

# Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 2 In Hindsight: Missing Monthly Assessments of Council Presidencies
- 3 Status Updates since our October *Forecast*
- 5 Syria
- 7 Libya
- 8 Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 9 UN Peacekeeping
- 11 Somalia
- 12 DPRK (North Korea)
- 14 Sudan/South Sudan
- 15 Central African Republic
- 16 Reconciliation
- 17 Group of Five for the Sahel
- 19 Lebanon
- 20 Yemen
- 22 Cyprus
- 23 Iraq

## Overview

The UK has the presidency in November. It has chosen to hold an open debate on [reconciliation](#) which appears to be a follow-up to an open debate held during its last presidency in August 2018, on mediation, in which reconciliation featured in the discussion.

There will be the regular briefings and consultations on the [Syria](#) political and humanitarian situation. The OPCW will brief the Council in a private meeting on the use of chemical weapons in the country.

Other meetings on the Middle East include:

- [Iraq](#), briefing and consultations on UNITAD;
- [Israel/Palestine](#), the monthly briefing and consultations;
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on resolution 1701;
- [Libya](#), briefing on the ICC by the Prosecutor and briefing and consultations on UNSMIL; and
- [Yemen](#), the monthly briefing, followed by consultations, on implementation of resolutions 2451 and 2452.

Several meetings on [Somalia](#) are expected. The Council is scheduled to adopt a resolution on the Somalia sanctions regime, addressing the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces, the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and humanitarian exemptions to the sanctions regime, all of which expire on 15 November. It is also expected to adopt a resolution renewing the mandate of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts, which expires on 15 December. A briefing, followed by consultations, on UNSOM is anticipated.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed will brief Council members on her recent visit to the Horn of Africa focused on [women, peace and security](#). A representative from the AU is also expected to brief.

Other Africa issues include:

- [Central African Republic](#), renewal of MINUSCA's mandate;
- [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), consultations on the strategic review of MONUSCO;
- [Sahel](#), a briefing on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel; and
- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), the renewal of UNISFA in Abyei.

On Europe, the Council will hold its semi-annual debate on [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and will need to renew the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force. There will also be consultations on UNFICYP in [Cyprus](#).

Regarding the [Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#) (DPRK), the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), will brief in consultations.

The sixth annual briefing with heads of [police components of peacekeeping operations](#) will be held in early November.

The 15 current Council members and the incoming five (Estonia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, and Vietnam) will participate in the annual "Hitting the Ground Running" workshop organised by Finland.

Several Arria-formula meetings are anticipated, including on radicalisation in prisons, children and armed conflict and reintegration, environment and security, and human rights defenders.

**30 October 2019**

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## In Hindsight: Missing Monthly Assessments of Council Presidencies\*

In 1997, Security Council members came up with the idea of producing monthly assessments of their own Council presidencies as one means of introducing a more analytical component into the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. With two exceptions (in 1999 and 2014), all presidencies produced their respective assessments from July 1997 until May 2015. More recently, fewer than half of the Council members have submitted monthly assessments, and most with considerable delay, in one case of more than two years. Meanwhile, the weak analytical content of the Council's annual report has remained among the chief concerns voiced by UN member states. (See *In Hindsight*, March 2019 Forecast.)

A note by the president from 1997, outlining a new structure for the annual report, specified that it would include, as an addendum, "brief assessments on the work of the Security Council, which representatives who have completed their functions as President of the Security Council may wish to prepare, under their own responsibility and following consultations with members of the Council for the month during which they presided and which should not be considered as representing the views of the Council" (S/1997/451).

As this language makes clear, monthly assessments were never mandatory. But starting with Sweden's July 1997 presidency, all presidencies prepared their assessments, which were published as an appendix to the annual report. Some members did more: Costa Rica issued the assessment of its December 1997 presidency as a separate document as well. In a letter to the Secretary-General, the country's Permanent Representative asked that the assessment be circulated as a document of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, citing the note that had established the practice and also underlining that "this document has not been agreed by Council members". Canada followed suit with the assessment of its February 1999 presidency. The cover letter referred to the General Assembly's discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question

of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and also requested that the assessment be circulated as both a Council and an Assembly document. This seemed to signal that some members saw the assessment as a transparency tool, affording the general membership a window into the Council's functioning.

In the absence of any guidance on their format, the assessments differed in length, level of detail and analytical content. All tended, however, to contain useful information about aspects of Council work missing from official Council documents, such as Arria-formula meetings or the horizon-scanning briefings provided in consultations by the Secretariat from 2010 through 2013.

In the following two years, more assessments were issued as separate documents (though with the exception of Canada's for April 2000, no longer as General Assembly documents), and by 2001 all but one were circulated as free-standing documents. They were usually sent to the president of the Security Council, accompanied by a cover letter stating that while the author had consulted other Council members, the assessment should not be considered as representing the views of the Council.

A note by the president of the Council issued on 22 May 2002 introduced several changes to the structure of the annual report. Some changes aimed at reducing its volume, which by then had reached almost 600 pages. For one, the report would no longer reproduce the monthly assessments in full, but would simply list the assessments "issued by the individual monthly Presidencies of the Council on its work" (S/2002/199). Also in 2002, the Council began the practice of assigning responsibility to the July presidency for drafting an introductory essay for the annual report with some analytical content.

Following the 2002 switch to listing merely the document symbols in the annual report, the individual assessments still included a note stating that while Council members had been consulted, the document represented the views of the presidency. In the past

decade or so, these formulations have disappeared almost completely from the cover note, reflecting a seeming shift in practice towards greater consultation among Council members on draft assessments.

The monthly assessments continued to be issued by all but one presidency through May 2015. Starting in 2016, published assessments dropped significantly. Only three assessments were published for that year, followed by five for 2017 and six for 2018, with only one at press time for 2019. The time lapse between the end of a presidency and the publication of the assessment also increased considerably, ranging from two months to in some cases a year or more. Early on, assessments had come out quite quickly, sometimes during the month following the presidency and almost never taking more than a few months.

The diminished number of assessments may have to do with a heightened divisiveness within the Council overall having contributed to a more contentious consultative process. This would explain the long time lapses between a presidency and the publication of the respective assessment. It appears that, on some occasions, members have chosen not to publish, rather than compromising the text. In some recent cases, elected members may not even have been aware that they were expected to produce an assessment. In at least one case, the drafter, having received comments from other members, decided to take on board only some of them and in the cover letter returned to the disclaimer language, stating that while other Council members had been consulted on the assessment, it should not be considered as representing the views of the Council.

During the discussion of the Security Council's 2018 annual report by the General Assembly on 10 and 12 September, several speakers noted with concern the decrease in the number of assessments issued and highlighted their usefulness as a complement to the introduction to the report. They expressed the hope that assessments would again be produced by all members, and in a timelier fashion.

\* For more details also see <https://www.scprocedure.org/chapter-9-section-1gb> (UPDATE WEBSITE OF: Sievers, Loraine, and Sam Daws . "Chapter 9 Section 1(g)b: Relations with Other Organs and Entities/Annual and Special Reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly." THE PROCEDURE OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, 4TH EDITION, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014).

## Status Update since our October Forecast

### Counter-Terrorism

On 1 October, the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee met to discuss a recent visit to Syria by the Monitoring Team assisting it. On 11 October, the committee met with the Monitoring Team for a quarterly briefing and a report on its recent country visit to the DRC. On 23 October, the Counter-Terrorism Committee met to discuss recent country visits to the Maldives, the Philippines and Ghana by the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate.

### Youth, Peace and Security

On 2 October, the Council held a debate under the agenda item "Peace and Security in Africa" with the focus on "Mobilising the Youth towards Silencing the Guns by 2020" (S/PV.8629). The briefers were the Special Adviser on Africa to the Secretary-General, Bience Gawanas; the AU Special Envoy on Youth, Aya Chebbi; Hafsa Ahmed, co-founder and chairperson of the organisation Naweza in Kenya; and Victor Ochen, a youth activist from Uganda. At press time, the adoption of a presidential statement by the end of October was possible.

### Afghanistan

On 2 October, Council members issued a press statement on the 28 September presidential elections (SC/13969). On 21 October, Council members issued a press statement condemning in the strongest terms a terrorist attack on 18 October in the Haska Mena district in Nangarhar Province (SC/13992). The attack resulted in the death of at least 60 people and almost 60 injured.

### Great Lakes Region

On 3 October, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed the Council on developments in the Great Lakes Region (S/PV.8630) and the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region (S/2019/783), followed by consultations. On 8 October, Council members issued a press statement on developments in the region, particularly on the DRC (SC/13978).

### Haiti

Council members met under "any other

business" on 3 October to discuss the political unrest in Haiti. At that meeting, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of MINUJUSTH Helen La Lime briefed on Haiti's political and economic challenges. On 15 October the Council held a debate on MINUJUSTH and heard a briefing from Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix (S/PV.8641). Norway also briefed in its capacity as president of ECOSOC about the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti. The delegations of the EU and Haiti also participated. The next day, 16 October, MINUJUSTH transitioned to the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). La Lime was appointed as head of BINUH on October 14.

### Sudan (Darfur)

On 3 October, Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, provided the quarterly briefing to Council members on the committee's work (S/PV.8632). On 17 October, the Council was briefed on the special report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the Secretary-General on UNAMID (S/2019/816) by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix (S/PV.8643). He told the Council that the Sudanese government has requested more time to formulate its needs for a possible follow-on mechanism to UNAMID and recommended that for an initial period of six months, which coincides with the anticipated duration of peace talks, UNAMID would retain the same ceiling of uniformed personnel. At press time, the Council was expected to adopt a resolution extending UNAMID's mandate until 31 October 2020.

### Mali

On 8 October, the Council received a briefing (S/PV.8636) via video teleconference from Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of MINUSMA, who presented the Secretary-General's latest report on Mali (S/2019/782). Ambassador José Singer (Dominican Republic), as chair of the Mali 2374 Sanctions Committee, briefed on the work of the committee. Consultations followed the public session. The next day, Council members issued a press statement on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the overall security situation (SC/13981).

### South Sudan

On 8 October, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2019/11) on the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) of 12 September 2018 (S/PV.8634). The statement welcomes initial progress implementing the R-ARCSS and calls on the parties to expedite the process of implementing transitional security arrangements and to continue consultation on the issue of the number and boundaries of states.

### Children and Armed Conflict

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict met on 8 October and 15 October to discuss its conclusions on the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Yemen (S/2019/453). It held a formal meeting on 14 October for a video teleconference discussion with the Sudan Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting ahead of the renewal of UNAMID (Darfur).

### DPRK (North Korea)

On 9 October, Council members discussed the 2 October submarine-launched ballistic missile test conducted by DPRK under "any other business". France, Germany and the UK requested the meeting, citing serious concern over the missile test. These members, together with Belgium, Germany, Poland, and incoming Council member Estonia, made a joint statement at the media stakeout afterwards condemning the DPRK's provocative actions. Stressing that the missile test constitutes a violation of Security Council resolutions, these members called on the DPRK to abandon the development of weapons of mass destruction.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 9 October, the Council held a briefing on MONUSCO (S/PV.8638). Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative and head of MONUSCO, briefed. A DRC representative also took part in the meeting. Afterwards Council members met in consultations. Following the meeting, Council members released a press statement on 14 October (SC/13985). In the statement, members welcomed the new coalition government as well as President Félix Tshisekedi's commitment to national unity, rule of law, and fighting against corruption.

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## Status Updates since our October Forecast

Council members also called for increased state presence in the eastern DRC in order to consolidate peace and address continued insecurity. The statement furthermore reiterated Council members' overall concern about the humanitarian situation, including the ongoing Ebola outbreak.

### Colombia

On 10 October the Council received a briefing on Colombia from the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on Colombia (S/2019/780) and the most recent developments (S/PV.8639). The briefing was followed by consultations. On 15 October, Council members issued a press statement, reiterating their unanimous support for the peace process in Colombia while deploring a recent announcement by a group of former fighters that they would return to armed activity. The statement expressed concerns about the killings of community and social leaders as well as candidates running in the 27 October local and departmental elections. In the statement, members reaffirmed their commitment to working closely with Colombia in achieving progress in the implementation of the peace agreement (S/13988).

### Guinea-Bissau

On 10 October, Council members held consultations on Guinea-Bissau ahead of next month's 24 November presidential election. Special Representative and head of UNIOGBIS Rosine Sori-Coulbaly briefed via video teleconference. On 16 October, Council members issued a press statement, reiterating "the imperative need for the presidential election to be held on 24 November 2019" (SC/13989). At press time, Council members were expected to meet on 30 October to discuss Guinea-Bissau under "any other business" following President José Mário Vaz's dismissal of the government on 28 October. From 27 to 30 October, the Chair of the 2048 Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea), led a committee visiting mission to Guinea-Bissau.

### Sudan/South Sudan

On 15 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2492 extending

UNISFA's support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) until 15 November (S/PV.8640). On 24 October, the Council was briefed (S/PV.8644) on the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2019/817) by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga (the latter via video teleconference). Lacroix referred to the "unprecedented opportunity" to resolve the border related issues between Sudan and South Sudan, adding that the two countries need to resume direct talks immediately to resolve the final status of Abyei.

### Western Sahara

On 16 October, Council members met in consultations to discuss MINURSO before its mandate's expiry on 31 October. Special Representative Colin Stewart discussed the fragile peace and ongoing humanitarian challenges in the region. At press time, the Council was expected to adopt a resolution on 30 October renewing MINURSO's mandate for 12 months.

### UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 16 October, Council members were briefed in consultations by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix on the latest 90-day report by the Secretary-General on UNDOF.

### Israel/Palestine

On 28 October, the Council held its quarterly open debate on Israel/Palestine. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov opened his statement by saying that there had been no progress towards the realisation of a two-state solution. He said that while there were severe humanitarian problems, the core of the crisis is political and there must be a political solution. The Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Naledi Pandor, presided over the open debate (S/PV.8648).

### Women, Peace and Security

On 29 October, the Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security, under the theme "Towards the successful implementation of the women, peace and security agenda: moving from commitments to accomplishments in preparation for the

commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)". The briefers were UN Secretary-General António Guterres; UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security Bineta Diop; Lina Ekomo, a former foreign minister of the Central African Republic on behalf of FEMWISE (the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation); and Alaa Salah, a civil society activist and community leader from Sudan. Resolution 2493 was adopted unanimously.

### Council Visiting Mission

From 18 to 23 October, a Security Council visiting mission went to South Sudan and Ethiopia, via Kenya. Members travelled to South Sudan on 20 October, to push for implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, in particular, the formation of a transitional government of national unity by the 12 November deadline of the pre-transition phase of the peace accord. Members met with representatives of UN Mission in South Sudan and UN Country Team, and civil society organisations. They also met with President Salva Kiir, before a public meeting with the other signatory parties and stakeholders to the peace agreement, including opposition leader Riek Machar. The mission co-leads, South Africa and the US, held a press conference at the mission's conclusion. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Council members held their 4th annual informal meeting with AU Peace and Security Council on 21 October, and 13th annual joint consultative meeting with the PSC on 22 October. The informal meeting focused on the AU's "Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020" initiative, and the modalities for joint field missions of the two Councils. For the consultative meeting, the Councils discussed South Sudan, the Sahel, Libya, the Central African Republic and under "any other business", Guinea-Bissau. Members also received briefings at the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) from Special Representative and head of the UNOAU Hanna Tetteh, and the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. At AU headquarters, Council members met with AU Commissioner Moussa Faki. They also met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

## Status Updates since our October *Forecast*

### Burundi

At press time, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy Michel Kafando and Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), the chair of the Burundi configuration of the PBC, were expected to brief the Council on 30 October on the Secretary-General's report on Burundi (S/2019/837).

### International Court of Justice

At press time, the Council was expecting to receive on 31 October the annual briefing by

President of the International Court of Justice Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf in a private meeting.

### Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations

On 30 October, the Council considered the Secretary-General's annual report (S/2019/759) on the UN-AU partnership on issues of peace and security in Africa (S/PV.8650). At press time, the expected briefers were Special Representative to the AU and head of the UN Office to the AU Hanna

Tetteh, and AU Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui (both via VTC).

### Kosovo

At press time, the Council was expecting to hold on 31 October its third and final regular briefing on Kosovo for the year. Special Representative and head of UNMIK Zahir Tanin was expected to brief the Council on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2019/797) and recent developments.

## Syria

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly meetings on the political process, the humanitarian situation, and the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Regarding the meeting on the use of chemical weapons, the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Fernando Arias, is expected to brief the Council in a private meeting.

The current authorisation for cross-border humanitarian assistance expires on 10 January 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

On 9 October, Turkey initiated a military offensive against Kurdish militias in north-eastern Syria, which it called "Operation Peace Spring". The operation—which has employed aerial bombardments, artillery fire, and ground forces—took place on the heels of a phone call between US President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Erdoğan on 6 October, in which Trump indicated that US troops would be withdrawn immediately from the border area inside Syria.

In a letter to the Security Council on 9 October, Turkey cited article 51 of the UN Charter, on self-defence, as a reason for its intervention, saying that the operation was intended to ensure the security of its border and to fight terrorism. Turkey considers Kurdish forces in Syria to be terrorists, and it maintained in its letter that the operation would counter Kurdish forces and the Islamic

State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria. Speaking at the UN General Assembly on 24 September, Erdoğan called for the establishment of a "safe zone" inside Syria 30 kilometres wide and 480 kilometres long in which to resettle one to two million Syrian refugees.

The security and political impacts of the incursion have been significant. Following several days of fighting, US Vice President Mike Pence met with Erdoğan in Ankara on 17 October, agreeing on a 120-hour pause in the fighting to allow Kurdish troops to withdraw from a border zone approximately 20 miles (32 kilometres) wide in order to pave the way for a more permanent ceasefire. For its part, the US—whose troops moved out of north-eastern Syria and into Iraq—agreed to withdraw sanctions it had imposed on Turkey in response to the incursion.

Subsequently, under an agreement reached by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Erdoğan in Sochi on 22 October, Russia and Syria agreed to patrol part of the border area and oversee the withdrawal of Kurdish forces 30 kilometres from the border over a period of 150 hours. Following this time period (that is, beginning the evening of 29 October), Russia and Turkey were expected to patrol sections of the border east and west of where the Turkish military operation was conducted and 10 kilometres into Syria, with the exception of Qamishli city. Turkey announced that its military campaign had ended on 22 October.

Turkey's "Operation Peace Spring"

apparently detracted from the ability of Kurdish forces to guard the thousands of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters under their watch. On 13 October, Kurdish officials claimed that hundreds of ISIL prisoners escaped from Ain Issa, a detention camp in north-eastern Syria, following shelling by Turkish forces near the camp.

The security environment remained uncertain and fluid at the time of writing. On 25 October, media outlets reported that skirmishes had resumed between Turkish forces and Kurdish fighters, and US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper said that some US troops would remain in eastern Syria to prevent oil facilities from falling into ISIL's hands.

The conflict in north-eastern Syria has had grave humanitarian consequences. OCHA has estimated that by 24 October, nearly 180,000 civilians had been displaced by the fighting that began on 9 October. On 29 October, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimated that 130 civilians had died in north-eastern Syria as a result of fighting since Turkey initiated its military operation.

On 26 October, the leader of ISIL, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, died near Barisha, Syria, during a raid conducted by US special forces.

Council members have engaged closely on Syria in recent weeks. On 30 September, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefed the Security Council on the political situation in the country. This came one week after Secretary-General António Guterres announced on 23 September that the Syrian government

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/12 (8 October 2019) welcomed the Secretary-General's announcement of the formation of the Constitutional Committee. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8645 (24 October 2019) was a meeting on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. S/PV.8628 (30 September 2019) was a meeting on the political situation in Syria.

# Syria

and the Syrian Negotiations Commission had agreed to form “a credible, balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee that will be facilitated by the UN in Geneva”. At the meeting, Pedersen announced his intention “to convene 150 Syrian men and women for the launch of a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned, credible, balanced and inclusive Constitutional Committee” on 30 October, facilitated by the United Nations in Geneva. At press time, the meeting was still scheduled to take place on this date.

On 8 October, the Council adopted a presidential statement welcoming the Secretary-General’s 23 September announcement of the agreement to form the constitutional committee. The statement reaffirmed that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict, which can only be resolved through the full implementation of resolution 2254.

Council members discussed north-eastern Syria during “any other business” on 10 October at the request of the five European members of the Council (Belgium, France, Germany, Poland, and the UK). Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller briefed, apparently noting that Turkey’s incursion was not a limited action and expressing concerns about its impact on the humanitarian, security and political situation in Syria. Members criticised the fighting to varying degrees, ranging from condemnation of Turkey’s action and calls for it to exercise restraint, to calling on all parties to exercise restraint. The US proposed press elements—an informal product that requires unanimity and is generally issued immediately after a closed meeting to provide information to the press – that would apparently have expressed concern about the humanitarian and security impact of the fighting. Members were unable to agree, however, and at the stakeout, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia (Russia) said that a product “should take into account other aspects of the Syrian crisis, not just the Turkish operation”.

On 16 October, Council members again discussed the situation in Syria under “any other business”, also at the request of the five European members. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock and Khiari briefed. In the press elements following the meeting, members expressed deep

concern about the risk of dispersion of terrorists belonging to UN-designated groups, including ISIL, and about the risk of a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria.

The monthly humanitarian meeting on Syria was held on 24 October with Assistant Secretary-General Mueller, Khiari, and Agnès Marcaillou, the Director of the UN Mine Action Service, briefing. Mueller emphasised the importance of protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, the need for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, and the need for an end to hostilities in Syria. She said that it was critical that cross-border humanitarian assistance be reauthorised by the Council for another year. Khiari also expressed concern about the humanitarian impact of the military operation in north-eastern Syria, while reporting that there had been an increase in air strikes in Idlib since 12 October. He noted the possibility that local populations could face political retribution, detention, and conscription when Syrian authorities regain control of the north-east. Khiari added that the issue of foreign nationals in Syria (most likely a reference to foreign terrorist fighters) had to be addressed, calling on all member states to take “all measures necessary to ensure that their nationals are repatriated for the purposes of prosecution, rehabilitation, and/or reintegration as appropriate and in line with international law and standards”. Marcaillou stressed that mine action was critical to improving humanitarian access in Syria.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 September, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on human rights in Syria by a vote of 27 in favour, six against and 13 abstentions (A/HRC/42/L.22). The resolution deplored the fact that the conflict in Syria continues in its ninth year with its devastating impact on the civilian population. It reaffirmed that there can only be a political solution to the conflict in Syria and demanded that all parties work towards a genuine political transition based on the 2012 Geneva communiqué and Security Council resolution 2254. On 10 October, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria released a statement noting “with grave concern the military offensive and aerial campaign being launched in northeast Syria on 9 October”. Hundreds of thousands of civilians may be affected by any operations along the border and “any new military campaign may lead to insecurity and chaos, risking circumstances under which a resurgence of ISIL could occur”,

the statement said. In a press briefing on 15 October, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that “since the Turkish military offensive began on 9 October, we have verified a number of civilian casualties each day as a result of airstrikes, ground-based strikes and sniper fire”.

## Women, Peace and Security

In his 30 September briefing to the Council, Pedersen announced in relation to the Constitutional Committee “that nearly half the civil society list are women, and that we have around 30 percent women in the overall 150”. He argued that “any viable, sustainable peace process needs to have women of all political persuasions at the table, since they represent over half its population and since, throughout the course of the conflict, they have taken on an ever more prominent role in their communities”.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how the Council can support the work of Special Envoy Pedersen in facilitating the Constitutional Committee. Members may emphasise the importance of confidence-building measures as a means of energising the political process. For example, in next month’s meetings, they could highlight that large-scale releases of detainees and abductees and information about missing persons could be important steps in this regard, as some have already begun to do.

Another key issue for the Council is how to address the humanitarian and security impacts of the recent conflict in north-eastern Syria. Humanitarian access to this area and the rise in displacement are important considerations, as are plans to guard the ISIL fighters who had been detained by Kurdish forces that have now retreated from the border areas. Members could seek further information from OCHA on how humanitarian access can be maintained and enhanced in north-eastern Syria, especially given that control of this area has changed hands.

In the future, the Council will also need to consider how to approach the potential repatriation of Syrian refugees now in Turkey to north-eastern Syria. A reaffirmation of the importance of the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees in accordance with international law, possibly in a Council outcome, could be considered.

Addressing the humanitarian situation in north-western Syria is another ongoing issue

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## Syria

facing the Council. Given that a significant amount of aid comes across the Turkish border with north-western Syria, members could begin discussing the reauthorising of cross-border humanitarian assistance, which has traditionally occurred in December.

### Council Dynamics

Many Council members were highly critical of Turkey's military operation in north-eastern Syria. Russia's position varied from that of other members. While also calling for

maximum restraint from the parties, it framed the operation as a result of coalition forces having supported the Kurds in north-eastern Syria at the expense of Arab groups, which Ambassador Nebenzia referred to as "demographic engineering" at the press stakeout on 10 October. All members are keenly aware of the importance of ISIL not regaining a foothold in north-eastern Syria. Several Council members share a variety of other concerns: that any repatriation of refugees into north-eastern Syria is done in a voluntary, safe and

dignified manner; that civilians and civilian infrastructure are not targeted in the conflict; and that there is accountability for the crimes being committed. As reflected in statements during the 24 October briefing, several members are also emphasising the critical importance of re-authorising cross-border humanitarian assistance.

Belgium, Germany, and Kuwait are the penholders on Syria humanitarian issues.

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## Libya

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to receive briefings by the Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salamé, and the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Jürgen Schulz, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany. Additionally, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda will deliver her semi-annual briefing on recent developments concerning cases in Libya.

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

### Key Recent Developments

On 22 October, Council members held their annual joint consultative meeting with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) in Addis Ababa. This was the first time since 2011 that Libya was on the agenda. It is also proving a difficult issue in the negotiations on the joint communiqué that is issued following these annual meetings. The situation has been a source of tension between the Council and PSC in the past, with the PSC frequently feeling sidelined in efforts to address the crisis.

On 16 October, the three African members of the Council (Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa) requested

consultations under "any other business" to discuss the AU proposal for a joint AU-UN special envoy for Libya. This idea had featured in a communiqué issued after the last AU PSC ministerial meeting on Libya on 8 October, supporting an 8 July decision by the AU High Level Committee on Libya that such a joint envoy be appointed. During the consultations, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed on the situation in Libya. The African members proposed elements to the press, and later a press statement, that would, among other things, have taken note of the proposal, which was not agreeable to all members.

Libya's capital, Tripoli, continues to be the scene of fighting that started on 4 April when General Khalifa Haftar, head of the eastern-based militia known as the Libyan National Army (LNA), launched an offensive towards Tripoli and against the internationally recognised and UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) based there. Libya does not have professional security forces, and the GNA currently relies on armed groups for its security. After initial military gains by the LNA around Tripoli, the front lines have remained mostly static since mid-April, with continuing air strikes and indiscriminate artillery shelling of densely populated civilian areas as well as an increase in the

use of drones, as reported by DiCarlo. The conflict is fuelled by support from other governments, including military support channelled to both the GNA and the LNA in violation of the UN arms embargo.

On 6 September, UNSMIL condemned an attack "conducted by General Haftar's forces" that targeted the Equestrian Club in Tripoli, injuring children. An UNSMIL assessment mission confirmed the civilian nature of the targeted site, on which four bombs were dropped.

Haftar's offensive halted a UN-supported political process and caused indefinite postponement of the National Conference, which had been scheduled for 14-16 April. The aim of the National Conference was for Libyans to agree on the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections and a constitutional referendum.

In August, Salamé proposed three steps for an end to the conflict: a humanitarian truce during Eid al-Adha, including confidence-building measures between the parties; a high-level conference of "concerned countries"; and a "Libyan meeting of leading and influential personalities from all over the country". The GNA agreed to the truce, as did the LNA, which had initially rejected it and then limited the truce on their part to the suburbs of Tripoli and for only a few days. More recently, and in support of Salamé's

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2491](#) (3 October 2019) renewed the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. [S/RES/2486](#) (12 September 2019) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 15 September 2020. [S/RES/2473](#) (10 June 2019) renewed the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. [S/RES/2441](#) (5 November 2018) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee as well as the measures related to the illicit export of crude oil from Libya until 20 February 2020; it was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8631](#) (3 October 2019) was the adoption of resolution 2491. [S/PV.8523](#) (8 May 2019) was the semi-annual briefing by ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on recent developments concerning cases in Libya.

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## Libya

second step, a series of meetings on Libya were held in Berlin in October, convened by Germany and co-led with UNSMIL; attendees included Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, the UK, the United Arab Emirates, the US, the AU, the Arab League and the EU.

The number of internally displaced people stands at 301,407, according to 18 October estimates by UNHCR. Of those, 128,000 have been displaced since the attack on Tripoli in early April.

At press time, the UN's 2019 humanitarian response plan for Libya of \$201.6 million was funded at 45.8 percent, with \$109.3 million outstanding.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

The Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee continues to brief the committee on an ad-hoc basis on the numerous violations of the UN arms embargo.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 42nd session, the Human Rights Council received an oral update on Libya on 25 September from Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore, who highlighted the level of civilian casualties in Tripoli and beyond, adding that since April, at least 46 attacks have been directed against health workers and health facilities. Gilmore also noted that serious human rights violations are widespread in Libya, including summary executions, abductions, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. She also called for "a dignified, human rights-based solution for migrants stranded in

Libya", which must include the closure of migrant detention centres.

### Women, Peace and Security

In his latest annual report on women, peace and security, the Secretary-General writes that the UN "received reports of intimidation, including social media attacks, against women activists and lawmakers in Libya and others living abroad". He names as "a stark example" the 17 July forced disappearance of Seham Sergiwa, a member of the House of Representatives. During a 4 September Council meeting on Libya, Marwa Mohamed, Head of Advocacy and Outreach of Lawyers for Justice in Libya, referred to Sergiwa's case as well, pointing out that she had "expressed political views critical of the offensive of the LNA on Tripoli". Speaking on the situation in general, Mohamed said that "since 2014, women human rights defenders have been routinely subjected to gender-based violence and threats, including physical assault, abductions, sexual violence, as well as gender-related slurs and smear campaigns". Together with a lack of accountability, this had "effectively forced women out of public life".

### Key Issues and Options

Council members are following closely the progress made by Salamé in his proposed three steps. In case of significant progress at the political level, the Council may consider endorsing any advances. Bearing in mind the complexities of the situation in Libya, the Council could add a request for more frequent written reporting by the Secretary-General so all members can stay more closely informed of developments.

An ongoing issue is the military escalation, which threatens to deepen long-standing political and economic divisions between different parts of Libya. Individual Council members could use their influence to put pressure on the parties and countries to adhere to the arms embargo. In the longer term, a Council visiting mission to Libya or a full-fledged visit by the Libya Sanctions Committee could be considered.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Libya remains a divisive issue within the Council. Council resolutions and presidential statements routinely call upon UN member states to cease support for parallel institutions in Libya, but some countries, including permanent members of the Council, fail to respect these calls and also continue to support Haftar militarily. Militias affiliated with the GNA also receive military support from abroad. Reportedly, Turkey and Qatar support the GNA militarily while Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provide military support to the LNA. Political support for Haftar comes from France, Russia, and the US.

Libya also continues to be a difficult issue in the relationship between the Council and the AU.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, sharing the pen with Germany on the sanctions file. Schulz, Germany's Deputy Permanent Representative, chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and to renew the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA). High Representative Valentin Inzko is expected to brief on the latest report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), due by 29 October.

The current authorisation for EUFOR ALTHEA expires on 6 November.

### Key Recent Developments

More than a year has passed since general elections took place on 7 October 2018. However, the new national-level BiH Council of Ministers has not yet been formed. Governments have also not been formed in the Federation of BiH (FBiH)—the predominantly Bosniak and Croat regional entity—and in two of the Federation's ten cantons. The deadlock reflects continued divisions and tensions among Bosniaks, Croats and

Serbs. NATO ministers agreed in December 2018 to start implementing BiH's long-stalled Membership Action Plan, a key step for BiH's accession to NATO. (The Membership Action Plan is a NATO programme of advice, assistance and practical support tailored to the individual needs of countries wishing to join the Alliance. Although it does not guarantee future membership, it effectively puts countries on track to joining the Alliance.) However, BiH has not accepted

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON BIH Security Council Resolution S/RES/2443** (6 November 2018) renewed the authorisation of EUFOR ALTHEA for a further period of 12 months, until 6 November 2019. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8522** (8 May 2019) was the semi-annual debate. **Security Council Letters S/2019/364** (1 May 2019) was the High Representative's report, covering the period from 16 October 2018 to 15 April 2019. **S/2018/974** (30 October 2018) was the High Representative's report, covering the period from 22 April 2018 to 15 October 2018.



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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

this offer, as Bosnian Serb leaders oppose NATO membership.

In September, the largest Bosniak party, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), adopted a declaration expressing the intention to centralise the country's governance by creating a republic with three levels of authority: state, regional and local. This was strongly opposed by Bosnian Croats and Serbs. An 18 September statement by Inzko deplored "the fact that SDA has decided to formulate its vision about the future of BiH based on a concept which is clearly not acceptable for some". The statement emphasised that the BiH Constitution guarantees the "sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of BiH" consisting of two autonomous entities, the FBiH and Republika Srpska (RS). The statement said that "any change to the internal organization of BiH must be adopted in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Constitution, which requires a comprehensive process of consensus-building and agreement across the entire political spectrum".

On 14 October, the EU Council adopted conclusions on BiH that called on the country to proceed with government formation and start work without any further delay. It also welcomed the continued presence of EUFOR ALTHEA and said that it looked forward to the next strategic review in 2021 as a basis for discussion with member states on EUFOR's tasks and options for the future of the operation. From 7 to 11 October, EUFOR ALTHEA held its annual Quick Response test exercise of the operation's capability to rapidly reinforce its troops in BiH with part of its reserve forces, which are held at high readiness in partner nations.

The Council held its previous semi-annual debate on BiH on 8 May. Inzko briefed and presented the latest report of the OHR.

He emphasised the continuation of divisive and destabilising rhetoric, the need to create governments at the local, state and federal levels and the importance of keeping the country moving forward along the path to integration with the European Union. Milorad Dodik, then-Chair of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Tripartite Presidency, continued to speak out against the country's statehood and to threaten secession by the RS. (The position of Chair rotates every eight months around the three members of the Presidency, with each of them serving as Chair twice during a presidential term.) Inzko stressed that BiH "still requires the attention and unified approach of the international community".

### Key Issues and Options

Ethnic divisions among Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs continue to create political gridlock and a dysfunctional state, hampering socioeconomic reforms—including BiH's EU integration—and fostering disregard of judicial decisions. Linked to this is the stalled progress on fulfilling the criteria and objectives for closing OHR. Regarding BiH's failure to form a government, one of the main areas of disagreement reportedly remains whether the country's NATO Membership Action Plan should be activated due to the opposition of Bosnian Serb leaders. A further issue, flagged by the High Representative last year, is pressure on BiH from migrants who are increasingly seeking to pass through the country.

### Council Dynamics

Council members largely share concerns over BiH's divisive ethnic politics and the urgent need for parties to take the necessary steps following general elections in October 2018. Most members are also critical of the RS leaders' rhetoric, which they view as

challenging BiH's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia, however, tends to be more supportive of the positions of the RS leadership and is critical of the High Representative, contending that his reporting is not objective. At the debate in May, where all 15 Council members made statements, Russia said the report of the OHR "was far from impartial" and called for more time to consider the report ahead of the debate.

As in previous years, the decision on 6 November 2018 to reauthorize EUFOR ALTHEA for one year was not controversial, as all members in the Coordination and Drafting Group and the Council support the continuation of the EU-led international force. The BiH Coordination and Drafting Group prepares the first draft of Council products on BiH. For 2019, it comprises Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, the UK and the US.

However, during negotiations last year, Russia broke silence and objected to three paragraphs in the renewal resolution that expressed support for the OHR; appreciation of the High Representative, personnel of NATO Headquarters Sarajevo, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the EU; and the importance of progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

These three paragraphs had been included in resolution 2183 adopted on 11 November 2014, on which Russia abstained, and have not been included in resolutions adopted subsequently, on which Russia has voted in favour. To achieve consensus on the renewal in 2018, the three references were removed at Russia's request. Resolution 2443 was adopted unanimously. (For more details see our What's In Blue story of 5 November 2018.)

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## UN Peacekeeping

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council will hold its annual briefing with the heads of UN police components. Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix

and UN Police Adviser Luís Carrilho are expected to brief. The heads of police components of three UN peacekeeping operations will also brief: Awale Abdounasir, the police commissioner of the UN Organization

Stabilization Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); Mary Gahonzire, the police commissioner of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA); and Issoufou Yacouba, the police

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2447 (13 December 2018) focused on enhancing support to police, justice and corrections in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. S/RES/2382 (6 November 2017) stressed the important contribution UN policing can provide in peacekeeping and special political missions throughout the conflict cycle across the entire peace continuum. Secretary-General's Report S/2018/1183 (31 December 2018) was the Secretary-General's report on UN policing. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8393 (6 November 2018) was the annual briefing on the role of UN policing in peacekeeping operations.

# UN Peacekeeping

commissioner of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Abdounasir is expected to speak about MONUSCO's efforts to address serious and organised crime, while Gahonzire will discuss UNISFA's efforts to support community protection committees in Abyei and Yacouba will address efforts to build governance in "ungoverned spaces" in Mali.

## Key Recent Developments

Briefings with the heads of police components of UN peacekeeping operations have been held in the Council annually since 2014 when this meeting was initiated by then-Council member Australia. The most recent of these, held on 6 November 2018, featured a briefing from Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions Alexandre Zouev and the heads of police components of three UN peacekeeping operations: Unaisi Bolatolu-Vuniwaqa of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Serge Therriault of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), and Abdounasir of MONUSCO. Tuesday Reitano, the deputy director of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, also participated in the meeting.

Zouev introduced the themes addressed by the police commissioners. Vuniwaqa discussed UNMISS' efforts to protect civilians through gender-responsive policing, Abdounasir briefed on efforts by MONUSCO to prevent and address organised crime, and Therriault briefed on MINUJUSTH's efforts to strengthen the rule of law through police reform. Reitano discussed trends in organised crime and highlighted gaps in the UN's efforts to address this challenge.

Resolution 2382, adopted on 6 November 2017 at that year's annual police commissioners' briefing, stressed the important role of UN policing with respect to the protection of civilians, capacity-building, and the development efforts of host-state police services. It further called on the Secretary-General to provide a report on UN policing

by the end of 2018, focused on "strengthening the operational and policy coherence of UN policing across the UN system", among other issues.

The report, which was published on 31 December 2018, made several observations to help enhance the effectiveness of UN policing. Among other things, the report:

- called on mission heads to include the heads of police components as part of their senior management teams;
- observed that member state support is needed for the UN to achieve the Secretary-General's strategy for gender parity for uniformed personnel by 2028;
- urged police-contributing countries to strengthen efforts to evaluate and train their police personnel and hold them accountable for criminal acts;
- observed that the UN Police Unit can contribute to "horizon scanning and early warning processes and briefings to the Security Council by analysing the state of policing and other law enforcement institutions and by recommending swift responses to emerging problems"; and
- encouraged the consideration of options for establishing a police advisory committee to "strengthen information exchange and triangular cooperation" among police-contributing countries, the Secretariat and the Security Council.

On 13 December 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2447, which was spearheaded by the Netherlands and Côte d'Ivoire and underscored the importance of integrating UN support for police, justice and corrections institutions in the mandates of UN peace operations.

## Women, Peace and Security

In his latest annual report on women, peace and security, the Secretary-General writes that "figures among uniformed personnel remain low" and that as of December 2018, women represented 12.8 per cent of police personnel. He further states that twelve sexual and gender-based violence advisers were placed in police components of UN missions in Abyei, the Central African Republic, Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Kosovo, Mali and South Sudan.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue that may be addressed in the meeting is the role of UN policing in the context of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, launched by Secretary-General António Guterres in August 2018 and currently endorsed by 152 member states and four regional organisations. This could include, for example, focus on how UN policing can most effectively advance political solutions to conflict, protect civilians, and strengthen peacekeeping's impact on sustaining peace.

The briefings with the heads of police components have traditionally included interaction between briefers and Council members. Members may pose questions directly to the heads of the police components, an otherwise rare practice in Council public briefings.

An additional issue for Council members is the fact that the Secretary-General's 31 December 2018 report on UN policing has yet to be formally discussed by the Council, although it has been informally discussed among police advisors from UN member state missions. Council members may choose to raise themes highlighted in the report during their interventions.

## Council Dynamics

There is general agreement among Council members about the importance of UN police in helping to maintain public order, protect civilians, and assist host states in building their law enforcement capacities. Members also emphasise the importance of deploying UN police with the requisite linguistic skills and training, including with regard to sexual and gender-based violence, and the need to increase the number of women in UN police contingents. While some members tend to emphasise the role of UN policing across the peace continuum (encompassing conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding), others underscore that prolonged deployments risk inhibiting the ability of host countries to develop their own policing capacities.

# Somalia

## Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to adopt a resolution on the Somalia sanctions regime, addressing the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces, the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and humanitarian exemptions to the sanctions regime, all of which expire on 15 November. The mandate review of the Somalia Panel of Experts, which expires on 15 December, is also due in November.

Finally, there will be a briefing, followed by consultations, on the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

The mandate of UNSOM expires on 31 March 2020. The mandate authorising the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) expires on 31 May 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

The armed group Al-Shabaab remains active and dangerous, carrying out attacks targeting civilians, government facilities and personnel, security forces, and international partners. On 30 September, the group attacked Baledogle, a military airbase located in Lower Shabelle region, about 60 miles from Mogadishu, currently used by the US to train Somali commandos. The attack was repelled and no injuries were reported. An Italian military convoy, a contingent of the EU training mission in Somalia, was attacked in Mogadishu on the same day, also without casualties. In response, the US stated that its forces carried out two airstrikes and engaged in an exchange of fire with militants, killing ten, in unspecified locations in the country.

Several Kenyan police officers were reportedly killed on 12 October when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb near Garissa on the Kenyan side of the Somali border. On 13 October, at least three mortar shells were fired at Mogadishu's international airport compound, where several embassies and UNSOM headquarters are located, injuring at least seven people. Over 40 Al-Shabaab militants were killed in operations conducted by the Somali military in Kismayo and Hiran, on 7 and 19 October, respectively.

The security situation, along with droughts and other climate-related issues, continue to be a driver of displacement. According to OCHA's 13 September assessment of humanitarian assistance in Somalia, submitted to the Somalia Sanctions Committee, 270,000 people were displaced between January and August 2019. The volatile security situation hampers the ability of humanitarian workers to provide assistance. In some districts, particularly in southern and central regions of Somalia, humanitarian access remains limited, due in part to insecurity along main supply routes. According to OCHA, in the absence of humanitarian assistance, up to 2.1 million people across Somalia will face severe hunger by December 2019. That would bring the total number of Somalis expected to be food insecure to 6.3 million by year's end. In light of this situation, OCHA has recommended that the Council extend the humanitarian exemption to the assets freeze imposed by the committee on individuals and entities.

The 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee met with a representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime on 3 October. One of the issues discussed was the ban on charcoal exports (discussed further below). The representative explained that Somali charcoal is in high demand because of its quality, particularly in the Gulf states.

The Chair of the committee, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium), briefed the Council on 25 October on the committee's recent activities. He emphasised the conclusions of OCHA's 13 September humanitarian assessment, and also spoke about the 15 October briefing by the coordinator of the Panel of Experts assisting the committee, on the panel's soon-to-be-published final report. The coordinator highlighted that Al-Shabaab continues to pose a threat to peace and security in the region and to violate international humanitarian law. The coordinator told the Committee that the panel had confirmed that Al-Shabaab is manufacturing homemade explosives while benefiting economically from a system of parallel taxation on virtually all trade in southern Somalia.

On the arms embargo, the coordinator assessed that it has been successful in keeping

heavy arms out of the country. He also recommended that the arms embargo be streamlined and updated to reflect current counter-insurgency efforts, including enhanced oversight over commercial explosives used by Al-Shabaab to manufacture improvised explosive devices.

The charcoal ban, according to the coordinator, has not affected Al-Shabaab's income in a critical way, as the group is not dependent on charcoal exports alone. In this context, the Committee also discussed how charcoal smugglers also smuggle other commodities and arms. As Al-Shabaab has other sources of revenue and is still profiting from charcoal domestically, the Panel of Experts suggested assessing the impact and utility of the charcoal ban. Finally, the coordinator recommended that the Council utilise targeted sanctions on violators of the sanctions regime, financiers of terrorism, violators of international humanitarian law and political spoilers.

Several Council members expressed support for the Panel of Experts' work and noted that it was unacceptable that Somalia has not cooperated with the panel during the last year, most notably by not allowing the panel to visit Somalia.

Special Representative and head of UNSOM James Swan last briefed the Council on 21 August. He highlighted the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia and stressed that the security situation also remains a serious concern, mainly due to Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks. At the same time, he noted that Somali security forces, working with AMISOM and international partners, are making progress in recovering and stabilising areas near Mogadishu previously held by Al-Shabaab.

On Djibouti and Eritrea, the Secretary-General informed the Council in a short letter on 5 August that no significant progress has been made in resolving the dispute between the two states; this was his latest update as requested in resolution 2444, which lifted sanctions on Eritrea. He noted that Djibouti insists on resolving its border dispute with Eritrea through binding international arbitration, and remains concerned about the fate of its soldiers who are missing as a result of the

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2472](#) (31 May 2019) renewed the authorisation of AMISOM until 31 May 2020 and authorised reductions to achieve a maximum level of 19,626 uniformed AMISOM personnel by 28 February 2020. [S/RES/2461](#) (27 March 2019) renewed the mandate of UNSOM until 31 March 2020. [S/RES/2444](#) (14 November 2018) lifted sanctions on Eritrea and extended various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2019. [Secretary-General's Report S/2019/661](#) (15 August 2019) was the most recent report on Somalia and UNSOM. [Security Council Letter S/2019/627](#) (2 August 2019) was from the Secretary-General on developments towards the normalisation of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8647](#) (25 October 2019) was a briefing by the Chair of the Somalia Committee, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium). [S/PV.8601](#) (21 August 2019) was the briefing by Special Representative and head of UNSOM James Swan on the latest UNSOM report. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13883](#) (15 July 2019) condemned the terrorist attack in Kismayo on 12 July 2019. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2019/799](#) (7 October 2019) contained the report of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia.

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## Somalia

border clashes between Djibouti and Eritrea from 10 to 12 June 2008. It further maintains that the unresolved issues with Eritrea constitute a threat to Djibouti itself and to international peace and security. Eritrea, for its part, maintains that the dispute should be resolved within a wider regional framework.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 42nd session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue on 25 September with the independent expert on human rights in Somalia, Bahame Nyanduga, and considered his report (A/HRC/42/62). The report concluded that while terror attacks, insecurity, human rights violations, poverty and intercommunal conflicts persist, the country's transition to a democratic state is advancing. On 27 September, the HRC adopted without a vote a resolution renewing the mandate of the independent expert for one year (A/HRC/RES/42/33). The resolution also called on the Federal Government of Somalia to take action in 22 specific areas, including making urgent progress towards settling outstanding constitutional issues; expediting the establishment of a national human rights commission; promoting the protection of all internally displaced persons; and ensuring safe, timely, sustained and unhindered access for humanitarian organisations.

### Key Issues and Options

The key immediate issue for the Council in November is renewing the various sanctions measures and corresponding exemptions. The Council may take the opportunity to streamline sanctions language found in several resolutions into one comprehensive text.

The Council may use the opportunity to reiterate previous calls for Somalia and other member states to meet their obligations in implementing the sanctions regime, particularly with respect to the arms embargo and charcoal ban, and impose or threaten to impose sanctions on individuals involved in the illicit trade in charcoal.

Regarding the Djibouti-Eritrea situation, the Council could issue a press statement in light of the lack of progress, encouraging the two sides to settle their dispute in accordance with one of the methods enumerated in Article 33 of the UN Charter.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

While negotiations over the renewal of sanctions and exemptions had yet to commence

at press time, there does not seem to be much disagreement over the renewal.

Somalia continues to be of the view that the arms embargo should be amended to allow it to import heavy weapons without authorisation from the sanctions committee. However, as the situation on the ground is not improving and given Somalia's recent lack of engagement and cooperation with the committee and its Panel of Experts, several Council members seem content to renew the measures as they are.

The Council may choose to consolidate sanctions language into a single new text, as well as consider suggestions for adding new elements to the regime. Such attempts may prove difficult, however, as this exercise may lead to wider discussions about previously agreed language, which other Council members will want to avoid.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia and the US is the penholder on piracy. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) is the Chair of the Somalia Sanctions Committee.

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## DPRK (North Korea)

### Expected Council Action

In November, the chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), is expected to brief Council members in consultations on the 90-day report about the committee's work.

The mandate of the Panel of Experts expires on 24 April 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

In recent months, the DPRK has conducted multiple ballistic missile tests and further jeopardised diplomatic efforts on the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. In the latest tests, the DPRK fired a submarine-launched ballistic missile on 2 October from the waters off the eastern coast of the country. The DPRK's state-run media confirmed

the missile test and declared it successful. According to information provided by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Defense, the projectile reached an altitude of 565 miles while covering a distance of 280 miles. Japan said that one part of the missile fell in the waters of its exclusive economic zone.

One week later, Council members discussed the incident under "any other business". France, Germany and the UK requested the meeting, citing serious concern over the missile test. These members, together with Belgium, Germany, Poland, and incoming Council member Estonia, made a joint statement at the media stakeout condemning the DPRK's actions as provocative. Stressing that the missile test constitutes a violation of Security Council resolutions, these members called on the DPRK

to abandon the development of weapons of mass destruction. The DPRK also conducted short-range missile tests in August and September. Council members met twice in August under "any other business" following each of the tests that month.

On the diplomatic front, there has been only limited engagement between the US and the DPRK and no meaningful progress since the collapse of the February US-DPRK summit in Hanoi. In June, US President Donald Trump and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un met briefly in the demilitarised zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas, and agreed to continue negotiations on denuclearization. In September, the DPRK indicated its willingness to engage in wide-ranging talks but stressed that the US needs to approach such talks with new ideas and proposals.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2464** (10 April 2019) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 24 April 2020. **S/RES/2397** (22 December 2017) tightened sanctions on the DPRK. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/16** (29 August 2017) condemned the launch of a missile over the territory of Japan and urged the DPRK to comply with previous Council resolutions and presidential statements. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8507** (10 April 2019) was the adoption of a resolution renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 24 April 2020. **S/PV.8363** (27 September 2018) was a ministerial-level meeting on efforts to denuclearise the DPRK. **S/PV.8362** (26 September 2018) was a high-level meeting on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. **Sanctions Committee Document S/2019/691** (30 August 2019) was a midterm report of the Panel of Experts.

## DPRK (North Korea)

On 5 October, the US and the DPRK negotiating teams met in Sweden in the first official working-level meeting of the two sides since the February summit in Hanoi. In statements issued afterwards, both sides offered varying perceptions of the encounter. The DPRK said it ended the talks because the US failed to make any concessions. The US presented a more positive view of the meeting and signalled its intention to continue the talks in the upcoming weeks. In a statement issued a day later, the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it would not engage in further negotiations unless the US changed its approach and abandoned its hostile policy towards the DPRK. The DPRK has also accused the US of using the negotiations for domestic political purposes.

No details were released formally about the specifics of the negotiations in Sweden. According to some media reports, the US offered temporary sanctions relief on some sectors of the economy in exchange for verifiable denuclearisation.

After initial discussions in the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, the midterm report of the Panel of Experts was published on 30 August. The report described the DPRK's continued violations of the sanctions imposed by the Council. The panel acknowledged that diplomatic efforts on denuclearisation had generally contributed to an easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula. The DPRK has, however, continued to improve its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities in violation of Council resolutions. Some of the areas in which sanctions evasions were most prominent include illicit ship-to-ship transfers, the proliferation of weapons, and increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks. The panel noted that the DPRK actors have engaged in cyber-attacks on financial institutions and infrastructure. The country also engaged in illegal transfer of crypto-currencies and money laundering. The panel has stressed that the DPRK's use of cyber-attacks provides an opportunity for sanctions evasion involving minimal resources while offering low-risk, high-reward opportunities. According to some estimates, the DPRK has managed to generate around \$2 billion using cyber-attacks, which represents a significant portion of the DPRK's revenue stream. This illustrates the importance of full

implementation of sanctions measures and the need for the Council to address the new methods the DPRK uses to evade sanctions.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 42nd session, the Human Rights Council adopted without a vote the outcome of the universal periodic review for the DPRK (A/HRC/42/10) on 20 September (A/HRC/DEC/42/108). Recommendations for the country in the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review included cooperating with OHCHR and allowing access to special procedure mandate holders, allowing direct and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance providers, abolishing the death penalty, and taking concrete measures to improve conditions of detention.

### Key Issues and Options

Since 2006, the Council has adopted a series of resolutions, imposing and gradually escalating sanctions on the DPRK. Nevertheless, the country has not significantly changed its behaviour: it has continued to test ballistic missiles and to violate the sanctions regime. While diplomatic efforts over the past two years have resulted in the easing of some tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the latest series of ballistic missile tests by the DPRK and the lack of progress on the diplomatic front present a serious concern for the Council.

An issue for the Council is finding the right balance between applying pressure through sanctions and simultaneously encouraging the diplomatic track. An option is to explore ways to modify the sanctions on the DPRK to encourage further engagement on the diplomatic front.

Some Council members are concerned about the impact of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK. The Council could seek more regular interaction with OCHA to obtain detailed information for its consideration of humanitarian exemptions. Another option would be to consider having the Panel of Experts assisting the sanctions committee add an expert on humanitarian issues who could analyse the impact of sanctions on the civilian population.

The ongoing dire human rights situation in the DPRK remains an issue. Every December from 2014 through 2017, the Council held a briefing with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on this topic. Although no

such meeting was held in 2018, an option would be for the Council to hold a meeting on the human rights situation in the DPRK before the end of 2019.

### Council Dynamics

The Council remains divided on the role of sanctions in addressing the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK. The US continues to emphasize the importance of sustaining the policy of maximum pressure on the DPRK until it takes concrete steps towards denuclearization. The EU members of the Council have generally been supportive of this approach. On the other hand, Russia and China have suggested on several occasions that they would be open to considering some sort of sanctions relief, arguing that some sanctions relief should accompany any potential positive developments on the diplomatic front. Russia has also emphasized that the Council should address the impact of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK.

Over the past several months, Germany, France, and the UK have taken the initiative in drawing the Council's attention to the ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK, initiating three meetings (two in August and one in October) under "any other business" to address the issue of ballistic tests. The US administration has downplayed recent missile tests and has focused mostly on the sanctions pressure and diplomatic efforts.

Although cautious in their optimism, Council members are unanimous in their support for the US-DPRK and inter-Korean diplomatic efforts. Council members are concerned about the recent escalation of missile tests by the DPRK and its potential to further derail the diplomatic efforts. Some members have shown interest in a new approach to the Council's relationship with the DPRK—including responding to positive developments through Council outcomes and other means of showing support for a serious dialogue about the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula—but there has been little movement in this direction.

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

# Sudan/South Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In November, the Council expects to renew the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The Council is also expected 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.

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support to the JBVMM expire on 15 November.

## Key Recent Developments

The overall security situation in Abyei, the disputed territory along the Sudan/South Sudan border, remains fragile. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report, covering 16 April to 15 October, intercommunal tensions continued, along with an increase in criminality and the sporadic presence of armed elements in Abyei, including in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ). On the political situation, the report noted that while both Sudan and South Sudan are undergoing internal transitions, there has been continued rapprochement between the two countries. However, it is too soon to assess the effects of this on the situation in Abyei, the report said. In Abyei, the two countries have not made any significant progress on the issues of border demarcation, the establishment of joint institutions, or the final resolution of Abyei's status.

On 15 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2492, extending the mission's support to the JBVMM until 15 November. The aim of the resolution was to consolidate what have been two separate Council decisions: on the renewal of UNISFA's mandate, and on the mission's support to the JBVMM. Resolution 2386 adopted on 15 November 2017 had decided to separate the Council's decision on mandate renewal from its decision on the JBVMM, by extending the mandate by six months and its support to the JBVMM by five months. During negotiations for that resolution, the US proposed suspending the mission's support to the JBVMM, which was opposed by several Council members, resulting in the compromise of separating the two decisions as a means of putting pressure on the parties. This

remained the practice until the one month technical rollover resolution was adopted in October. (For more details, see our What's In Blue story of 14 November 2017.)

The JBVMM remains at initial operating capability, according to a 20 September letter from the Secretary-General, with only two of the four sector headquarters in operation and three out of four team sites established within the SDBZ. Despite the absence of significant progress in meeting the border-related benchmarks contained in resolution 2465 and the lack of technical assets, the JBVMM "remains an essential tool to monitor the situation along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan", the letter says.

UNISFA's mandate was extended until 15 November in resolution 2469, adopted on 14 May. The resolution reduced the authorised troop ceiling from 4,140 to 3,550 and increased the authorised police ceiling from 345 to 640 police personnel. The resolution also requested, for the first time, that the Secretary-General appoint a civilian Deputy Head of Mission for UNISFA "to further facilitate liaison between and engagement with the parties in a manner consistent with the Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, including agreement to establish the Abyei Police Service". Such an appointment has not yet been made because of opposition from Sudan in particular. (For more details, see our What's In Blue story of 13 May.)

The Council was last briefed on the issue on 24 October by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga (the latter via video teleconference from Addis Ababa). Lacroix referred to the "unprecedented opportunity" to resolve the border-related issues between Sudan and South Sudan, adding that following recent positive developments in bilateral relations, the two countries need to resume direct talks immediately to resolve the final status of Abyei. Onanga-Anyanga also referred to the improved relations between the two countries, adding that the list of pending issues remains extensive with most of the commitments agreed to in 2012 not yet implemented.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council to consider ahead of UNISFA's mandate renewal is the overall 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.

Council members may want to consider the two possible options proposed in the Secretary-General's report. The first option includes the repatriation of 295 troops to complete the force reduction set out in resolution 2445, which did not take place as planned by May, followed by a further reduction of 295 troops in accordance with resolution 2469, bringing the authorised ceiling to 3,550. The second option includes postponing the further reduction of the 295 troops, requested in resolution 2469, until the end of the dry season—that is, beyond May 2020—and strengthening the mission's civilian capacities, based on the conflict and criminal trends over the past six months as well as the positive political developments between Sudan and South Sudan. Both approaches include an extension of the mission's support to the JBVMM for six months. The report recommends the second approach.

The difficulty of obtaining visas for members of UNISFA's police component has been an ongoing problem. On 25 September, the strength of the mission's police component stood at thirty-four officers against an authorised total of 640 police personnel. According to the Secretary-General's report, this is attributable to the non-issuance of visas to police personnel by Sudan. In this context, members will most likely be eager to hear if the political transformations in Sudan have had an impact on improving this process.

Another issue is what steps the Council should take to encourage greater progress in the political process to resolve the final status of Abyei. Council members may also reflect on how best to support Onanga-Anyanga, whose mandate includes carrying out good offices and, in cooperation with regional and subregional organisations, to enhance subregional capacities for conflict prevention and mediation.

## Council Dynamics

As in previous years, the Council's focus on the situation in Abyei remains limited, largely

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2492** (15 October 2019) extended UNISFA's support for the JBVMM until 15 November 2019. **S/RES/2469** (14 May 2019) extended UNISFA's mandate until 15 November 2019. **Secretary General's Report S/2019/817** (15 October 2019) was on the situation in Abyei. **Security Council Letters S/2019/768** (20 September 2019) was from the Secretary-General on the JBVMM. **S/2018/955** (24 October 2018) was from the Secretary-General setting out the mandate of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8644** (24 October 2019) was a briefing on Sudan/South Sudan.

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## Sudan/South Sudan

overshadowed by its ongoing engagement on South Sudan and Sudan (Darfur). However, the upcoming expiration of UNISFA's mandate and its support for the JBVMM present opportunities for Council members to direct attention to the issue.

Negotiations around troop and police levels have been particularly contentious in the past. The US has consistently pushed for further troop reductions. It has repeatedly asserted that UNISFA is persisting longer than intended for an interim force, and that Sudan and South Sudan are taking advantage of the relative stability that UNISFA provides to delay attempts to resolve the status

of Abyei. The US has also pressed for a viable exit strategy for the mission. When it circulated the draft of what became resolution 2492 in October, the US apparently again expressed the need for UNISFA to be more effective and efficient while recognising that the mission's support for the JBVMM should be retained.

During negotiations in May on resolution 2469, the three African members, supported by China and some other members, called for a rollover of the mission's mandate, given the evolving internal political situations in Sudan and South Sudan. However, the US and some other members opposed a rollover.

In statements at the 24 October briefing, several Council members expressed their support for UNISFA, as well as for the JBVMM, and called on Sudan and South Sudan to make progress in resolving the final status of Abyei. Some members, including the Dominican Republic, Germany, Peru, Poland, and the US emphasised the need to implement the previously agreed increase in the mission's police personnel and for the necessary visas to be issued to allow this. The US and France highlighted the need to appoint a civilian Deputy Head of Mission.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

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## Central African Republic

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which expires on 15 November.

### Key Recent Developments

The Political Peace Agreement in the Central African Republic (CAR) was signed by the CAR government and 14 armed groups in Bangui on 6 February, following negotiations in Khartoum that began on 24 January under the auspices of the AU. A new cabinet, in which all 14 armed groups are represented, was formed on 22 March.

This is the latest of several peace agreements that have been signed between the government and armed groups in the CAR since the current crisis began in 2013, and it remains to be seen whether it will be fully implemented. According to the Secretary-General's 15 October MINUSCA report, military confrontations between CAR security forces and MINUSCA have subsided, and human rights violations linked to the conflict have decreased. However, armed groups have been fighting each other and violating the agreement through violence against civilians, illegal taxation, and obstructing the deployment of state institutions and security forces.

The report noted that while the agreement has offered many civilians a reprieve from violence, the overall levels of violence remain worrisome, with women and children among the most affected.

In recent incidents, from 27 to 30 September, clashes between armed elements in the southern Kouango area claimed 14 lives and uprooted around 2,000 people from their homes. Unidentified armed men killed 12 people in a village outside the town of Bambari in the centre of the country on 10 October. Against the backdrop of continuing security concerns and lack of significant progress in the deployment of CAR security forces and expansion of state authority, MINUSCA continues to be the primary provider of security in the country. The Secretary-General thus recommended in his report that MINUSCA's authorised troop strength be maintained.

According to his report, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance has decreased from 2.9 million to 2.6 million, but a fifth of the population remains displaced, with 581,000 internally displaced people and over 605,000 refugees registered in neighbouring countries at 31 August. Meanwhile, the CAR continues to be one of the most dangerous places for humanitarian workers, according to OCHA, decreasing their ability

to deliver assistance. Between January and September, three humanitarian workers were killed and 34 were injured in the country.

The Secretary-General recommended in his report that MINUSCA's mandate to provide political, technical and operational support for the peace process, implementation of the agreement, and extension of state authority be reinforced "without caveats that could preclude MINUSCA from seeking resources commensurate to its tasks".

From 5 to 7 October, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui; and the managing director for Africa in the European External Action Service, Koen Vervaeke, visited the CAR to take stock of the implementation of the peace agreement. They met with government officials, political parties and civil society. They called on all signatories to the agreement to respect their commitments and immediately end violence and promote dialogue. They stressed that those violating the agreement should be sanctioned and that MINUSCA should use its agile posture to safeguard the integrity of the agreement. They also encouraged the adoption of draft laws essential to holding peaceful, inclusive and credible elections.

Also in the report, the Secretary-General

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2488** (12 September 2019) amended the CAR sanctions regime for CAR security forces. **S/RES/2454** (31 January 2019) renewed the CAR sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee. **S/RES/2446** (15 November 2018) extended the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 December. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/822** (15 October 2019) was on MINUSCA. **Security Council Letter S/2019/145** (14 February 2019) was the Secretary-General's letter containing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8646** (25 October 2019) was a briefing on the latest MINUSCA report.

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## Central African Republic

stressed the importance of holding presidential, legislative and local elections scheduled for 2020 and 2021 on time to consolidate peace and ensure stability. He welcomed the promulgation of the electoral code into law on 20 August while noting with concern that preparations for voter registration, due to begin in January 2020, were already behind schedule. He further stressed that, given the limited capacity of the CAR and the country's security challenges, MINUSCA's strong support is essential throughout the electoral process. Accordingly, the Secretary-General recommended that the Council authorise MINUSCA to provide operational, logistical and security support for the elections and coordination of other international support as well as the necessary resources to perform these tasks.

The Special Representative for the CAR and head of MINUSCA Mankeur Ndiaye last briefed the Council on 25 October. AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui and the EU External Action Service's Director for Integrated Approach for Security and Peace, Stefano Tomat, also briefed, both via videoteleconference. Ndiaye stressed that at the time of adopting MINUSCA's current mandate, the extent of the logistical and technical means required for the implementation of the peace agreement, could not be foreseen. Therefore, he said, it is essential that MINUSCA be provided with a mandate and adequate resources to support the implementation of the peace agreement. Additionally, he asked the Council to mandate MINUSCA to provide the necessary technical, logistical, security and operational support for the conduct of the elections within constitutional deadlines.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 42nd session, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution without a vote on 27

September on technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of human rights in the CAR (A/HRC/RES/42/36). The resolution strongly condemned killings; acts of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment; sexual violence; abductions; arbitrary arrests and deprivation of liberty; extortion and looting; the recruitment and use of children; the occupation of schools and attacks on them, on the sick and injured, medical personnel, health centres and medical vehicles as well as the denial of humanitarian assistance. It renewed, for one year, the mandate of the independent expert on human rights in the CAR. It also decided to organise, at its 43rd session in March 2020, a high-level interactive dialogue to assess the evolution of the human rights situation on the ground, placing special emphasis on preventing the recruitment and use of children in the armed conflict.

### Key Issues and Options

The immediate task for the Council is renewing MINUSCA's mandate in November. Protection of civilians will remain a priority, but in light of the peace agreement, the Council will need to update language on MINUSCA's support for the political processes in the CAR. It may choose to elaborate on MINUSCA's political mandate, including in support of the agreement and local reconciliation initiatives.

The Council may also give MINUSCA responsibility for providing good offices and advising the CAR on electoral preparations. In addition, the Council may authorise MINUSCA to provide technical and logistical support to the electoral process.

More generally, monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement remains a priority as violence continues and rebel groups show half-hearted commitment. A credible threat of targeted sanctions against spoilers might provide an incentive for armed groups to truly commit to the process, and sanctions against those responsible for attacks against civilians, MINUSCA and humanitarian

workers might also help to curb violence. Furthermore, targeting actors who enable the economic activities of armed groups and the flow of arms might further pressure them to adhere to the agreement.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

All Council members share the hope that the peace agreement will improve the situation and restore peace and security in the CAR, and they agree that without MINUSCA's presence there would be a serious security vacuum in the country. Some Council members also see MINUSCA as a vital element in helping to keep rebel groups committed to the political process. Despite this political achievement, Council members seem to share the view that the security situation has not changed significantly and that, accordingly, MINUSCA's mandate should not be altered dramatically.

Several Council members see the mandate renewal as an opportunity for the Council to emphasise MINUSCA's role in supporting the wider political process. Particularly, in light of the limited capacity of the CAR to conduct timely elections without MINUSCA and the negative impact on security and stability that might follow if elections are not held, some Council members are in favour of authorising MINUSCA to provide technical and logistical support for the scheduled legislative and presidential elections in 2020-2021. While this expansion of MINUSCA's mandate will not necessarily prove controversial among Council members, some may be hesitant to add tasks that may require enlarging MINUSCA's budget.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchoué (Côte d'Ivoire) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

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## Reconciliation

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to hold an open debate on reconciliation. At press time, no formal outcome was anticipated.

### Key Recent Developments

This open debate seems to stem from an open debate held by the UK during its last presidency of the Security Council, in August

2018, on "Maintenance of international peace and security: Mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts". While it focused on the role of mediation, reconciliation was a

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON RECONCILIATION** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2004/2 (26 January 2004) was a presidential statement adopted after an open debate on "post-conflict reconciliation: role of the UN". Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8334 (29 August 2018) was the open debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: Mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts" held at the initiative of the UK. S/PV.4903 and Resumption 1 (26 January 2004) was the open debate on "post-conflict reconciliation: role of the UN" held at the initiative of Chile.



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## Reconciliation

part of the discussion, with several speakers raising the topic.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was invited to participate as a member of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation. In his statement, Welby said that mediation is only effective in the context of reconciliation. He defined reconciliation as “the process of transforming violent conflict into non-violent coexistence where communities have come to terms with history and are learning to disagree well”.

Other briefers included Secretary-General António Guterres and Mossarat Qadeem, co-founder of the PAIMAN Alumni Trust, which works to prevent violent extremism in Pakistan. Several speakers talked about how mediation efforts are complemented by national reconciliation and post-conflict development. Additionally, some speakers stressed that the parties themselves must recognise their own interest in reconciling and take ownership over any reconciliation process.

The last Council meeting focused specifically on reconciliation took place more than fifteen years ago, during an open debate on 26 January 2004, organised by Chile. The meeting was focused on “post-conflict national reconciliation: role of the UN” and was seen as a continuation of the ministerial-level meeting on the rule of law on 24 September 2003, spearheaded by the UK, which included discussion of the need to balance national reconciliation and justice, and the Council's role in fostering reconciliation. The January 2004 meeting had three briefers: Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme; and Carolyn McAskie, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of OCHA. Additionally, Chile shared

excerpts from a letter from Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Thirty-seven member states participated in the open debate. At the end of the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement that reaffirmed the vital importance of the UN's role in post-conflict national reconciliation and underscored the experience and expertise in the UN system and among member states with respect to such reconciliation.

Throughout the years, various resolutions and presidential statements have stressed the importance of reconciliation as part of a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

At press time, Council members were negotiating a draft presidential statement on conflict prevention that could be adopted before the end of October.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to learn more about how various elements of reconciliation—for example, truth and reconciliation commissions and national dialogues—have worked in different settings and with what impact. Colombia, whose peace process has an important reconciliation component and whose implementation the Council has been following closely, will most likely be on many members' minds. Participants may also use the debate as an opportunity to discuss how to support national and local reconciliation strategies in other countries emerging from conflict; whether and how to support reconciliation processes as part of exit strategies for peace operations; and how the Council can engage with other parts of the UN system, including the Peacebuilding Commission and UN Country Teams, to support such processes.

One option for the Council is to invite a civil society representative involved in truth

and reconciliation commissions or other reconciliation efforts to brief.

Another option would be for the Council to adopt a presidential statement on reconciliation processes. The UK could also choose to produce a chair's summary that would reflect the themes of the open debate.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council rarely addresses reconciliation as a thematic issue. The topic has, however, been part of discussions on post-conflict situations, such as South Sudan or the former Yugoslav republics. Additionally, several Council members have their own historical reconciliation experiences from which they can draw, such as Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, and the UK. In the open debate on mediation last August, members spoke about how reconciliation is needed for inclusive societies. Members also talked about the importance of confidence-building in local reconciliation. Many praised the Secretary-General's increased focus on using mediation to shore up preventive diplomacy. The UK focused on UN peacekeeping missions' effective facilitation role of mediation efforts. Equatorial Guinea, speaking on behalf of the three elected African Council members, emphasised the unique role regional organisations can play and called for continued UN support to regional efforts, especially those of the African Union. Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Peru, Poland, and the UK made specific mention of the need to include women in conflict resolution at all levels. France and Peru worried about how the increasing complexity of conflicts could pose a challenge to mediation efforts. China stressed the need for those involved in post-conflict resolution to recognise national sovereignty and to avoid imposing unilateral solutions.

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## Group of Five for the Sahel

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council expects a briefing on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S), which Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (G5 Sahel)

decided to establish in February 2017 to combat terrorist and criminal groups in the region. Prior to the briefing, members expect the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the FC-G5S, which the Council requested to

receive every six months in resolution 2391.

### Key Recent Developments

Over the past year, the security situation in the Sahel deteriorated further, as terrorist

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE G5 SAHEL** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2480](#) (28 June 2019) renewed the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2020, which included expanding MINUSMA's provision of “life-support consumables” to benefit all G5 Sahel joint force contingents. [S/RES/2391](#) (8 December 2017) outlined ways in which MINUSMA should support the G5 Sahel joint force. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8526](#) (16 May 2019) was a briefing on the G5 Sahel joint force. [Secretary-General's Report S/2019/782](#) (1 October 2019) was the latest report on MINUSMA. [Security Council Press Statement SC/133811](#) (16 May 2019) was on the G5 Sahel joint force and Burkina Faso.

## Group of Five for the Sahel

groups continue to destabilise much of Mali and Burkina Faso, fuel inter-communal violence, and increasingly threaten coastal West African states.

Attacks in central Mali on 30 September and 1 October against a Malian battalion of the FC-G5S in Boulkessi and a Malian army base in Mondoro killed twenty-five soldiers and left around sixty missing. It was one of the deadliest strikes against Malian forces since 2012. In Burkina Faso, the number of internally displaced people increased by nearly 70 percent in just a three-week period due to violence and insecurity, to total 486,000 people by 11 October, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Burkina Faso's military sustained its greatest losses ever in a single incident when 24 soldiers were killed on 19 August in Koutougou, near the Malian border. The Islamic State claimed that its affiliate the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), a splinter group of Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram, carried out the attack.

In light of the worsening insecurity, on 25 August, at the heads of state summit in Biarritz of the Group of Seven (G7)—Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US—the G7 adopted the Biarritz declaration for a G7 and Africa partnership and the Sahel partnership action plan. The initiative calls for extended military cooperation to fight terrorism in the Sahel, enhanced efforts to strengthen governance, in particular for the rule of law, and to promote inclusive, sustainable economic growth in the region.

The 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided to enhance their engagement and cooperation to respond to the terrorism threat emanating from the Sahel. At a 14 September ECOWAS summit on terrorism held in Ouagadougou, West African leaders directed the ECOWAS Commission to finalise an eight point Priority Action Plan for 2020-2024 to combat terrorism in the region, to be adopted at ECOWAS' next summit, on 21 December in Abuja. ECOWAS countries further committed to mobilising \$1 billion towards their enhanced counter-terrorism activities.

On 25 September, a high-level event was convened on Mali and the Sahel in New York during General Assembly high-level week, at which states reiterated their support to the joint force, and stressed the need to support

initiatives to address structural causes of the Sahel's instability. The following day, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held a high-level meeting on the situation in Burkina Faso with Burkinabe President Roch Kaboré. In a press release, the PBC said that it stood ready to advocate for support to the government's priority economic development and emergency programmes and other peacebuilding efforts in the country.

Earlier this year, when the Council adopted resolution 2480 on 28 June renewing the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for one year, it expanded MINUSMA's provision of "life-support consumables" to benefit all contingents of the FC-G5S rather than just those operating on Malian territory, on the condition that the joint force or other partners deliver this assistance and that units receiving such assistance strictly comply with the UN human rights due diligence policy.

### Key Issues and Options

Despite efforts by regional countries and external partners over recent years, the terrorism threat and inter-communal violence have been worsening in the Sahel, expanding from Mali to parts of Niger and Burkina Faso. There are now heightened concerns about terrorist groups spreading to coastal West African countries. Regarding the FC-G5S, persistent challenges for its effectiveness, as discussed at the Council's last briefing on 16 May, include training and equipment shortages, unclear sustainability of financing, the absence of fortified and secure operational bases and limited basic infrastructure. Information sharing and coordination between the force and G5 Sahel member states remain challenging, as does the need to clarify and develop the force's strategic concept of operations. Apparently, there is increased questioning among member states about whether the G5 Sahel joint force can become an effective way to combat terrorism in the region—signalled, for example, by ECOWAS' intention to become more involved. Forthcoming FC-G5S operations may be an important test to counter some of these growing doubts.

Promoting and ensuring that the FC-G5S complies with international human rights and humanitarian law, which is necessary for UN support and critical for effective

counter-terrorism, is a related issue. Complementing security measures through addressing structural problems that contribute to regional instability through the UN's Sahel Strategy and the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme is a further important issue. Problems in common facing Sahelian countries include poor governance, poverty, lack of opportunities for young people, and climate change that has disrupted many livelihoods.

A continuing option before the Council, and advocated by the Secretary-General, is to establish a dedicated UN support office, funded through assessed contributions and independent of MINUSMA, to deliver a support package for the FC-G5S across its entire area of operations. Council members could continue to provide bilateral support to strengthen the military capacities of G5 Sahel countries, both to the joint force and national militaries.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

While there may be growing doubts among countries over the viability of the FC-G5S to stem the current deterioration, so far in public forums member states have continued to call for support to the regional force. Over the past two years, the Council has been divided over whether the UN should provide financial support to the FC-G5S. Resolution 2391 in December 2017 established some multilateral support for the FC-G5S and this was enhanced by resolution 2480. But most members—including France, which has championed the joint force—would wish to see further support provided through the UN. The US, though, has objected to proposals that could incur UN assessed contributions. Internal discussions within the AU that have postponed pursuit of a Council resolution on financing for AU peace support operations, and growing concerns about the FC-G5S, together make it unlikely that there will be a new push to authorise a UN support package this year. G5 Sahel member Niger will join the Council in two months, replacing Côte d'Ivoire, and could potentially be a strong proponent of the FC-G5S from within the Council.

On Burkina Faso, Council members, including France, have advocated greater PBC involvement to support an enhanced UN country team mobilisation to help prevent further deterioration. Council members'

## Group of Five for the Sahel

16 May press statement, issued following its last briefing on the FC-G5S, encouraged the PBC's engagement on Burkina Faso. At the

same time, some members have wondered whether the PBC is itself the right forum to address the worsening situation.

France is the penholder on the G5 Sahel joint force.

## Lebanon

### Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expires on 31 August 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

The Lebanese government has come under growing domestic pressure to root out corruption and improve the economic situation. Among the most pressing issues facing the Lebanese economy are mounting public debt and persistently low levels of economic growth. In addition, Lebanon continues to carry the burden of hosting over one million Syrian refugees.

In addressing the economic situation, the Lebanese government led by Prime Minister Saad Hariri has sought to initiate a series of reforms and austerity measures, including public-sector spending cuts and tax hikes. Given the high public debt, the Lebanese government is in dire need of financial assistance. The release of some \$11 billion in loans and grants pledged by international donors in 2018 is conditioned on Lebanon's implementing necessary structural reforms. From the outset, the government's attempts to implement austerity measures drew strong criticism from the general population. The first major demonstrations took place at the end of September when thousands gathered in Beirut to voice their concerns about the government's handling of the economy.

On 18 October, the government said it

would impose a tax on phone calls using Voice over Internet Protocol technology and calls using the Internet instead of analogue phone lines with applications such as WhatsApp. This announcement prompted thousands of demonstrators to turn out in Beirut and other cities throughout the country. Facing public pressure, the government reversed its decision later the same day. The demonstrations continued, however, and the participants' numbers grew over the next several days. On 21 October, the government approved the budget for next year, including reducing the salaries of government officials and eliminating unnecessary government bodies and agencies. The budget did not include any new taxes. These measures did not appease the demonstrators, who, at press time, continued to protest, and called for Hariri's government to resign. On 29 October, Hariri announced his resignation.

Another issue facing Lebanon is a shortage of foreign currency reserves, particularly US dollars. This has had especially negative consequences for companies in the fuel sector. Domestic gas sales are conducted in Lebanese pounds, while international importers and suppliers sell oil to gas stations almost exclusively in US dollars. This situation prompted gas station owners to go on a nationwide strike in September and again in October.

During her broader visit to the Middle East, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo travelled to Lebanon from 9 to 11 October. In meetings with senior government officials, including President Michel Aoun and Prime Minister Hariri, DiCarlo reiterated the UN's support for the extension of state authority over the whole Lebanese territory. Other issues high on the agenda during DiCarlo's visit were the economic situation

and economic reforms, security challenges, and Syrian refugees. During her last day in Lebanon, DiCarlo visited the UNIFIL area of operations in southern Lebanon and met with the head of mission and force commander, Major General Stefano Del Col.

### Key Issues and Options

The situation in UNIFIL's area of operations has remained relatively calm despite a very volatile regional security environment. The Council's primary concern is the lack of implementation of resolution 1701, including a permanent ceasefire and disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon.

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

The Council is likely to continue to monitor the political situation in Lebanon closely, especially given recent instances of public unrest in the country. An issue for the Council is how to address the growing political instability and its potentially negative consequences for the overall security situation in Lebanon.

Lebanon's burden in hosting over one million refugees from Syria is also of deep concern, and in that regard, the Council could request a briefing by UNHCR on how member states can help enhance services for refugees.

### Council Dynamics

The Council is united in its support for Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2485 (29 August 2019) renewed UNIFIL's mandate for another year and asked the Secretary-General to conduct UNIFIL's assessment by 1 June 2020. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) expanded UNIFIL by 15,000 troops and expanded its mandate. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory, and free and fair presidential elections. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2019/574 (17 July 2019) was on the implementation of resolution 1701. S/2019/343 (25 April 2019) was on the implementation of resolution 1559. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/13696 (8 February 2019) welcomed the formation of the new unity government in Lebanon

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## Lebanon

security. The Council has also continued to emphasise that the Lebanese Armed Forces should play a critical role in addressing security challenges in the country.

Council members' positions differ, however, on the security dynamics in the region and the role of the mission. Over the past several years, these differences have been especially evident during negotiations on UNIFIL's mandate renewals. The US has taken the view that the mission should play a more active role in confronting the threats the US considers most serious in this context—those posed by Iran, Hezbollah, and the proliferation of

weapons in southern Lebanon. The US entered the latest mandate renewal negotiations advocating a significant reduction of the troop ceiling and a comprehensive strategic review of the mission. These proposals encountered strong opposition from most Council members. The US has argued that the mission's role should be reconsidered, given that UNIFIL is unable to fulfil part of its mandate because it lacks access to its area of operations. On the political front, the US has raised concerns about Hezbollah's growing role in the new Lebanese government. Other members—including France

(the penholder) and Russia—have emphasised that no changes should be made to the mission's mandate. These members are cautious about such changes because of their potential impact on the fragile calm that has been maintained in southern Lebanon for over a decade. The mandate renewal resolution, however, calls for an assessment of the mission to be conducted by the Secretariat and in this context to take into consideration the troop ceiling and the civilian component of UNIFIL.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council will receive its monthly briefing on Yemen from Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock and General Abhijit Guha, the chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) and head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), are also likely to brief.

The mandate of UNMHA expires on 15 January 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

There has been growing momentum for restarting a political process and negotiations on a comprehensive settlement to end the Yemen war. On 20 September, the Houthi rebel group announced that it would cease attacks against Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, which has led the coalition in support of the Yemeni government for the past 4.5 years, has signalled an openness towards a de-escalation. Yemen's south has also experienced greater calm since the beginning of the fighting in August between the government and southern separatists, who, by late October, were close to formalising a power-sharing agreement after two months of Saudi-mediated talks.

After the Stockholm Agreement brokered in December 2018, further negotiations between the government and the Houthis

had been placed on hold until the Stockholm Agreement's implementation. (The Stockholm Agreement included a deal to demilitarise the port city of Hodeidah, a prisoner exchange, and a statement of understanding to de-escalate fighting in the city of Taiz). But the fighting in the south and rising regional tensions have created new urgency to restart a political process. In a communiqué from the 26 September ministerial-level meeting in New York of the P5, Germany, Kuwait and Sweden with Griffiths, the countries of this newly formed 'small group' on Yemen affirmed that the lack of the Stockholm Agreement's full implementation "should not prevent the parties from participating in the Special Envoy's process toward a broader political settlement to end the conflict".

On 17 October, the Council held its monthly briefing on Yemen. Lowcock briefed first on the humanitarian crisis. He said that disbursements of \$700 million by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the past month—part of the \$1.5 billion they pledged in February—combined with new contributions by other governments, had relieved the financial strain on relief efforts, allowing programmes that had been suspended to restart. Humanitarian restrictions remained particularly challenging in the Houthi-controlled north, however. Lowcock also highlighted the humanitarian impact of government regulations on fuel

imports that were creating a severe fuel shortage in the north.

Griffiths briefed via the Council via VTC from Riyadh. He said that there were signs of hope for Yemen, citing a reduction of violence in the north, and a decrease in the number of airstrikes since October. Griffiths also welcomed the Houthis' recent release of 290 detainees, which he hoped could lead to the parties resuming discussions for further prisoner releases in line with the Stockholm Agreement. During consultations, Guha briefed members by VTC for the first time since his appointment in September as the UNMHA head and RCC chair.

At the end of the public part of the meeting, Yemen's permanent representative Abdullah Ali Fadhel al-Saadi addressed the Council. Despite Council members' calls in the chamber to advance political talks in parallel with implementing the Stockholm Agreement, al-Saadi asserted that "all political consultations on the comprehensive dispute settlement hinge on the implementation the Stockholm Agreement...as those who failed to observe previous agreements will never comply with them this time".

On 24 October, it was announced that an agreement had been reached in Riyadh between the Yemeni government and the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which had seized control of Yemen's interim capital Aden in August. (The STC is supported

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2481](#) (15 July 2019) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 15 January 2020. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/9](#) (29 August 2019) was on developments in southern Yemen and efforts to resume comprehensive political negotiations. [Secretary-General's Letter S/2019/823](#) (14 October 2019) was a review of UNMHA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8642](#) (17 October 2019) was a briefing on Yemen. [Human Rights Council Document A/HRC/42/17](#) (9 August 2019) was a report of the Group of International and Regional Eminent Experts on Yemen

# Yemen

by the UAE, despite the UAE being a coalition member.) At press time, the parties still had not formally signed the agreement. According to the deal, negotiated in Jeddah and Riyadh, the STC will become part of a new 24-member government that should be formed within thirty days of the signing, with 12 ministries allocated each to the STC and supporters of the internationally recognised President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi. Saudi forces, which had been deploying for several weeks to Aden amid reports of a pending deal, have reportedly replaced Emirati forces in the city. The agreement would postpone the issue of southern independence until the war with the Houthis has been resolved.

In accordance with resolution 2481, the Secretary-General submitted a review of UNMHA in a 14 October letter to Council members. The review found that the mission's presence continues to have a tangible calming and moderating effect and that UNMHA's objectives remain achievable and appropriate for the situation on the ground. According to the review, the mission has achieved an initial operating capacity with 55 personnel, including 35 military and police monitors and 20 civilian staff.

On 22 October, UNMHA announced the establishment of four joint observation posts along the Hodeidah city frontlines. The observation posts, manned by teams of UN, government and Houthi monitors, are part of the ceasefire enhancement and de-escalation mechanism activated on 10 September.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 26 September, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Yemen by a vote of 22 in favour, 12 against and 11 abstentions (A/HRC/RES/42/2). The resolution condemns the ongoing violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen, including those involving the widespread recruitment and use of children by parties to the armed conflict, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, denial of humanitarian access and attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including medical facilities and missions and their personnel, as well as schools, and emphasizes the importance of accountability. It renewed the mandate of the Group of International and Regional Eminent Experts (GEE) for one year. The resolution contained new language on the GEE's mandate to include the following: to

establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged violations and abuses and, where possible, to identify those responsible; to make recommendations on improving respect for international human rights law; and to engage with Yemeni authorities and other stakeholders to promote accountability for violations and abuses. On 27 September, the HRC adopted a resolution on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen, without a vote (A/HRC/RES/42/31).

Before the Council's 17 October meeting on Yemen, some Council members' plan to have the Chair of the GEE brief on its latest report caused strong pushback from certain Council members, as well as from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The initiative was scuttled, and instead, an informal meeting was held the following day (18 October) at the UK mission, where the GEE briefed Council members on the report that details possible war crimes committed by the parties to the conflict.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue is restarting negotiations for a broader solution to the conflict, while at the same time advancing implementation of the Stockholm agreement. The apparent agreement between the Yemeni government and the STC would be an important step towards resuming a political process. At press time, its signing was expected soon; despite the 24 October announcement of agreement, the parties have been seeking to clarify the sequencing of different steps in the deal. A related issue is how to make peace talks more inclusive of other sectors of Yemeni society, beyond the government and the Houthis. Regarding the Stockholm Agreement, implementing its main component—the demilitarisation of Hodeidah—requires a political agreement on local forces to take over security in vacated areas, and on port revenues and governance arrangements, according to the UNMHA review.

The humanitarian crisis—currently the largest in the world, with 24 million people requiring assistance—remains severe. In its monthly updates, OCHA usually briefs on a number of key priorities to mitigate the situation, which the Council has acknowledged in several products: the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, a fully funded aid operation, support for Yemen's struggling economy and the need for a political solution.

The Council may seek to welcome the power-sharing agreement once formally signed between the government and the

STC, brokered by Saudi Arabia, through a presidential statement. A Council product could further reiterate messages from the 26 September communiqué of the 'small group': that the lack of full implementation of the Stockholm Agreement should not prevent the parties' participation in an inclusive political process toward a broader political settlement, and calling on the Yemeni parties to resume negotiations without delay on the security and political arrangements necessary to end the conflict.

## Council Dynamics

Council members appear united in wanting the parties to restart a political process concurrently with efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement. Even coalition member Kuwait, which has often underscored the need to implement the Stockholm accord to return to talks, appears now to favour moving forward with both processes at once, having supported the 26 September communiqué of the small group. At the Council briefing in October, Kuwait offered to host future negotiations, a role it played previously when it hosted talks for three months in 2016.

Differences in members' positions emerged in the context of the cancelled briefing by the GEE chair last month. During the preparation of the Council's October programme of work, Peru suggested including the GEE chair as a briefer during the monthly Yemen meeting. Only in the week before the briefing on Yemen did some members begin objecting to the GEE's participation, arguing that the timing could undermine the momentum to restart a political process. While some countries supported Peru, the GEE chair's participation was cancelled as a procedural vote was unlikely to pass, with even some members that have supported the GEE's mandate in the Human Rights Council preferring to postpone its briefing at the Security Council.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Peru chairs the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee. Following the appointment of permanent representative Gustavo Meza-Cuadra as Peru's foreign minister, Deputy Permanent Representative Luis Ugarelli has temporarily assumed the committee chairmanship.

# Cyprus

## Expected Council Action

In November, the Secretary-General is due to present to the Council the report on his good offices in Cyprus as requested by resolution 2483. Council members are expected to receive a briefing from a representative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

The mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) expires on 31 January 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

Tensions between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey intensified over the long-standing issue of hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus. Over the past few months, Turkey has deployed several vessels in the area and has started hydrocarbon exploration and drilling activities. The Republic of Cyprus claims that Turkey's activities within its exclusive economic zone constitute a breach of international law. Turkey says its exploration activities are conducted in the area of its continental shelf and are therefore legitimate. Besides, Turkey has maintained that it would protect the rights of Turkish Cypriots and that they are also entitled to receive benefits from the hydrocarbon resources.

On several occasions between June and July, the EU condemned Turkey's exploration and drilling, calling the activities illegitimate. In early October, tensions rose further when Turkey deployed one of its drilling ships in one of the areas where the Republic of Cyprus has already given exploration rights to international oil companies. During the 14 October meeting of the EU Council, agreement was reached to sanction those involved in illegal drilling activities off the coast of Cyprus. The EU Council asked the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the EU Commission to present proposals to this end. At press time, there were no specific details about possible individuals or entities that will be sanctioned.

On 9 October, Council members were briefed in consultations on the situation in Cyprus by Assistant Secretary-General Oscar for Peacebuilding Support Fernandez-Taranco. The meeting, requested by

the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus, focused primarily on the status of Varosha. The Republic of Cyprus has claimed that threats by Turkey and Turkish Cypriot authorities to change the status of Varosha run contrary to Council resolutions on Cyprus.

Varosha, which is a beach resort suburb of the city of Famagusta, is on the Turkish Cypriot side of the buffer zone, a demilitarised area separating Turkish Cypriots in the north from Greek Cypriots in the south. The residents, who were predominantly Greek Cypriots, fled Varosha in 1974 after Turkish military forces intervened on the island following a coup d'état by Greek officers of the Cyprus National Guard. Since then, Varosha has remained unpopulated and closed to the public. It is under the control of the Turkish military. In resolutions 550 and 789 the Council has called for the transfer of Varosha's administration to the UN force.

After the 9 October meeting, the Council adopted a press statement that recalled the importance of the status of Varosha as described in previous Council resolutions and "reiterated that no actions should be carried out in relation to Varosha that are not in accordance with those resolutions".

While there was some limited activity on the political front, the unification talks have remained at an impasse since July 2017. On 9 August, Special Representative Elizabeth Spehar hosted a meeting between Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinçi. In a joint statement issued after the meeting, the two leaders expressed their readiness to hold a joint meeting with the Secretary-General and also agreed to continue their engagement with Jane Holl Lute, a senior UN official appointed by the Secretary-General to conduct consultations, on finalising the terms of reference for the negotiations.

The Secretary-General has emphasised that before resuming negotiations the sides should agree on the terms of reference to represent a starting point for a negotiated solution. Lute has engaged in a series of separate discussions with the Cypriot leaders on finding agreement on the terms of reference.

So far, Lute has kept a low profile and has not released any substantive details about her discussions.

## Key Issues and Options

The absence of a meaningful political process remains the central issue for the Council. In addressing this, the Council could consider playing a more proactive role in stimulating that process. In light of the enduring stalemate, the Council could consider changing the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, including seeking options for downsizing and a possible exit strategy.

Developments surrounding the political process have generally played an important role in guiding Council discussions during mandate renewal negotiations. Although Lute has been engaged in talks with the parties, the Council has not received detailed information about their progress. Given the sensitivities involved, the Council could consider requesting a closed meeting with Lute about the prospects for the political process.

The Council will continue to monitor the rising tensions off the coast of Cyprus. This issue has the potential to damage prospects for the political process as well as the security situation on the island.

## Council Dynamics

Cyprus remains an issue of low intensity on the Council's agenda. Among members with a special interest in Cyprus that follow the issue closely are France, Russia, and the UK. The latter is also one of the guarantor powers under the 1960 treaty guaranteeing the independence, territorial integrity, and security of Cyprus.

The 2011 discovery of hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus has brought increased attention to the island during the past several years. The US has become more engaged in finding a political solution to the Cyprus problem, given the island's location and strategic importance in the fight against terrorism in the Middle East as well as growing overall concerns about security in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Council members are united in their support for a negotiated solution to the Cyprus

**UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2483 (25 July 2019) extended the mandate of UNFICYP in its current configuration until 31 January 2020. S/RES/789 (25 November 1992) endorsed the Secretary-General's set of ideas for Cyprus reunited as a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with a single, indivisible sovereignty. S/RES/550 (11 May 1984) called on all states to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Cyprus and condemned all secessionist actions. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2019/562 (10 July 2019) was on UNFICYP. S/2019/322 (16 April 2019) was on the Secretary-General's good offices. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/13980 (9 October 2019) reiterated the importance of the status of Varosha as set out in previous Security Council resolutions.

## Cyprus

issue. Members seem to diverge, however, on the conditions and timeframe for reunification talks. With the protracted impasse in those talks, some members appear to share the view that this process cannot be open-ended and that the Council could apply pressure on the parties to revive the negotiations. On the other hand, Russia has strongly opposed any attempt to exert pressure on both sides and affect negotiations in any

way, maintaining that the process must be Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned to achieve lasting results.

The US has emphasised that peacekeeping missions must support political processes and that the Council should reconsider the mandates of missions where the political process is absent. Given the lack of progress on the political front in Cyprus, the US has supported a comprehensive strategic review of

the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process. Some members are still wary of initiating drastic changes to the mission's mandate and size. In the absence of progress, the US position is likely to gain more support from other members who have so far been cautious about this issue. Russia is likely to oppose any changes to the status quo.

The UK is the penholder on Cyprus.

## Iraq

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to receive a briefing from Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). His third report to the Council is due in November. The Secretary-General's reports on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, are also due in November.

UNITAD's mandate expires on 21 September 2020. UNAMI's mandate expires on 31 May 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

On 20 September, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2490, renewing the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020, as requested by the Iraqi government. The resolution further requested the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD "to continue to submit and present reports to the Council on the team's activities, every 180 days".

UNITAD was set up through resolution 2379 of 21 September 2017 for an initial period of two years, following a request by the Iraqi government. The Council had asked the Secretary-General to establish an investigative team to support Iraqi domestic

efforts to hold the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) accountable for crimes it committed in the country "by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide". Additionally, UNITAD is responsible for promoting accountability globally for atrocity crimes committed by ISIL in order to counter ISIL narratives that have led people to join the terrorist group.

According to resolution 2379, UNITAD is to be "impartial, independent, and credible", operating within its terms of reference, the UN Charter, UN best practices and relevant international law, including international human rights law. The investigative team has an assessed budget of around \$19.5 million for 2019; additionally, it relies on voluntary contributions made to the trust fund established by resolution 2379 as well as in-kind contributions, including the provision of expert personnel. UNITAD's overall staff stands at around 100 members. Support for the work of UNITAD is part of UNAMI's mandate.

On 31 May 2018, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Karim Asad Ahmad Khan as Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. The investigative team formally began its work on 20 August 2018, and in line with the 90-day deadline set out in

resolution 2379, the Special Adviser's first report was published on 16 November 2018. The resolution further set a 180-day reporting cycle for subsequent reports and asked the Special Adviser to present these reports to the Council. Khan's first briefing took place on 4 December 2018, followed by a second briefing on 15 July. During the Council's 28-29 June visiting mission to Kuwait and Iraq, members met with the Special Adviser and his team. In a 30 June press statement on the trip, Council members underscored their support for UNITAD.

UNITAD's implementation strategy entails three initial areas for investigation, with monthly benchmarks for progress. Those areas are: attacks committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community in the Sinjar district in August 2014; crimes committed by ISIL in Mosul between 2014 and 2016; and the mass killing of unarmed Iraqi air force cadets from Tikrit Air Academy (also known as "Camp Speicher") in June 2014. UNITAD's investigations are focusing on those ISIL members who bear the greatest responsibility among the leadership as well as regional and mid-level commanders. If extra-budgetary funding increases, UNITAD expects to add more areas for investigation.

Resolution 2379 refers to the possibility of evidence collected by the investigative team complementing "investigations carried out by

**UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2490](#) (20 September 2019) extended the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020. [S/RES/2379](#) (21 September 2017) established an investigative team to collect, store and preserve evidence of international crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8624](#) (20 September 2019) was the adoption of resolution 2490, extending the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020. [S/PV.8573](#) (15 July 2019) was the second briefing by the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. [S/PV.8412](#) (4 December 2018) was the first briefing by the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. [S/PV.8052](#) (21 September 2017) was the adoption of resolution 2379. [Security Council Letters S/2019/760](#) (19 September 2019) transmitted a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, requesting the extension of UNITAD's mandate until 21 September 2020. [S/2019/407](#) (17 May 2019) was from the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, transmitting the second report on the activities of UNITAD. [S/2018/1031](#) (15 November 2018) was from the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, transmitting the first report on the activities of UNITAD. [S/2018/773](#) (15 August 2018) was from the Secretary-General, notifying the Council of his appointment of Karim Asad Ahmad Khan as Special Adviser and head of the investigative team earlier that year and that the investigative team was to begin its work on 20 August 2018. [S/2018/118](#) (9 February 2018) was a letter from the Secretary-General, conveying the terms of reference for the investigative team.

# Iraq

authorities in third countries at their request”. UNITAD is currently supporting cases in Finland, France, and Germany.

The international crimes UNITAD is mandated to investigate are not yet incorporated into Iraq’s domestic legal system and are prosecuted as terrorist crimes. Iraq is currently working on legislation establishing a tribunal for the prosecution of ISIL for international crimes.

## Issues and Options

After extending its mandate for another year in September, the Council will keep monitoring UNITAD’s activities closely. An option for Council members would be to hold consultations following Khan’s briefing in order to have a more interactive and frank discussion with him.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of UNITAD, and the negotiations on UNITAD’s mandate renewal were reportedly uncontroversial. The Iraqi government also appears supportive, as shown by its request to extend UNITAD’s mandate. Some members continue to be concerned about the possibility that evidence shared by UNITAD might be used in criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed. Other members stress that this matter falls under Iraq’s sovereignty, a viewpoint shared by Iraq. Another issue frequently raised by members is how and where to prosecute foreign terrorist fighters currently in Iraq.

The UK is the penholder on UNITAD.

### Security Council Report Staff

**Karin Landgren**  
Executive Director

**Joanna Weschler**  
Deputy Executive Director

**Shamala Kandiah Thompson**  
Deputy Executive Director

**Paul Romita**  
Senior Policy Analyst

**Victor Casanova Abos**  
Policy Analyst

**Teale Harold**  
Policy Analyst

**Lindiwe Knutson**  
Policy Analyst

**Vladimir Sesar**  
Policy Analyst

**Eran Sthoeger**  
Policy Analyst

**Vanessa Tiede**  
Policy Analyst

**Benjamin Villanti**  
Policy Analyst

**Robbin VanNewkirk**  
Website Manager

**Audrey Waysse**  
Operations Manager

**Maritza Lopez**  
Administrative Assistant

**Anna Haven**  
Research Assistant

Security Council Report is a non-profit organisation supported by the Governments of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Arab Emirates, and Carnegie Corporation.

Design Point Five, NY

**Security Council Report**  
711 Third Avenue, Suite 1501  
New York NY 10017

**Telephone** +1 212 759 6394

**Fax** +1 212 759 4038

**Web** [securitycouncilreport.org](http://securitycouncilreport.org)  
[whatsinblue.org](http://whatsinblue.org)

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