

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

Viet Nam has the presidency of the Council in January. It has chosen to hold a ministerial-level open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the [UN Charter](#)”. Viet Nam’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh, is expected to chair the meeting, and Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief. Viet Nam will also convene a briefing on cooperation with [regional and sub-regional organisations](#), with a focus on ASEAN.

The Council is expected to receive updates on the activities of two UN regional offices. There will be a briefing on the UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel ([UNOWAS](#)) and a briefing in consultations on the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia ([UNRCCA](#)).

On African issues, there will be updates on the activities of the UN missions in [Libya](#) (UNSMIL) and [Mali](#) (MINUSMA). An adoption is scheduled at the end of the month to renew the Central African Republic sanctions regime and the mandate of its Panel of Experts.

Regarding [Yemen](#), the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) before mid-January. It will also receive the monthly briefing followed by consultations, on implementation of resolutions 2451 and 2452.

The other regular Middle East meetings are:

- [Syria](#), the regular briefings on the political and humanitarian situation and on chemical weapons;
- [Israel/Palestine](#), the quarterly open debate.

Meetings on situations in South America and Europe are also expected in January. The Council will hold a briefing followed by consultations on [Colombia](#) on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. On [Cyprus](#), Council members will be briefed in consultations on recent developments and the latest report on the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), and the Council is expected to renew the mandate of UNFICYP by the end of the month.

At press time, the Council had been unable to re-authorise the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism in Syria. If agreement is not reached by the end of 2019, members are likely to continue to negotiate a new mandate prior to the expiration of the current one on 10 January.

Council members will most likely follow closely developments in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, although no meetings on these issues were scheduled at press time.

## In Hindsight: The Security Council and Cyber Threats

The world’s first electronic computer, ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer), was completed in 1945, the year the United Nations was created. ENIAC’s applications were military: it was financed by the US Army. Nearly 75 years later, technology has vast reach and destabilising potential: a recent United Nations University report says that the combination of artificial intelligence (AI) and other powerful dual-use technologies places the world at “a time of technological rupture with implications for large-scale crisis prevention”. There are innumerable life-improving

applications, but a far-reaching dark side.

Technology has been used to misinform and deceive populations in ways that subvert national unity and coherence, whip up polarising and deadly hatreds, and disrupt public infrastructure. Facial recognition technology offers behavioural—and political—microtargeting and with it the potential to intimidate and control populations, potentially infringing on human rights including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. By weaponising societal disruption, cyber technology has brought a new elasticity to concepts of threats to

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council and Cyber Threats

international peace and security.

Military cyber applications are evolving rapidly. Many technologies are broadly accessible not only to states but also to cyber-mercenaries and terrorists. Their capacity for concealment and anonymity can make attribution of responsibility for violations of international law—and therefore accountability—extremely difficult.

The range of potentially aggressive actions coming under the cyber rubric is vast, yet apart from autonomous weapons systems and robotics, and the threat of a cyberattack on nuclear weapons systems, few of these actions carry the same level of threat perception as does a violent military or terrorist attack.

Cyber threats have been discussed in many international forums, including the First Committee of the UN's General Assembly and in two General Assembly-mandated processes, the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace in the Context of International Security (GGE). According to its founding resolution (A/RES/73/27), adopted in December 2018, the OEWG strives to “further develop the rules, norms and principles of responsible behaviour of States...and the ways for their implementation” regarding information and telecommunications in the context of international security. Unlike the OEWG, which is open to all member states, the GGE, with a similar mandate, is composed of 25 member states. A series of GGEs began in 2004, intended to help promote cooperation among states in addressing security threats from information and communications technology.

Several other intergovernmental, private sector, and civil society actors and processes contribute to proposed cyber norms, including Microsoft's Cybersecurity Tech Accord, the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, and the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace.

The Security Council has not yet held a formal, dedicated debate on the impact of information and communication technologies on the maintenance of international peace and security, though it has considered

the issue in informal meetings and as part of a broader discussion. In August 2019, a concept note for a ministerial-level debate on challenges to peace and security in the Middle East, organised by Poland, suggested that members consider “[h]ow to counteract cyber threats, including threats to energy infrastructure, in terms of promoting cooperative mechanisms for deterring and responding to significant cyber incidents in the Middle East” (S/2019/643), and several participants addressed this in their interventions (S/PV.8600).

Speaking at the annual “Hitting the Ground Running” workshop organised by Finland, in 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres told current and incoming Council members that cyber warfare had become a first-order threat to international peace and security and that “[m]assive cyberattacks could well become the first step in the next major war” (S/2018/404). He highlighted the need for the Council to conceptualise its role in anticipating, preventing and, if necessary, responding to such threats to global security.

To date, the two discussions held by Council members on cyber threats have been open Arria-formula meetings. Spain and Senegal jointly convened an Arria-formula meeting, “Cybersecurity and International Peace and Security”, in November 2016, and Ukraine did so in March 2017 with “Hybrid Wars as a Threat to International Peace and Security”, during which cyber threats were among those discussed.

The November 2016 Arria-formula meeting discussed the challenges resulting from the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) that can threaten international peace and security. It was pointed out that countering cyberattacks can be particularly challenging because of, among other factors, the speed at which these attacks can be carried out and the difficulty of attributing their source and ultimate responsibility. Council members were encouraged to explore ways to assess vulnerabilities and prevent cyberattacks while developing national strategies and policies, including sharing best practices, committing to international cooperation, and forming partnerships among governments, businesses, regional and sub-regional organisations, and civil society.

The 2017 Arria-formula meeting on hybrid wars covered a broad range of hostile interventions. According to the concept note for the meeting, these included “advanced weapons systems, cyber-attacks, interference with political processes, quasi-military activities, systematic dissemination of propaganda domestically and internationally, secret intelligence operations and abuse and manipulation of available international instruments... used to achiev[e] political objectives”. Hybrid warfare, the note went on to say, “involves actions designed to fall below military response thresholds to deny or de-legitimate a military response from the target”.

There have been some Council discussions of cyber threats at the subsidiary-body level. For example, the Counter-Terrorism Committee held a special meeting in late 2016 on preventing the exploitation of ICTs for terrorist purposes. Sanctions evasion is one Council entry point to this discussion. In February 2019, the Panel of Experts' report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) noted that DPRK actors have engaged in cyberattacks on financial institutions and infrastructure. The country also engaged in the illegal transfer of crypto-currencies and money laundering. The panel has stressed that the DPRK's use of cyberattacks 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 cyberattacks, which represents a significant portion of the DPRK's revenue stream. The panel recommended that the Council consider, when drafting future sanctions measures, the significance of the DPRK's use of cyber technology to evade sanctions.

Technology has amplified the reach of hate speech, which has been subject to Security Council sanctions since 2004 when the 1572 Côte d'Ivoire Sanctions Committee incorporated hate speech as a designation criterion. Hate speech was added to the South Sudan sanctions regime in 2016 and to that of the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2018. The report of the Myanmar Fact-Finding Mission—whose head, Marzuki Darusman, briefed the Council in October 2018—found that in Myanmar, Facebook had been “a useful instrument for

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council and Cyber Threats

those seeking to spread hate”. Peacekeeping actors have been threatened by disinformation or anti-UN campaigns on social media in the CAR, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere. This, along with the military cyber capabilities of a range of armed actors, is likely to remain a challenge to UN peace operations.

With Estonia’s interest in

cybersecurity—which it identified as one of its priorities during its campaign for the 2020-2021 term—the topic can be expected to become a focus of more formal discussion among Council members. Members bring different levels of familiarity in this field. In addition to some lack of trust among stakeholders and the sensitivity of the issue among several of the permanent

members, this factor may present initial obstacles to discussion and challenges to normative advances. At the same time, the declared priority of a member state may open the door for the Council’s more serious exploration of an issue which, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, presents a threat to international peace and security of the first order.

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## Status Update

### Iraq

On 3 December 2019, the Council received a briefing, followed by consultations, on Iraq (S/PV.8676). Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert briefed the Council on the Secretary-General’s latest report on UNAMI (S/2019/903) and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives (S/2019/865) and the most recent developments in the country. Roberto Mardini, Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the UN, and Monsignor Bashar Matti Warda, Archbishop of Erbil, also briefed. On 13 December 2019, Council members issued a press statement expressing grave concern at the loss of life of those demonstrating and at the killing, maiming, and arbitrary arrests of unarmed demonstrators, and welcomed efforts for an inclusive dialogue between the Government and people of Iraq (SC/14048).

### Somalia

On 4 December 2019, the Council adopted resolution 2500, renewing the counter-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia for 12 months.

### Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)

On 4 December 2019, Council members discussed under “any other business” in consultations the latest missile launches by the DPRK, including the launch of two missiles on November 28. Following the meeting, the EU members of the Council, joined by incoming member Estonia, made a joint

statement at the press stake-out condemning the provocative actions by the DPRK while also emphasising that ballistic missile launches represent a clear violation of Security Council resolutions. On 11 December, the Council received a briefing on non-proliferation related issues in the DPRK (S/PV.8682). Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, briefed the Council on the recent string of ballistic missile launches by the DPRK and rising tensions on the Korean peninsula. Council members expressed concern and called for the continuation of the dialogue on denuclearisation.

### Central Africa

On 6 December 2019, François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), briefed the Council (S/PV.8679) on the situation in Central Africa and the latest Secretary-General’s report on the activities of UNOCA (S/2019/913). Sasha Lezhnev, Deputy Director of Policy at the Enough Project, which supports peace and an end to mass atrocities in Africa’s deadliest conflict zones, also briefed the Council.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

On 6 December 2019, Council members held a meeting in consultations under “any other business” to discuss the situation in eastern DRC after an attack and protests took place against a compound of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in Beni. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre

Lacroix briefed members after visiting Beni earlier in the week. After the meeting, a US representative—as president of the Council—read out elements to the press. In the elements, Council members condemned the attacks against civilians and Ebola responders. The members also expressed their full support for MONUSCO’s efforts to protect civilians. On 19 December 2019, the Council adopted resolution 2502, renewing the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December 2020.

### Arria-formula Meeting on “Protection of the Environment during Armed Conflict”

On 9 December 2019, an Arria-formula meeting was convened on the “Protection of the Environment during Armed Conflict”. It was co-hosted by Council members Germany, Kuwait and Peru, and incoming member Estonia. Panelists included Assistant Secretary-General and head of the New York Office of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Satya Tripathi and Willem Zwiijnenburg, the Humanitarian Disarmament Leader at PAX. Tripathi maintained that UN technical and scientific entities need to work more closely with the UN’s peace and security architecture with respect to protecting the environment in armed conflict. Zwiijnenburg called for the Security Council to build its knowledge and expertise on the issue through formal briefings and open debates. Following statements by the panelists, Council members (except China) and incoming member Estonia made interventions.

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## Status Update since our December Forecast

### UN Criminal Tribunals

On 11 December 2019, the Security Council held its semi-annual debate (S/PV.8681) on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The IRMCT's president, Judge Carmel Agius, and prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, briefed on their respective assessment reports (S/2019/888). They also met with the Council's Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to the debate, on 9 December 2019.

### Sudan (Darfur)

On 12 December 2019, 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.8684). On 18 December 2019, the Council received the semi-annual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda related to the court's work on Darfur (S/PV.8691).

### Golan Heights

On 12 December 2019, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) (S/2019/923) and the most recent developments. On 19 December 2019, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2503, renewing UNDOF's mandate until 30 June 2020.

### Youth, Peace and Security

On 12 December 2019, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the role African youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts on the continent (S/PRST/2019/15).

### UNOWAS

On 16 December 2019, the Council held a briefing on intercommunal violence and

terrorism in West Africa (S/PV.8685). Briefings via VTC were given by Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) Mohamed Ibn Chambas and AU Peace and Security Commissioner Smaïl Chergui. The concept note for the meeting, organised by Côte d'Ivoire and the US, noted that it was being held to discuss the "shared drivers of intercommunal violence and violent extremism".

### Afghanistan

On 16 December 2019, the Council held its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan (S/PV.8687). Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), briefed on the Secretary-General's latest report on UNAMA (S/2019/935) and the most recent developments. Aisha Khurram, Afghanistan's current Youth Representative to the UN, also briefed. Also on 16 December 2019, the Council adopted resolution 2501, renewing for 12 months the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee.

### South Sudan

On 17 December 2019, the Council was briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan (S/2019/936) by Special Representative for South Sudan and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) David Shearer. Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, also briefed (S/PV.8689). Consultations followed the briefing.

### Subsidiary Bodies

On 17 December 2019, the Council held its annual briefing by the outgoing chairs of the Security Council subsidiary bodies (S/PV.8688). The briefings came from Ambassador Kacou Houadja Léon Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) on the 2127 Central African

Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee and the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations; Ambassador Anatolio Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) on the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee and the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee; Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) on the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee and the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions; Deputy Permanent Representative Luis Ugarelli (Peru) on the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee, the 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals, and the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee; and Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland) on the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee, the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, and the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee. The chairpersons shared their opinions on the status of their respective sanctions regimes, the role and efficacy of sanctions in general, use of the Committees' working methods, and issues to consider for the future.

### Iran (non-proliferation)

On 19 December 2019, the Council held its semi-annual briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme (S/PV.8695). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2019/934) and recent developments. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the EU to the UN, briefed on the activities related to the work of the Joint Commission, which the EU chairs. He also presented key findings from the report of the Joint Commission to the Council (S/2019/925). Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) briefed in his capacity as the Council's 2231 facilitator.



# Syria

## Expected Council Action

In January 2020, the Council expects to receive the monthly Syria briefings on the humanitarian situation, political developments, and the use of chemical weapons.

The cross-border/cross-line aid delivery mechanism, as mandated by resolution 2449 of 13 December 2018, expires on 10 January 2020. By 20 December 2019, it had yet to be renewed. It is not clear whether the Council will be able to agree on a formula for renewing the mandate prior to its expiration, given the difference of views regarding the number of border crossings that should remain open and the duration of the mandate.

## Key Recent Developments

On 10-11 December 2019, representatives of the Astana guarantors—Iran, Russia and Turkey—convened in Nur-Sultan (formerly Astana), Kazakhstan, for talks on developments in Idlib and the Constitutional Committee, among other issues. Representatives of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and the UN observed the meeting. This was the 14th round of talks as part of the Astana process. The Astana guarantors issued a joint communiqué at the end of the meeting in which, inter alia, they reaffirmed their “strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity” of Syria; “expressed their opposition to the illegal seizure and transfer of oil revenues that should belong” to Syria; welcomed the “signing of the Memorandum of 22 October 2019 [between Turkey and Russia] on stabilization in north-east Syria”; expressed “readiness to support the work of the [constitutional] committee”; and highlighted “the need to facilitate safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their original places of residence in Syria, ensuring their right of return and right to be supported”. The next round of talks in the Astana format is planned for March 2020.

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller briefed the Council on 19 December on the humanitarian situation in Syria. She emphasised the importance to the people of Syria of cross-border aid operations authorised by the Council, and stated that without this mechanism there

would be an immediate end to aid supporting millions of civilians, leading to “a rapid increase in hunger and disease resulting in death, suffering and further displacement.”

On 20 December 2019, the Security Council voted on two draft resolutions that would have renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access. The first draft—which was produced by Belgium, Germany and Kuwait—received 13 affirmative votes but was vetoed by China and Russia. It would have re-authorised use of three of the four border crossings (Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa on the Turkey/Syria border and AlYarubiyah on the Iraq/Syria border) that had been mandated by previous resolutions. The draft would have re-authorised these crossings “for a period of six months, followed by an additional period of six months unless the Council decides otherwise”. While the draft would not have re-authorised use of the al-Ramtha crossing on the Syria/Jordan border, it would have requested the Secretary-General to conduct within six months an independent written review of UN humanitarian cross-border and cross-line operations, including recommendations on how to further strengthen the UN Monitoring Mechanism and on the need to re-authorise the use of the al-Ramtha crossing.

The second draft, produced by Russia, failed to be adopted due to an insufficient number of affirmative votes, as only five members (China, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Russia, and South Africa) supported it. (Absent a veto by a permanent member, a resolution on non-procedural matters requires nine or more affirmative votes to be adopted.) The Russian draft called for a re-authorisation of two of the four existing border crossings and a six-month mandate (instead of one year, as had been the case in prior re-authorisations); it would not have re-authorised use of the al-Yarubiyah and al-Ramtha border crossings.

The Constitutional Committee reconvened in Geneva on 25-29 November 2019 for its second session; there was no progress, as the co-chairs from the government side and the opposition side were unable to agree on an agenda for the meeting. The government side wanted to discuss “national constants” such as terrorism and sanctions relief prior to

discussing constitutional matters. The opposition maintained that these issues could be addressed but not outside the context of the constitution.

There are signs that the Syrian government is distancing itself from the Constitutional Committee. In a 31 October television interview, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said that while the pro-government group of the Constitutional Committee “represents the viewpoint of the Syrian government...the Syrian government is not part of these negotiations nor of these discussions”. Similarly, the Syrian Arab News Agency, which is associated with the government’s Ministry of Information, has described the government side in the Constitutional Committee as the “Syrian Government-backed delegation”, suggesting that the delegation in Geneva has the government’s support but does not represent it.

Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen (via video-teleconference) and Rajaa Altalli, the co-founder and co-director of the Centre for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria, briefed the Council on the political track in Syria on 20 December 2019. Pedersen said that he saw no reason to convene the third session of the Constitutional Committee absent an agreed agenda by the parties. Altalli appealed to the Council to support civil society in Syria and to help with the release of detainees in the country.

On 4 December 2019, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed Council members in consultations on the Syria chemical weapons track. She reportedly said that gaps remain in Syria’s initial declaration to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 6 December 2019, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern in a statement that, despite the fragile ceasefire in north-eastern Syria, there was “a spike in what appears to be an indiscriminate use of...IEDs (improvised explosive devices) in residential neighborhoods and local markets. These attacks have mainly been carried out in areas under the control of Turkish forces and affiliated armed groups and, to a lesser extent, in areas under the control of Kurdish armed groups in northern and north-eastern Syria and in areas within the ‘de-escalation zone’

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/12](#) (8 October 2019) welcomed the Secretary-General’s announcement of the Constitutional Committee’s formation. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8696](#) (20 December 2019) was a meeting on the political situation in Syria. [S/PV.8694](#) (19 December 2019) was a meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria. [Secretary General’s Report S/2019/949](#) (16 December 2019) was a report on the humanitarian situation in Syria. [Other S/2019/962](#) (20 December 2019) was a Russian draft resolution on cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria that received five affirmative votes and failed to be adopted. [S/2019/961](#) (20 December 2019) was a Belgium/Germany/Kuwait draft resolution on cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria that was vetoed by China and Russia. [S/2019/915](#) (29 November 2019) was the OPCW report on Syria covering the period 24 October to 23 November 2019.

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# Syria

in Idlib and parts of Aleppo”, the spokesperson said. He also expressed concern over the continued military operations in the “de-escalation zone” of Idlib, including airstrikes and ground-based strikes by government forces and their allies, resulting in civilian casualties.

## Key Issues and Options

Given the difficulties in agreeing on an agenda for the second round of talks of the Constitutional Committee, a key issue for the Council is underscoring the importance for the parties to work together constructively in the Constitutional Committee and backing the facilitation efforts of the Special Envoy. Members may want to emphasise the need for the parties to engage earnestly and make the compromises necessary to get the negotiations back on track.

A related issue is the importance of creating an environment in Syria that is conducive to advancing the political process. Members may emphasise the importance of confidence-building measures to accompany the work of the Constitutional Committee. For example, in January’s meetings, they could reiterate the confidence-building potential of large-scale releases of detainees and abductees and information about missing persons. Council members could also highlight other potential confidence-building measures, including several of those outlined by the International Crisis Group’s 25 November 2019 report, “Ways Out of Europe’s Syria Reconstruction

Conundrum”, such as the “establishment of a technical committee to launch a property restitution process;...amnesty for army deserters; [and] regular access to formal and informal detention centres to qualified international organisations”.

The Board of Inquiry (BOI) on Syria is expected to finalise its work by late January. The BOI commenced its work on 30 September 2019 and is responsible for investigating attacks on facilities in north-west Syria on a “deconfliction” list that included health facilities whose coordinates had been provided to the parties to prevent their targeting. An option would be to ask the Secretariat to brief Council members on the BOI findings in a closed format to allow for a frank dialogue and exchange of views.

Another important issue for the Council is to support efforts to reach the millions of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance. If agreement is not reached on a resolution to re-authorise cross-border/cross-line humanitarian assistance by the end of 2019, efforts could be made to reach agreement on this matter prior to the 10 January 2020 mandate expiration.

## Council Dynamics

Several Council members share concerns with regard to Syria: that any repatriation of refugees into Syria is voluntary and conducted in a safe and dignified manner; and that civilians and civilian infrastructure are not targeted in

the conflict. There is also concern that the government has been distancing itself from the Constitutional Committee. Several members have further emphasised the importance of confidence-building measures to help support the political process, such as the release of detainees and abductees. European members of the Council often underscore that Syria should not receive reconstruction assistance without a meaningful and inclusive political process.

The difficult negotiations on the reauthorisation of cross-border aid have highlighted key differences among members on the humanitarian file. Most members underscore the critical importance of this Council-authorised mechanism. China and Russia, however, continue to express reservations. China has maintained that coordination with Syria on this mechanism could be strengthened and expressed concern that aid coming into the country could be diverted to terrorist groups; at the 14 November 2019 Council meeting on Syria, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said that the cross-border aid delivery system “is one of the most closely scrutinized... in the world” and that “evidence of systemic aid diversion” had not been detected. Russia has asserted that the cross-border aid delivery mechanism, as mandated by resolution 2449, does not respond to current realities on the ground.

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# Mali

## Expected Council Action

In January, the Council expects to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General’s quarterly report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Secretary-General’s bi-annual letter on the security situation, MINUSMA’s performance, and transition planning. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is likely to brief. Both the report and the letter are due in late December 2019.

The mandate of MINUSMA expires on 30 June 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

Terrorist groups have inflicted heavy casualties on the Malian armed forces in the north and central regions of Mali over recent months while continuing to fuel intercommunal violence in the centre. Meanwhile, implementation of the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement has remained limited.

On 30 September and 1 October 2019, attacks claimed by the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM) against the base of a Malian battalion of the regional counterterrorism Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S) in Boulkessi and

a Malian army base in Mondoro in central Mali killed at least 25 soldiers and left around 60 missing, according to the government. The Islamic State claimed a 1 November 2019 attack in north-eastern Mali in which 53 Malian soldiers and one civilian were killed. On 18 November 2019, 24 Malian soldiers were killed and 29 wounded in another attack in north-eastern Mali near the border with Niger, in which 17 militants were also killed, according to a Malian military spokesperson.

On 25 November 2019, 13 French soldiers were killed when two French helicopters collided during a joint operation against

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2480](#) (28 June 2019) renewed the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2020. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8670](#) (20 November 2019) was a briefing on the G5 Sahel Joint Force. [S/PV.8636](#) (8 October 2019) was a briefing on Mali. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13981](#) (9 October 2019) urged the accelerated implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and expressed increased concerns about the deteriorating security situation in central Mali. [Sanctions Committee Document SC/14018](#) (7 November 2019) was a press release on the 2374 Sanctions Committee mission to Mali.

# Mali

armed elements in Mali in the Liptako-Gourma area, the tri-border region with Burkina Faso and Niger. It was the largest single-day loss for France since intervening in Mali in 2013 and since establishing Operation Barkhane—a 4,500-strong counter-terrorism force that operates across the Sahel—in 2014.

The deteriorating security situation triggered protests in October and November 2019 in several cities, including the capital, Bamako, with demonstrators criticising the government, calling for more support for the military, and demanding that foreign forces, particularly French and MINUSMA troops, leave the country. France will host a summit in early 2020 with G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) to assess Operation Barkhane and counter-terrorism strategies in the region. The summit was called following the deaths of the 13 French soldiers, and postponed to January following an Islamic State-claimed attack in Niger on 10 December 2019 that killed 71 Nigerien soldiers.

Implementation of the 2015 peace agreement continues to be slow. The ongoing “inclusive national dialogue”, launched in September 2019 to reach consensual decisions on the major challenges facing Mali and on political reforms, has held up progress on issues such as the revision of the constitution and legislation on decentralisation. An agreement was reached on 28 November 2019 by the Technical Security Commission (created by the peace agreement to deal with security measures) to deploy around 1,300 former combatants of armed groups that have been trained and integrated into the Malian military to bases in the north. At press time, the Agreement Monitoring Committee still had not met since the cancellation of its planned meeting in September.

Following the Council’s decision in June 2019 to lift restrictions that had limited the provision of life consumables support to joint force units operating in Mali, in October 2019 MINUSMA received its first request from the G5 Sahel for such support for all FC-G5S contingents. During a 20 November Council briefing on the FC-G5S, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita reported that MINUSMA had approved and begun fulfilling the request for 429,000 litres of fuel and oil and 35,000 rations, having applied the UN’s human rights due-diligence policy.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

During the Council’s meeting on Mali on 8 October 2019, Ambassador José Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic), chair of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee, briefed on the committee’s activities during the previous nine months. From 16 to 18 October, Singer Weisinger led a committee delegation to Bamako. According to a press release, the delegation met with a range of interlocutors, including the High Representative for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, facilitators of the national inclusive dialogue, individuals listed on the 2374 sanctions list, representatives of signatory and non-signatory armed groups, civil society, MINUSMA and other international actors in Mali. While the delegation met with representatives from the Malian government, it was unable to meet with ministerial-level government officials. On 27 November, the Sanctions Committee met to discuss the Chair’s visit. On 19 December, the Committee approved the application of an assets freeze on the five individuals on whom the Committee imposed a travel ban in July 2019.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

The Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali, Alioune Tine, visited the country from 19 to 28 November 2019, following the killing on 1 November 2019 of 53 soldiers and one civilian, and attacks on the army bases in late September and early October 2019 in Boulkessi and Mondoro. He will present a report to the Human Rights Council during its 43rd regular session in March 2020. In a 2 December 2019 statement, Tine said that he is “gravely concerned at the continuing deterioration of the overall security situation, which has now reached a critical threshold”. He also highlighted worsening levels of violence, robbery, rape and kidnapping in Timbuktu, and said a resurgence of transnational crime was threatening social cohesion and was going unpunished. “It is time to recognise the inadequacy of the current security responses so Mali can move to more appropriate alternatives as soon as possible”, he said.

## Women, Peace and Security

During the 20 November 2019 meeting on the FC-G5S, Council members received a briefing by Assitan Diallo, president of the Association of African Women for Research and Development. She argued that “it is women and young people who pay the highest price when it comes to war” and that “there can be no peace or development in Mali without gender equality”. Diallo said that gender-based violence in Mali encompasses sexual slavery, gang rape, and early and forced marriage. She charged that the legal requirement of 30 percent female representation in institutions and processes that are supporting the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was “far from being respected”. Diallo also noted that women were underrepresented in the security and defence structures of the G-5 Sahel, preventing the full contribution of women

to regional peace and security. In the same vein, she stressed that the gender unit in the FC-G5S must have the capability to defend women’s rights robustly. Diallo called upon the Council to hold both MINUSMA and the FC-G5S accountable for gender mainstreaming in their operations. In a 21 November 2019 press statement on the FC-G5S, Council members reiterated their call for the “full, effective and meaningful participation” of women in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue remains implementing the 2015 peace agreement, particularly in the five priority areas specified by the Council in resolution 2480 when it renewed the mandate of MINUSMA in June 2019: constitutional reform, decentralisation, security sector reform, development of the north, and the full, effective and meaningful participation of women.

Other key issues will be the security situation, MINUSMA’s performance, and transition planning, all of which will be covered in a Secretary-General’s letter that the Council requested in resolution 2480 be submitted every six months, in addition to his quarterly reports. Specifically, the Council requested that this letter detail:

- information on security challenges in Mali, progress in mission operations, troop performance and rotations, as well as an update on discussions in the Instance de Coordination au Mali—which includes all the security presences—on the coordination of security responsibilities; and
- the implementation of the UN integrated strategic framework developed in early 2018, including a transition plan with a view to hand over relevant tasks to the UN Country Team.

Connected to this is assessing the impact on MINUSMA of the Council’s adding a second strategic priority for MINUSMA. In resolution 2480, the Council mandated MINUSMA, within its existing resources, to support the government in addressing the deteriorating situation in central Mali while continuing to devote close attention to the north. In practice, these tasks were to be performed without any troops added and with fewer resources than those originally proposed by the Secretary-General to the Fifth Committee. The Council may want to focus on how the expansion of tasks within existing resources has worked on the ground.



## Mali

Sanctions are a key tool for the Council. The sanctions committee may consider additional designations, while also engaging in outreach activities to increase understanding of the sanctions regime. A lack of understanding of the sanctions among Malian actors was one of the committee's observations during its visiting mission. In a possible press statement, often issued following Council meetings on Mali, members could recall their willingness to impose sanctions on individuals and entities obstructing the peace agreement's implementation,

including on the government and signatory and non-signatory groups.

### Council Dynamics

Members have been frustrated by the slow implementation of the peace agreement, which is why in resolution 2480 the Council specified priority areas in which it expects to see progress. The US is the most vocal among members in underscoring that the parties are not doing enough to implement the agreement. The deteriorating security situation in Mali and the region more

broadly is of growing concern for members, reflected by the upcoming summit France will host with G5 Sahel heads of state.

Niger, which is being profoundly affected by the instability in neighbouring Mali and incurred what is reportedly the deadliest incident in its military's history in the 10 December attack, will replace Côte d'Ivoire on the Council in January 2020. Estonia, which is also an incoming Council member, recently approved an increase in the military personnel it contributes to Operation Barkhane. France is the penholder on Mali.

## West Africa and the Sahel

### Expected Council Action

In January, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), will brief the Council to present the semi-annual UNOWAS report, which the Council should receive by the end of December 2019.

### Key Recent Developments

The security situation in the Sahel has deteriorated as terrorist groups continue to destabilise much of Mali and Burkina Faso, fuel intercommunal violence, and increasingly threaten coastal West African states. The terrorist group Boko Haram and a splinter group, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), also remain a threat to north-east Nigeria and to other countries in the Lake Chad Basin.

Mali's military has endured heavy casualties in recent months while implementation of a 2015 peace agreement stalled (for more about Mali, see our brief in this month's Forecast). Violence in Burkina Faso has internally displaced at least 560,000 people by early December 2019 (compared with 87,000 people at the end of January 2019), according to OCHA, and has created an "unprecedented humanitarian emergency" in that country, with 1.5 million people requiring assistance. Among recent developments, on 18 November, gunmen killed at least 37 people in an attack on a convoy carrying employees of a Canadian mining company. A 1 December attack by gunmen during a church service in Hantoukoura in eastern Burkina Faso resulted in 14 deaths. On

10 December, an attack claimed by the Islamic State on a base in Inates, western Niger, killed 71 soldiers—reportedly the deadliest incident in the history of Niger's military.

Efforts continued to stand up the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S, made up of units from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), but as discussed during a 20 November 2019 Council briefing, the force faces persistent challenges that prevent it from becoming fully operational. Its inability to stem the violence in the region prompted the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to increase its engagement in addressing the terrorism threat. During a 14 September 2019 extraordinary summit in Ouagadougou on terrorism, ECOWAS member states committed to increased security cooperation and to mobilising \$1 billion for counter-terrorism efforts in the 2020–2024 period. In the margins of the Group of Seven (G7) summit in August, France and Germany announced the launch of a new partnership for security and stability in the Sahel. The initiative calls for extended military cooperation, enhanced efforts to strengthen governance, in particular rule of law institutions, and economic development, and encompasses a broader focus on the ECOWAS region. On 15 December, leaders of G5 Sahel countries met in Niamey, following the deadly attack in Inates, calling for closer cooperation and international support in fighting terrorism.

On 19 November 2019, Security Council members received the report of an

independent strategic review of UNOWAS and the Secretary-General's observations and recommendations, which were aligned with the report. Abdoulaye Bathily, the former head of the UN Office for Central Africa, led the review, which was quite positive. The report observed that UNOWAS plays a critical role in conflict prevention and sustaining peace and that it has carried out its mandate effectively. The review highlighted the increased demands and expectations facing UNOWAS, however. These include more calls for its good offices in the context of political or electoral tensions. UNOWAS has also been expected to provide support to post-transition countries after the closure of UN missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone and, looking ahead, is likely to play the same role in Guinea-Bissau after the possible conclusion of the UN mission there at the end of 2020. It has also taken on a stepped-up role in The Gambia and Burkina Faso. The review also said that UNOWAS should give more attention to structural prevention amidst the deteriorating security situation and invest more in its rule of law and good governance mandate.

Among its recommendations, the review said that UNOWAS should enhance collaboration with ECOWAS and other sub-regional organisations by, among other things, establishing a liaison office with ECOWAS in Abuja. It flagged the need for UNOWAS to promote greater synergies between the UN system and entities in the region in the context of

**UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/7 (7 August 2019) was on West Africa and the Sahel. Security Council Letter S/2019/890 (15 November 2019) contained the report on the strategic review of UNOWAS. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8685 (16 December 2019) was a briefing on intercommunal violence and terrorism. S/PV.8670 (20 November 2019) was a meeting on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.



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## West Africa and the Sahel

the UN development system reforms. Meeting these demands would require increased human and financial resources for UNOWAS, according to the report and the Secretary-General's observations.

On 27 November 2019, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue on the review with Bathily, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita, and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Chair Guillermo Fernández de Soto Valderrama (Colombia). At press time, the Council was considering these recommendations for the mandate renewal of UNOWAS, set to expire on 31 December 2019. It was expected that the Council would renew the mandate for a three-year period through an exchange of letters between its president and the Secretary-General.

Chambas last briefed the Council (via VTC) on 16 December 2019, along with AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smaïl Chergui, during a meeting on intercommunal violence and terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel.

### Key Issues and Options

The worsening security situation in the Sahel and the growing risk of spillover into non-Sahel countries are key issues, as are Chambas' good offices activities around election-related and political tensions. In 2020 alone, there are high-stakes presidential elections in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger and Togo.

Illicit trafficking of drugs, intercommunal violence, and piracy are key issues, which at times are linked with terrorist groups. The FC-G5S, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin, and ECOWAS' new commitments make up important security initiatives. Also important are efforts to address structural causes of instability, such as underdevelopment, poor governance and climate change, through initiatives such as the UN's Sahel Strategy, the G5 Priority Investment Programme and the Lake Chad Basin regional stabilisation strategy. Implementation of the Mali Peace Agreement is also considered critical for stabilising the Sahel.

One option for the Council would be to continue to organise periodic meetings on transnational problems in West Africa and the Sahel, the better to understand their root causes and linkages, for more informed Council decisions on specific conflict situations, as was the purpose of the 16 December 2019 meeting on intercommunal violence.

### Council Dynamics

Members share concerns about the worsening security situation in the region, but it is not clear what immediate concrete measures the Council can take. Most members do not consider UN peacekeeping to be appropriate for conducting counter-terrorism activities and thus seek to support regional forces such as the FC-G5S and

the MNJTF. Further debate on the divisive issue of authorising UN assessed contributions for the FC-G5S has been put off to see whether the force can become effective with the current funding it has received.

Consistent with the findings of the strategic review, members view UNOWAS as playing a significant conflict-prevention role and have valued Chambas' good offices activities. As part of such efforts, Chambas frequently seeks coordination with ECOWAS and the AU in UNOWAS' messaging and actions. Overall, most members appeared to support the review's proposals. This includes the recommendation that UNOWAS enhance its coordination with sub-regional organisations and UN entities and country teams in the region. At the informal interactive dialogue, several members also expressed their support for increasing the mission's resources. At press time, however, recommendations that would significantly increase UNOWAS' budget, such as establishing an ECOWAS liaison office, appeared unlikely to receive support from the US, which has been seeking to reduce UN peace operations' costs.

The West African Council member traditionally serves as penholder on UNOWAS. During 2019, Côte d'Ivoire and Belgium served as co-penholders. Starting in January, incoming member Niger will succeed Côte d'Ivoire.

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## The UN Charter

### Expected Council Action

In January 2020, Council president Viet Nam will convene a ministerial-level open debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter". Viet Nam's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh, is expected to chair the meeting, and Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief. A presidential statement may be adopted during the meeting.

### Background

Viet Nam is organising the open debate ahead of the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter in June 2020, as an opportunity for member states to reaffirm their commitment to upholding Charter principles, particularly in the context of international peace and security. Council members could also reflect on possible actions that the Council, the UN system as a whole, regional

and sub-regional organisations, and member states can take to uphold the Charter.

The concept note circulated by Viet Nam ahead of the meeting notes that in the aftermath of the Second World War, the UN Charter has helped the international community make significant strides in achieving progress towards international peace and security. The Charter affirms the primacy of conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE UN CHARTER** Security Council Letters S/2018/85 (1 February 2018) was the concept note for the 21 February 2018 ministerial briefing on the theme "Purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security". S/2016/103 (1 February 2016) was the concept note for the 15 February 2016 ministerial-level open debate on the UN Charter. S/2015/87 (3 February 2015) was the concept note for the 23 February 2015 ministerial-level open debate on the UN Charter. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8185 (21 February 2018) was a ministerial-level briefing on the "purposes and principles of the UN Charter in the maintenance of international peace and security". Secretary-General António Guterres and former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon briefed the Council. S/PV.7621 (15 February 2016) was a ministerial-level open debate on the topic "Respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations as a key element for the maintenance of international peace and security". S/PV.7389 (23 February 2015) was a ministerial-level open debate on the UN Charter, marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of the UN and commemorating the end of World War II.

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## The UN Charter

disputes. The concept note highlights that the Security Council—which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, according to the Charter—has at times experienced difficulties responding to crises swiftly and effectively.

To facilitate discussion about how the Security Council can better respond to threats to international peace and security through collective action, the concept note invites participants to discuss in the meeting how member states in general, and the Council in particular, should employ the tools provided in the Charter to uphold international peace and security; to reflect on examples of successful interventions by the Council, as well as failures and lessons learned; and to consider how to improve collaboration between various international actors to promote adherence to the Charter, among other issues.

There have been numerous Council meetings focused on the UN Charter in recent years. On 23 February 2015, a ministerial-level open debate was convened at the initiative of China with the intention of reaffirming commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter during the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the UN's founding. The meeting was chaired by China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, and 79 member states participated, including those on the Council. Then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon underscored the importance of sovereignty to the international order but emphasised that sovereignty comes with responsibilities and that

timely “action to prevent conflict and protect human rights helps to strengthen sovereignty, rather than challenge or restrict it”, given that human rights violations “kill and displace people, divide communities, undermine economies and destroy cultural heritage”.

During its February 2016 presidency of the Council, Venezuela organised a ministerial-level open debate focused on the topic “Respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations as a key element for the maintenance of international peace and security”. Venezuela's Foreign Minister, Delcy Rodríguez Gómez, presided, while 64 member states participated, including Council members. In his briefing, Ban reiterated his emphasis on prevention “through both early warning and early action”.

Kuwait initiated a ministerial-level briefing on the “purposes and principles of the UN Charter in the maintenance of international peace and security” on 21 February 2018. Both Guterres, who by then was Secretary-General, and Ban, briefed. The meeting was presided over by Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah. Guterres said that the tools provided in the Charter must be used with greater determination and constantly updated. In this context, he emphasised the importance of conflict prevention, the adaptation of UN peacekeeping to current realities, and partnerships between the Security Council and regional and sub-regional organisations. Ban said

that in order to meet today's international peace and security challenges, “the Security Council should undergo reforms to be more flexible in its decision-making process”, further stating that “reform of the Security Council is long overdue”.

### Council Dynamics

Different political outlooks, including with respect to the interpretation of the UN Charter, are at the crux of the divide between Council members. Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, for example, contains the principle of non-intervention. It states that the UN is not to “intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state”. The principle is cited often by Council members such as China and Russia in country-specific situations, such as Burundi, Myanmar and Syria, as a rationale against more forceful Council action, which in their view undermines state sovereignty. On the other hand, Article 2(7) adds that “this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII”. The exception to the principle of non-intervention is quoted by other Council members, including France, the UK and the US, as a basis for a more proactive approach by the Council. They maintain that state sovereignty should not be a shield against actions to protect civilians from massive human rights violations and are more inclined to push for coercive measures.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In January, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), which expires on 15 January 2020. The Council is also expected to receive its monthly briefing on Yemen with Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock may brief on the humanitarian situation, and General Abhijit Guha, the head of UNMHA and chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), is likely to brief in

consultations. The Yemen Panel of Experts is due to submit its final report to the 2140 Sanctions Committee before providing it to the Council by 28 January.

### Key Recent Developments

Yemen's Houthi rebel group and Saudi Arabia have continued the talks they started in September 2019, which have contributed to a de-escalation in hostilities. Saudi Arabia also remains closely involved in overseeing implementation of the Riyadh Agreement signed in November 2019 between the

internationally recognised Yemeni government and the southern secessionists known as the Southern Transitional Council (STC). The Special Envoy, meanwhile, continues to push for implementation of the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement between the government and the Houthis, including its main component, demilitarising the port city of Hodeidah. The multiple processes seemed to indicate the greatest willingness among parties to restart negotiations on a comprehensive political solution since the failed peace talks in 2016 in Kuwait.

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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. **Secretary-General's Letter S/2019/823** (14 October 2019) was a review of UNMHA. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8672** (22 November 2019) was a briefing on Yemen.

# Yemen

In a statement issued on 26 November 2019, the Saudi-led coalition, which backs the Yemeni government against the Houthis, announced that it was releasing 200 Houthi prisoners. That followed the Houthis' release of 290 detainees in October. The coalition also said that in cooperation with the World Health Organization, medical flights would be permitted out of Sana'a airport, which has been closed to civilian air traffic since August 2016. On 28 November, 128 prisoners were released by the coalition and returned to Sana'a. No medical flights had taken place by press time.

The de-escalation in hostilities that has accompanied the Houthi-Saudi talks has appeared to hold, despite reports of fighting and coalition airstrikes. Fighting around Hodeidah prompted a 25 November 2019 statement by General Guha in which he said he was "deeply concerned by the escalation" and noted an "increase in the number of airstrikes undertaken in the past 72 hours".

Ten civilians were killed and 18 injured in a shelling attack on Al-Raqw market in Monabbih District in Sa'ada governorate on 20 November, while on 27 November, an attack on the same market resulted in at least ten civilians killed and 22 injured, several of whom were Ethiopians, according to OCHA, which did not attribute responsibility for the incidents. Still, the Houthis have refrained from conducting cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia since announcing the cessation of attacks on Saudi territory on 20 September 2019.

On 5 December 2019, clashes erupted between government and STC forces around Zinjibar, the Abyan provincial capital. It was the first instance of fighting since the two sides signed the Riyadh Agreement.

As discussed during consultations on Yemen on 12 December 2019, the parties to the Riyadh Agreement have not met initial deadlines for security arrangements and for forming a new, "technocrat", government. Griffiths apparently noted during the consultations that this was not a surprise, since the deadlines had been highly ambitious. Lowcock and Guha also briefed. On 18 and 19 December, Guha chaired a meeting with the government and Houthi representatives

to the RCC to discuss implementation of the Hodeidah agreement and improving humanitarian access in Hodeidah governorate.

## Key Issues and Options

Restarting negotiations for a broader solution to the conflict while at the same time advancing the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement and the Riyadh Agreement are key issues.

The Yemeni government has continued to appear hesitant about restarting peace talks before the Stockholm Agreement's implementation. The one-year anniversary of the agreement passed on 13 December 2019 with only limited progress in implementing its three components: the agreement on Hodeidah, a prisoner exchange, and a statement of understanding on Taiz.

Regarding the Riyadh Agreement, almost none of the deadlines for implementing provisions dealing with political and security arrangements have been met at press time. Restarting political talks will be contingent on the government and the STC agreeing on a joint delegation as the Riyadh Agreement specifies that the government delegation to future peace talks is to include the STC.

An issue related to future peace talks is how to make these more inclusive, involving not only the STC but other sectors of Yemeni society, such as political parties and geographical power structures not necessarily represented by the Houthis or the government, as well as women and youth. Another question is around eventually consolidating these processes under a UN-led negotiations process. The Special Envoy was not directly involved in the Saudi-led mediation that produced the Riyadh Agreement nor current efforts to implement the deal, nor is he directly involved in the Saudi-Houthi talks.

The Council may continue to monitor implementation of the agreements and their components closely, with the option of reacting with statements to progress or setbacks. The Council could consider undertaking a visiting mission to the region to encourage peace talks and an inclusive process for a comprehensive political settlement.

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 UN has reported an increasingly constrained operating environment for humanitarian actors in the Houthi-controlled north. Another issue of concern is Houthi authorities' failure to permit access for a UN inspection mission of the SAFER oil tanker located in the Red Sea near Hodeidah, which, because of its age and lack of maintenance since 2015, risks causing a major environmental disaster.

Regarding UNMHA, a review of the mission submitted by the Secretary-General in October 2019 found that its 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. The Council may renew the mandate for six months, as has been the practice since UNMHA's establishment in January 2019. It could consider reducing the reporting cycle to every two months, rather than the current monthly cycle.

## Council Dynamics

Recent months have seen the emergence of consensus among Council members in wanting the parties to restart a political process concurrently with efforts to implement the Stockholm Agreement. Even coalition member Kuwait changed its public position to support moving forward simultaneously with both processes and has offered to host future negotiations, whereas it previously underscored the need to implement the Stockholm accord before returning to talks. Tunisia replaces Kuwait as of 1 January as the Arab member of the Council.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador Inga Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is succeeding Peru as chair of the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee.



# Colombia

## Expected Council Action

In January 2020, the Council will receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu on recent developments and the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the mission, which at press time was due on 26 December 2019. As was the practice in 2018 and 2019, the Council is likely to issue a press statement following the 90-day briefing.

The mandate of the verification mission expires on 25 September 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

The overall political situation in Colombia has remained complex. On 27 October 2019, the country held its first local and municipal elections since the signing of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Electoral campaigns in Colombia have for decades been marked by violence, and the 2019 campaign also saw cases of election-related killings, kidnappings and threats. On election day, five people were killed in election-related incidents, compared to 28 killed on the day of the last local elections prior to the signing of the agreement, held in 2015.

Centro Democrático (CD), the party of Colombian President Ivan Duque, suffered setbacks in the October 2019 elections, especially in the big cities. Its candidates lost the mayoral elections in Medellín, a CD stronghold, and in the capital city of Bogotá, whose mayor has traditionally been considered the second most powerful politician in the country after the president.

Candidates associated with FARC-EP running either for the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC), the political party founded by the FARC-EP after the laying-down of weapons, or for other opposition parties, won in a handful of races, gaining seven seats in different municipal councils, one in a provincial assembly, one in an administrative local assembly, and three mayoral posts.

The government faced further crisis when on 5 November a report from an investigation into an August operation by the Colombian military was presented in the Senate by Senator Roy Barreras, revealing that eight of the 15 people killed in the bombing were minors aged between 12 and 17 years. The operation, a military offensive against an alleged rebel base in the Caquetá province, came hours after two former leaders of the FARC-EP, Luciano Marín (known as Iván Márquez), one of the chief negotiators of the agreement, and Seuxis Pausías Hernández (known as Jesús Santrich), released a video in which they announced a "new phase of armed struggle" in Colombia. The government declared that the military operation had been carefully planned and properly conducted and had resulted in the elimination of one of the dissident FARC-EP leaders. The November revelations that several of those killed were children who, with various others, were likely to be civilians, led the Senate to plan a motion to censure Defence Minister Guillermo Botero. Botero resigned the next day, and on 12 November 2019 Duque appointed his then Foreign Minister, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, to the post, appointing as foreign minister Claudia Blum, a politician and diplomat who served as Colombia's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York in 2006–2010.

High levels of violence have continued, especially in areas from which FARC-EP had withdrawn, with targeted assassinations of indigenous and social leaders and human rights defenders. The Cauca department, which Council members visited in July 2019, has had particularly high numbers of killings recently. Nineteen people were killed in Cauca over the four-day period from 30 August to 2 September 2019. On 29 October 2019, five people from the Nasa indigenous community were shot dead and six others were severely injured by gunfire in the Tacueyó reservation in Cauca. Between 1 January and 1 November 2019, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Colombia, 52 persons, including 11 human rights defenders, were killed in the Nasa territory in Cauca.

Numerous demonstrations in different parts of the country, including a national teachers' strike in September, have condemned the killings. The November disclosure of the eight minors, and possibly other civilians, killed by the military on 29 August sparked another wave of mass demonstration, starting on 21 November 2019 when there was also a national strike.

In addition to decrying the continuing targeted killings, the protesters also demonstrated against the government's failure to improve the economic situation of large sectors of Colombian society, especially in rural areas, as well as the return to a phenomenon characteristic of the civil war period known as "the false positives", whereby civilians killed in military operations were presented as combatants in official reports. In several demonstrations, the full implementation by the government of the peace agreement was among the participants' demands.

The Council last discussed Colombia on 10 October 2019, when it received a briefing from Ruiz Massieu and held consultations on the topic. On 15 October, Council members issued a press statement reiterating their unanimous support for the peace process in Colombia while deploring the 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.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 30 October 2019, a spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement that OHCHR had signed a Host Country Agreement with Colombia to remain and operate in the country with its full mandate—including technical cooperation and human rights monitoring and reporting—for a further three years. On the occasion of Human Rights Day on 10 December 2019, a spokesman for OHCHR said that the office had documented killings of at least 86 social leaders and human rights defenders in Colombia in 2019.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2487](#) (12 September 2019) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia until 25 September 2020. [Secretary-General's Report S/2019/780](#) (1 October 2019) was the latest report on the work of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. [Security Council Visiting Mission Report S/2019/827](#) (18 October 2019) was the report from the 11-14 July 2019 visiting mission to Colombia. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8639](#) (10 October 2019) was a briefing by Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13988](#) (15 October 2019) was the Council's most recent press statement on Colombia.

# Colombia

## Key Issues and Options

With the mission's mandate focused on verifying aspects of the agreement related to the political, economic and social reincorporation of the FARC-EP, personal and collective security guarantees, and comprehensive programmes of security and protection measures for communities and organisations in conflict-affected areas, Council members will want to hear how the recent political and social turmoil may have affected the implementation of the agreement.

The need to implement the peace agreement fully—as opposed to focusing on only select aspects—continues to be an issue, acknowledged by the Council in a series of recent statements that stressed the interlocking nature of the different elements of the accord.

The UN verification mission, which started its operations in September 2017, was established in accordance with the 2016 agreement in which the parties requested the UN to set up a political mission. The

agreement stipulated an initial three-year duration for the mission, “renewable if necessary”. That initial three-year period will come to an end in September 2020. The resolutions renewing the mandate of the mission have left it unchanged. Resolution 2487 adopted in September 2019 expressed the Council's willingness to work with the government of Colombia to extend the mission beyond 2020, should the parties desire. It is likely, however, that the parties may suggest some changes with the expiry of the current mandate, and the Council may wish to begin holding Colombia-focused discussions to consider ways in which the mandate could be modified to fit the evolving situation on the ground.

Given the important role of the international element of the verification process provided by the UN, which is recognised by the parties and by Colombians at large, the Council might consider a visiting mission to Colombia in the first half of 2020 to signal its ongoing support as well as its concerns

about the violence, to encourage full implementation of the agreement, and to hear the views of local actors regarding the possible next phase of Council involvement.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their overall support for the peace process. While they have generally been deferential towards the government, some differences in tone emerged in 2019. Several members have been critical of the government on issues such as the continuing security vacuum in areas from which FARC-EP withdrew under the agreement and an uneven approach to implementing different aspects of the agreement. Other members objected to singling out human rights defenders as a separate category among victims of targeted assassinations.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

# Libya

## Expected Council Action

In January, 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, Ambassador Jürgen Schulz, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany.

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

Libya's capital, Tripoli, has been the scene of fighting for over eight months, starting on 4 April 2019 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 Libyan 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. On 12 December 2019, Haftar, using sharp rhetoric, announced a “broad and total assault” on Tripoli. At press time, there are no confirmed reports of Haftar's forces having made advances into the city.

On 27 November 2019, the internationally recognised and UN-backed GNA and Turkey signed two agreements, one on cooperation on military and security matters and one on maritime boundary delimitation. The military cooperation agreement, which was approved by the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs commission on 16 December 2019, enables the GNA to request Turkish troops, among other things, which would significantly step up the military support Turkey has been providing to the GNA. The maritime agreement, which affects drilling rights, has further complicated the relationship between Turkey and Greece, with the latter expelling

the Libyan ambassador and arguing that the agreement violates international law by infringing on Greek sovereignty. The Libyan House of Representatives, based in Tobruk and allied with the GNA, contested the validity of the agreement. Greece sent a letter to the Council on 9 December 2019, asking the Council to condemn the agreement.

The Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee issued its final report on 29 November 2019. It named Jordan, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates as supplying weapons to the conflict parties in Libya, “routinely and sometimes blatantly” in violation of the arms embargo. Armed groups from Chad and Sudan are also involved in the fighting for different sides of the conflict; however, the panel assessed their influence on the outcomes of the fighting as limited.

The panel called the arms embargo “ineffective”, citing Jordan and the United Arab Emirates as major arms suppliers for forces

**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. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8667](#) (18 November 2019) was the latest meeting on UNSMIL and Libya sanctions. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2019/914](#) (29 November 2019) was the latest final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

# Libya

allied with Haftar, and Turkey for forces allied with the GNA. This support was acknowledged by members of the GNA, including President Fayeze al-Sarraj. In one instance, vehicles from Turkey were received on behalf of Salah Badi's Al Samoud brigade, which is affiliated with the GNA. The Council designated Salah Badi as subject to sanctions in November 2018. The panel further noted that a Haftar-affiliated battalion received training in Jordan, also in non-compliance with Council sanctions. The use of unmanned combat aerial vehicles (drones) has "escalated", with Haftar's forces having more advanced equipment at the time of publication of the report.

The panel described the increased interference of foreign elements, which includes armed groups from Chad and Sudan, as a "direct threat to the security and stability of Libya", since this foreign presence "may lead to further instability" in the war-torn country. The Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement is reportedly supporting forces allied with the GNA, while other Sudanese armed groups are supporting forces allied with Haftar. The Sudanese paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) are reported to support Haftar's forces as well. The panel concluded that Sudan and the RSF's General Mohamed Hamdan "Hemeti" Dagalo are in non-compliance with Council sanctions. In addition, different Chadian armed groups support Haftar's and GNA forces. According to Libyan and US officials, mercenaries of the private but reportedly Kremlin-affiliated Russian military company Wagner Group are also involved on the ground in Libya in support of Haftar.

The panel further concluded that neither side has the military capacity to win the conflict, with the frontlines remaining unchanged since April. According to the report, the external support to both sides continues to enforce the proxy character of the conflict in post-2011 Libya.

Individuals listed for targeted sanctions continue to operate in Libya, including Abd al-Rahman al-Milad, who is reportedly working with GNA-affiliated fighters. Mohamed Khashlaf, head of the Shuhada al Nasr brigade who is sanctioned for his leading role in the smuggling of migrants, continues to be paid by the GNA and is in charge of securing the Zawiyah oil complex, Libya's largest refinery.

The self-styled eastern-based "National

Oil Corporation", that exists in parallel to the National Oil Corporation of the GNA, continues to try to export crude oil, which is illicit according to resolution 2441. The panel registered four such attempts by the "National Oil Corporation" during the reporting period, with the latter stating its goal of becoming a legitimate institution that controls all of Libya's oil. The report further indicates that the eastern "Central Bank" of Libya continues to contract companies to print money.

In August 2019, 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". In support of Salamé's second step, five meetings were held in Berlin, the latest on 10 December, convened by Germany and co-led with UNSMIL.

On 18 November 2019, Salamé briefed the Council on the latest developments in Libya. On 2 December, Council members issued a press statement on that meeting.

On 6 November 2019, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda delivered her semi-annual briefing on recent developments concerning cases in Libya.

At press time, the UN's 2019 humanitarian response plan for Libya of \$201.6 million was funded at close to 50 percent, with \$101.3 million outstanding.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

During the 18 November 2019 meeting on Libya, Schulz was unable to brief the Council in his position as chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee because the committee could not reach consensus on his statement, specifically with regard to a proposed reference to the case of German-Tunisian national Moncef Kartas, one of the panel's arms experts, who was arrested and detained on espionage charges by Tunisian authorities on 26 March 2019. According to the UN Spokesperson, this was "in violation of the privileges and immunities that have been granted to Mr. Kartas". On 21 May 2019, a Tunisian appeals court decided to release Kartas, and he was able to return to Germany. The case against him is still open.

On 25 November 2019, the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee briefed the committee on its final report.

## Women, Peace and Security

On 5 November 2018, the Council extended the

mandate of the Panel of Experts until 15 February 2020 with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). The abstentions were prompted by a provision in what is now resolution 2441 that contains a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctioning individuals for acts that "include but are not limited to planning, directing or committing acts involving sexual and gender-based violence". In its 9 December 2019 report, the panel identified "individuals that had more than likely been subjected to abuse and sexual and gender-based violence". However, "the necessary evidential levels for reporting to the Committee could not be met". The panel elaborated that they were, among other things, unable to access confidential locations where interviews with victims might be conducted or to obtain the expert opinion of independent trauma and psychological counsellors.

During the 18 November 2019 briefing, Council members were also briefed by Rida Ahmed Al Tubuly, director and co-founder of Together We Build It, an organisation advocating for women's roles in a formal peace process. She called on the international community as well as UNSMIL to "redesign the negotiating table" by redistributing power and making it gender-sensitive and inclusive. According to Al Tubuly, this change can be achieved if the Council sets an example by implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

## 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.

An ongoing issue is the military escalation, which threatens to deepen long-standing political and economic divisions between different parts of Libya, contributing to the overall instability of the country. 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 that covers the whole country 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 continue to support Haftar militarily. As stated in the final report



# Libya

by the Panel of Experts, militias affiliated with the GNA also receive military support from abroad. Tunisia, which joins the Council in January for its 2020-2021 term, is expected

to make Libya one of its priority issues.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, sharing the pen with Germany on the sanctions file. Ambassador Schulz, Germany's Deputy

Permanent Representative, chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

## Cyprus

### Expected Council Action

In January 2020, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) ahead of its 31 January expiry. Special Representative and head of mission Elizabeth Spehar is expected to brief on the latest UNFICYP report and recent developments. A representative from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs may also brief.

### Key Recent Developments

The Council is approaching another UNFICYP mandate renewal in January, which will take place against the backdrop of a lack of any meaningful developments on the political front. While the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders maintained limited engagement with each other in 2019, the unification talks remain at an impasse since the collapse of the latest round of negotiations in July 2017.

In an effort to invigorate the political process, Secretary-General António Guterres hosted an informal meeting with Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinçi in Berlin on 25 November 2019. In a statement issued after the meeting, Guterres said that the Cypriot leaders agreed that the current status quo is not sustainable and they both stressed the importance of reaching a solution to the Cyprus issue within a foreseeable timeframe. Guterres also noted that he would be willing to explore the possibility of organising an informal meeting with Cypriot parties and the three guarantor powers (Greece, Turkey and the UK).

Four days before the Berlin meeting, Council members discussed in consultations the latest Secretary-General's report on his good offices in Cyprus. Following the meeting, they agreed on press elements in which they welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to host a meeting in Berlin and called

on the Cypriot leaders to build on previous convergences and renew their commitment to settle the Cyprus issue.

The Secretary-General's good offices report did not contain any substantial information on the political process beyond what has been reported in the media. The Secretary-General has been explicit in this and his previous reports that before starting negotiations, the leaders should first agree on the terms of reference, which would represent a starting point for a negotiated solution. During the reporting period, Jane Holl Lute, who was appointed by the Secretary-General to conduct preliminary consultations, has continued her interactions with the Cypriot parties on finalising the terms of reference. The Secretary-General, however, did not provide any details about the contents of Lute's discussions with the parties.

The Republic of Cyprus and Turkey remain locked in a dispute over the exploration of hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus. Over the past few months, Turkey has deployed several of its vessels in the area to start 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 in the area of its continental shelf and are therefore legitimate. Turkey has also maintained that it will protect the rights of Turkish Cypriots and that they are entitled to receive benefits from the hydrocarbon resources.

The EU has repeatedly condemned Turkey's exploration and drilling activities, calling them illegitimate. The EU Council has agreed to sanction those involved in illegal activities off the coast of Cyprus. In early December 2019, the EU foreign ministers agreed on a legal framework for the sanctions, paving the way for targeting specific individuals and entities which, at press time, have not been designated.

The Republic of Cyprus has also sought legal recourse on this matter and in December filed an application against Turkey before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Turkey does not recognise the court's jurisdiction.

### Key Issues and Options

At the moment, the Council is primarily concerned with the lack of substantial progress in the unification talks and remote prospects for advancing the political settlement of the Cyprus problem. In addressing this, the Council could consider taking a more proactive approach to revitalising the process. One option would be to explore changing the mandate of UNFICYP, including options for downsizing and a possible exit strategy.

Developments related to the broader political process have traditionally played a crucial role in guiding the negotiations on the mandate renewal. For over a year, Lute has been consulting with the parties on the way forward in that process. So far, Council members have received few, if any, substantial details about Lute's engagement with the parties. Ahead of the mandate renewal in January, the Council could consider holding a private meeting with Lute on the prospects for progress on the political track.

Tensions over hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus are of growing concern for the Council. As was the case in the past, these tensions can affect the political process negatively and carry potential risks for the security situation in the region.

### Council Dynamics

Notwithstanding the impasse in unification talks, Council members are consistent in their support for a negotiated solution to the Cyprus issue and the Secretary-General's efforts to that end. Given that this issue has been on the Council's agenda for decades,

**UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2483 (25 July 2019) extended the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/883** (14 November 2019) was on the Secretary-General's good offices in Cyprus. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13980** (9 October 2019) reiterated the importance of the status of the city of Varosha as set out in previous Security Council resolutions.

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## Cyprus

some members appear to be frustrated by the seemingly indefinite nature of this process. Members seem to diverge on the conditions and timeframe for the reunification talks. Some seem 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.

The US has emphasised that peacekeeping missions must support political processes

and that the Council should reconsider the mandates of missions where progress on the political track is absent. During past mandate renewal negotiations, the US has supported a comprehensive strategic review of the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process. On the other hand, Russia has strongly opposed any attempt to exert pressure on either side and affect negotiations in any

way, maintaining that the process must be Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned to achieve lasting results. Most Council members seem wary of initiating drastic changes to the mission's mandate and size. In the absence of progress in unification talks, the US position might gain more support from other members who have been cautious on this issue. Russia is likely to oppose any changes to the status quo.

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## Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

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### Expected Council Action

In January, the Security Council is expected to hold its quarterly open debate on the Middle East, focusing on Israel/Palestine. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov is likely to brief.

### Key Recent Developments

The last period has been marked by much political uncertainty concerning Israel/Palestine issues. On 18 November 2019, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reversed the US position on Israeli settlements. "After carefully studying all sides of the legal debate...the establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not, per se, inconsistent with international law", he told a press conference. The Secretary-General's spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric stated the next day in response to press inquiries that the UN "very much regrets" this announcement and that the UN's position has not changed. Additionally, the ten elected Council members appeared at a press stakeout after the Council's meeting on 20 November 2019 responding to the issue. Jürgen Schulz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany, reiterated the elected members' support for international law regarding the illegality of the settlements. He also repeated their collective concern about the possible annexation of areas in the West Bank. This comes on the heels of several announcements in 2019 by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would annex all Israeli settlements located in Palestinian territories if he won the election and a specific promise that

he would annex the occupied Jordan Valley in the West Bank.

However, despite holding two elections in less than six months (most recently on 17 September 2019), Israel still does not have a government. Since the first 2019 election, held in April, Netanyahu's Likud party has been engaged in a tight bid for power with the Blue and White Alliance, led by Benny Gantz, a former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and a former Netanyahu ally. In December 2018, Gantz established a new political party, Israel Resilience, which, along with the Blue and White Alliance in which it plays a leading role, is considered a more centrist option to the right-wing Likud. He has heavily criticised Netanyahu's role in three separate corruption cases and on 19 September seemingly ruled out any possibility that Blue and White would serve in a coalition with Netanyahu, though the alliance has left open the possibility of a secular unity government with Likud but without Netanyahu. There have also been reports that Netanyahu and Gantz might alternate the post of prime minister as a compromise. Since attempts by both groups to form a coalition failed, however, the country's politics have been at a standstill. On 11 December 2019, President Reuven Rivlin announced that, as a result of the inability of the leaders to form a coalition, a historic third election was necessary. It will most likely be held on 2 March 2020.

Until the next elections are held and a new government is formed, the country will continue to be led by Netanyahu in a caretaker role.

Further complicating matters, Netanyahu was indicted on 21 November 2019 on charges of fraud, bribery and breach of trust. It is unclear if Netanyahu is legally able to run for the post of prime minister under these circumstances, although Israeli law allows a prime minister to remain in office even if indicted. There has been pressure on Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit to issue a ruling on whether an indicted candidate can compete, which had not been made at press time.

Preparations have begun for the Palestinian Authority to hold its first parliamentary and presidential elections in 14 years. Parliamentary elections could happen as early as February 2020, with presidential elections to follow three months later. During the opening of the UN General Assembly in September 2019, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced general plans for elections. However, several challenges remain, particularly the need for logistical plans and ongoing discussions about how to hold elections in Gaza given the split between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in Ramallah.

The Council discussed the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, during its regular monthly meetings in November and December 2019, along with the quarterly open debate in October 2019. Mladenov briefed at all three sessions. He repeatedly warned the Council in these meetings that there were "new dangerous flashpoints" emerging on this file, as he said during the October open debate. He also underlined the continued humanitarian

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST (ISRAEL/PALESTINE)** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334](#) (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for the Secretary-General to brief the Council quarterly on implementation of the resolution. [Secretary-General's Report S/2019/938](#) (12 December 2019) was the most recent written report on the implementation of resolution 2334. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8690](#) (18 December 2019) included the 12th report on the implementation of resolution 2334. [S/PV.8669](#) (20 November 2019) was the monthly briefing by Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. [S/PV.8648](#) (28 October 2019) was the most recent quarterly open debate on the Palestinian question.

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## Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

challenges in Gaza and the ongoing settlement issues. His concerns about increasing tensions were underscored by 48 hours of what he described during the November meeting as “the most serious recent escalation between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza”. During that period, Islamic Jihad launched around 450 rockets at Israel, while Israeli strikes against Islamic Jihad targets killed a senior leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Baha Abu al-Ata, and more than 30 other Palestinians, including three women and eight children.

On 18 December 2019, the Council received its quarterly briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334 of December 2016, which condemned Israeli settlements. Mladenov presented the Secretary-General’s written report, only the third since resolution 2334 was adopted. The report showed that no steps had been taken to cease settlement activity. In the report, the Secretary-General stressed his concern, noting the overall increase in approved settlements, incidents of settler violence, the worrying humanitarian situation in Gaza, and the need for Egyptian-led intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts to continue.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 15 November 2019 statement, the special rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territory

occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, applauded the 12 November 2019 ruling by the European Court of Justice, which held that food products produced by Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory must indicate that they originate from a settlement and not be described as a “product of Israel”. In a 19 November 2019 statement, Lynk said the US announcement that Israeli settlements do not violate international law “is a decisive break with international consensus, and will only further entrench the perpetual Israeli occupation”. He added that the decision was “the very last nail in the coffin of the two-state solution” and that it “effectively grants permission to the Israeli government to formally annex large parts of the occupied West Bank, as it has already done with East Jerusalem”.

### Key Issues and Options

The Council remains stalled on the Israel/Palestine issues because of its internal divisions. Apart from the scheduled monthly meetings, Council members could choose to hold an Arria-formula meeting or an informal interactive dialogue to highlight specific issues facing the region. This was done in May 2019 when an Arria-formula meeting was held on Israel’s construction of settlements. Viet Nam, as president of the Council for January, could also invite a civil society representative to brief during the open debate, as was done twice in 2019, in April and November.

The same chief issues are likely to continue to be discussed by Council members:

the blockade against Gaza, concerns about the Gaza humanitarian situation, the importance of progress on the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, and the viability of the two-state solution in the current political and security context.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

There are deep divisions between the US and other members of the Council on the Israel/Palestine issues. Several Council members have criticised US actions, such as moving its embassy to Jerusalem and tacitly supporting Netanyahu’s statements about annexation of the Jordan Valley. More broadly, with the upcoming elections in Israel, Palestine and the US, some members may want to await their outcomes before making policy decisions. The lack of international consensus even on previously agreed parameters only heightens the complexity.

Indonesia, Kuwait and South Africa have emerged as a strong, like-minded group to push for increased discussion and outcomes on this issue, focusing especially on promoting the rights and needs of Palestinians. With Kuwait leaving the Council and its seat being taken by Tunisia, this dynamic may change. (The seat reserved for Arab countries alternates between the Asian and African geographic groups.)

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## UNRCCA (Central Asia)

### Expected Council Action

In January 2020, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Natalia Gherman, is expected to brief the Council in consultations on UNRCCA’s activities.

### Background

UNRCCA is a special political mission, established by the Secretary-General in 2007 for an open-ended period based on a proposal by the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). It is headquartered in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, with office locations in all Central Asian states, and its mandate includes a liaison function, monitoring and analysis of the situation on the ground, maintaining contact with regional organisations, offering a political framework for conflict prevention activities of the entire UN system in the region, and additionally maintaining contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to ensure a comprehensive overview of the regional situation. Its proposed budget for 2020 from assessed contributions

(the regular UN budget) is around \$3 million, and it has a staff of 31 (22 national, nine international). It is established practice that the Special Representative reports orally to the Council twice a year.

### Key Recent Developments

Gherman last briefed Council members in consultations on 2 July 2019. She updated members on the activities of UNRCCA regarding priority matters such as trans-boundary water management, countering terrorism, the roles of women and youth, and energy.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/2 (19 January 2018) was on Afghanistan and Central Asia. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8162** (19 January 2018) was an open debate entitled “Building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development”. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13179** (25 January 2018) reaffirmed the importance of preventive diplomacy and acknowledged UNRCCA’s role in that regard. It also expressed support for UNRCCA’s role in regional counter-terrorism activities, welcomed its engagement related to border management, and commended efforts related to trans-boundary water management and combatting drug trafficking.



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## UNRCCA (Central Asia)

In line with its mandate, UNRCCA organised several workshops and training sessions over the last six months. These included a training session on “Good Practices in Border Security and Management to Strengthen National and International Capacities in Countering Terrorism” on 6-8 August 2019 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan; on countering the financing of terrorism on 27 August 2019 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan; and on “Countering the Use of the Internet for Propaganda and Recruitment Purposes in Central Asia” on 13-14 November 2019 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

On 30 September 2019, the Centre launched the “UNRCCA Preventive Diplomacy Academy”, aimed at implementing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda of the Security Council. The initiative organised three workshops for young people from Central Asian countries and Afghanistan this year.

### Issues and Options

One issue for the Council is what more it can do to support UNRCCA’s work. An option would be to hear Gherman’s briefing in an open meeting, followed by consultations. This would allow Council members to publicly express support for the work of UNRCCA and to raise awareness of its activities and then

have a potentially less formal, more detailed and frank exchange with Gherman in consultations. Another option would be for the Council to hold a debate and give the five Central Asian governments the opportunity to speak.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the work of UNRCCA. Until early 2015, they issued a press statement following each briefing, encouraging increased cooperation and coordination among the Central Asian countries, UNRCCA, and “relevant regional organisations”. In September 2015, Russia, the penholder on UNRCCA, sought to add specific references to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), as well as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU. The P3 (France, the UK and the US) opposed these additions, seeing the CIS, the CSTO and the SCO as vehicles for enhancing Russian influence in the region. No press statements could be agreed on for more than two years.

As a Central Asian state, Kazakhstan sought to overcome these differences during

its 2017-2018 term on the Council. In February 2017, Council members agreed on press elements that welcomed the Special Representative’s briefing, reaffirmed the importance of conflict prevention tools, acknowledged the role of UNRCCA, and encouraged greater cooperation between the states in the region, UNRCCA, and relevant regional organisations. Under the Kazakh Council presidency in January 2018, Council members found consensus on a press statement, again referring to “relevant regional organisations” without naming them. It appears that this was acceptable to Russia in light of its close relationship with Kazakhstan and with the addition of the phrase “including those organizations of which the Central Asian States are members”. In the statement, Council members reaffirmed the importance of preventive diplomacy and acknowledged UNRCCA’s role in that regard. They further expressed support for UNRCCA’s role in regional counter-terrorism activities, welcomed its engagement related to border management, and commended efforts related to trans-boundary water management and combatting drug trafficking. Since January 2018, no press statements have been issued on UNRCCA.

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## Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations

### Expected Council Action

In January, Council president Viet Nam is expected to convene a briefing on the cooperation between the UN and regional organisations in maintaining international peace and security, with a focus on the relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Viet Nam also assumes the chairmanship of ASEAN at the outset of 2020. The Secretary-General of ASEAN may brief the Council.

### Background

The UN Charter established the Security Council as the principal organ charged with the maintenance of international peace and security while also envisioning a role for regional organisations in the context of

local disputes. Chapter VIII of the Charter encourages the resolution of such disputes by regional organisations as long as their efforts are consistent with the principles and purposes of the UN.

Briefings on the relationships with different organisations have become a regular feature of the Council’s programme of work in the post-Cold War era. Council members have held annual joint consultative meetings with members of the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) since 2007, and the Council has convened annual briefings on the work of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and on UN-EU cooperation since 2001 and 2010, respectively.

In the course of the last decade, there has been a growing recognition of the

opportunities for a productive division of work between the Council and regional organisations. The AU has perhaps the most established relationship with the Security Council, with peacekeeping a principal area of their institutional cooperation. In Europe, regional organisations such as the EU and the OSCE play key roles in conflict and post-conflict environments. For example, the OSCE closely monitors such issues as the situations in Ukraine and Georgia, thus serving as an important source of information for the Council about developments in these areas.

One notable example of cooperation between the Security Council and ASEAN took place during a border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia in the vicinity of the Preah Vihear temple complex in 2011. On 14

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UN AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/5 (13 June 2019) encouraged the holding of an annual briefing by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS). **Secretary-General’s Report S/2018/592** (17 August 2018) was the biennial report on cooperation between the UN and regional and other organisations. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.6480** (14 February 2011) was a private meeting on the Thailand-Cambodia border situation. **Security Council Press Statement SC/10174** (14 February 2011) was about the Cambodia-Thailand border situation.

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## Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations

February 2011, following exchanges of fire across the Thailand-Cambodia border, the Council held a private meeting on the border situation at the request of Cambodia. At the meeting, the then-chairman of ASEAN, the foreign minister of Indonesia, briefed the Council, and representatives of Cambodia and Thailand made statements. In a press statement issued after the meeting, Council members welcomed ASEAN's mediation efforts and encouraged the parties to cooperate with the organisation. (For more on this, see *What's In Blue* from 9 February 2011.) Tensions around the Preah Vihear temple complex abated following an International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in November 2011 ordering both sides to withdraw their troops from the temple's surroundings. Observers from ASEAN were deployed to monitor the ceasefire agreement. It appears that in this case, rather than taking the lead, members of the Council saw their role as supporting regional efforts.

### Key Recent Developments

In 2019, the Council continued to engage regularly with regional and sub-regional organisations on peace and security issues. Cooperation with the AU on peace and security in Africa featured prominently on the Council's agenda in the past year. The Council held two open debates focused on the AU's "Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020" initiative, on 27 February and 2 October 2019. At the February debate, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2457, which highlights the Council's support for African-led initiatives to end conflict on the continent. The October debate focused on the connection between youth empowerment and peace-building efforts in Africa.

Apart from the periodic Council briefings on UN-AU and UN-EU partnerships, several meetings were held in the past year on cooperation between the Council and other regional organisations, demonstrating the desire of some Council members for these relationships to develop along similar lines as those with the AU and EU.

On 13 June 2019, Kuwait convened a high-level briefing on cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS). In a presidential statement adopted following the meeting, the Council encouraged the practice of holding of an annual briefing by the Secretary-General of the LAS as well as of convening an annual informal meeting between Security Council members and the members of the Council of the LAS.

On 25 September 2019, Russia organised a ministerial-level meeting on the work of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Commonwealth of Independent States, with a focus on their role in counter-terrorism efforts. In his briefing to the Council, the Secretary-General mentioned that the UN is strengthening its institutional links with the three organisations. However, P3 representatives and several EU members of the Council expressed doubts about enhancing the cooperation between the Council and these organisations.

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## Central African Republic

### Expected Council Action

In January 2020, the Council is expected to renew the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) sanctions regime, which expires at the end of the month.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) expires on 15 November 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

The Political Peace Agreement in the CAR was signed in Bangui by the CAR government and 14 armed groups on 6 February 2019, following negotiations in Khartoum that began on 24 January 2019 under the auspices of the AU. A new cabinet, in which all 14 armed groups are represented, was formed on 22 March 2019.

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. Confrontations between rebel groups, CAR security forces and MINUSCA have subsided, and human rights violations linked to the conflict appear to have decreased, yet many civilians live with general insecurity. Armed groups have been fighting each other and violating the agreement through violence against civilians, illegal taxation, and obstructing the wider expansion of state authority and deployment of security forces. MINUSCA continues to be the primary provider of security in the country.

On 15 November 2019, the Council adopted resolution 2499, renewing the mandate of MINUSCA until 15 November 2020 and maintaining the existing levels of 11,650 military personnel and 2,080 police personnel. The priority tasks of the mission

are the protection of civilians, good offices and support to the peace process, support to preparations for peaceful elections, facilitating the safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, and the promotion and protection of human rights. Resolution 2499 contains new language on electoral support, authorising MINUSCA to assist the CAR in the preparation and delivery of peaceful presidential, legislative and local elections by providing good offices, security, and operational, logistical and, as appropriate, technical support, in particular to facilitate access to remote areas, as well as coordinating international electoral assistance.

On sanctions, resolution 2488 of 12 September 2019 amended the arms embargo imposed on the CAR in previous resolutions. Most elements of the arms embargo remain in place, including those on the CAR security forces. However, the resolution exempts,

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2499 (15 November 2019) extended the mandate of MINUSCA and the authorisation to use all means to provide operational support to MINUSCA until 15 November 2020. 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. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/3** (9 April 2019) established benchmarks for suspending or progressively lifting arms embargo measures on the government of the CAR. **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.

# Central African Republic

after notifying the committee, supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use and supplies to the CAR security forces of weapons with a calibre of 14.5mm or less that are intended solely for the support of or use in the CAR process of security sector reform. Under the previous sanctions regime, these supplies to the CAR security forces required prior approval from the committee. The resolution also requested that the Secretary-General update the Security Council by 31 December 2019 on the progress achieved by the CAR authorities on the key benchmarks established in its presidential statement of 9 April 2019, such as progress on the effective implementation of the National Program for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, and development of weapons stockpile management capabilities.

After the adoption of the resolution, the CAR representative called it a “step in the right direction” towards the lifting of the arms embargo in its entirety. He said that the government is at a disadvantage compared to armed groups in terms of weaponry.

The outgoing chair of the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kacou Houadja Léon Adom (Côte d’Ivoire), visited the CAR from 1 to 4 October 2019. During the visit, he saw first-hand the gaps in the CAR’s capacity to manage properly its weapons stockpiles. The recent report of the Panel of Experts assisting the committee, presented to the committee on 2 December 2019, confirmed that the influx of weapons from neighbouring states to armed groups in the country continues. During the meeting, the panel also provided the committee several “statement of cases” for adding individuals to the sanctions list.

## Key Issues and Options

The immediate task for the Council in January is renewing the arms embargo, travel ban and assets freeze imposed on the CAR. The Council may choose to further amend the arms embargo. It may also call on all states to implement fully the embargo to stop the flow of illegal weapons into the CAR.

Monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement and preparations for the elections 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. Furthermore, sanctions against those responsible for attacks against civilians, MINUSCA, and humanitarian workers might also help to curb violence. 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

There was wide consensus among Council members on the need to accommodate some of the CAR government’s concerns about the arms embargo, which resulted in the amendment of the regime in resolution 2488. Against the backdrop of the continued requests of the government, Council members may diverge, however, on the possibility for further easing of the regime in January.

Several Council members, including the African members, are of the view that the sanctions regime continues to promote security in the CAR and can also serve as pressure in the implementation of the peace agreement. They believe there is no room for further adjustments at this point in light of the political and security situations and the CAR government’s unreadiness to manage heavier weapons. On the other hand, China and Russia, both of which voted in favour of resolution 2488, took the position that the Council should go farther in amending the arms embargo. China said the embargo should be lifted altogether while Russia expressed its intention to press for significant adjustments of the sanctions regime in January 2020. It is unclear at this point, however, if they will push for such changes in the upcoming negotiations in light of the situation on the ground.

Another element that could factor into negotiations over the sanctions resolution is the report of the Secretary-General on meeting the benchmarks enumerated by the Council in the presidential statement of 9 April 2019.

France is the penholder on the CAR.

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