISFA’s support for the JBVMM until 15 April 2019. **Secretary General’s Report S/2018/923** (16 October 2018) was on the situation in Abyei. **Security Council Letters S/2019/227** (8 March 2019) was the appointment of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. S/2018/955 (24 October 2018) set out the functions of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa.

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## Sudan/South Sudan

for the JBVM (as it did in November 2017), both of which then-Council member Ethiopia and some other members successfully resisted. As a result, negotiations ahead of adopting resolution 2438 in October proceeded comparatively smoothly.

During Ethiopia's term on the Council in 2017 and 2018, outcomes on UNISFA were

primarily negotiated bilaterally between the US and Ethiopia (UNISFA's main troop-contributing country). The US repeatedly asserted that UNISFA was persisting longer than intended for an interim force and that Sudan and South Sudan were taking advantage of the relative stability that UNISFA provides to delay attempts to resolve the

status of Abyei. However, Ethiopia in particular viewed UNISFA's presence as critical. Some members may adopt Ethiopia's position during upcoming negotiations. It is unclear, however, whether the US will be willing to compromise.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In April, Special Envoy Martin Griffiths is expected to brief the Council on the implementation of resolutions 2451 and 2452. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock and General Michael Lollesgaard, the chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) and head of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), may also brief.

### Key Recent Developments

Progress has largely remained stalled in getting the warring Houthis rebels and Yemeni government to withdraw their forces from the critical port city of Hodeidah and the nearby smaller ports of Saleef and Ras Isa as set out in the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement. Carrying forward the other two elements of the Stockholm Agreement—a prisoner exchange and Statement of Understanding on Taiz for greater humanitarian access to the city—have also stalled.

The impasse around Hodeidah continued despite a 17 February agreement on a plan to conduct the Phase 1 redeployment of forces envisioned in the original agreement on Hodeidah. The plan set out a two-step process, with the Houthis redeploying from Saleef and Ras Isa ports in the first step, and from Hodeidah port in the second. In the second step, both parties would also withdraw forces from the frontline area of the so-called Kilo 8 triangle in Hodeidah city in a manoeuvre that would allow UN access to the Red Sea mills, which hold enough grain for 3.7 million people for a month but have been inaccessible since October last year.

While no redeployments have occurred

at press time, on 26 February a World Food Programme-led assessment mission accessed the Red Sea mills to determine the condition of grain stocks, which the UN has worried could start rotting. Despite some spoilage and damage to the mills, it seems that food stocks can be salvaged if the UN can gain further access to repair the damage and fumigate the mills.

Upon concluding a visit to Aden, UK Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt warned on 3 March that the Stockholm Agreement could collapse within weeks if the sides do not hold to their commitments. The weekend of 10 to 11 March saw the outbreak of what was reported as the heaviest fighting in Hodeidah since the agreement was reached at the end of UN-brokered consultations in Sweden. In a 12 March joint statement, the ambassadors of the P5 countries to Yemen said they were "extremely concerned" that the three parts of the agreement had not been implemented. They urged both parties to begin implementing the latest proposal on Hodeidah "without further delay and without seeking to exploit the redeployments by the other side". On 13 March, Griffiths and Lollesgaard briefed Council members in consultations. Discussion focused on the lack of progress on Hodeidah.

On 19 March, Griffiths announced that discussions with both parties had led to "significant progress towards an agreement to implement" the Phase 1 redeployments and that operational details would be presented to the RCC for endorsement shortly.

The conflict has continued in other areas of the country. Particularly heavy fighting has continued in the north-western Hajjah governorate between the Hajour tribe and the

Houthis. The clashes have centred around the Kushar district, which is strategically significant because if Yemeni government forces advance to Kushar, they could threaten Houthi supply routes between Sana'a and their home region of Saada. On 11 March, the Office of the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator condemned "strikes" on houses in Kushar, which killed 12 children and ten women, according to medical sources. On 18 March, the humanitarian relief organisation International Refugee Council said civilian deaths had doubled in Hajjah and Taiz governorates over the past three months compared to the pre-Hodeidah ceasefire average, citing 164 people killed in Hajjah and 184 killed in Taiz since the Stockholm Agreement came into effect.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 40th session, the Human Rights Council received an oral update on 20 March from the High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on the human rights situation in Yemen. Bachelet emphasised that the "dire human rights situation...merits attention". Outlining the humanitarian situation, she urged the removal of restrictions on humanitarian supplies.

### Women, Peace and Security-Related Developments

On 4 March, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security convened a meeting with Council members on the situation in Yemen. Griffiths briefed the expert group by video teleconferencing, joined by experts from his office and the UN Country Team. During the meeting several members apparently asked how to increase the involvement of women in the talks beyond an advisory role to the Special Envoy and in the implementation of the Stockholm agreement, among other issues.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2456 (26 February 2019) extended the Yemen sanctions regime for an additional year. S/RES/2452 (16 January 2019) established 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 Press Statement SC/13713** (22 February 2019) called for the immediate implementation of the Phase 1 redeployment of forces under the Hodeidah agreement.

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# Yemen

## Key Issues and Options

Implementing the Stockholm Agreement remains a key issue. UN officials have regularly highlighted that progress has been impeded by a deep mistrust between the parties. This includes the Houthis' concern that measures to redeploy, including de-mining of roads, could make them vulnerable to attack from Yemeni government forces.

Since agreeing to the Phase 1 redeployment arrangements in February, a stumbling block has been the composition of the vaguely worded “local security forces” that, according to the Hodeidah agreement, are to take over security responsibilities—an issue that the sides had agreed to work out later. The Yemeni government, however, subsequently insisted on resolving this question and wanted these to be its own police. By the 13 March consultations, the Houthis were apparently objecting to a proposal for addressing the matter.

Another issue is how much longer the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which backs the Yemeni government, will continue waiting for the Hodeidah agreement's implementation before possibly resuming a military offensive on the city. Moreover, fighting on other fronts beyond Hodeidah governorate may jeopardise the stalled processes. If the

impasse continues, the Council could adopt a presidential statement or a resolution to exert pressure on the parties to follow through on their commitments from Stockholm.

Organising a new round of consultations between the parties on a broader political solution to the conflict has been delayed until the Hodeidah agreement is implemented. Griffiths, however, has noted during recent Council briefings the importance of resuming such talks. Some of the underlying challenges in implementing the Hodeidah agreement represent issues to be worked out in a comprehensive political agreement, and the Council may express support for initiatives to restart peace talks if the Special Envoy seeks to move ahead with a new round of consultations. Upon the parties agreeing on a negotiating framework for a comprehensive political solution, the Council may adopt a resolution endorsing this framework, as Griffiths has proposed.

Despite the de-escalation around Hodeidah since the Stockholm Agreement, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophic. More than 24 million people—80 percent of the population—require aid and 10 million people are at risk of famine. Sustaining access for commercial imports and humanitarian assistance through Hodeidah port and then making sure the goods are distributed

throughout Yemen are among the challenges for addressing the crisis.

A looming issue is the risk of instability in southern Yemen, which leaders of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) have said is possible if the STC is not included as a formal participant in peace talks.

## Council Dynamics

Members appear united in wanting the parties to fulfil their commitments under the Stockholm Agreement. Kuwait is part of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and tends to champion coalition positions. It has sought to facilitate political efforts, hosting peace talks in 2016 and providing aircraft to transport the Houthi delegation to the consultations in Sweden in December 2018. Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Peru and Poland have been among members seeking 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. The first sanctions committee mission to the region since its establishment in February 2014 was set to depart at press time.

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# Sudan (Darfur)

## Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will be briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) as requested in resolution 2429, which is due to be submitted by 9 April. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing.

The mandate of UNAMID expires on 30 June.

## Key Recent Developments

On 22 February, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir declared a nationwide state of emergency for one year. The announcement came in response to ongoing protests across Sudan calling for President al-Bashir,

who has ruled the country for nearly three decades, to step down. (The protests began in December 2018, sparked by food and fuel shortages.) The state of emergency led to the federal and state governments being dissolved while the national and state assemblies were maintained. Additionally, the Minister of Defence was given the role of the First Vice-President; 18 new governors with military and security positions were appointed to replace dismissed governors; and the Sudanese Armed Forces were assigned to maintain law and order. On 11 March, the National Legislative Assembly approved a shortening of the state of emergency from one year to six months.

On 26 February, the US, the UK, Norway and Canada issued a joint statement saying the “return to military rule does not create a conducive environment for a renewed political dialogue or credible elections”. The statement also noted “the ongoing detention of political leaders, activists and journalists... [and] continuing reports of unacceptable use of live fire, beating of protestors and mistreatment of detainees”.

The Darfur peace process has again stalled in the context of the ongoing protests, which have included sporadic protests in some areas of Darfur. Reportedly citing solidarity with the protesters, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)/Gibril Ibrahim faction and

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2429 (13 July 2018) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/19** (11 December 2018) was on the Secretary-General's proposed benchmarks and indicators. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/44** (14 January 2019) was the 90-day report on UNAMID. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8468** (25 February 2019) was a briefing on UNAMID. **S/PV.8490** (26 March 2019) was the quarterly briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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## Sudan (Darfur)

the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minawi faction revoked their December 2018 agreement to resume talks with the Sudanese government in January. On 20 March, the Sudanese opposition alliance Sudan Call announced its decision to withdraw from the AU High-Level Implementation Panel's Roadmap Agreement for Ending the Conflicts in Sudan, signed with the government in 2016.

On 28 January, al-Bashir declared an open-ended cessation of hostilities in Darfur and Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states (also known as the "Two Areas"). On 9 February, the SLA/Minni Minawi faction, JEM/Gibril Ibrahim faction and two other groups extended a unilateral cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the Two Areas until 8 May. However, there are reports of ongoing violence in the Jebel Marra region between the government and the SLA/Abdul Wahid faction.

Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita briefed the Council on 25 February, following her joint visit to Sudan from 9 to 12 February, along with Assistant Secretary-General at the UN Development Programme Mourad Wahba, and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. Keita told the Council of a "collective responsibility to ensure that UNAMID's exit does not create a vacuum that leads to persistent local-level tensions or new risk factors", adding that the visit served to highlight "the challenging factors that the government, UNAMID and UN country team are facing to maintain the pace of the transition, including in terms of the availability of resources."

On UNAMID's drawdown as set out in resolution 2429, Keita told the Council that ten UNAMID team sites were closed by December 2018 and handed over to the government, in accordance with agreements signed with the mission. She said the former

sector headquarters in Nyala, Ed Daein and El Geneina are due to be closed by June, leaving the remaining 13 team sites in the greater Jebel Marra and the logistics hub in El Fasher. She also said that the new mission headquarters in Zalingei is fully operational while the office of the Joint Special Representative and head of UNAMID has been relocated to Khartoum.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

On 12 February, the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee met with representatives of Sudan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan and Uganda to discuss implementation of the sanctions measures and the 10 January final report of the Panel of Experts. On 26 March, Ambassador Joanna Wroniecka (Poland), chair of Committee, provided the quarterly briefing to the Council on the work of the Committee, during which she expressed her intention to visit the country, at dates yet to be determined.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue that Council members will want to follow closely is the effect on the security situation of further troop reductions and implementation of the mission's revised priorities as set out in resolution 2429. The impact of recent developments, including the lack of progress in the peace process and ongoing violence in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur, will be an additional factor.

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

implementing the benchmarks. The upcoming strategic review, requested in resolution 2429 by 1 May, is expected to further inform the Council's thinking ahead of the 30 June expiry of UNAMID's mandate.

### Council Dynamics

There continue to be differences amongst Council members in assessing the situation in Darfur, as was again made apparent during the discussion following the 25 February briefing. Several members—including Belgium, France, Germany, the US and the UK—raised concern over the ongoing protests in Sudan and the national state of emergency. In its statement the UK said that "political instability in the Sudan and the declaration of a state of emergency naturally affect the situation in Darfur... [and] call into question the Government's commitment to delivering progress on human rights, the rule of law and security sector reform". Germany expressed the view that these events made it "necessary to look even more closely at the benchmarks for a withdrawal of [UNAMID], in particular the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms", while France said the withdrawal of UNAMID must be "adapted to the situation on the ground" and should be "gradual and cautious".

However, Russia expressed the view that these events "have nothing to do with" the Council's consideration of the situation in Darfur and UNAMID, saying that "it is important to continue the process of drawing down UNAMID's military component". Other members, including China, Indonesia, Kuwait and South Africa, along with Russia, highlighted the improved situation in Darfur and did not refer to the ongoing protests.

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

# Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

## Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to hold its quarterly open debate on the Middle East, focusing on Israel/Palestine. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov will likely brief. There may also be a briefer from civil society.

## Key Recent Developments

On 7 February, Council members were briefed under “any other business” regarding Israel’s decision not to renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH). Several members of the international community, including those countries whose citizens acted as observers, were surprised at the decision and shared their disapproval. During the meeting, the US supported the action as the sovereign right of Israel. The US blocked adoption of a Council press statement condemning Israel’s action, proposed by Indonesia and Kuwait, which had also requested the meeting. The rest of the Council was ready to adopt some press elements.

On 20 February the Council held its monthly meeting on the Middle East (Israel/Palestine). Along with the usual participation of Mladenov, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller briefed the Council for the first time on Israel/Palestine since 2016. In the public session, Mladenov condemned unilateral moves by both sides that are undermining peace efforts, urged donors to continue their support for civil society, and regretted Israel’s decision not to renew the mandate of TIPH. On Palestinian reconciliation, Mladenov said elections might be the only way out of the current impasse.

Mueller said the situation remains, at its core, a protection crisis. She noted that funding continues to decrease while needs grow. She particularly stressed the impact on children, noting that 40 children have been killed in the “march to return” protests since they began in March 2018. She said that on multiple occasions over the past year, Gaza health services were at the risk of shutting down because of a lack of electricity. While the humanitarian situation in the West Bank is less acute, she noted the growing pressures faced by families in Area C, an administrative division of the West Bank.

Mueller said that the ability to provide humanitarian assistance is increasingly constrained because of record low funding.

On 8 March, Council members met under “any other business” to discuss an ongoing disagreement between Israel and Palestine on tax collection, as requested by Indonesia and Kuwait. Mladenov took part in the meeting. On 17 February the Israeli government’s security cabinet announced plans to implement a law adopted by the Knesset in 2018 to withhold approximately \$139 million in tax transfers to the Palestinian Authority (PA), citing payments made by the PA to Palestinians involved in attacks against Israelis using the tax money. Israel says the payments encourage further violence and are used to finance terrorism. Palestinian authorities argue the money is an essential welfare policy that takes care of its citizens. According to a 1994 economic agreement, Israel collects money on behalf of the PA and then transfers it. On 20 February it was reported that the PA returned the entirety of collected tax revenue to Israel in protest of the change in procedure.

Mladenov stressed on 8 March that these actions could have economic and security implications as well as an effect on any political dialogue. He again urged the Council to engage constructively. Most members expressed concerns about the impact of this disagreement on the humanitarian, security, and economic situation, recalling the Oslo Accords and urging the parties to restrain from unilateral action. However, one member argued that the money goes to terrorists, saying that it is the Palestinian Authority’s actions that were putting their people at risk.

A surprise participant was Jason Greenblatt, US President Donald Trump’s special envoy and Special Representative for International Negotiations. Greenblatt and Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law, have reportedly been developing Trump’s peace plan for Israel and Palestine. Greenblatt delivered the US statement on the tax issue and after those discussions spoke briefly about the peace plan. Earlier in the week, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Greenblatt said: “It really is up to the Israelis and the Palestinians; they’re the ones who will have to live with the

consequences of the plan... [he hopes external stakeholders] will focus on the good and see the possibilities of a brighter future. And if the two sides are willing to engage, they will be the ones to work through the tough issues.”

After the meeting some Council members said that Greenblatt had not provided any details about the peace plan. Apparently, several Council members asked Greenblatt specific questions, but he repeatedly said he could not give details.

On 15 March, two rockets were fired from Gaza into Tel Aviv. On 17 March, a Palestinian killed an Israeli soldier and civilian in the West Bank. On 21 March, President Trump announced via Twitter that it was time for the US to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and officially did so in a presidential proclamation on 25 March. Israel took control of the Golan Heights from Syria in 1967. In May 1974, the UN Disengagement Observer Force was established through resolution 350 (1974) after increased tensions and an agreed disengagement of the Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan. Since then, the situation has been in a relative stand-off. In response, the UN and many other countries, including all European members of the Council, have said that they continue not to recognize Israel’s sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, including the Golan Heights. Additionally, on 25 March a rocket was fired from Gaza into a village north of Tel Aviv, injuring seven people. In response, Israel struck what it said were Hamas targets in Gaza. More rockets came into Israel from Gaza, but since then there has been relative calm.

On 26 March, Mladenov presented his ninth report on implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) to the Council. He presented a written report, *S/2019/251*; the first since June 2018. Mladenov said Israel has taken no steps to follow the provisions laid out in the resolution. Several members publically thanked the Secretariat for the second written report.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 40th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue on 18 March with the Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, and considered his report (*A/HRC/40/73*). The HRC also held an interactive

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST (ISRAEL/PALESTINE)** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334](#) (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for the Secretary-General to brief the Council quarterly on implementation of the resolution; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2019/251](#) (20 March 2019) was the latest report on the implementation of the resolution 2334, relating to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It was the first written report since June 2018. [S/2018/614](#) (18 June 2018) was the latest report on the implementation of resolution 2334, relating to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. [Security Council Letter S/2018/1150](#) (21 December 2018) was from 13 members of the Council, including outgoing and incoming elected members, reiterating the request that the Secretary-General’s quarterly report on Israel/Palestine be provided in written form, rather than orally.

# Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

dialogue with the independent international commission of inquiry to investigate all alleged violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military assaults on the large-scale civilian protests that began on 30 March 2018, whether before, during or after, and considered the commission's final report (A/HRC/40/74).

The HRC also considered the reports of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the implementation of HRC resolutions S-9/1 and S-12/1 (A/HRC/40/39); the implementation of HRC resolution 37/36 (A/HRC/40/42); and HRC resolution 37/37 (A/HRC/40/43). Furthermore, it considered the report of the High Commissioner on the database of all business enterprises involved in the activities detailed in paragraph 96 of the report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/40/40).

On 22 March, the HRC adopted the following four resolutions submitted by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: "Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" (A/HRC/40/L.25), by 23 to 8 votes with 15 abstentions; "Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination" (A/HRC/40/L.26), by 41 to 3 votes with 2 abstentions; "Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem" (A/HRC/40/L.27), by 39 to 3 votes, with 5 abstentions; and "Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan" (A/HRC/40/L.28), by 32 to 5 votes, with 10 abstentions.

## Key Issues and Options

There has been little progress on this file and, in fact, Mladenov has warned the Council every month that there could be serious repercussions because of the lack of Council unity and action. Each month, the Council is faced with recurring issues, including repeated violations of resolution 2334, violence against civilians, provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric, the difficult promotion of intra-Palestinian reconciliation, and the humanitarian needs of Gaza.

It seems unlikely that any outcome will be decided, given the inability to adopt an outcome on 7 February regarding the TIPH mandate. Nevertheless Kuwait, before it leaves the Council at the end of the year, may continue to push for various outcomes. For example, after the 7 February meeting, Kuwait said it would explore having a Council mission to the region. Other members had suggested this

in the past. This proposal is expected to face heavy resistance from the US.

Another issue for Council members is the continued silence by the US on its peace plan. Depending on the US timetable, the peace plan could be announced before the Council's open debate in April, though it will more likely be announced around June. Council members, and the wider UN community, may need to be ready to address it.

## Council Dynamics

After US Ambassador Nikki Haley left her post at the end of 2018, there were questions as to how her departure would affect US statements on this matter. Would the US return to addressing Israel/Palestine during the quarterly open debates as was done during the Obama administration or would it continue to use the meetings to focus on what it views as Iran's destabilising influence in the region? As most countries expected, the practice of focusing on Iran and terrorism in the Middle East continues. January's open debate once again highlighted the stark differences between the US and other members on this file.

Indonesia and South Africa, who joined the Council in 2019, have been active on this file. Kuwait and Indonesia have jointly called for both meetings and products on Israel/Palestine. During the meeting in February, Kuwait, Indonesia and South Africa spoke in the open chamber (along with Côte d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea), while Kuwait and South Africa took the opportunity to call again for at least two written reports on the status of the implementation of resolution 2334. Indonesia, Kuwait, and South Africa also spoke out against the decision of Israel to not renew TIPH's mandate.

Several Council members continue to call for written reports in advance of the quarterly briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334. Apart from one written report produced in June 2018, these reports have only been conveyed orally. The sole written report was prompted by a letter submitted by ten Council members—Bolivia, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Sweden—on 14 May 2018 requesting the quarterly reports to be in writing. This call was repeated in another letter on 21 December signed by 13 members, including both outgoing and incoming elected members; Germany and the Dominican Republic were not signatories, however.

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